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Great Tribulation Before the Coming of Christ

By Steven J. Hogan

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Most of you have seen a movie about an existential threat that could result in the annihilation of this planet – a nuclear war, a massive meteor, an invasion from aliens. This may be interesting and entertaining to watch, but it's fiction. But God speaks the truth, and He has told you all you need to know about what will happen on this earth in the years leading up to Christ's return and immediately after, and it's catastrophic and apocalyptic, and all part of God's pre-determined and perfect plan. And Matt. 24 gives you more vital information about the end-times and Christ's coming than any other chapter in the Bible.

The disciples ask Jesus for signs about the end of this age and His coming (Matt. 24:3), and He answers them in Matt. 24:29-30. But Jesus shares many other things that need to take place before that happens. In the last post we learned there will be deception, wars, earthquakes, and famines – and that all *"these things are merely the beginning of*

birth pangs." Matt. 24:4-8

Then there's vss. 9-14, an extremely weighty passage describing what Christians will experience in the last few years before Christ's return to rapture the church. Let me summarize what it says: so-called Christians are falling away from the faith, and there's more deception, and lawlessness like never before, and true Christians are being betrayed, persecuted, and martyred on a global scale. The Christians are to preach the gospel until the end of the age, and those who persevere, who survive, are saved, are raptured into heaven to be with Christ. Let's now look carefully at this extremely important end-times' passage.

Matt. 24:9 – *"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."* I cannot think of a more sobering, more challenging, more intense verse in all of Scripture. The word *"Then"* tells us that what is written in vss. 9-14 comes after the birth pains (vss. 4-8). The specific timing of these vss. is clarified by the next section (vss. 15-22), which is about the Antichrist desolating the temple at the midpoint (3½ yrs.) of Dan. 70th week. Shortly after this unholy desecration, the devil, working through the Antichrist, goes after the Jews and greatly persecutes them, and this is great tribulation (vss. 21-22). As explained in Rev. 12:13-17, this is followed by the persecution of Christians. Since believers are being martyred and since it's on a global scale, then we must conclude that vs. 9 is also speaking of great tribulation.

The enemy's motivation to murder is fueled by the hate they have for God. Jesus told us, *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you… all these things they will do to you for My name's sake"* (Jn. 15:18, 21). It's obvious that increasing numbers of sinners aren't holding back in their disgust, their disdain for believers, and it's leading not just to hate speech, but to physical violence. We can see that this hate for Christians is getting worse and worse in this world, and will eventually lead to believers being killed all over all this earth (Rev. 6:9-11, 12:17, 13:4-8). *"Keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that are*

about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:36

The next three verses give more reasons for this unbridled, unrestrained hate of Christians.
Matt. 24:10 – *"At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another."* In this world there are weak churches, churches that don't faithfully teach the whole counsel of God. There are also so-called churches, and these aren't real churches for they don't preach the gospel, that people are sinners whose only hope is to repent, and believe that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for their sins, and rose again. Rom. 3:23, 5:8, 6:23, 10:9-13

When there are birth pains (Matt. 24:4-8), deceptive signs (2 Th. 2:9-12), people being forced to worship the Antichrist or die (Rev. 13:15), people having to decide whether to take the mark of the Beast or not be able to buy or sell (Rev. 13:16-17), then so-called believers, people who think they are Christians but are not, will fall away, will apostatize, will leave their weak or so-called churches and begin following the Antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18-19, Rev. 13:4). The polarization, the division in this world in the last few years of this age will be stark, be black and white – people will be for Christ or against Christ, for Christians or against Christians, for the Antichrist or against the Antichrist.

One of the most difficult things in the end-times will be when your own family members spew out hate, and turn against you, and turn you in to the authorities. *"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death"* (Matt. 10:21). *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be the members of his own household"* (Matt. 10:34-36). This may even happen to you. But God will give you the grace to keep following Christ, to love and forgive, and to keep sharing the gospel.

