

# The Great Tribulation (Part I)

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[ 0 : 00 ] We've been spending several weeks looking at these, I say, signs, because that's what the apostles were asking for, these signs, signs of the coming of the Lord.

Signs as well as we go on into chapter 24 and the Olivet Discourse, but he gives six of them right here, signs that will immediately precede the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we got through all five of those and came up short, didn't have enough time to cover number six. And the sixth one is the gospel preached to all the world.

The gospel preached to all the world. Verse 14 of Matthew 24 says, And this gospel of the kingdom, gospel of the kingdom, will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations.

And then what? The end will come. Then the end will come. So this is the final one. And, you know, this is different from the others, isn't it?

[ 1 : 26 ] In fact, we could say that the other signs, the first five signs in this series of six are pretty serious things.

You know, great calamities, you know, famines and pestilence and earthquakes and wars and rumors of wars and antichrists all over the place.

And, you know, and on and on. And then we have this last one. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world.

Pretty amazing. And amazing when you think of it in this sense. All these signs Jesus has revealed. Signs that will come just before the end.

Signs that will mark events on this earth that will be unparalleled in history. Even though, again, I'm going to remind you that as we looked at those five signs, the signs we've already looked at, we see that some of these things have been happening perhaps even since the beginning of time.

[ 2 : 35 ] But we're not talking about just these kind of things occurring here and then there and down through history. We're talking about intensification. These signs will be unique in their scope.

That is, it will be global. They will also be unique, of course, in their intensity. Intensity. So, yeah, false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes, universal persecution of believers, mass apostasy of false believers, leaving the faith that they claim to have, that they profess to have.

All right, all those things. And yet, in spite of this worldwide evil and calamity and affliction, all these things going on, in spite of the absence of the church, also I would add that.

Imagine a world without the church. I'm not talking about churches. There'll be plenty of churches still. Some will go on into the tribulation period and not really know the difference.

Not really see the difference. And they'll wonder where those Baptists go. Well, not all Baptists will be gone, too. There'll be some Baptist churches still operating after the rapture.

[ 3 : 48 ] But imagine a world without the church. No true church. No true Christians. All right, so think about it. Worldwide evil and affliction and the absence of the church.

And I would say also in spite of the fact that Antichrist will then be ruling this planet, ruling it, and doing so by the supernatural power of Satan.

That's going to be going on at this time. And I would say also add also in spite of the presence of many false prophets endowed, not just simply speaking false doctrine, but false prophets who are endowed with supernatural powers, signs and wonders in order to deceive.

All that going on in spite of all that, somehow the gospel is going to be preached to the whole planet, to everyone on the planet, to every single person will hear the gospel.

Now, how is that going to happen? How will that happen? When we have now been going on 2,000 years, church has been in existence for a little over 2,000 years.

[ 5 : 00 ] All right. And still today, there are people in places on this planet that have yet to hear the gospel. And we've had 2,000 years to do that.

So how then in this short space of time, I would put the parameter about three, three and a half years during the Great Tribulation, when all these things are going to be happening globally and intensifying with each thing taking place, how then, if we haven't been able to do it over 2,000 years, how will it all be done like that as one of the signs?

All right. And that really is the point. This is a sign. This is a sign. All of the signs given by Jesus are, in one sense or another, divine in their origin.

Now, I know, you know, earthquakes, they're a natural thing on this planet. Wars and rumors and wars and wars. I mean, those things happen, you know, you wouldn't think that you need some kind of divine intervention to make those things happen.

In fact, it's usually the absence of the divine that brings these things about. But we're talking about something a little different here in these six signs.

[ 6 : 20 ] They are, in one sense or another, divine in origin. And so the final sign will be accomplished supernaturally. It'll be accomplished supernaturally by divine action.

And the reason we know that is Revelation 14, verses 6 and 7. Let me read it to you. I don't know if I put that on your notes. Did I? Okay. Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth the sea and springs of water.

All right. So what we have here is something supernatural. This will be a one last evangelization of this world.

One last one. The preacher is going to be a holy angel. And that angel will be given the power, I guess has the power, to speak to every soul on the planet at one time.

At one time. And I would say that this will be, obviously will be the last opportunity to believe. The very last opportunity to believe.

[ 7 : 57 ] And so, I mean, why would I say that? Because how does the verse end? Then the end will come. The end will come.

That will be it. That will be the last opportunity. All right. So that's the sixth of the six signs that Jesus gives.

