

THE JEW: THE KEY THAT TURNS THE PROPHETIC CLOCK
Matthew 24:15-22

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. The Jew is the key to prophetic truth. When God begins again to deal with the Jew, the prophetic clock with begin to tick.
- B. For centuries before the first advent of Christ, the nation of Israel looked forward to the coming of Messiah and His kingdom which He would set up on this earth. When the Lord Jesus began His public ministry, His first spoken words were, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). He came unto His own people that He might call them to repentance, to offer them the promised kingdom and to bring the promised blessings of redemption to them.
- C. When the Lord told them that there would be no kingdom unless they turned from sin and accepted Him as Messiah, they rejected His words. When Pilate brought Christ before the fanatical crowd of Israelites and said, “Behold, your king.” They shouted, “We will not have this man to reign over us. We have no king but Caesar! The sin of rejection of Christ was not done out of ignorance. They willfully sinned and God pronounced judgment on the nation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that commeth in the name of the Lord.
(Matt. 23:37-39)

- D. Christ’s announcement of judgment gives us the key to understanding Israel’s present-day suffering and her yet future suffering in the Tribulation period. **NOTE:** The kingdom has been removed from Israel for almost 2000 years. In this 2000 year period, she has suffered terribly at the hands of wicked men and nations. For instance, how can it be explained that over 6 million Jews were murdered by Hitler unless this were divine judgment?
- E. Yet, the Bible tells us that there is yet greater judgment for Israel in the Tribulation period. This will be Israel’s final judgment for rejection of Messiah and then “all Israel shall be saved.” (Rom. 11:26)

II. REVIEW AND CONTEXT

- A. The Lord has told us that the sign of the beginning of the end of the age is the abomination of desolation (24:15), which will be when Antichrist sets himself up as God in the Jewish temple. This will occur in the middle of the Tribulation or after the first 3½ years.
- B. Last week we saw how this will begin the period called the Great Tribulation which is the last 3½ years before the second advent of Christ (24:21).
- C. Also last week we saw how God will apparently remove the true Church out of this world before the 7 year Tribulation period will begin. Perhaps you are now thinking, “If God takes the Church out of the world before the Tribulation begins, will no one have a chance to know God during that awful time?”

III. A REMNANT OF JEWS SAVED (24:16-20): “Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child and to them that give such in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter neither on the Sabbath day:” -- Who are they who must flee so quickly when the last days begin? So great will be their trouble that they will not even have time to pick up a wrap.

- A. It is fairly easy to identify these folks. They will be Jews. The Lord says “them which be in Judea.” Judea is a geographical part of the land of Israel, ancient Palestine. It encompasses the hill country surrounding the city of Jerusalem and includes the city as well. It is to the residents of Jerusalem and Judea that this warning is addressed. Furthermore the Lord mentions the Sabbath. A Jew could only travel a limited distance on the Sabbath and if this tribulation came on the Sabbath they would either be Sabbath breakers or be destroyed. Later these same folks are called the elect, for it says, “for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (24:22). Apparently they are believing Jews, men and women who accept Christ during the Tribulation period. **NOTE:** These folks are not the Church where there is neither Jew nor Gentile but one body in Christ, but are Jewish believers in Christ who will be converted after the removal of the Church and before the time of the Great Tribulation.
- B. These believing Jews will be in the city of Jerusalem when the Antichrist breaks his covenant with the Jews. At the beginning of the Tribulation period makes a covenant with the Jews to offer protection to them as to gain rights to the rich mineral deposits in that area. But in the middle of the Tribulation, after 3½ years, the Antichrist will break the covenant and set himself up in Jerusalem as God. The believing Jews in Jerusalem will know then to flee to the mountains for protection from the wrath of the Antichrist.

