

The Great Tribulation?

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Matthew 24:21

There is probably not a Christian alive that has not heard of the "Great Tribulation." From the earliest days of our Christian walk, we have heard messages on it, read books about it, and even seen movies depicting it. Most of what we have heard is the eschatology of Dispensationalism. It teaches that someday soon, Christ will return to the earth invisibly and snatch away all the Christians--the rapture. After God has removed the Church, He will go back to dealing with Israel. There will be a seven year period called the tribulation in which the earth and its inhabitants will be destroyed by God's wrath. Among Pre-millennialists there are those who hold different positions as to when the rapture will happen; some are Pre-trib, some Mid-trib and some Post-trib in their position on the rapture. I know Christians that have stored food in preparation for the famine during the coming great Tribulation. They were obviously not Pre-trib. At the end of the tribulation Christ will return and inaugurate the Millennium, a physical earthly kingdom. At the end of the Millennium there will be a rebellion and Christ will come and destroy the rebels and the eternal state will begin (I count three comings).

The entire scheme of Dispensational eschatology, though popular in recent years, has no roots in historic Christian interpretation of the Scriptures.

According to preterists, the great tribulation was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in 70 AD. This has been the belief of Christians throughout the history of the church until the last hundred and fifty years or so.

Is the "Great Tribulation" something that looms in our future or is it a past event? Is Matthew 24 talking about an event yet future or something that happened in the time of the disciples? The Great Tribulation is PAST! It happened in the first century.

Let me remind you that in Matthew 24 Jesus is answering the disciples' questions about the destruction of Jerusalem. They wanted to know when it would be destroyed, and what signs would precede the end of the age and His parousia. Thus far in our study we have been given two signs; the gospel would be preached to all nations and they would see the abomination of desolation. We have also seen that both of these things happened in the first century, the disciples saw these things come to pass. After talking about the abomination of desolation, which was Jerusalem surrounded by armies, Jesus talks about the great tribulation.

Matthew 24:21 (NKJV) "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.

"Then" is when? Within a few thousand years? The "then" is referring to the context of verses 15-20; when you see the abomination of desolation, which Luke tells us is Jerusalem surrounded by armies. Now, we already saw that this happened in 67 AD when Cestius Gallus, the Roman general, laid siege to Jerusalem. The Great Tribulation is not an event yet future to us. It was "then," during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in the first century. This is made abundantly clear in the parallel text in Luke's gospel.

Luke 21:20-24 (NKJV) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Notice who in particular verse 23 says the tribulation will come upon-- "the land", which is Jerusalem and "this people," which refers to the first century Jews, not the future world. Verse 24 gives us added details as to exactly what will happen in the Great Tribulation. We will look more closely at the details of verse 24 in a few moments. Right now I want us to examine:

Luke 21:22 (NKJV) "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Luke tells us here that ALL things which are written will be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. What does he mean by that? "All things which are written," refers to prophecy. **All prophecy** was to be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. Daniel tells us this very same thing in:

Daniel 9:24 (NKJV) "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy."

Daniel was told that 70 weeks had been determined on his people Israel, and city Jerusalem. By the end of this prophetic time period, God promised that six things would be accomplished. One of the things that Daniel was told would happen by the end of that period was that God would "seal up vision and prophecy". The Hebrew commentaries are in agreement on the meaning of to "seal up vision and prophecy" -- they say it means the **end and complete fulfillment of all prophecy**.

Daniel's prophecy, then, tells of the time when all prophecy would **cease** to be given and what had been given would be **fulfilled**. When would this be? Daniel's vision ends with the destruction of Jerusalem which we know occurred in 70 AD:

Daniel 9:26 (NKJV) "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

So Luke is saying the same thing that Daniel said, which is that at the time Jerusalem is destroyed **all prophecy** will be fulfilled. What does that include? That would include the prophecy of the Second coming, the resurrection, the new heavens and earth, everything prophesied to Israel would be fulfilled at the time of Jerusalem's destruction.

Daniel 12:1(NKJV) "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.

Does that sound familiar to you? It should, we just read that same idea in:

Matthew 24:21 (NKJV) "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.

Now, notice the next verse in Daniel;

Daniel 12:2 (NKJV) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

This is the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and it happens at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, so does the Second coming according to:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 (NKJV) since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, Paul ties the destruction of Jerusalem, the days of vengeance, with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This is so important for us to understand. The completion of the plan of redemption, the fulfillment of all prophecy, was tied up in Jerusalem's destruction, making it an age changing event.

