



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“Israel and the Tribulation”

TRANSCRIPT

Our topic is the Tribulation, the second in our series on that topic. There will be three, and this topic is Israel and the Tribulation. The tribulation, in the beginning of the message last time, I said, was one of the monster subjects of the Bible. It's one of the biggies of the Bible, the subject of the Great Tribulation. Many of the passages that deal with the tribulation deal with the Nation Israel in the tribulation. And what I want to do as we begin our studies is to ask you to turn to some of these passages in the Old Testament and parts of one in the New Testament. And let's just see for ourselves some of the passages that have to do with this great topic of the 70th week, the tribulation, and the last half of that week, the Great Tribulation.

The first passage that I want you to turn to with me is Deuteronomy chapter 4, Deuteronomy chapter 4 in verse 25 through verse 31, Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 25 through verse 31. In the 25th verse of Deuteronomy chapter 4 we read these words,

“When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a carved image, or the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke Him to anger:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from the land whereunto ye go over the Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations, where the Lord shall lead you.

And there you shall serve gods, the work of men’s hand, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

But if from there thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

Now notice the next clause.

“When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God and shall be obedient unto His voice;

(For the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.”

So he prophesized then a long history that begins with rebellion, leads to scattering among the nations, but concludes with a promise that if in tribulation -- and he says, when thou art, if in tribulation they turn to the Lord thy God, he will remember the Abrahamic Covenant, in which he has promised that he would restore them to the land.

Let’s turn over now to the 30th chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 30, and we want to read verses 5 through 7, Jeremiah 5 through 7.

“For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

Ask now, and see whether a man doeth travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it.”

We notice that, because we’re going to see when we come to Matthew 24, that this is one of the themes that our Lord develops, too. That day is great so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. So, again, reference is made to this time. There is no other time like it. It’s the time of Jacob’s trouble, Israel’s judgment, but he shall be saved out of it.

The next passage, Daniel chapter 12. Of course when he says that Israel or Jacob shall be saved out of it, he means in the physical as well as the spiritual sense. Daniel chapter 12 in verse 1.

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.”

So again, stress is laid upon the fact that this is a unique day.

“And at that time thy people shall be delivered everyone that shall be found written in the book.”

Notice that, too, because he doesn’t promise deliverance for every Israelite but for the elect in Israel. Zechariah chapter 13, verse 8 and verse 9. Zechariah writes in chapter 13, verse 8,

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts in it shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left in it.

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested. 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.

The time of this is, again, the time of the end. The chapter began with, in that day, the day when Israel looks upon him whom they feared and mourns over the Son. In that day, the great day of the Lord, there will be a time of purification for the Nation Israel when the judgments of God fall upon them.

We turn now to Revelation chapter 12, verse 1 through verse 17, but I won’t read all of this. The first part of the chapter has to do with the woman and the male child. We are told in verse 1,

“There appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pain to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born.”

This, of course, is a reference to the Nation Israel who is the woman, and our Lord Jesus who is the male child, and Satan who is the dragon. And we read in the 5th verse,

“And she brought forth a male child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

You will notice there is no reference made here to the cross, because the interest of the writer of the Book of Revelation is directed towards the consummation. And so he passes by the cross, speaks of the son ascending to the heavens, and then he speaks about things that are going to transpire upon the earth. And between the 5th and 6th verses is the present age, and then, as in Daniel chapter 9, the author, following good prophetic style, leaps into the future. And we read,

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days,” (the familiar notation, for the three and a half years of the tribulation period, the Great Tribulation period.)

And there was war in heaven: and Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was there place found any more in heaven. (He’s trying to explain now why the dragon will come into the earth.)

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceiveth the whole earth, or world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now has come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accusers of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

Now, I said I wasn’t going to read all this chapter [laughter] but I didn’t know exactly where to stop. So verse 13 is a good verse, I like it. So we go on.

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast into the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the male child.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle.

(That is not the United States Air Force [laughter].)

That she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”

And, again, you’ll notice that the familiar notation of the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation.

“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

And the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

And he stood upon the sand of the sea.”

And then John describes how as a result of Satan’s machinations, there arise the two beasts who will persecute the Nation Israel and the elect of that period of time in a further the way. Now, you can see just from these few passages that I’ve selected from the Bible that the subject of the tribulation and Israel is a big subject and is found throughout the Scriptures.

