



The time of Jacobs' trouble

Matthew chapter 24:15-31

Centuries before Jesus was born the prophet Jeremiah foretold this period of history called 'The Time of Jacob's Trouble' and the primary focus of this time will be on the land of Israel. It will be a time of distress and trouble unequalled in history.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied this would happen after Israel was back in their own land in the Last Days.

(Jeremiah 30:3-7) "The days are coming, 'declares the Lord,' when I will bring my people Israel back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the Lord. These are the words the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah: "This is what the Lord says: "Cries of fear are heard-terror, not peace. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labour, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it".

In 1948 after almost 2000 years of exile the nation of Israel was reborn and in 1967 the Old City of Jerusalem was recaptured signifying the end of Gentile domination of Jerusalem.

The Prophet Daniel also spoke about

this 'Time of Jacob's Trouble.'

(Daniel 12:1-2) "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people will arise. There will be a time of distress such as not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people- everyone whose name is found written in the book-will be delivered."

From verse fifteen of Matthew twenty-four Jesus clearly predicts this period of time that begins with the Antichrist demanding to be worshipped as God on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus specifically mentions in verse twenty-one that He is talking about a time of devastation and trouble at the end of this age unequalled in history. *"For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equalled again."*

In Matthew twenty-four verses one to fourteen the Lord Jesus had predicted the conditions in the world leading up to His Second Coming but now He specifically focuses on the last brief period of this present age that begins with the Antichrist in some way desecrating the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and claiming to be God.

(Vs 15) "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand"

Centuries before the prophet Daniel prophesied the coming of a ruler who would invade the Holy Land and desecrate the temple.

(Daniel 8:9-14) "Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of rebellion, the host of the saints and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."

(Daniel 8:23-25) "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power."

(Daniel 11:29-35) "At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show

favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation."

This man was a Seleucid Greek called Antiochus Epiphanies. Antiochus was a master of intrigue and deception who gained the support and favour of the Jewish nation. The religious leaders who were not faithful to God and His Word supported Antiochus.

He constantly made demands on the Jews and most of them compromised with him. Eventually most of the backslidden Jews began to participate in pagan festivals and in cult prostitution introduced by Antiochus. Antiochus enticed the Jewish nation to accept him as a legitimate friend and protector. (*1 Maccabees 15:1-9*) However, after his deception he turned on the Jews with a terrible hate and violence. (*2 Maccabees 7*) He stopped the temple sacrifices and forbade the reading of the Torah and killed anyone who was caught with a copy. Antiochus desecrated the temple by shedding the blood of a pig on the altar of sacrifice and by setting up an emblem of worship to the Greek god Zeus in the temple. (*Daniel 11:31 12:11*) (*2 Maccabees 5:15-16*)

The Lord Jesus was speaking about this event that occurred a 160 years before His time and said that it was going to happen again. In the context of His discourse He had in mind 70AD but was saying that the abomination would be fully manifest at the end of this age through a man called the Antichrist. Jesus implied that the Antichrist would come in the character of Antiochus.

In fact the abomination has happened several times in history and each partial fulfilment teaches us about the ultimate one. This was the way the Jewish mind

understood prophecy and the lord Jesus was using the same method.

Paul the apostle also tells us about the final 'abomination of desolation' fully revealed in the Antichrist.

(2 Thessalonians 2:4) "He opposes and exults himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped and even sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God."

According to God's Word in the Last Days before Jesus comes back Israel and its leaders will enter into a peace agreement with many nations and will live relatively secure in this covenant with the nations although God calls this covenant, 'A Covenant of Death. (Isaiah 28: 14-15) Then suddenly the forces of the Antichrist will invade Israel and Jerusalem. At this time the Antichrist will stand on the Temple Mount to proclaim to everyone that he is God. This invasion will create such intensity and fear in the hearts of Israelis that even strong men will grip their stomachs as women do in labour.