- C. The question still remains, “How do these Jews become believers in Christ, since there are no Christians left to preach the gospel to them after the removal of the Church?” Where do these converted Jews come from? Apparently after the Rapture of the Church, God will sovereignly convert 144,000 Jews. There will be 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:2-4). The 144,000 are specifically said to be redeemed (Rev. 14:1, 3-5). **NOTE:** These Jews, like all other believers of all time, will be sovereignly converted by God. Undoubtedly, their conversion will be more spectacular than most conversions but it is God who saves them. This 144,000 are to be turned from unbelief to belief much in the same dramatic way as was the Apostle Paul. Paul was sovereignly converted on the road to Damascus by the sudden appearance of the risen Lord Jesus Christ.
- D. The 144,000 will become fiery evangelists. They will be like so many Pauls, proclaiming the eternal gospel in mighty Spirit-given power throughout the whole earth. They will preach Christ and the nearness of the earthly kingdom, which in just seven years will be made a reality when Christ returns in the second advent. From the ministry of the 144,000 multitudes, including some Jews, will turn to Christ (Rev. 7:9-12). **NOTE:** The tribulation is a temporal judgment of all men because of their lawlessness and rejection. Men will be so blinded by Satan that they will not repent.

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” (Rev. 16:10-11).

Although many opportunities will be given for men to repent, most will refuse Christ, going on in spiritual harlotry and the worship of Satan. However, due to the preaching of the 144,000 some will respond to Christ, for there will be folks from “all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues” (Rev. 7: 9, 14) who will be saved. The majority of those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior during the Tribulation will pay with their lives. The thought of martyrdom always keeps men from jumping hastily into receiving Christ, and during the Tribulation most saints will undergo the ultimate in suffering for Christ.

- E. For you who have logically followed the teaching on prophecy, you may be asking, “If the Holy Spirit, who restrains sin and who indwells all believers in the true Church, is removed when the Church is removed in the Rapture, will the Holy Spirit regenerate men in the Tribulation?” The answer is “yes,” the Holy Spirit will still regenerate men in the Tribulation. Only His permanent indwelling in the church and His restraining work is removed. The Holy Spirit will regenerate men as He did in the Old Testament before the Church was ever formed.

- F. The appearance of the 144,000 is very important for it is the beginning of the fulfilling of God's renewed activity with the Jews, long predicted by the Old Testament prophets. God's prophetic clock will begin to move when He again begins to deal with Israel.

IV. THE REMNANT OF JEWS SPARED (24:21, 22): "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Believers in the Tribulation, especially during the first 3½ years will know that the Great Tribulation (the last 3½ years) is beginning when the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple and when the Jewish believers flee to the mountains to escape the wrath of Antichrist. All fury will break loose those last 3½ years and it will be the greatest period of suffering for the whole world in human history.

- A. God will have to terminate the days of the Tribulation or no human life will be able to survive, for "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved (delivered, spared).
- B. God primarily shortens those days for the elect of God. The context would demand that this refer primarily to the converted Jews but by application this can refer to converted Gentiles as well. One of the purposes for the Tribulation period is that Israel might pass under the rod of judgment. (Ezk. 20:33-38). God will purge the rebels out of the nation and leave a believing remnant with whom He can fulfill all the promises of His kingdom. As far as Israel is concerned, the Tribulation will bring judgment on the unbelievers in the nation because of the sin of rejecting Christ, and will bring salvation and blessing on those who turn to Him when He appears in His second advent.

V. EXHORTATIONS TO BELIEVERS

- A. For Christians, we should be very comforted, for we know that the midnight hour of the Tribulation has not yet arrived and the hour of God's grace has not yet run its course. We also have the comfort that we shall never see this wicked period, for we shall be raptured out and go to be with the Lord Jesus.
- B. As Christians, we know that God has everything under control. Everything is happening on schedule and according to plan. All the present world events are no surprise to God, and are all working for the return of His Son, Jesus Christ.

VI. WARNING TO UNBELIEVERS

- A. For you here this morning without Christ, do you realize the consequences of not belonging to Christ? You, if you are alive when Christ returns for His Church, will miss the Rapture and be thrown into the awful suffering of the Tribulation period. You will probably die during that time without ever trusting in Christ and your destiny will be the Lake of Fire.

- B. Now is the time to receive Christ. Flee to Him for salvation lest you face the temporal wrath of the Tribulation and the eternal wrath of divine judgment. Christ and Christ alone can deliver you from sin, judgment and hell!