William Kimball, in his book, "What the Bible Says About the Great Tribulation" said, "This period of great tribulation is not an event which the entire world is yet awaiting, but a past historic event of unparalleled concentrated severity specifically afflicting the Jewish nation in 70 AD."

Eusebius of Caesarea, who lived in the third century, said, "He believed that the flight of the Christians, the abomination of desolation, and the great tribulation, were all connected with the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD."

John Walvoord, a leading spokesman for Dispensationalism, says this, "The great tribulation, is a specific period of time beginning with the abomination of desolation (We saw that this began in 67 AD when Cestius Gallus, the Roman general, laid siege to Jerusalem) and closing with the second coming of Christ, in the light of Daniel's prophecies and confirmed by reference to forty-two months. In Revelation 11:2 and 13:5, the great tribulation is a specific three-and-a-half-year period leading up to the second coming..." Now, Walvoord sees all of these things as yet future, but if we can establish that the abomination of desolation and the great tribulation are past, then we can clearly understand that so also is the second coming of Christ, because they are all connected.

Now, let's look at what exactly happened in AD 70 and see if it truly was "the Great Tribulation" and "the days of vengeance." Because most Christians are totally unfamiliar with the events of AD 70, they can't understand how it was the great tribulation. The Bible only predicts the events of Jerusalem's fall because none of the Bible was written after AD 70; so to find out what happened at that time, we need to look to history.

Most of the history that we are going to look at this morning comes from Josephus, a Jew, who lived and wrote at the time of Jerusalem's destruction. In the preface to "**The War of the Jews**," Josephus said this, "Whereas the war which the Jews made with the Romans hath been the greatest of all those, not only that have been in our times, but, in a manner, of those that were ever heard of." (PREFACE, Section 1)

Josephus, who was not a Christian, agrees with Jesus' words in Matthew 24:21, that the war with the Romans was "the greatest of all" wars "ever heard of."

What was it that caused this war? Many think that the Romans just decided to crush the Jews, so they laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed it. This is not the case. Notice a verse in Daniel 9:

Daniel 9:26 (NKJV) "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

Who is the prince to come?

Daniel 9:25 (NKJV) "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

The nearest antecedent for the coming prince in verse 26, would carry us back to the "Messiah the Prince" (verse 25), who was cut off (verse 26). Therefore, Christ becomes the one and only "Prince" in the whole context. The "**people of the prince**" speaks of the Jewish people who were the ones responsible for the destruction of the city Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.

Rome did not initiate the war against Jerusalem. The zealots in Jerusalem had incited the Jews to rebel against Rome and to quit paying their taxes. Remember what Jesus told them about taxes?

Matthew 22:17 (NKJV) "Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

Matthew 22:21 (NKJV) They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Paul told them the same thing.

Romans 13:1 (NKJV) Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

They didn't listen to Jesus or Paul. The Jews stopped paying their taxes and rebelled against Rome. A recurring theme in Josephus' work on the Roman war is the clear imputation of guilt upon the Jews themselves for the starting of the war.

Josephus said, "However, I will not go to the other extreme, out of opposition to those men who extol the Romans, nor will I determine to raise the actions of my countrymen too high; but I will prosecute the actions of both parties with accuracy. Yet I shall suit my language to the passions I am under, as to the affairs I describe, and must be allowed to indulge some lamentation upon the miseries undergone by my own country; **for that it was a seditious temper of our own that destroyed it; and that they were the tyrants among the Jews who brought the Roman power upon us**, who unwillingly attacked us, and occasioned the burning of our holy temple; Titus Caesar, who destroyed it, is himself a witness, who, during the entire war, pitied the people who were kept under by the seditious, and did often voluntarily delay the taking of the city, and allowed time to the siege, in order to let the authors have opportunity for repentance.

Accordingly it appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were; while the authors of them were not foreigners neither." (PREFACE, Section 4)

The Jews also rebelled by ceasing to offer a sacrifice for Caesar. Josephus says this was the beginning of the war.