We are, it seems as we look at our history, advancing steadily and surely to the climax of God’s dealings with Israel. It wasn’t long ago that the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee of the United Nations took a giant step backwards, a step that has threatened to make the United Nations appear irresponsible, prejudiced, and anti-Semitic if we needed any such indication of that.

But a resolution was approved by the committee called the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee was sent to the general assembly for adoption which stated, quote, “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.” This resolution was approved, and we now have the verdict of the United Nations that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination. This, of course, is another one of the many steps that will lead ultimately to the persecution of the Nation Israel during the time of the Great Tribulation amidst those judgments.

Last week we looked at the 70th week of Israel, which is described for us in Daniel chapter 9, verse 24 through verse 27. We looked at its design, and we saw that as a result of the four hundred and ninety years which were severed off from the times of the Gentiles, God was going to do a number of specific things with reference to Israel and the Gentiles. He said in Daniel chapter 9, verse 24 that as a result of the four-hundred-and-ninety-year period of time the Holy City, the transgression would be finished and end of sins would be made, reconciliation for inequity would be accomplished, everlasting righteousness would be brought in, the vision and prophecy would be sealed up, and the Most Holy Place would be anointed. As a result of the four hundred and ninety years, these things take place.

We saw also as we studied this passage that there is a kind of progression of things that one can determine from the study of these verses. We noticed that there was a commandment to restore and build Jerusalem— 445 B.C. As a result of that commandment or at the conclusion of the sixty-ninth week or four hundred and eighty three years, Messiah would come. And the Messiah, of course, did come. We saw that there was reference made to the destruction of the city.

Now, we know that that occurred in 70 A.D. That, however, is not said to be within the sixty-ninth or the 70th week, so it is in the interval. Then we saw that at the beginning of the 70th week, the antichrist, the prince that was to come, would consummate a covenant with the Nation Israel. This covenant evidently has to do with the restoration of the ancient worship in the city of Jerusalem—in the passage that we shall look at in a moment, we will see specific reference to it. This covenant is concluded at the beginning of the last seven years of the seventy weeks of years, at the beginning of what we call the tribulation period of seven years.

We were also told, however, that in the middle of that 70th week, at the three and a half year mark, that covenant would be broken, which would seem to indicate that the antichrist is going to cause sacrifices and the worship of Israel to cease, and is going to set up the worship of himself. He will do this through his False Prophet. His False Prophet is his lieutenant. He is his minister of religion. And it is the work of the False Prophet to set up the abomination of desolation in the Most Holy Place and call upon the whole of the world to worship the Beast.

They will make statements like who is like unto the Beast? Who can be compared with the Beast? No one can be compared with Beast. Such a great man is he. It’s obvious that the Beast is a man who must command the admiration of the world. So you must not think of some character such as Stalin, or Khrushchev, or Hitler, or any of the other vile figures of the past. You must think of a man who is just as vile, but who has a winning type of personality like Jack Kennedy.

Now, I don’t suggest in anyway that Jack Kennedy is the antichrist, but he will have a mouth speaking great things, this antichrist, and so we expect him to be an unusual orator who will command the admiration of the great mass of the people upon the earth. The last part of that week we saw was characterized by struggles and wars and desolations until finally the end shall come. Daniel does not give us a great many of the details in Daniel chapter 9.

Now, we want to turn our attention to the New Testament, and I want you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 24 now as we take a look at this great Olivet Discourse with the theme of Israel and the tribulation in our minds. So turn with me to Matthew chapter 24 against the background of what we have said, and let me read a few verses beginning with verse 1 through verse 14. Matthew chapter 24,

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple, and his disciples came to him to show Him the buildings of the temple.

Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And as he sat down upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him, privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?”

They were interested in prophecy, and the Lord Jesus did not rebuke their interest in prophecy. There are some people who think that only fanatics—wild men—study prophecy, but the apostles were interested in prophecy, and we, too, if we are in the apostolic tradition, we too will be interested in prophecy. And Jesus answered and said unto them, stop studying prophecy. No [laughter], he goes on to give them answers to their questions,

“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors 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: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in various places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

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 grow cold. (What a terrible thing that is, for the love that we have for Jesus Christ to grow cold.)

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

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.”

