

## Signs Of The End - Tribulation

### Luke 21:5-36

In our most recent study of these precious words given here in Luke chapter 21, we spoke about all the many beliefs that we Christians have developed over time about the “Last Days” that our Lord spoke to us about here, those “Last Days” when our Lord calls all of life on this earth to a close, and then creates a whole new and blessedly righteous kingdom that will reign in heaven and on earth for all eternity.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 21 and follow along as I read, beginning in verse 5,

<sup>5</sup> . . . while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he (the Lord Jesus) said, <sup>6</sup> “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” <sup>7</sup> And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” <sup>8</sup> And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. <sup>9</sup> And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

<sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup> There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup> But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. <sup>13</sup> This will be your opportunity to bear witness. <sup>14</sup> Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, <sup>15</sup> for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup> You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. <sup>17</sup> You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your lives.

<sup>20</sup> “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup> Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, <sup>22</sup> for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. <sup>23</sup> Alas for women who are pregnant and for those

who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. <sup>24</sup> They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

<sup>25</sup> "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, <sup>26</sup> people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

<sup>29</sup> And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. <sup>31</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>34</sup> "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:5-36)

And then also listen as I read a few verses given to us in Matthew chapter 24,

<sup>36</sup> "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. <sup>37</sup> For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

<sup>40</sup> Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. <sup>42</sup> Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you

also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matthew 24:36-44)

In our earlier studies, we said that many who hold to the "Premillennialist" doctrine believe that sometime before the millennium that is spoken about in Revelation chapter 20 takes place, Christ will suddenly appear in the heavens, and all the people who have put their faith and trust in Him will be "raptured", "caught away" into the clouds to be with Him.

And at that moment, the beginning days of the "great tribulation" spoken about here in Matthew 24:21 will be set fully into motion. Listen to those words!

<sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (Matthew 24:21)

I confess to you that as I study through these words that tell us about these coming events of the last days, a sense of exhilaration wells up within me, a special mixture of a deep sense of fear combined with joy-filled feelings of excitement.

It is in many ways similar to the feeling that I experienced in those beginning days of my salvation, those moments when I first began to realize that the things of this life are really not under the control of men. That yes, men do contribute their part. And yes, men can and they do make choices and manipulate many of the circumstances of their daily lives. But mankind's responses are merely "secondary causes", because there is a far greater, far mightier Hand at work, a "First Cause" of all that is taking place, a "First Cause" that commands and countermands all of the decisions being made on this earth.

And though now, in these days, the choices and decisions of mankind seem to be controlling all the events taking place around us each day, there will surely come a time when men will no longer have the opportunity to make those choices and decisions! When that special moment arrives and from that moment forward, God and God alone will be making all the decisions.

And oh dear Christian, no matter which of those chosen doctrines you prefer to believe about the "Millennium", may we simply read carefully and accept the words these scriptures are telling us about those days that lay ahead of us.

These words are saying to us that there will come a very special moment when the Lord Jesus, along with all His heavenly host of angels, will suddenly split through from heaven into the skies above us and will gather to Himself all those who have put their faith and trust in Him as Savior and Lord.

In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, every believer will suddenly disappear, leaving only the unbelievers to remain and to wonder what has taken place. That is clearly what our Lord is telling us as He reminds us about the "days of Noah".

Follow along with me as I read those words from Matthew chapter 24.

<sup>36</sup> "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. <sup>37</sup> For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, (Matthew 24:36-39)

Here, God is clearly telling us that the coming days will be like those days of Noah . . . hearts weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the cares of this life, no one paying much attention to the "signs of the times". That there before the flood, they, like us today, were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. And there were only eight people who believed in God left remaining among all the people on the earth. And God separated them out from the unbelievers to deliver them from the wrath to come. And as those eight people entered the Ark, all the rest were unaware as the flood came and swept them all away.

And here our Lord adds the words, "so it will be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. That two men will be in the field, one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken and one left. And He warns us to stay awake, for we will not know when our Lord is coming.

And then also, we have the words of 1 Thessalonians 4 telling us that,

<sup>16</sup> . . . the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up

together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Try for a moment to imagine with me just what is being described here within this passage. Some people wonder where the word "rapture" comes from. It comes from these words "caught up together with them in the clouds". "Caught up", in the Greek "harpazo" is also translated with the word "rapture". It is an expression that means "snatched away", "taken by force", not violently so, but without choice.

And I am glad for that because some of us might want to stay a bit longer. And for what we might think is a good reason, perhaps in one last desperate attempt to save our children or other loved ones.

But we'll not be able to do that. Because this folks, is the beginning of the end. And there'll not be any more opportunities remaining after this special moment spoken about here takes place.

Yes, some people, hopefully many, that are left behind will turn their hearts to Christ during their suffering in the tribulation. But their days of salvation will be very, very difficult days.

And think further with me about what might take place as all of us believers are raptured out of this world. If the rapture takes place either at the beginning or during the middle of the tribulation, it will mean catastrophic consequences for all the rest of the people who remain on the earth.

It will cause an immediate collapse of most all of the world organizations and systems, because many, many of the responsible positions and vital roles within those organizations are being held by believers.