And to remind you, you can move to your other notes there. We'll get to that here in just a minute. But to kind of remind us and keep us reminded that Jesus is basically answering a question here, isn't he?

He's answering a question. That's how chapter 24 basically began. The disciples had a question. In fact, two questions. You boil it down.

Two questions. When and what? When and what? That is, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

[ 9 : 00 ] You remember I have said, I think every time we've met to study out of this chapter, that Jesus answers the second question first.

And although he'll get to the first question, he's basically going to tell them nobody knows when. No one knows. And so he's answering the what question, right?

And so for the past several weeks, Wednesday nights, we've been looking at these passages in Matthew 24 that basically comprise Jesus' answer to the disciples' second question.

And so in verses 4 through 14, again, Jesus predicted or foretold a series of six signs, signs of his coming, and what did the Bible call them?

He called them. Well, in the New King James Version, in verse 8, he called, it's translated, the beginning of sorrows. This will be the beginning of sorrows.

[ 10 : 07 ] And, but again, a more literal translation would be the beginning of birth pangs. Birth pangs. And so these six signs will occur shortly before Jesus returns, second time, before he appears.

And the time is consistent, the timing of it is consistent with the analogy, the analogy of birth pangs, because birth pangs occur at the very end of the pregnancy, and they increase in rapidity, they increase in severity.

I can say that. I was right beside my wife, you know, that first child, 25, six hours of labor, rubbing her back with a tennis ball, you know, the whole time.

Watching that monitor, you know, and I could see when those contractions are beginning to start, and then I could look at her, and I could tell they were beginning to start, you know, and over and over again, and they got bigger and bigger and greater and more frequent as we, as we went along. And so, you know, we know what we're talking about here. And so this is what happens just before a child is born. And likewise, then the signs that Jesus, of Jesus' return, his second coming, will, will come rapidly and increase in severity.

[ 11 : 32 ] And let me also remind you again, these signs were not for his disciples. I mean, the disciples asked the question, you know, what's the sign?

What's the sign of your coming? When will all this happen? They asked the question, and Jesus answers their question, but these signs that Jesus gives are not for them. They'll never see them. They never did see them. And remember again, they're not for us either. The signs are not for us, not for his blood-bought church, because we won't be here when these signs appear. But the first place, Jesus repeatedly used the pronoun you. It's actually a plural pronoun you, but it does not refer to his immediate audience.

That would be his disciples. And just to remind you, the use of the pronoun in that way is the same way that many of the prophets used it when they gave their prophecies.

[ 12 : 40 ] They would say you, but they weren't talking about the people that were listening to their prophecies at the time, or even those who may have written them down. They are referring to people in the future, the people who will be alive when these prophecies begin to be fulfilled.

So don't be thrown by the fact that Jesus uses this personal pronoun, the plural, and that, well, he's talking to his disciples. They're not for them at all.

And second, I would say that since Jesus, again, likens these signs to birth pains, then we know that they will immediately precede the second coming, which, by the way, last time I checked, has not happened yet.

If so, we're in deep trouble. Deep trouble. But no, it hasn't happened yet. And so it's future, still future for us today.

The third thing I would say that as we, and as we shall see in verse 15, when we get to it, we will get to it. Verse 15 following, as we see from those verses, the signs foretold by Jesus will occur during the great tribulation.

[ 14 : 00 ] As opposed to the tribulation. All right. Great, the great tribulation is a designation for the last half of the tribulation period, the seven years of tribulation.

It will be the three and a half years, the final three and a half years of the seven year tribulation, which, in my understanding of biblical prophecy, will commence after, I mean, the seven year tribulation will commence after the rapture of the church.

I hold to a pre-tribulation rapture of the church, of the believing church. So, we won't be here when these signs begin to take place.

Now, whether we'll see them from heaven, I really kind of doubt that. And then one other thing before we get to verse 15. According to Matthew 16 and verse 4, these signs, Jesus said that signs, Jesus said that signs are only for a wicked and adulterous generation.

That's what I usually think of when people talk to me or I hear people talking about signs of the times, that we need to read the signs. And there are people who make a living out of, you know, watching the news, reading the paper, and make a living writing books and speaking for huge amounts of money to try to expound the, you know, the signs that are occurring.

[ 15 : 37 ] And we're looking for these signs and they're intently looking for those signs. But Jesus said it's a wicked and adulterous generation that looks for signs, seeks signs. And so I, I kind of fall back on what Adrian Rogers really loved to say.