In verse 38 of the preceding chapter, the Lord Jesus had announced doom upon the theocracy. He had said, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” Israel, you see, had not responded to the ministry of the Lord. And as a result of their failure to respond, he announces that they are doomed. Your house is left unto you desolate.

Now, he did give them a glimmer of hope, however. He said, “I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” So he did give them some hope that in the future they would say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, then the curse upon the house would be lifted, and

they should enter into those Abraham covenantal blessings referred to in Deuteronomy chapter 4.

Now, we can come to the Olivet Discourse with three general approaches. We might look at the discourse and say, well, everything in the Olivet Discourse has been fulfilled. So what we are now looking at is past events which have no significance for us. But what do we -- how then should we understand what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age? Well, what shall we make of verses 29 through 31 when we read of those days when the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give its light, and there shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the times of the earth shall mourn when they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory?

No, it’s impossible to understand the Olivet Discourse as a kind of resume of what has happened in the nineteen hundred years since the Lord Jesus spoke to the apostles. There are those who take this preterit view of the interpretation of this Scripture and also of the Book of Revelation. But they are like people who are playing an accordion, and as they play and they pull the bellows out and pull it out and pull it out until finally they must get one more wheezy sound out of it, and they pull it out a little more, because the preterit’s interpretive of Scriptures seeking to find fulfillment in the past of these great prophecies and in the Book of Revelation, after about every hundred years they have to go back over the ground again and reinterpret it, because there is a hundred more years of history which is not given in their interpretations and that has been the history of that form of interpretation.

There are some who look at these chapters, 24 and 25, as if they referred to the present time, and they read them and find only in them moral principles. And of course, we find moral principles in these things. There are moral principles in the prophetic word. We learn, for example, through the great prophecies that God does reward obedience to him, and he does judge disobedience. There are great moral principles that

one sees in prophecy, and it’s valid to find these moral principles, and it’s valid to make that kind of application as we preach prophecy. But, again, there are things that hardly refer to the present time. And so most of the interpreters who have adhered to a normal interpretation of the word of God have concluded that Matthew chapter 24 and chapter 25 have to do with the period of time which we know as the 70th week of Israel recorded in Daniel chapter 9, verse 24 through 27.

In other words, in the Olivet Discourse we look on to the future when God deals again with the Nation Israel. As a matter of fact, this has nothing to do with the church directly—by application, yes, as we’ve been saying, but the church is not found in Matthew 24 and 25. Now, you go home tonight and read them through and see if you can find the word, “church”?

Now, I’ll let you do it even though it’s a useless thing. You will not find it because it’s not there. But it will do you good to read the chapter. So go looking anyway. The church is not here. This is a reference to the time after the rapture. After the church has been caught up and resurrected and has met the Lord in the air. After the Great Snatch has occurred, remember?

I read this afternoon a story in one of Dr. Barnhouse’s books which I had forgotten. He said that he was preaching in Detroit one time, and while he was there he was asked to go out to take a look at a steel mill. And he went out, and he saw in operation a great electromagnetic crane, and he was very much impressed by it. And it was taking iron filings, and it was putting these iron filings into a bath furnace of some kind.

And he said he was amazed as he watched these cars of the metal that came down upon the tracks, and then he saw that giant crane which came down over the car, and then he would see them turn on the electric current and the whole contents of the railroad car would be caught up against the magnet, and then the crane would take it over to the mouth of the furnace and drop it into the melting metal.

But he noticed that as the man turned on the current and all of this metal was caught up by the crane, he noticed there were a couple of pieces that fell to the ground. And he commented upon it, and the man who was showing him through said, “Well, you can bet your last dollar that the pieces which fell back are not iron.” And so he said he went over and took a look at those two pieces and sure enough one was a piece of a broom stick, and the other was a piece of copper tubing. But when the rapture comes, all of the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air [laughter].

Now, I wonder, I wonder if you are true metal. I wonder if when the rapture comes, you’ll hear the voice. Well, now this chapter, 24 and 25, these two chapters occur after that event. They have to do with Israel and the 70th week.

Now, the questions that are Lord seeks to answer are found in verse 3. If you compare all of the accounts in Luke and Mark and in Matthew of the Olivet Discourse, you’ll discover that there are really three questions that are asked. Now, I’m going to repeat the three questions. The three questions that the disciples asked the Lord were these, first when shall these things be?