Matt. 24:11 – *"Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many."* Another reason for so much hate against Christians is that so-called religious leaders will be misleading and deceiving people. Out of utter hate for God, these fakes, these hypocrites, will be speaking lies about Jesus Christ and the gospel, and they will be defaming, will be slandering God and His children. The result is that a great many naïve and foolish people will believe their lies and betray true Christians, even their own family members.

Matt. 24:12 – *"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold."* Like never before, we are seeing lawlessness in our country. Leaders and all kinds of people are breaking the law, and it's getting much worse. 2 Tim. 3:14 tells us, *"Evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse."* We are witnessing the beginning years of depravity, people with no conscience, people who have lost their minds, who are crazy, who have totally rejected God. Without question, many wicked people are calling *"evil good, and good evil."* Is. 5:20

The result is that *"most people's love will grow cold"* which means there will be little to no kindness, or patience, or forgiveness, or gentleness, or empathy, but instead hate, anger, selfishness, abuse, slander, malice, and just plain meanness. This will be seen in families, in relationships, in the work place, and out on the street. And when the Antichrist is revealed and ruling the world, it will be much worse for he is the *"the man of lawlessness"* (2 Th. 2:3), the chief perpetrator and promoter of lawlessness, the one who enforces laws that are lawless.

Matt. 24:13 – *"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."* All over the world believers will be dying for the Lord, be martyred for their faith, but a large remnant will endure, will persevere to the end. By means of God's Spirit, word, love, power, by means of the church, and by means of their faith, hope, and obedience, they will continue on until the end of the age, at which time they are saved, are glorified. *"He will keep you strong to the end so that you are blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful."* 1 Cor. 1:8-9

We usually think of *"save"* in a spiritual sense, that God spiritually saves a person from sin, death, and hell. In this context, it means physical salvation, that God enables a person to survive, to make it through this tough, intense great tribulation and therefore, is alive on earth when Christ returns, and he is saved, he is raptured and becomes like Christ (Rom. 8:29, 1 Jn. 3:2). So vs. 13, along with vss. 31, 41-42, are rapture verses. *"We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"* 1 Th. 5:17, Rev. 7:14

In view of what Jesus says in vss. 9-13, what should Christians do? Vs. 9 would indicate that we need to know God's love, and be battling, be overcoming for Him (Rom. 8:35-39, Eph. 6:10-18). Vs. 10 suggests that we must not be naïve, but wise, and be praying for our enemies. Vs. 11 is saying that we need to counter the lies of the devil with the truth of God's word. Vs. 12 is telling us to be holy, to not live like the world, but to love both the saved and the lost. Vs. 13 instructs us to not grow weary, to not give up, but to keep going, to endure, to persevere to the very end of this age. Finally, there's vs. 14, the conclusion to this most critical passage for Christians.

Matt. 24:14 – *"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."* Your primary job in these last years is to preach the gospel, to tell people the good news, the message of salvation, how they can be saved from sin, death, and God's wrath on earth and a fiery, eternal punishment in hell (Rev. 8-9, 16, 20:15). So do your part, and as God gives you opportunities, tell people this kingdom message about their entire life, their eternal life, and that it means loving and serving the King of kings, and being blessed forever and ever. Ps. 23:6; Lk. 21:12-15; Jn. 3:5, 3:16; Col. 4:2-6

Jesus Christ is leading churches, believers, and mission teams in this final global evangelistic effort – and it's encouraging that the gospel is being proclaimed all over the world. It won't be long before that last person hears the gospel and is saved, and it's the end of this age and

the church is fully grown (Matt. 16:18, Eph. 2:19-22). At this point, Jesus Christ returns for His bride and raptures her from the earth, and all believers from all time will be gathered to Him, and together, they will be taken home, will go to heaven. Jn. 14:1-3

