

"The Olivet Discourse"

Matthew 24-25

Part 15

Introduction: In our study of the Olivet Discourse we have to the midpoint of the tribulation. The midpoint is marked by a sign which Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 24:15.

Notice Matthew 24:15

This is a reference to the anti-christ. Three and one half years into the tribulation the anti-christ will break the covenant which he will make with the nation of Israel. When the covenant is broken he will unleash his anger on the nation of Israel and when he does there will be a great slaughter of Jewish people.

Zechariah 13:8-9

⁸ *And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.*

⁹ *And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*

Here we see that two thirds of the people of Israel will die and this slaughter will begin at the midpoint of the tribulation. Last week I told you that there were 3 warnings here which Jesus gave to His disciples.

I. Great Persecution.

Notice Matthew 24:16-18

The persecution will come so quickly and will be so intense that Jesus tells them when they hear about the abomination of desolation they are to flee into the mountains as quickly as they possibly can. They are to take no time to gather any belongings.

To help them to see how terrible the persecution will be Jesus speaks the words of verse 19.

Notice Matthew 24:19

Last week I told you that Hosea gives us insight into what Jesus is referring to here.

Hosea 13:16

¹⁶ *Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.*

This is why Jesus pronounces a woe on those who will be pregnant and to those who will be nursing mothers at this time. Hosea tells us that babies will be cut out of the moms and young children will be dashed in pieces.

This brings us to where we are in our study tonight. This will be the continuation of the Great Persecution.

Notice Matthew 24:20

Here in this verse Jesus tells them to pray that their flight will not be in the winter or on the Sabbath. These would be two things which could

hinder travel for the Jewish people who were trying to escape the wrath of the anti-christ.

1. The winter.

The winters in Israel can be snowy and cold so to flee from their house to the mountains with their family in the middle of the winter would just slow them down and Jesus words in the previous verses were all about getting away as quickly as they possibly can. The cold and the snow would hinder their travel and would therefore hinder their escape from the wrath of the anti-christ.

2. The Sabbath.

Now last week I told you that the persecution which is happening here will fall on many people but the main focus is on the people of Israel. That can be seen in this verse when Jesus tells them to pray this does not happen on the Sabbath. The Sabbath only pertains to Israel. But what does the Sabbath have to do with hindering their flight? It will be difficult enough to deal with the anti-christ and his armies who will be focused on exterminating all Jewish people. But if it happens on the Sabbath they would also have to deal with the radical legalistic Jews who would stone their own if they traveled more than 2000 cubits on the Sabbath.

The point which Jesus is making here is that they will need to escape as quickly as they can and they will need to pray that there flight is without any hindrance at all.

Why will there be such a need for a rapid escape?

Notice Matthew 24:21

The word "then" in this verse is very important. It dates this verse at the midpoint of the tribulation. We need to understand that the events of the first half of the tribulation will also make life on this earth very difficult. Remember that the restraints will be lifted from the demonic world when the rapture happens so evil will increase greatly after the church is gone. That then will set the stage for the anti-christ to present himself as the "savior" of Israel and they will enter the covenant with him only to have a false sense of security. The events which will unfold starting in the second half of the tribulation will be far worse than anything which the world has ever seen. As we move on in this study we will see why Jesus spoke these words.

Notice Matthew 24:22

Here we see that the days of the tribulation will be shortened. There are 2 ways to look at this statement by our Lord.

1. The light of the day will be shortened at this time.

The "days" that are mentioned here could actually refer to the actual light given by the sun in the 24 hour period.

Revelation 8:12

¹² And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

Here we see the 4th Trumpet Judgment will cause the sun, moon, and the stars to be smitten. When this happens one third of the light will

be taken away from the face of the earth. Let me give you an example of what this would be like.

Today it was daylight a little before 6 am and it will get dark around 9 pm. That means we have about 15 hours of daylight this time of year. If we took away one third of our daylight it would be reduced by 5 hours down to 10 hours of daylight. So right now we have 15 hours of daylight and we have 9 hours of darkness. If one third of the daylight were taken away then we would have 14 hours of darkness and 10 hours of daylight. Let me show you the verse again.

Revelation 8:12

¹² And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

We see that at this time the night time will be even darker for the moon and the stars will also withhold one third of their light. Now let me show you another verse in Revelation.