"And at this time it was that some of those that principally excited the people to go to war, made an assault upon a certain fortress called Masada. They took it by treachery, and slew the Romans that were there, and put others of their own party to keep it. At the same time Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, a very bold youth, who was at that time governor of the temple, persuaded those that officiated in the divine service to receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner. **And this was the true beginning of our war with the Romans:** for they rejected the sacrifice of Caesar on this account: and when many of the high priests and principal men besought them not to omit the sacrifice, which it was customary for them to offer for their princes, they would not be prevailed upon. These relied much upon their multitude, for the most flourishing part of the innovators assisted them; but they had the chief regard to Eleazar, the governor of the temple." (Josephus Book II, Chapter XVII, Section 2)

The city was full of wickedness and the people appointed high priests of unknown and ignoble persons who cooperated with them in their wickedness. Josephus records the regular high priest, Ananus, as saying, "Certainly, it had been good for me to die before I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations." The wickedness within the city was great, the city was in civil war. Josephus tells us what went on in the city.

"And indeed many there were of the Jews that deserted every day, and fled away from the zealots, although their flight was very difficult, since they had guarded every passage out of the city, and slew every one that was caught at them, as taking it for granted they were going over to the Romans; yet did he who gave them money get clear off, while he only that gave them none was voted a traitor. So the upshot was this, that the rich purchased their flight by money, while none but the poor were slain. Along all the roads also **vast numbers of dead bodies lay in heaps**, and even many of those that were so zealous in deserting at length chose rather to perish within the city; for the hopes of burial made death in their own city appear of the two less terrible to them. But these zealots came at last to that degree of barbarity, as not to bestow a burial either on those slain in the city, or on those that lay along the roads; but as if they had made an agreement to cancel both the laws of their country and the laws of nature, and, at the same time that they defiled men with their wicked actions, they would pollute the Divinity itself also, they left the **dead bodies to putrefy under the sun**; and the same punishment was allotted to such as buried any as to those that deserted, which was no other than death; while he that granted the favor of a grave to another would presently stand in need of a grave himself. To say all in a word, no other gentle passion was so entirely lost among them as mercy; for what were the greatest objects of pity did most of all irritate these wretches, and they transferred their rage from the living to those that had been slain, and from the dead to the living. Nay, the terror was so very great, that he who survived called them that were first dead happy, as being at rest already; as did those that were under torture in the prisons, declare, that, upon this comparison, those that lay unburied were the happiest. These men, therefore, trampled upon all the laws of men, and laughed at the laws of God; and for the oracles of the prophets, they ridiculed them as the tricks of jugglers; yet did these prophets foretell many things concerning [the rewards of] virtue, and [punishments of] vice, which when these zealots violated, they occasioned the fulfilling of those very prophecies belonging to their own country; for there was a certain ancient oracle of those men, that the city should then be taken and the sanctuary burnt, by right of war, when a sedition should invade the Jews, and their own hand should pollute the temple of God. Now while these zealots did not [quite] disbelieve these predictions, they made themselves the instruments of their accomplishment." (Josephus Book IV, Chapter VI, Section 3)

In light of what Josephus says here about the dead bodies laying in heaps and rotting in the sun, listen to the prophecy of:

Amos 8:1-4 (NKJV) Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. 2 And He said, "Amos, what do you see?" So I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me: "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. 3 And the songs of the temple shall be wailing in that day," Says the Lord GOD; "Many dead bodies everywhere, They shall be thrown out in silence." 4 Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail,

Why was this happening to Israel? They had broken the covenant with their God. They had turned from God and thus were suffering a covenantal judgment.

Deuteronomy 28:15 (NKJV) "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Deuteronomy 28:63 (NKJV) "And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess.

The destruction of a immense quantity of corn and other provisions by the rebels, was the direct occasion of a terrible famine, which consumed incredible numbers of Jews in Jerusalem during its siege.

" And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one parted from the other. Eleazar and his party, that kept the sacred first-fruits, came against John in their cups. Those that were with John plundered the populace, and went out with zeal against Simon. This Simon had his supply of provisions from the city, in opposition to the seditious. When, therefore, John was assaulted on both sides, he made his men turn about, throwing his darts upon those citizens that came up against him, from the cloisters he had in his possession, while he opposed those that attacked him from the temple by engines of war; and if at any time he was freed from those that were above him, which happened frequently, from their being drunk and tired, he sallied out with a great number upon Simon and his party; and this he did always in such parts of the city as he could come at, till **he set on fire those houses that were full of corn, and of all provisions.** The same thing was done by Simon, when, upon the others' retreat, he attacked the city also; as if they had, on purpose done it to serve the Romans, by destroying what the city had laid up against the Siege, and by thus cutting off the nerves of their own power. Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space, ready for fighting on both sides; and that **almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years.** So they were taken by the means of famine, which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure." (Josephus Book V, Chapter I, Section 4)

The famine during the great tribulation was predicted in:

Ezekiel 4:10-12 (NKJV) "And your food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it. 11 "You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink. 12 "And you shall eat it as barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight."