Here are some concluding thoughts:
* You don't want to ignore, or hope this message goes away, or believe it isn't relevant to you, your family, and the church, or think that you will be raptured before this happens. Jesus Christ clearly states: *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."* Matt. 24:35
* God knows everything and is sovereign over all who will be on earth in these last years. Rom. 8:28

* Christ personally trains all believers who are on earth in the end-times. Ps. 18:30-36, 144:1
* This passage is God's warning to you about these final years, and to be forewarned, to know what will happen, is to be forearmed, to be truly ready for that time. *"Take heed, behold, I have told you everything in advance."* Mark 13:23, Ezek. 33:7, Rom. 13:11-14

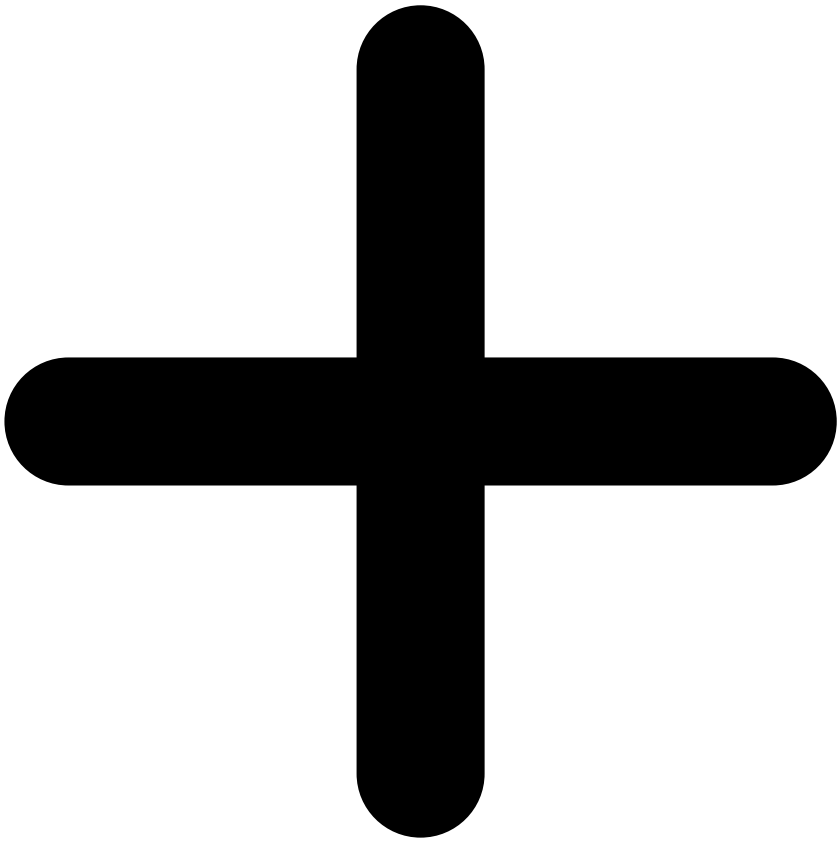
* Throughout history, believers have undergone great tribulation, but in the end-times it won't be local but global, unlike anything we have ever seen before. Acts 8:1 (Act 11:19), 2 Cor. 11:21-29
* Those of you on earth in these last days must see this as a great privilege, a great honor to be here to love, to serve, to suffer, and to survive or be martyred for the Lord. And remember that God will give you all the grace you need and that the Holy Spirit is in you. Matt. 28:19-20, Eph. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 6:19, 2 Cor. 9:8, 1 Pet. 2:21

* I can't emphasize, I can't stress enough the importance of taking to heart all that Jesus tells you about the future. Know and understand these things, and share them with your friends, fellow church members, and family – especially your children and grandchildren. 2 Tim. 4:1-2

* *"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you*

stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." Jude 24-25

P.S. I spoke about great tribulation, and many Christians believe they will not experience it, but that's not true. Here are two posts that clearly explain why Christians will go through this severe persecution in the end times: "Christians Will Go Through Great Tribulation and "The Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching is False."





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