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Great Distress and Deception Before Christ's Coming



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #360 ~

Daniel's 70 weeks, a key prophetic time clock, was stopped at the end of the 69th week, at the point of Jesus' death. It's about 2,000 years later, and it will start up again, and soon. This 70th week, a prophecy-packed seven years is, in my opinion, the most significant seven years in all of history. In Matt. 24, the most crucial prophecy chapter in the New Testament, Jesus draws our attention to this critical last week, the 70th week. Dan. 9:24-27

At the beginning of the 70th week, the coming Antichrist confirms a treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:27). During the first 3½ years of this week, *"birth pains"* are occurring in various parts of the world – deception, wars, famines, earthquakes, plagues, and hyperinflation (Matt. 24:4-8). These *"birth pains"* are God's way of waking us up, of alerting us to the fact that Christ is coming soon to rescue believers, punish unbelievers, and set up His earthly kingdom. It's also during this

first half of the 70th week that practicing Jews will be offering sacrifices in their newly built temple.

Jesus then tells you about great tribulation, this persecution that Christians will experience after these birth pains. *"They will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name"* (Matt. 24:9). And Jesus instructs us to persevere, and to preach the gospel to all the nations until the end of this age. (Matt. 24:9-14). Then He warns us, *"Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation that was spoken of through the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)…"* (Matt. 24:15). Jesus uses the word *"therefore"* to connect what He says in vss. 15-20 with regard to the Jews to what He says in vss. 9-14 with regard to the Christians.

This *"Desolation",* occurring at the midpoint of Dan. 70th week (Dan. 9:27), is when that devilish Antichrist desecrates the temple of God by turning it into a temple of Satan. Jesus concludes vs. 15 with "*Let the reader understand."* He says this because it's extremely relevant for Christians, for this is when they and discerning Jews know for certain that this brazen idolater is the Antichrist, the evilest man to ever live on earth, and that He will be coming after them to kill them.

"Then those who are in Judea must flee for their lives" (Matt. 24:16-20). When this *"Desolation"* happens, Jesus tells the Jews to run for their lives, and to not go back home, for that would mean certain death at the hands of the devil. This God-ordained persecution is described in Rev. 12:12-13 – *"Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time… he persecuted the woman* (the Jews)."

Matt. 24:21-22, some very sobering verses, sum up what will be happening to Jews and Christians. *"Then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world*

until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." Christians must know that these verses are for them! The great persecution that begins in Jerusalem for the Jews intensifies and spreads to Christians all over the world. We read about this in Matt. 24:9, but here it is repeated and amplified, and then validated by Rev. 12:17 – *"The dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children* (Christians),*who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."*

Sad to say, there's confusion among Christians as to whether this tribulation affects them or not. So I must share several points to help you understand this devilishly dark and troubling time:
* Tribulation is from the Greek word *"thlipsis",* and is translated as distress, pressure, tribulation, affliction, and persecution. And wrath is from the Greek word *"orge".* So wrath and tribulation are different in the Greek and do not have the same meaning.
* The Bible never says that tribulation or great tribulation is God's wrath, but that it's Satan's wrath. *"The devil has come down to you, having great wrath."* Rev. 12:12
* Great persecution (Rev. 6:9-11) occurs before God's wrath (Rev. 6:16). Rev. 7:14 agrees with this, for it too speaks of great tribulation happening before God's wrath (Rev. 8-9).

* The Bible never says the entire 7 years of Dan. 70th week is tribulation or great tribulation.
* Christians on earth at the midpoint of Dan. 70th will experience great tribulation brought on by Satan, but will be rescued from God's wrath, the day of the Lord, when Christ returns to rapture the church. 1 Th. 1:10, 5:9, 4:17; Rev. 6:9-17, 7:9-14
* This great tribulation is not to be confused with birth pains. That's because birth pains affect both believers and unbelievers, but tribulation affects only the elect. Also, Matt. 24:9 tells us that tribulation begins after the birth pains, and this is substantiated by Rev. 6:1-11.

* Great tribulation begins at the midpoint of Dan. 70th week (Dan. 9:27),

but it's cut short (Matt. 24:22). It's not that the 70th week is cut short, but that great tribulation is cut short.
* The Bible never says the rapture occurs at the beginning of Dan. 70th week, before this so-called seven years of tribulation / great tribulation, but at some God-only-knows time during the 2nd half of it.
* The rapture occurs after this tribulation is cut short and this age comes to an end, but before God pours out His wrath on earth. Matt. 24:29-31; 1 Th. 1:10, 5:9; Rev. 6:9-17, 7:9-14

* Great tribulation is the greatest persecution of Christians in all of history. Matt. 24:21
* Great tribulation affects the elect, those who are saved and those who will be saved, both Jew and Gentile. Matt 24:22, 24
* This end-times' tribulation is also described in 2 Th. 1:5-6 and Rev. 6:9-11, 7:14, 13:7 – *"It was also given to him* (the beast, the Antichrist) *to make war with the saints and to overcome them."*

* In the New Testament, tribulation speaks primarily of how it impacts Christians: *"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).*"Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22).*"Who will separate us from the love of God? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* (Rom. 8:35). *"Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory"* (2 Cor. 4:17). *"We sent Timothy… so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions, for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this" (1 Th. 3:3). "We ourselves speak proudly of you… for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions"* (2 Th. 1:4).*"Do not fear what you are about to suffer… you will be tested and have tribulation for ten days"* (Rev. 2:10).*"These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* Rev. 7:14