We also see this famine predicted in John's Olivet discourse, which is the book of Revelation.

Revelation 6:5-6 (NKJV) When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of

scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

The pair of scales is a symbol of famine. This famine destroyed many in Jerusalem. After the horse of famine comes death.

Revelation 6:7-8 (NKJV) When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." 8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

Josephus records the history that bears out the fulfillment of these awful prophecies.

" And, indeed, why do I relate these particular calamities? while Manneus, the son of Lazarus, came running to Titus at this very time, and told him that there had been carried out through that one gate, which was intrusted to his care, no fewer than a hundred and fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty dead bodies, in the interval between the fourteenth day of the month Xanthieus, [Nisan,] when the Romans pitched their camp by the city, and the first day of the month Panemus [Tamuz]. This was itself a prodigious multitude; and though this man was not himself set as a governor at that gate, yet was he appointed to pay the public stipend for carrying these bodies out, and so was obliged of necessity to number them, while the rest were buried by their relations; though all their burial was but this, to bring them away, and cast them out of the city. After this man there ran away to Titus many of the eminent citizens, and told him the entire number of the poor that were dead, and that **no fewer than six hundred thousand were thrown out at the gates**, though still the number of the rest could not be discovered; and they told him further, that when they were no longer able to carry out the **dead bodies of the poor, they laid their corpses on heaps in very large houses, and shut them up therein**; as also that a medimnus of wheat was sold for a talent; and that when, a while afterward, it was not possible to gather herbs, by reason **the city was all walled about**, some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle, and **to eat the dung which they got there; and what they of old could not endure so much as to see they now used for food**. When the Romans barely heard all this, they commiserated their case; while the seditious, who saw it also, did not repent, but suffered the same distress to come upon themselves; for they were blinded by that fate which was already coming upon the city, and upon themselves also." (Josephus Book V, Chapter XIII, Section 7)

The depth of this famine is so clearly seen in the gut wrenching story that Josephus tells of Mary.

"Now there was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was Mary; her father was Eleazar, of the village Bethesub, which signifies *the House of Hyssop*. She was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude, and was with them besieged therein at this time. The other effects of this woman had been already seized upon; such I mean as she had brought with her out of Perea, and removed to the city. What she had treasured up besides, as also what food she had contrived to save, had also been carried off by the rapacious guards, who came every day running into her house for that purpose. This put the poor woman into a very great passion, and by the frequent reproaches and imprecations she cast at these rapacious villains, she had provoked them to anger against her; but none of them, either out of the indignation she had raised against herself, or out of the commiseration of her case, would take away her life; and if she found any food, she perceived her labours were for others, and not for herself; and it was now become impossible for her any way to find any more food, while the famine pierced through her very bowels and marrow, when also her passion was fired to a degree beyond the

famine itself: nor did she consult with anything but with her passion and the necessity she was in. She then attempted a most unnatural thing; and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, 'O thou miserable infant! for whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition? As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! The famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us; yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other. Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews.' As soon as she had said this, she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed. Upon this the seditious come in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not shew them what food she had gotten ready. She replied, that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son. Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them 'This is mine own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself! Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous, and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also.' After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. Upon which, the whole city was full of horrid action immediately; and while everyone laid this miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled, as if this unheard-of-action had been done by themselves. So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die; and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not live long enough either to hear or see such miseries." (Josephus Book VI, Chapter III, Section 4)

Listen again to the covenantal curses of Deuteronomy 28:

Deuteronomy 28:53 (NKJV) "You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you.

Deuteronomy 28:57 (NKJV) "her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates.

(I would strongly encourage you to read Deuteronomy 28 in its entirety keeping in mind all we have discussed today.)