I heard him say it many, many times. He says, believers, we're not looking for a sign. We're waiting for a shout. A shout. We're listening for a shout.

All right. So, the signs are not for us. All right. So don't, after we have our study, don't go out and say, I wonder if these things are happening now. Well, they're not. Unless, and if you do see these signs, then it's because you missed the rapture.

Okay. That doesn't mean you can't be saved in the tribulation period and countless millions will be. But it'll be a lot harder in the tribulation period and in fact, you might not live long enough to trust in Christ with the things that are going to happen then.

Anyway, now looking at our passage, we're finally going to get to that. Although, we're not going to get past verse 15 tonight. We're looking at the great tribulation.

[16:52] That's why I put that as a title on your notes, the great tribulation. Though, really, we've been talking about things that are going to happen during the great tribulation. Now, not everybody agrees with that, even some who hold to pre-millennial, pre-rapture tribulation just like I do or even the dispensationalists vary on what they believe about these six signs that we've been talking about.

Some think that those are just signs that will take place, things will be taking place throughout the church age and then intensify just before the tribulation. And so, they take the signs of his coming as the coming, his kind of part, way coming to get his church, to receive his church.

But I really don't agree with that. I think these signs take place in the tribulation. All right, so we've been talking about the great tribulation already, but now we're really, really going to speak more of that.

So, in Matthew 24, I want to go ahead and read the entire passage before we look, kind of pick it apart a little bit.

Matthew 24, and starting with verse 15. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, not Daniel standing in there, but the abomination standing in the holy place, and then parenthetically, whoever reads, let him understand.

[18:35] Then, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days. And pray that your flights may not be in winter or on the Sabbath, for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's sake, these days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or there, do not believe it.

for false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

Therefore, if they say to you, look, he is in the desert, do not go out. Or look, he is in the inner rooms, do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

[19:53] For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. All right, now we're not going to get anywhere near all of those verses here tonight.

But we are going to ultimately see four things. I'll just break it down into four things. And here's the first one. Number one, the trigger. Okay?

The trigger. So that's point number one, if you're filling in your blank there. And verse 15 says, therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation.

So the verse, actually, in the Greek text, it begins with two conjunctions. Two Greek conjunctions. Therefore, when?

Therefore, when? Those are two Greek conjunctions, and conjunctions are pretty important things in speech. and so, what does it mean to start out that way?

[20:53] Well, the purpose of these kind of a dual conjunction, or dual conjunctions, the point of it, the purpose of it is to point the reader back to the preceding 11 verses.

We already know that about conjunctions. They're connecting things. They connect what came before with what is about to take place. But in this case, it's very important that we take the cue here and look backward and consider a couple of things about what has already been said.

And now, again, what do we have before this? We have the six signs, don't we? And I've already said that I believe those six signs are going to take place in the last three and a half years of the tribulation, which is called the Great Tribulation.

And when the last sign is done, then the end will come. All right? So that's what he's referring back to. And so the conjunctions then point the reader back to the preceding 11 verses to make a connection and to make a reference to timing.

To make a connection and to make a reference to timing. All right? So what about connection? Connection. Well, the abomination of desolation that he mentions here, it has something directly to do with the birth pangs leading up to Christ's return.

[ 22 : 22 ] All right? The conjunctions are for that purpose. It is to connect this event, the abomination of desolation, whatever that is.

We'll talk about it here in a minute. But it's to connect that with, it has something to do, to make sure we understand it has something to do with the birth pangs leading up to Christ's return.

So the connection. But then timing has something to do, it tells us something about timing. And that is the abomination of desolation will be the event that will trigger these birth pangs leading up to Christ's return.

So, this is the trigger. And say, well, why didn't he mention this one first? Well, he's Jesus. Just take it up with him. It's the way he, he taught it.

So he gives these six signs and then he says, therefore, when? All right? So, it's, it's, it's connecting it backward and he is revealing something about timing.

[ 23 : 26 ] And so here, you know, here's the point Jesus makes and when you think about it, it, it makes good sense. Therefore, for just emphasize the verse, therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, then, verse 16, let those who are in Judea flee.

Because, I mean, think about this logic. When you see that, the abomination of desolation, when you see that, then look out. Look out, run for your lives, run to the hills, run to the mountains, pray that you're not pregnant when that happens.

You know, and he's going to go on and describe that in the next few verses. Run for your lives, hide out, because here it comes. What's coming?