Christians are interlaced within all The businesses and the financial markets, the manufacturing processes, the many workplaces and communities and homes. And then they will suddenly vanish without even a word.

Assembly lines in manufacturing plants will grind to a halt as many of their best workers suddenly disappear. And those who remain will be left without any understanding of what has just taken place.

And folks, let's remember that not all those unbelievers who are left behind are vile murderers and drug dealers and the like. No! In many cases they will be beloved members of our own families, those who simply refused to listen to all the many pleas for them to come to Christ for salvation.

We should begin to weep, even now, for their soon coming suffering. Our beloved family members left behind to endure the wiles of satan and his demons as they unleash their unmerciful havoc upon an unsuspecting world.

What a sorrowful thing to imagine!

If we think that people are helpless and hopeless today, with all of the compassion and all of the free provisions being given to them, the free food, government assistance and healthcare. Consider how it will be in a world without any form of love or compassion or pity or comfort remaining within it.

And it will surely be exactly that way! Remember that love, real love comes only through the presence of God's Spirit within people. The human kind of love that an unbeliever has within him or her is only a scant shadow of God's real love.

And as the Holy Spirit removes His people and His own presence from this earth, loving compassion and deeds of kindness and mercy will suddenly be nonexistent. Satan and His demons do not know about such things, but they do know about pain and suffering and misery, and they will wreak havoc upon the people who are left behind.

Satan and his strong demons will form their own kind of unholy trinity, the antichrist, the beast, and the false prophet.

Bible scholars have concluded that as the Christians are raptured out of this world, chaos will reign. And people will seek to find leaders among those who are left behind.

That is when the "unholy trinity", the antichrist, the beast, and the false prophet will rise up and take possession of certain strong leaders in the world. And the mass population will have such a sense of helplessness that they will gladly follow after those demon-filled leaders.

It is predicted that those leaders will, at first, present themselves as being caring and compassionate, able to “fix” the broken systems of the world, provide food and shelter and healthcare, drawing the masses into allegiance to them.

But in exchange for the provisions they will make, they will require commitment and loyalty beyond anything ever known before.

At that time, everyone remaining on the earth will be required to prove their allegiance to the antichrist, the beast, and the false prophet by taking what these scriptures describe as the “mark of the beast” upon the palms of their hands and upon their foreheads, described here as the number “666”.

Read with me about the rise to power of the “unholy trinity”, the antichrist, the beast, and the false prophet. Those words in Revelation chapter 13 . . .

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” <sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. <sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear: <sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. <sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,

<sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. <sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. <sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.  
(Revelation 13:1-18)

Note these last words that call us to wisdom as we consider this special “mark of the beast”. It may actually be the exact number 666, or that number may be an allegory for another kind of numbering system. But whatever that number means, those who are on the earth at that time will absolutely be required to receive it or they will be denied all forms of help, food, clothing, healthcare, and the like.

This is real folks! Yes, the manner in which the book writers and movie producers present it will vary, with some people being heroes in fighting against the devil. But listen! That is fiction! And this is real. And it is not just some metaphorical description. This is absolutely real, and it will be awful beyond our imagination.

Our nation, America, is not mentioned in these scriptures. And only vague mention is given to the other powerful countries of the world, Russia, China and others like them. So we really don't know exactly what our role or theirs will be.

These scriptures are clear, however, that for the most part, most all of these events will center themselves in and around the mid-east countries, especially Israel and their adversarial neighbors.

The bible scholars predict that there will be great and ever-increasing suffering for all the people of the earth for a period of approximately seven years. And whether that is an exact time frame or not is debated by many. But in these words, God is emphatic that the time will be short and limited, and that then He will call all of the conflict to a close.



It will begin with what these scriptures and the bible scholars call the "Battle of Megiddo", the "Battle of Armageddon", the greatest of all wars, and it will take place there in Israel, not far from the city of Jerusalem. In that war will be death and destruction such as mankind has never experienced before.

And then, God will simply, but finally call it all to a close. And His manner of doing that will leave nothing of this world still standing, neither the heavens nor the earth or anything within them. Everything will be totally destroyed, obliterated. And He will then create a new heaven and a new earth for us to live in.

I have said all along that these are ominous, foreboding words. And there are so many well-meaning Christians who want to debate this whole matter.

But please dear Christian, we must be very careful of our debate. I have been quoting exact scripture. And these words that I have read to you are as pure and holy and exact as all the other words of scripture. And they are absolute truth. This will surely come to pass. And only those whose names are written in the "Lamb's book of life" will survive.

So then, may I ask each of us again? Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? Have you fully surrendered your life into the hands of our Savior, Christ Jesus?

These events that we have been reading may not begin today, but then again, maybe they will.

I personally believe that a lot that is being described here is already set into place and is already very subtly at work all throughout the world. Satan knows that his time is coming soon and he is preparing our world for his rise to power.

Already we see the evidence spoken about in 2 Timothy 3 where we read,

<sup>1</sup> But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. <sup>2</sup> For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Oh dear Christian, do not these words sound familiar? The last days surely have begun and these things that we have spoken about today will surely take place.

So then, if we know that these things will come to be, how should we live as those days approach us? May I give us the words of 2 Peter 3 as we close for today?

<sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. (2 Timothy 3:11-14)

Pray with me.