

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be”, Matthew 24/21.

“These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”, Revelation 7/14.

### THE POPULAR THEORY:

Because of a misunderstanding by many commentators, of the prophecy in Daniel 9-24-27, which relates to the well known subject of the ‘70 weeks’ prophecy, many folk are led astray to think that the last seven years of that prophecy are future and apply to a supposed ‘rapture’ of ‘the saved’ to heaven and, to the rise of an imaginary antichrist, followed by 3 ½ years of tribulation before Christ comes We speak here of the supposed ‘Tribulation’.

### TWO TRIBULATIONS –1. ISRAEL 2. THE WORLD

The above two quotations speak of two great tribulations – the first, which has already come upon Israel, and the second, which is yet to come upon the whole world., during which the ‘slain of the Lord.... will be from one end of the earth,...to the other ..” (Jer.25-33, The target will be those who reject the new King in Jerusalem, and the apostate church which stirs the nations to come against the new King. (Revelation 17 and 18)

**THE TRIBULATION FOR ISRAEL** The first quotation speaks of Israel’s past great tribulation, but which at the time of its utterance, was still future. It forms a part of the well known ‘Mount Olivet Prophecy’ uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ after his disciples had been admiring the great stones of the walls of King Herod’s temple in Jerusalem. That temple which took over forty years to build at great expense, was a large and magnificent building giving all the appearance that it would continue for a very long time into the future. But with the divine inspiration God had given Him, our Lord Jesus knew it was to be destroyed. He also knew he was soon to be rejected, condemned and crucified by that generation of his own people. As well, he knew they would later be given an opportunity to repent of their crime – and many thousands of them did repent (see Acts ch. 2). Being “the man Christ Jesus” as well as “the Son of God”, He knew of the diabolical nature of mankind and its capacity for great evil. He knew “what was in man”. He also knew that most of the nation would not repent, but would continue to support their spiritual leaders’ judicial murder of Him, though the Son of God, their anointed Messiah and future King, as proved by His many miracles and godly life.

Inspired by God, our Lord Jesus therefore uttered this prophecy - recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. He warns his disciples not to set their hearts on the present things that they saw, but to look forward to His Second Coming, when He would

return to this earth “with power and great glory” - Matthew 24/30. They, and we, are asked not to concentrate upon this life or the kingdoms of men that we see. For though they seem real and continuing they can be, and are, shaken and removed. Rather He wants us to look for God’s kingdom to come, which cannot be shaken or removed after it has been set up. God’s kingdom most certainly will be set up at Christ’s return, and present world signs indicate it will be soon - see Hebrews. 12/25-29, Daniel 2/44; 2 Timothy 4/1. Faced with His warning that all of the stones of Herod’s great temple would be thrown down, his disciples asked our Lord Jesus a burning question: “Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

#### ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 24

Jesus answers their concerned question in a very detailed way. His answer covers not only their particular questions, the “when” and the “what”, but also covers the whole period of time from their day down to our day. Obviously The Master knew that His words would be recorded for posterity so that all disciples of every age could “watch” and “be ready” –

Matthew 24-42/44; ch. 25/13.

In vv. 4 and 5 Jesus predicts the rise of many false prophets who would claim to be The Messiah, the Christ, God’s Anointed One. They must not be led astray.

In vv. 6 and 7 he predicts a time of wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes.

In vv. 8 to 14 he predicts the persecution of his Jewish disciples, the rise of false prophets, and the preaching of the gospel throughout the then world.

In vv. 15 to 28 he predicts the troubles that Israel would go through because of the Roman invasion and destruction of Judea.

In v. 29 in symbolic language he predicts the eclipse of the Jewish religious system (“the moon”) and the removal or death of its leaders and nobles (“the stars”).

In vv. 30 to 41 Jesus predicts his Second Coming. It will be preceded by the restoration of the Jewish people to their land (the fig tree branches putting forth its leaves, v. 32 (cp. Ezekiel 36/8-15).

Finally, in vv. 42 to 51 Jesus counsels his disciples of all ages (but particularly those who have seen and are still seeing the restoration of many of the Jews to Israel) to “watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come”.

The Mount Olivet prophecy is one that we do well to carefully heed in our preparation for the return of our Lord Jesus and His setting up the Kingdom of God.

#### THE TRIBULATION FOR THE WORLD

The second quotation at our heading, Revelation 7/14 predicts a future great world tribulation that will involve all nations and that will “hurt the earth and the sea”, v.2. That tribulation or great calamity is God’s punishment of the nations for their idolatry, violence and evil. It is further indicated in Revelation 14/8-11; 14/17-20; 16/14-21 as coming

upon “great Babylon” - the symbol used to describe this whole world led as it is by false religions, particularly the false Christianity which controls most of Europe, creating great confusion amongst ordinary people – Babylon means ‘confusion’, Genesis 11/9.

The counsel of God’s Spirit through the apostle John is that we, who look for the coming of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom, “come out of her”, (18/4), meaning that true servants of the Lord should forsake the false religious system which deludes the world.

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