The beginning of sorrows. The birth pains. They're going to be horrendous. And Jesus, by the way, when you go a little bit further in Matthew 24, verse 21, for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, never, nor ever shall be.

It's something unique, something big. It's not just, I've always had tribulation, but it's not like this one. Not like this. It's unique. When it happens, there's nothing in history to compare it to.

[ 24 : 58 ] And, of course, there will never be anything since to compare it to, because when it's over, the end is over. The end is gone. So, the abomination of desolation, it's the key event.

Very key event. And I guess that's why not only does Jesus mention it here, but as he refers to the Old Testament, he refers to Daniel. Daniel mentions it there.

It's mentioned in Revelation. And so, it's pretty key. A pretty key event. And so, I want us to consider just a few things about it. First of all, what is it?

That's probably a good question. What is it? Just what is meant by the abomination of desolation? And there's a lot of speculation about it. I think the Bible gives us enough details for us to know just kind of what this is, what happens.

[ 25 : 57 ] Now, what about this word abomination? Well, the word, the Greek word that's translated abomination is just a word that means a foul thing.

It's foul. not as in birds. It's foul, detestable, detestable thing. And usually is connected, in fact, I think in the Bible, probably always connected to idolatry, idols, pagan worship.

and so that's why it could be translated, by the way, sacrilege. In fact, it could be translated here the desolating sacrilege.

You could actually translate that. It's a sacrilege. It's a detestable thing that is going to happen.

Revolted, foul, wicked, you know, whatever word you want to use.

Now, the phrase itself, the abomination of desolation, the NIV actually gives us a fuller meaning of the phrase, and it translates as the abomination that causes desolation.

[ 27 : 28 ] So, it's not, it's just, you know, the abomination of desolation. I mean, you could read that two ways. You could say, well, this desolation will bring about an abomination or the desolation is an abomination or the right way is the abomination is what causes the desolation.

And, so, whatever the abomination is, it is what causes the desolation. It's what causes the desolation.

Now, there is something said in the verse that gives the reader a clue as to the nature of the abomination. In this very verse, the abomination involves someone or something that will one day stand in the holy place.

that gives you an indication of what this abomination is. And, of course, we've covered, you know, you've heard plenty out of this passage, plenty of people speak on it, so you, you, it's not, most of this is not new.

But that does lead us then to a second thing. Where will it take place? Where will it take place? And, as I've noted, just quoted it, Jesus said, the abomination that causes, that brings about desolation, will, it will, whatever it is, will stand in the holy place.

[ 28 : 53 ] It'll stand in the holy place. What's the holy place? Well, the holy place, I think, is likely just the temple, the temple in Jerusalem. In a very general sense, the temple.

Now, I think, obviously, it'll be, it will be in some specific place in the temple, but the holy place doesn't tell us, those words don't tell us exactly where it would be.

The only other time this phrase is used in the New Testament is in Acts, and I'm giving this to you, Acts chapter 21, verse 28, in the New Testament, where the Jews called the temple the holy place. They're referring to the temple, kind of the temple proper. In fact, they're, you know, they're accusing Paul of bringing Gentiles into the temple.

And so, and they use the term holy place, holy place. It doesn't, you know, designate any particular spot. I mean, obviously, it'd have to be in the court of the Jews.

[ 30 : 00 ] It'd have to be in a place where, you know, the larger area there, in fact, it's the large part of the temple where Jesus did his teaching his last week of ministry before he died, before he was crucified.

Very large place, and that was for Jews only. There was a court of the Gentiles also, but then there was a door that would bar them from going on into the temple under penalty of death, actually.

So, anyway, a holy place just probably just refers to the temple itself. It is used in the Old Testament in Psalm 24 and verse 3, and David wrote that psalm, and he called the temple the Lord's holy place.

So, we don't really have any biblical authority to say there's any one particular place in the temple when the terms used only twice in all the Bible, and they're just referred generally to the temple.

Now, I would mention then that some scholars believe it is a reference to the holy of holies. In fact, some say it's not the holy of holies, then that place on the other side of the curtain that sometimes people will call the holy place, though in the Bible it's, they don't use those words to describe it.

[ 31 : 24 ] The holy, the place where the priests could go and, you know, where the lampstand and the table of showbread and such were there, and they would minister in there, and then the veil, only the high priest could go through the veil, and the holy of holies, the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant was kept.