Now, he has just described the desolation of Israel, and so he says, here, When shall these things be, the time when there shall not be one stone left upon another, when they all shall be thrown down? When shall these things be?

The second question is one that is not found in Matthew. It is what is the sign when these things are about to be? Luke gives us the answer. He refers to the destruction of the city Jerusalem.

The third question is found here in the latter part of verse 3, what is the sign of thy coming and consummation of the age? Now, incidentally, there are not two questions here. In the old Scofield edition of the King James Version in the footnotes, reference used to be made to the fact that there were two questions here in the last part of verse 3, what shall be the sign of thy coming, question number one, and what shall be the sign of the end of the age? But in the Greek text it is worded in such a way that there is only

one question implied, for the time of the coming and the end of the age are the same thing. What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the age? So there is really just one question.

Now, the first question is: When shall these things be? The second question: What is the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age? The answers to these questions are given in this way. In verses 4 through 28 we have the answer to the first question, when shall these things be? And he gives us a very elaborate answer to that question. He describes the conditions that will let us know, I’m not going to be here but maybe some of you will be there. He describes the conditions which will obtain upon the earth when these things shall be. And then in verses 29 through 31 he answers the second question, what’s the sign of thy coming and the end of the age? So we have two questions here: one answered in verses 4 through 28, the second answered in verses 29 through 31.

So we turn to the exposition of the first question. Incidentally that’s why, in these questions, is why I have point 2, the exposition of the first question and point 3, the exposition of the third question, and I know that you must have thought Dr. Johnson has omitted a point here because he ought to have the exposition of the second question. But it was intentional. I can make a mistake. I’ve made three in my life [laughter] and it could have been done, but this really was intentional. We are in Matthew, we have only the first and the third question, and I’m glad you’re smiling because you know I’m just attempting to kid you a little bit. I have said things like this and some audiences and they look very seriously at me [laughter], and I know they really think that I’m being very truthful.

Well, now, let’s look at the first of these questions. When shall these things be? Now, the Lord answers this question in this way. He, first of all, gives us in verse 4 through verse 14, a kind of summary of the whole 70th week. In other words, he gives us a running view of what is going to happen during the seven-year period of time, verse 4 through verse 14.

Then in verse 15 through verse 28 he goes back over that and puts in a number of different details that he has not discussed in the opening section. It’s just as if you and I were to sit down and plan an automobile trip to California. And we should decide at our first meeting that we’re going to go the southern route rather than the northern route, after a lengthy discussion. That would be very general. We’d argue it out. We decide we are going to go the southern route and come back the northern route. And then we look at our watches, and we see it’s late, and so we decide we are going to have to meet again and discuss the details. And so we meet the next week, we say we’re going the southern route, coming back the northern, now what are we going to see along the way? And we think about the details and discuss them.

So in verses 4 through 14 he gives us an overview of the entire week, but then in verse 15 through verse 28 he fills in details. The 70th week then is the subject of verses 4 through 14. And the warning is a warning of the characteristics of that period in the future. So you should not -- in order to be accurate -- you should not look for these things in the present age. Of course if we see things in the present age that are similar to these things in the 70th week, we have reason to believe that we are approaching the time when the trends that reached their climax in the 70th week are beginning to manifest themselves, so in that sense we can.

We read in the 5th verse that the Lord Jesus said after saying be careful that no man deceives you, many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many. We might wonder how it is possible for anyone to come and claim the teachings of Christ and deceive anyone. But there are amazingly a vast number of spiritual and unspiritual kooks in the world. I was once speaking with Dwight Pentecost about some of the odd people that one meets in the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles. In fact, I spoke with Dr. Vernon McGee, who was the pastor of that church, about the odd people in that congregation. They have a strange number of -- they had a strange lot of people in that congregation.

Now, they were just this strange—this church incidentally is a gigantic church with about four thousand people who can sit there. And they would usually have twenty-five hundred people on Sunday morning. I’ve spoken there many times. And when I began to speak there, it disturbed me quite a bit, because right in the midst of the congregation someone would get up and get ready to go out but instead of going out, the door because there is something you have to do [laughter], they would get up out of this section over here and walk over and sit down over here [laughter]. And then somebody would get up over here and walk over and sit down over in this place. This went on throughout the message. That was very disconcerting. I was not used to that.