Revelation 16:10

¹⁰ 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,

Here we see that when the 5th Vial Judgment is poured out that the kingdom of the beast will be full of darkness.

Now let us take this back to Matthew 24:22.

Notice Matthew 24:22

So what would the shortening of the days in Revelation 8:12 and the darkness of Revelation 16:10 have to do with Matthew 24:22?

Let us remember that Jesus has commanded them to flee Jerusalem when they see the abomination of desolation and the persecution will be extremely severe. Now let us understand that the darkness spoken of in Revelation 8 and 16 would be a great benefit to the Jewish people for it would allow them to escape under the concealment of darkness.

So this is a possible explanation.

2. The 2nd half of the tribulation will only be three and one half years when it could have lasted much longer.

Another thought is that the three and one half years of GREAT tribulation is an extension of God's grace for God could have allowed it to go on much longer.

This is another possibility. Let us look at the verse again.

Notice Matthew 24:22

Now I want you to notice that this is done for the "elect's" sake. Last week I told you that the "elect" refers to Israel and I believe that here it refers to the saved of Israel. But what I really want to draw your attention to is that in order to protect the saved of Israel during the tribulation God will supernaturally alter the universe if the shortening of the days refers to what we looked at in Revelation 8:12 and 16:10. I will make an application with this at the end but there is another point to see here first.

II. Great Deception

Now we have looked at the deception mentioned in Matthew 24:4-5.

Matthew 24:4-5

⁴ *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

⁵ *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

This deception will come as a result of the removal of the restraints on the demonic world and the strong delusion which God will send on those who rejected the Gospel before the rapture.

The great deception of Matthew 24:23-26 is different.

Notice Matthew 24:23-26

We need to understand what is happening at this time in order to understand what our Lord is saying here.

Notice Matthew 24:16-18

The wrath of the anti-christ is focused upon Israel at this time. Israel will flee into the mountains at this time.

Revelation 12:6

⁶ *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

The woman here refers to Israel and we see that she flees into the wilderness at this time but let us also remember that two thirds of Israel have been slaughtered at this time. So this is one third of Israel.

Notice Matthew 24:23

Notice the message of deception here. They will say, "Here is Christ" or "There is Christ".

Notice Matthew 24:24-26

Here in verse 26 we see their message again. The message will be to Israel who is under great persecution. The message will be, "Christ has come He is over here." Jesus tells them not to be lured away with that deceitful message.

Now let me tell you what is going on here. Israel is under great persecution at this time. The message of the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached to all the world which is the good news that the King is coming to set up His Kingdom. Israel is under great persecution and she knows the King is coming. They long for the arrival of Christ to set them free from the persecution which they are under. These false teachers will come with the message, "Christ has come. He is here." This message will be from Satan and will be for the purpose of luring the Jews out of hiding. Remember they are in the mountains and the wilderness. If the false teachers can lure them out then the anti-christ will kill them.

Now notice Matthew 24:24

Here we are able to see why the saved of Israel will not be lured out by the false teachers. It will be impossible for them to be deceived for God will not allow it to happen.

So God will protect His elect with supernatural darkness and here we see that He will protect His elect by giving them the discernment and the wisdom they need to recognize the false teachers.

Conclusion:

The application here for us is exciting. We are also referred to the "elect" of God.

Colossians 3:8-13

⁸ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

¹⁰ And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

¹¹ Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

*¹² Put on therefore, **as the elect of God**, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;*

¹³ Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

The church is also the elect of God. Let me just tell you that God loves us just as much as He loves the elect of Israel. Just as He will protect them during the Great Tribulation so He protects you and me today. There is a hedge of protection around us that no one can penetrate

unless God permits it to happen. Remember the conversation between God and Satan concerning Job?

Job 1:8-10

⁸ *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

⁹ *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?*

¹⁰ *Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?* *thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.*

What is the hedge? Remember in 2 Kings when the king of Syria wanted to spy out where Elisha was? We can see the hedge there.

2 Kings 6:14-17

¹⁴ *Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.*

¹⁵ *And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?*

¹⁶ *And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*

¹⁷ *And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw:*

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and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

They were surrounded by a hedge made up of an army of angels. It is the same for you and me today. We can walk whatever path God calls us to walk and we need not fear anything for nothing can separate us from the love of God.