In fact an Abomination stands today on the temple Mount that has been desolate ever since 70AD. When the Eastern leg of the Ancient Roman Empire called Byzantium fell to Islam the Muslims eventually built the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem itself in the ninth Century. In effect they erected an abomination of desolation on the Temple Mount that still stands today. When you see the Dome of the Rock standing on the Temple Mount you see another 'abomination of desolation.'

Today the whole Muslim world is waiting on the arrival of the Mahdi whom they say is coming to lead the Muslim nations to establish Islam as the only world religion. They also say he will bear the name of Mohammad and in a real

sense be the re-incarnation, as it were, of the prophet himself. Of course we know that the man of sin will be an incarnation of Satan. If the final Antichrist is a Muslim General then he will succeed for a time in bringing devastation to the whole world.

When you see the agenda of Islam today and the way that it is infiltrating Europe, other Western democracies as well as most third world countries you may well be seeing the resurrection of the, 'beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lives!' During the Middle Ages Islam almost invaded Europe but was stopped by Charles Martel. Many are looking to Europe for the manifestation of the Antichrist and looking for the 'New Rome' as it were but Europe will be only a part of the whole. Already it is being taken over by the Muslim nations through its deals for oil. Islam is winning the war against the West socially and economically. Ultimately in all probability Islam will invade Europe by the sword of Allah the moon god of war!

The 'abomination of desolation' already stands today in the Dome of the Rock awaiting the manifestation of the Antichrist.

The Antichrist himself being religious will use religion to bring himself to power and then destroy all religions except his own religion with him as its god. The apostle John describes this scenario for us in the book of Revelation.

(Revelation 17:1-6,9a, 18) "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet

beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus...This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits...The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

The Antichrist and his empire will use the Prostitute Christian nations in the west with their history of Christianity to solidify its power and then destroy it with fire. Rome will be a major player and its even possible that the next Pope will try to amalgamate the global religion with Islam but the 'iron' will not mix with 'the clay.' Islam can never assimilate itself with western Christianity or politics for that matter as the Koran specifically teaches that the worship of Allah is the only religion and Mohammad is His prophet and that all nations must come under the domination of Islam.

Right now the spiritually decadent and morally bankrupt Western nations that profess Christianity have prostituted themselves with the world and will try to amalgamate with Islam. However, the 'beast' (empire) she rides will buck her off and devour her with fire.

(Revelation 17:15-17) "Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts

to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled."

America has been one of the major suppliers of weapons and missiles to third world countries because of the almighty dollar. At one time they supported Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein and now America's compromise with Islam has come back on their own heads. When you see 9/11 you see the nature and character of Islam! Both America and Great Britain are becoming weak as Islam grows in power and strength.

Our western civilization has its roots in ancient Greco Roman culture and philosophy. In a very real sense 'the New Rome' is Europe, America and Great Britain combined but 'Rome' will 'burn again' at the hands of Islam as ancient Rome burnt at the hands of the Visigoths! This is a frightening scenario but its is the reality of the world in which we live! The major player in the 'New Rome' is America and it too will burn!

When you look at the description and character of 'BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS' described in Revelation chapter seventeen and eighteen you can see the culture and character of modern America and Britain associated with Biblical Christianity and most of the European nations associated with Roman Catholicism.

With the coming of the emperor Constantine Pagan Rome became religious Rome. The Church of Rome is clearly identified with the false religious system of the ancient Babylonian Empire. The Babylonian Empire was the original source of all false religion. Many religious practices of the Church of Rome have their source in the religious practices of Babylon.

The first century Christians including the apostles actually called Ancient Rome Babylon. (1 Peter 5:13) For some time now there have been moves in the Roman Catholic Church to establish a global religion encompassing all faiths. Already the late Pope John Paul II had met with the Dalai Lama, African witch doctors, Buddhists and leaders of other religions to propagate a world religion (You can still see this on video records of this event in the 1980's)

Ecumenism and interfaith associations manifest the spirit of antichrist at work in the Church today. It points very clearly to the ultimate formation of the One World Prostitute Church of the last days. Many mainline Protestant denominations and even some evangelical leaders are trying to work hand in hand with the Church of Rome today. This is spiritual deception in the Church. Many of our most trusted evangelical leaders have publicly extolled the virtues of the now deceased Pope John Paul II but seem to be ignorant of the persecution of Bible believing Christians he encouraged in Mexico. At least three or four times it was reported that the late Pope John Paul II called born again Christians "rapacious wolves."