I asked Vernon about it afterwards. He said that used to bug me, too [laughter]. Then he said I’ve gotten used to it [more laughter]. Well, there were all kinds of strange people there, and I told Dwight as I was talking with him, I said one night I was speaking there and I really did think that the Lord helped me in my preaching considerably that night. I thought afterwards I had done a pretty good job, but I didn’t realize how good I had done. Because this man came up, he was a very nice-looking man about 35 years of age, dressed very well in a loud sport coat [laughter], and he walked up to me and he said to me, “You are great!” Well, I thought, boy, he has really got an understanding of the Scriptures [laughter]. But then he said, You are the great Holy Ghost [laughter]. And then I realized he was out of his mind [more laughter]. Well, that really happened. I told Dwight that.

He said, That’s nothing. He said, I had a woman come up to me and say to me, I am Jesus Christ in the same church. You could see this church had some strange characters in it. I hope Vernon doesn’t listen to this tape [laughter]. And Dwight had more presence of mind than I did. I was flabbergasted when the man said to me, You are the great Holy Ghost. I didn’t know what to say. I felt like confessing my sins [laughter]. But Dwight said, I simply said to her, show me the nail prints in your hands. And he said she turned pale and ran hastily off.

Well, you know, you would not think that there would be people who would attempt to deceive others and say they are Jesus Christ. You wouldn’t think they could get a way with anything like it, but I have right here before me, I saved this. Twenty years ago, a man came to the city of Dallas. I got this through the mail. Here is his calling card. It says, Jesus Christ, and it even has a Latin quotation underneath it: *Omnia vinc et amor* – love conquers all things. Has his address, the company that he operates, and here is his picture if you want to know what he looks like. He’s balding [laughter], but it’s Jesus Christ. And he has reincarnate, omnipotent, director, general, and teacher of the United Service Aids Society. And if you send him ten dollars [laughter], he will be glad to send you a prescription, providing of course you enclose a stamped addressed return envelope. And he will send you instructions on how the world may be changed, but be sure to send the ten dollars.

Now, the Lord Jesus, I’m sure, did not have a man like this in mind, because he doesn’t fool anybody. Now, in *Time* magazine we have in the religion section, “Mad About Moon,” and I’m sure that many of you know about Sun Myung Moon, the South Korean cult leader who has people speak of him as the second Christ. He himself says, I will conquer and subjugate the world. I am your brain. And his Unification church’s national budget now is \$11 million, not counting the expenses of a hundred and twenty local branches and affiliates. The cult grows steadily and currently claims 30,000 members. All believe that a, “lord of the second advent,” Moon is the one they refer to, “will redeem mankind physically by fathering the perfect family, a blend of Christian terminology, occultism, and dualism as taught in Moon’s Scripture.” And this is sweeping the country with a lot of our wealthy young people being caught up in this.

Now, this is not what our Lord is speaking about, because that doesn’t deceive anybody. He is talking about something far more subtle than that, but perhaps these are trends that are leading up to what our Lord is speaking about. “Many shall come in my name saying I am Messiah and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and

rumors of wars, see that ye be not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nations shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.”

Do you notice that there is a deep connection between the moral and the physical? And when moral conditions are at their worst, then we see in nature itself manifestations of the judgment of God upon us. So there is a connection between the moral and the physical. We, of course, do see again in our history trends, cycles of things that may be leading up to this, but this is prophecy that has to do with the first part of that week.

He says in verses 11 and 12 that many false prophets shall arise, and they shall deceive many. Deception and hypocrisy shall abound during that 70th week. We certainly have indications of this same thing today in the sense that we have false prophets and false ministers who have arisen in the Christian church and are leading countless thousands into deception and away from the truth of God. He adds, he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. By the way, that text does not have anything whatsoever to do with eternal security. We are not taught here that we must endure to the end in order to be saved spiritually.

Now, there is a sense of course in which everybody who has truly believed in the Lord Jesus will endure to the end. But that is not what he is speaking about. He is speaking about saving, being saved from the physical judgments of that period. Notice the 22nd verse, “And except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved.” But for the elects’ sake those days shall be short. So what he is saying is that he that shall endure until the end, the same shall be saved out of these judgments. And characteristic of the period is the preaching of the Gospel.

Now, having said that, the Lord Jesus, in verse 15 through verse 28, begins to discuss the period of time which we know as the Great Tribulation, and the Great Tribulation is that last half of that 70th week of Israel recorded in Daniel chapter 9.