And so there's, some say, well, I think it probably would be there, and maybe it is, maybe it will be, but there's nothing in the Bible here that says that. There are others, too, that maintain that the holy place is just a term for all of Jerusalem, the entire city.

And the reason they do that is they're kind of skewed by their eschatology. Those who believe that what Jesus is talking about here happened in 70 AD in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. So, so then, you know, they, they want to broaden the term holy place to all of the city of Jerusalem. Anyway, now, the abomination will be some sacrilege that is done in the temple, somewhere in the temple.

Daniel, and Jesus mentions Daniel here, and we'll, we'll get to Daniel's prophecy maybe tonight, we'll see. Daniel, he prophesied this event, and he said that the abomination will be set up, set up, which agrees somewhat with the wording that Jesus used, that it will stand in the holy place.

[ 33 : 08 ] It will be set up, or stand, in the holy place. So that kind of gets our minds to thinking, reasoning, what this could be. Sometimes we want to go back to Daniel's prophecy about Antiochus Epiphanes.

You remember when we studied through Daniel, and Daniel was given a vision about this very wicked ruler who would one day come and invade Judea, and invade the temple, and set up a pagan statue in the temple.

And so, you know, some would say, well, maybe it's something like that, some idol to worship. Well, we're getting close, but that's not really it.

The abomination is most likely a throne set up in the temple. A throne. Whose throne?

The Antichrist's. Not Antichrist's with a small a, but the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, Paul said, the son of perdition.

[ 34 : 24 ] In fact, I gave you that passage, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 3 and 4. Paul calls him the man of sin, the son of perdition, which simply means the one deserving of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped so that he sits as God in the temple of God.

That would be the temple. Showing himself that he is God. This is what Paul said the Antichrist will do. And that fits, I mean, very logically with what Jesus is saying here in Matthew 24, verse 15. Stand in the holy place. Or Daniel, when Daniel said set up, he will set up, now, it's going to be his throne, where he will rule for a very short time, but he will rule from Jerusalem, from the temple, set himself up as God, above all that is called God, and demand that the world worship him. Now, that leads then to a third thing, we'll get that in here. Why will it cause desolation? I mean, this is pretty logical, I mean, actually, when you know the what and the where, then you know the why. The why. Why brings about a desolation. Antichrist, setting himself up as God, and he will set up his throne in the very temple of the living God.

[ 36 : 06 ] It would be difficult to imagine something more blasphemous than that. sacrilege. And so it's something more sacrilegious. Sacrilege.

And so that very audacious and blasphemous act will be the trigger for God's wrath poured out upon this planet in the great tribulation, the final three and a half years of this present evil age. And then we'll get one more here and put it all together. Let's see what Jesus said about who prophesied it. Who prophesied this and when?

I mean, he mentions it, doesn't he? He says, he calls him by name. Verse 15, therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

You know, the scripture, I'm having a hard time recalling, the reference, but it says, God does nothing but that he reveals his plan through his prophets.

[ 37 : 16 ] And here's Daniel, you know, who lived and prophesied some 500 years before Jesus Christ came.

And now you add on to that another couple thousand years, 25, 2600 years, and still counted. And Daniel prophesied the very event that Jesus says also that is going to come.

And he reminded them that the prophet Daniel has already revealed these things to us. And so, where did he do that? Well, he mentions the desolation a number of times, things, but the clearest prophecy for this time period that Jesus is talking about here is Daniel 9 verses 25, 27, which we call Daniel's 70 weeks.

Daniel's 70 weeks, a very intriguing prophecy, to say the least, much debated, actually. and, but, you know that my approach to biblical interpretation, to discover the meaning of scripture, the approach is to, is a literal approach, to take it literally, exactly what it says.

And that doesn't mean that everything in the Bible is literal. There are symbols and figures, but even those are meant to be fulfilled literally. okay.

[ 38 : 54 ] And so, when you go back to Daniel's 70 weeks, I mean, it doesn't take a scholar to figure out the math.

Daniel speaks of this period of time, 480, 490 years, and even mentions some markers to tell you when this kind of counting of the clock begins, and when certain parts, certain events are going to happen in that clock, in those weeks, and, you know, we're out of time, so we'll just have to wait until next week to look once again at Daniel chapter 9, and if you want to go ahead and write in your notes, point number two is the timing.

The timing, and when is this going to happen that Jesus is foretelling, predicting, prophesying, and we'll talk about that next time.

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