

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

Matt. 24:1-21

In Mathew 24 the Lord described the tribulation period and His return to set up the kingdom. When He finished His message recorded in chapter 23, He left the temple where He had been teaching. The disciples remarked about the beautiful temple, and He told them it would be destroyed. They proceeded to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples asked Him when the temple would be destroyed and what would be the sign of His return.

Please keep in mind that the disciples knew nothing of the church, and the Lord did not reveal church truth to them. They were not asking about the rapture, and He was not telling them what to look for before it happens. He listed several things that would be happening before the end of the age. This is what the believing Jews of the tribulation are to look for just before His glorious appearing. Though we see many of these things happening in increasing intensity today, the Lord is talking about the tribulation period. The reason we can say this is because of the parallel between this passage and the sixth chapter of Revelation, which is the opening of the seals. This takes place at the beginning of the tribulation and runs to the mid-way point.

Daniel prophesied the seven years of tribulation. **Daniel 9:27**, “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: (7 years) and in the midst of the week (3½ years) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” This prince will make a 7-year covenant with Israel that will allow them to rebuild their temple and begin again their sacrifices, which they have not been able to do since 70 AD when Titus destroyed the temple. In the middle of the time he will break the covenant and set up the abomination of desolation in the temple and require the world to worship him.

Immediately following the rapture of the church, the seven years of tribulation begin to unfold here on earth. The seven years are divided into two equal parts of 3½ years. In Mathew 24 the Lord referred to the first half as “the beginning of sorrows” and the second as “great tribulation.” In chapters 6-19 of the book of Revelation He described the entire period in great detail.

The Lord said there would be false Christs, wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. He called this “the beginning of sorrows.” These are things that will happen in the first 3½ years of the tribulation period. He then goes on to speak of persecution, false prophets, increasing iniquity and decreasing love. He inserts the blessing given to those who endure to the end and the fact that the gospel will be preached to all nations before the end comes. This brings us to the desolation of abomination; which Daniel clearly places in the midst of the tribulation period.

Consider for a few minutes the parallel with Revelation, chapter six. In chapters four and five, John describes a scene in Heaven as the Lord Jesus Christ receives the seven-sealed book. This book is the title deed to creation. Jesus Christ is the rightful heir. In chapter six, He opens six of the seals and begins to claim again that which is His. Chronologically the sixth seal brings us to the mid-way point of the tribulation period. Antichrist or the beast is about to proclaim himself god and require the whole world to worship him.

John watches the Lord open the first seal and hears the noise of thunder, which warns of a coming storm. One of the four beasts invites him to come and see (6:1).

I. FALSE CHRISTS A rider on a white horse (6:2)

Matthew 24:4-5, “...Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

A. He has a bow for distant warfare but no arrows.

- B. **He has a victor's crown on his head.**
- C. **He goes forth conquering and to conquer.**
- D. **He is the beast, that man of sin or the antichrist.**
 1. *He is revealed after the rapture (2 Thes. 2:3-10).*
 2. *He brings in a peace program that seems to work.*

II. WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS A rider on a red horse (6:3-4)

Matthew 24:6-7, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom....”

- A. **He has power to take peace from the earth.**
- B. **He has a great sword for close warfare.**
 1. *This is hand-to-hand combat.*
 2. *This is internal strife, class-wars, and civil wars.*
 3. *This is the breaking up of all established order.*
- C. **He is the failure of the beast's peace program.**

III. FAMINES A rider on a black horse (6:5-6)

Matthew 24:7, “...and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

- A. **He has a pair of balances in his hand.**
- B. **He is famine that follows in the wake of global warfare.**
 1. *Enough wheat for one meal will cost one day's wages.*
 2. *Enough barley for three meals will cost the same.*
 3. *Oil and wine are for the rich and are not affected.*

IV. DEATH A rider on a pale horse (6:7-8).

- A. **The horse is the color of death- pale green.**
- B. **The rider is Death and Hell followed with him.**
 1. *He kills with war, anarchy, famine, pestilences and beasts.*
 2. *He kills one-fourth of the earth's population.*

V. MARTYRED SAINTS (6:9-11).

Matthew 24:9-12, “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

- A. **These are saints of the tribulation.**
- B. **These die because of the wickedness of the beast.**
- C. **These are given white robes and told to wait for vengeance.**

VI. EARTHQUAKES (Matt. 24:7) The beginning of God's intervention (6:12-17)

- A. **Man's wickedness causes the first five catastrophes.**
- B. **God's wrath gets man's attention as He begins to rattle his cage.**
 1. *A great earthquake moves ever mountain and island.*
 2. *The sun becomes black.*
 3. *The moon turns red as blood.*
 4. *The stars begin to fall from heaven.*

C. Man's wicked heart is hardened.

- 1. He does not admit his error and repent.*
- 2. He does admit that God is about to judge him.*
- 3. He tries to hide from God's wrath in death.*

Instead of man repenting and turning to God when the first judgments fall, he still insists on believing a lie.

VII. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Revelation 7:1-8 describes the sealing of the 144,000 Jews to witness for Christ to the entire earth. Chapter 14:1-5 gives further detail about these. Thousands of people are saved.