Remember it begins with the covenant between the antichrist and the Nation. And in the midst of the week, the covenant is broken, and the abomination of desolation is set up in the Most Holy Place. That’s what our Lord is speaking about in verse 15 when he says, when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the Holy Place—the reference is to the temple—whosoever readeth let him understand, then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains. So now we have admonition in the light of the end. This is the time of Jacob’s trouble that we read about in Jeremiah chapter 30, verse 5 through verse 7 at the beginning of our studies.

And now two themes in these verses, verse 15 through verse 28. In the first part of these verses we have the theme of disaster, verse 15 through verse 22. And then in verse 23 through verse 28, great stress is laid upon the theme of deception. Well, let’s notice two or three of the things that are said. We have said that the Lord Jesus refers to the setting up of the image of the beast in the temple in Jerusalem. What does that suggest for us? Well, that suggests to us that the temple in Jerusalem must therefore be rebuilt. So we should expect that during the great, the period that we know as the tribulation period, there should be the rebuilding of the temple in the city of Jerusalem.

By the way, not all Bible teachers believe that there is going to be the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. In 1971 there was a conference on biblical prophecy held in Jerusalem, and a number of outstanding Bible teachers were at that conference including one from our theological seminary here, and another from one of the West Coast’s seminary, and one from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, a very good seminary, but a seminary with whose position is largely amillennial. President Clowney of that institution, a very fine man, a man whom I greatly respect, but who has an entirely different view of prophecies from that which I hold has said in his message to that conference that the new temple that would be constructed would not be a temple of brick and stones or material things, but would be composed of living men with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone. In other words, he spiritualized the new temple. He said,

“We dare not promise to a people with the covenant name of Israel, second-class citizenship in the kingdom of heaven by way of the restoration of an earthly economy with a temple of stone. To do so is to obscure the gospel.”

Now, he did not explain how the building again of a temple in the city of Jerusalem would obscure the gospel, because of course there is no necessary obscuring of the gospel at all. Then Dr. Finberg of the Talbot Seminary stood and gave his message in which he gave biblical reasons for the rebuilding of the temple out of wood and stone or stone and brick or whatever it would be made out of in the city of Jerusalem.

Now, you can see from Matthew chapter 24, verse 15 on which side of this argument the Lord Jesus would stand. He says, when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet stand in the Holy Place, well it’s obvious that the Holy Place—that’s a reference to the temple—it’s obvious our Lord Jesus anticipates that there will be a Holy place or a temple in Jerusalem in order for the abomination of desolation, the image of the Beast, to be set up there.

And further, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, the Apostle Paul stands on the side of our Lord Jesus and Daniel as well. He says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 3, let no man deceive you by any means, for that day, the day of the Lord, shall not come except there come the falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed the son of perdition who opposes and exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God—*sitteth in the temple of God*. This cannot be a temple made of men who believe in the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus, while right in the midst of that temple, would be sitting the abomination of desolation. How ridiculous can you be in the interpretation of Scripture? So Paul understands that in the last days, that temple in Jerusalem is going to be rebuilt.

And I am sure that deep down in the hearts of the Israelites who have returned, particularly those who have some spiritual understanding, there is in their hearts, deep

down within, the determination to see that temple reconstructed in order that the ancient worship of Israel may be carried on again in the city of Jerusalem.

During the Six-day War, a reporter asked the well-known Israeli historian, Israel Eldad, do your people intend to rebuild the temple? Eldad replied from the time that King David first conquered Jerusalem until Solomon built the temple, just one generation passed. So will it be with us. He’s saying in effect, we’re going to build that temple in one generation.

What about the Dome of the Rock which now stands on the temple site, the reporter said? Remember the Dome of the Rock is the Mosque of Omar, very sacred to Islam. What about that? It is of course an open question, Eldad answered. Who knows? Maybe there will be an earthquake. So they intend, those who are religious or spiritually minded in Israel, they intend to see that that temple is rebuilt.

Then we read on in verse 21 of chapter 24, for then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be. In other words, during this period of time we shall have a tribulation that is a day that has -- it is different from everyday that has ever been to that time and will be different from everyday after that.