I hope that by now you are beginning to understand the words of Jesus in:

Matthew 24:21 (NKJV) "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.

Let me share with you just one more passage from Josephus just to make sure you see the severity of Jerusalem's destruction.

"Hereupon some of the deserters, having no other way, leaped down from the wall immediately, while others of them went out of the city with stones, as if they would fight them; but thereupon they fled away to the Romans. But here a worse fate accompanied these than what they had found within the city; and they met with a quicker despatch from the too great abundance they had among the Romans, than they could have done from the famine among the Jews; for when they came first to the Romans, they were puffed up by the famine, and swelled like men in a dropsy; after which

they all on the sudden overfilled those bodies that were before empty, and so burst asunder, excepting such only as were skillful enough to restrain their appetites, and by degrees took in their food into bodies unaccustomed thereto. Yet did another plague seize upon those that were thus preserved; for there was found among the **Syrian deserters a certain person who was caught gathering pieces of gold out of the excrements of the Jews' bellies**; for the deserters used to swallow such pieces of gold, as we told you before, when they came out, and for these did the seditious search them all; for there was a great quantity of gold in the city, insomuch that as much was now sold [in the Roman camp] for twelve Attic [drams], as was sold before for twenty-five. But when this contrivance was discovered in one instance, the fame of it filled their several camps, that the deserters came to them full of gold. So the multitude of the Arabians, with the Syrians, cut up those that came as supplicants, and searched their bellies. Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night's time **about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected.**" (Josephus Book V, Chapter XIII, Section 4)

Israel had crucified the Lord and publicly called God's judgment down on themselves: "***And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'***" (Matthew 27:25). God's judgement on Israel in 70 AD matched their crime, the crucifixion of Christ. This crime was the worst in history, so their punishment was also the worst in history. To call anything else "**the great tribulation**" is to downplay the immensity of that generation's crime.

Renan said, "From this time forth, hunger, rage, despair, and madness dwelt in Jerusalem. It was a cage of furious maniacs, as city resounding with howling and inhabited by cannibals, a very hell. Titus, for his part, was atrociously vindictive; every day five hundred unfortunates were crucified in the sight of the city with hateful refinements of cruelty or sufficient ground whereon to erect them."

We need to realize the scope of the great tribulation upon the people of Israel. It was not just those in Jerusalem that suffered and died, but all over Palestine, the whole country felt the judgement of God. Josephus said, "There was not a Syrian city which did not slay their Jewish inhabitants, and were more bitter enemies to us than were the Romans themselves."

David Clark said, "It is doubtful if anything before or since has equaled it for ruthless slaughter and merciless destruction. From the locality of these churches in Asia Minor to the borders of Egypt the land was a slaughterhouse, City after city was wrecked, sacked, and burned; till it was recorded that cities were left without an inhabitant."

The destruction of Jerusalem was far more than just the destruction of a city. Jerusalem and the temple were the center of worship of the one and only true and living God. With its destruction came a covenantal change. God's kingdom was taken from them, and no longer would Gentiles rule over God's kingdom because His Kingdom was now a spiritual kingdom, entered not by a physical birth but by a spiritual birth. The old heavens and earth of Judaism were destroyed the new heavens and earth of Spiritual Israel were established. It signaled the end of the age. God had utterly destroyed the physical temple, the genealogical records which qualified descendants of Aaron to serve as priests, and the city of Jerusalem. The old system of worship was forever over.

The destruction of Jerusalem was not simply a local judgment, it was a covenantal judgment. Notice Jesus' words:

Matthew 23:35-36 (NKJV) "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

This judgment upon Jerusalem was not simply local, it reached all the way back to Able. The blood of Able was vindicated by God's judgment upon Jerusalem.

It was far more than the fall of a city, it was the end of an age. That is why Jesus said it would be a, ***"great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."***

For this reason I ask, "How could it be possible for there to be in the future a destruction of Jerusalem equal or greater than that which happened in 70 AD?" Jesus said nothing in time would ever equal what happened in 70 AD, nothing.

The Great Tribulation is behind us, it is an event in history. With the destruction of Jerusalem came the fulfillment of all prophecy. We live in the never ending age of the new covenant, the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and earth of Revelation 21 and 22.

Note: All quotes from Josephus are taken from "The Wars of The Jews," and all the bold emphasis in the quotes are mine.

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on January 11, 1998.