Matt 24:23-24 – *"… False Christs and false prophets will rise and will*

show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." Many God-fearing Jews, ones who are most likely expecting the Messiah to come and reign as King, are trying to escape from that evil, devil-possessed man, for he is chasing after them and trying to kill them. *"When the dragon* (Satan) *saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman* (the Jews) *who gave birth to the male child* (Jesus)." Rev. 12:13

But God has good plans for these Jews, these elect, for He wants to physically save them from Satan so He can spiritually save them from sin, which won't happen until the end of the 70th week. In the meantime, God protects them from their #1 enemy, that wicked devil of a man. *"The two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman* (the Jews)*, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time"* (Rev. 12:14). A large remnant of Jews miraculously escapes, and it maybe by airplanes. The phrase that speaks of time, times, and half a time, refers to 3½ years, the last half of Dan. 70th week, that time when the Jews are pursued by the devil but protected by God. Rev. 12:6

"The dragon was enraged with the woman..." (Rev. 12:17a). Satan is really mad, is furious that these Jews have escaped, but he doesn't give up. He knows they are hiding but he doesn't know where. Satan and the Antichrist have the same mindset for they greatly hate both Jews and Christians, and are going after them so as to kill them. And they use deception, employing false Christs and false prophets to lure the elect from their hiding places. They *"will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."* Matt. 24:24, 2 Thess. 2:8-12

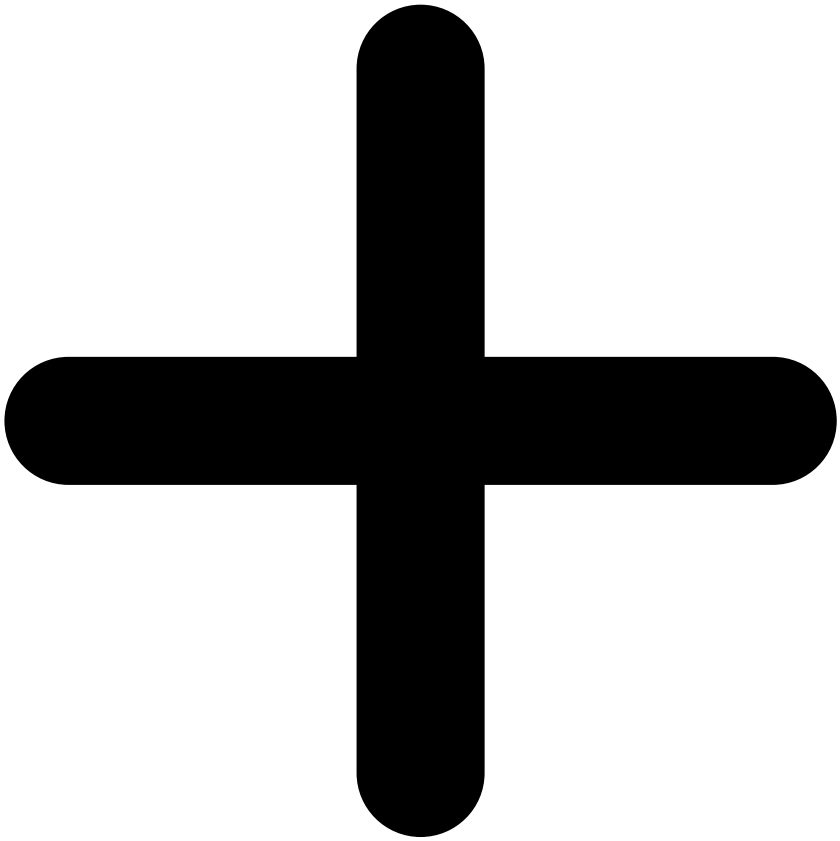
The devil's goal is to make people believe that Jesus is on earth, out in the wilderness or in some house, and doing miracles. *"He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven in the presence of men and he deceives those who dwell on earth"* (Rev. 13:13-14). Billions of people will be misled, be deceived, be worshiping the Antichrist and taking his mark (Rev. 13:15-17), but not the saved or

those who will be saved. As for that protected and special group of Jews, they will be safe and secure until the day of salvation at the end of the 70th week. Then they will say, *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."* Matt. 23:39

"Behold, I have told you in advance" (Matt. 24:25). God did not tell us everything He knows about the end-times, but everything we need to know. Yes, there is a lot of information to learn, for there's the Old Testament (Is., Dan., Zech., the Psalms, etc.), and the New Testament (Matt., Luke, Rom., Eph. 1, 1-2 Thess., 1 Pet. 1, Rev., etc.). In these end-times, in this calm before the storm, we should be excited to learn all this important information about Christ's coming and kingdom. Matt. 24:25, 35, 45, and 2 Tim. 4:1-2, more than any other verses, motivate me to study and teach God's prophetic word. *"Who is the faithful and wise slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?"* Matt. 24:45

Matt. 24:27,*"just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be"*, is the climactic conclusion to this prophetic passage, Matt. 24:15-26. Deceivers are saying that Jesus is on earth, but this verse makes it clear that He is coming in the air. To illustrate His coming, Jesus talks about it as if it looks like a magnificent bolt of lightning. As we know, lightning is sudden, directional, brilliant, bright, powerful, visible, and breath-taking. So too it will be with Christ's coming. And verse 27, the sign of His coming, complements verse 30. *"The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky… and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."* Rev. 22:7 – *"Behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."*

P.S. Here is a link to the most read post or article on this blog site, *"Matthew 24 – The Most Important Prophecy Chapter in the Bible."* I encourage you to read it so you can understand more clearly what God has planned out for His people in the last years of the end-times.



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