Now, this is very important for us in the debate over when the rapture of the church occurs. There are many Christians who think that those promises of being kept from the hour of trial simply means that we shall be able to pass through the tribulation period untouched by these judgments. They woefully underestimate the greatness of the judgments of the tribulation period. This is a day such as the earth has never known nor ever will know.

I remember a comedian one time who was talking about three sizes of nuclear bombs. He says there is one that’s large, and then the second class is larger, and the third in where has everybody gone? [Laughter]

Now, these great tribulations that are poured out by God upon the earth are so gigantic that the earth will never know a day such as that day. The Lord Jesus speaks of it here. He speaks of great signs and wonders. He says there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall show great signs and wonders in so much that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect.

Now, I know that this is going to happen. You know why, because so many of you are being deceived today by simple signs. Did you hear about sister so-and-so, who heard about brother so-and-so, who told them a story about what happened out in some place over there, there somebody said that this took place. And as a result of that somebody was healed. Why it’s amazing the gullible Christians who have swallowed the hook of the charismatic movement. It’s amazing.

I was in Connecticut preaching last week. I was amazed at the questions that came from a biblically oriented audience. Four or five hundred people, I answered questions every night. It was amazing how many of those questions touched the charismatic movement. Why they are deceived by the claims of the charismatics. We are told about this miracle and that miracle and this healing and that healing, and there is no real documentation for these things. No documentation at all. I’ve often said, Just raise a few people from the dead, will you? That’s what they did in the New Testament times. Just do a few of those things.

I still remember when some of those believers were fooled by what happened out on the East Indies. It was written down on a piece of paper, and most people think if you write something down on a piece of paper and get some stupid publisher to publish it, that’s documentation. It’s not documentation at all. Now we know that those reports that came from the East Indies were false and many people were taken in. Why I am not disturbed -- I’m not surprised at all that the Lord Jesus said that they will be deceived, and if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. He just won’t let the elect be deceived.

Now, particularly when we read in the Book of Revelation that the False Prophet is able to call down fire from heaven, I can see right now some of the Christians, maybe some who even attended Believers Chapel, rushing around during the 70th week saying, Wow, is he great, he can call down fire from heaven. The Lord is surely with him. Why in the Old Testament it was Elijah who called down fire from heaven, wasn’t it? And when he called down fire from heaven, that was the evidence that he was really the prophet of the true God, wasn’t it? This man calls down fire from heaven—doesn’t that mean he’s the prophet of the true God? And you are gullible people, and they will believe anything, because they won’t study the Bible. They won’t study the Scriptures.

Now, I must confess several people came up to me this past week and gave me a humbling compliment. It was an ugly compliment. And I thought about it, I like it more and more, but nevertheless it was humbling. They said of all the messages, I give nine messages on prophecy. We went from the beginning on through to the eternal state, and I thought I had said some rather good things. Quite a few people came to me and said the one thing that you have said that has meant something is that we ought to study the Bible. Well, really that’s just about one of the greatest things that could come home to all of us, to study the Scriptures.

He speaks of great signs and wonders, and then he speaks in the last few verses wherefore -- and, oh, by the way, he said, behold I’ve told you beforehand, I want to warn you, therefore if they shall say unto you, behold he is in the desert, go not forth. Don’t even go. Don’t bother to go. If someone said to you there’s a fellow who claims to be Jesus Christ, Well if you want to go for a good time, just to see how odd people can be, it’s all right to go [laughter], but if you’re thinking that there might be such possibilities, don’t go. Don’t bother to go.

Behold he’s in the secret chambers, don’t believe it. For as the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even to the West, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. In other words, when the Lord Jesus comes the whole world will know it, there’ll be no

question about it. You won’t find him down on the corner of L and such and such. For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. And he cites the Proverb to the effect that where men are, there will be the judgment that God is great.

Well, we’re talking about the tribulation. The last part verse 29, 30, and 31 is the exposition of the third question in which he refers to the Second Advent. He speaks about cosmic agitation, the kingly advent and glory and the final assembling of Israel into the land at the conclusion of that period of time. But since that subject is really not our subject this turn, we will stop at this point.

Next week we will be studying the third and final of our series in the tribulation, and we shall look at the Tribulation and the Gentiles and their relationship to it. Let’s close with the word of prayer.

[Prayer] We are thankful to Thee, Lord, for these words from the word of God. And we do ask, O God, deliver us from the gullibility that so characterizes the Christian church in many ways today and make us students of Holy Scripture.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.