In fact all those denominations and churches that go in for Ecumenism, Interfaith and New Age philosophies are already part of Babylon the Great. Faithful Christians are to separate themselves from this kind of religious system.

(Revelation 18:4-5) "Then I heard another voice from heaven say, "Come out of her my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes."

Today there are faithful Christians everywhere who are meeting in homes or schools or in small groups where they can freely study the Bible and pray and

enjoy real fellowship in the Holy Spirit. They can already see the trends in the established Church to move away from the Bible. These kinds of groups will increase in the years to come. How we see the believers meeting together in the book of Acts is happening again with faithful Christians in these last days.

When the Antichrist desecrates the temple mount it will be a time of trouble for the nation of Israel that will affect the whole world. At that time the Antichrist will destroy two thirds of the Jews living in Israel but God will not let them be totally destroyed as a nation but will deliver a remnant because of His covenant promises to them as a people. The prophet Zechariah foretold this event.

(Zechariah 13:7-9) "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, against the man who is close to Me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn My hand against the little ones. In the whole land, "declares the LORD, "two thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on My name and I will answer them; I will say, "They are My people," and they will say, "The Lord is our God."

(Zechariah 14:1-5) "A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain mov-

ing north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him."

When the Antichrist moves to invade Jerusalem and sets himself up on the Temple Mount those living in Jerusalem should flee from the city as fast as they can because the devastation wrought by the Antichrist will be swift and deadly.

(Vs 16-21) "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equalled again."

In some way faithful Christians globally in many western countries will need to drop everything and run for their lives. If the Antichrist is a Muslim general and the prophesied Mahdi to come at the end of this age then the whole Muslim world will rise up to support him. They will rise up in Europe, in America, in Great Britain and in Australia. Even in the islands North of Australia Islam will prevail.

In 70 AD when the Roman armies withdrew from Jerusalem for a short period of time all those who believed what Jesus had predicted escaped from the city. Shortly after, the army returned and destroyed the city. Only the faithful remnant that believed the prophetic words of Jesus escaped when they had the chance. When the Roman armies withdrew nobody had much time. They had to leave their possessions behind and flee as quickly as possible.

During 'the Time of Jacob's Trouble' at the end of the age when the armies surround Jerusalem once again only those who are ready to meet Jesus will know that His Coming is very imminent. Faithful Christians need to be making preparations now through prayer, Bible study, and fellowship and by not living for the things of this world.

When the Lord Jesus comes again He will catch up His faithful followers to meet Him in the Air and as His faithful believers go up the fire of God's wrath comes down. Then the Lord Jesus will descend with His bride and His holy angels to rule and to reign over the nations that have survived the fiery wrath of God. One of the many descriptions of this last judgement is seen in the book of Revelation.

(Revelation 16:8-11) "The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done."

The plagues described in the book of Revelation replay the judgments on Egypt in the book of Exodus. This 'Time of Jacob's Trouble' will culminate in the third world war at a place called Armageddon. " Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon" (Revelation 16:16). This last Great War to end all wars will be fought over the city of Jerusalem. At that time the Lord Jesus will save the whole world from annihilating itself. When you look at the nuclear stockpile of weapons globally you can see the future of this

present age very clearly!

It's interesting historically that when Rome was disintegrating and the barbarians were descending on Rome the emperor put on entertainment for the people to divert their attention away from their imminent destruction at the hands of the Visigoths. Today in the western nations primarily we are being entertained by the media who themselves cannot see what is really going on. Our leaders and politicians who are selling us out to Islam for the mighty dollar are by this betrayal slowly eroding western democracy and liberty! Indeed 'Babylon the great' is falling!

(Vs 22) "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

As the armies of the nations converge on the city of Jerusalem the world will be on the brink of self-destruction however, God will cut those days short for the sake of His chosen people. To 'cut short' is the word you would use for cutting off a dog's tail. It will be swift and sudden. During this time both Israel and the faithful Church will be suffering persecution by the Antichrist and his global empire.

(Revelation 13:7a) "He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them."

(Daniel 7:25 12:7) "He will speak against the Most High and oppress the saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time...It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

One thing we always need to keep in mind is that Jesus said that He will enable faithful Christians to stand in His

strength in times of persecution and to overcome whatever Satan throws at them.

(Luke 21:12-19) "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words of wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed by parents, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair on your head will perish. By standing firm you will save yourselves."

The apostle Peter also said, "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Peter 4:14).

The apostle Paul also said, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it". (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In 70AD the Christians were also under the siege by the Romans but when the armies withdrew the faithful remnant escaped just before the Romans returned to completely destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

As the final plagues fall without restraint on a Christ hating, Christ rejecting world the faithful believers will experience a mighty 'caesarean section' as the 'labour pains' of wars famines diseases and earthquakes intensify. As the faithful Church is caught up to meet Jesus in the air the bowls of God's wrath will be fully poured out on the world without

restraint. You can read about these bowls in Revelation chapter sixteen. Faithful Christians will not experience them for God has not destined them for wrath but for salvation. The apostle Paul told us that this would be so when he said, "*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

When the flood came upon the earth Noah and his family was saved out of it. Just before the fire fell on Sodom Lot was rescued. Just as the final bowls of God's wrath are poured out at the end of this age every faithful Christian will be rescued. The apostle John says, "*These are they which came out of great tribulation*" (Revelation 7:14).

(Vs 23-25) "At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect if that were possible. See I have told you ahead of time."

At the end of this age just before Jesus returns again spiritual deception will intensify and multiply in the professing Christian Church. Even today false teachers and prophets in the Church are turning the purity of the gospel into licentiousness and greed. These men and women are teaching doctrines of demons and are even deceiving the elect.

(1 Timothy 4:1-2) "The Spirit clearly says that in latter times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

Today this spiritual seduction is coming into the Church through the money preachers, the Interfaith Movement, Ecumenism, secular psychology, New Age philosophies, Secular marketing

strategies for church growth and Post Modernism.

The '*false Christs*' Jesus mentioned here are those with a false anointing. These counterfeit signs, miracles and wonders will open the way for the Antichrist. (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

The whole world today is becoming obsessed with the Supernatural. The next generation is being groomed by Satan to expect the supernatural as commonplace. Many computer and virtual reality games are designed with supernatural themes. Such films as the Harry Potter movies are preparing the next generation to accept the Antichrist. Through counterfeit signs and miracles Satan is already deceiving multitudes of Christians. The false global Super Church at the end of this age will be a supernatural Church embracing all religions. Its members will be able to duplicate signs, miracles and wonders. Just look at that false prophet Benny Hinn!

(Vs 26-27) "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

There will be nothing secret about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will come visibly and openly for all to see. It is interesting to note that the Rev Sun Moon who claims to be equal to Jesus Christ actually said that when he flies in his jet from the East to the West that he is the Son of Man who is like the lightning that comes from the East and flashes to the West. He is a false Christ!

In a very real sense whenever you see anyone wanting to be deified or worshipped in any way you see a false Christ. The Dalia Lama of Tibet does not believe in God but allows him self to be

worshipped as a god and as the re-incarnation of the Buddha. When you see TV preachers telling us that they and others are 'little Gods' you see the spirit of Antichrist at work!

(Vs 28) "Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."

Whenever you see vultures circling in the sky in a desert you know that something is dying. Today in Israel the 'vultures' of every false cult and religious sect are active especially in Jerusalem. Ultimately the whole world will be in an advanced state of spiritual depravity and decay as the 'vultures' of spiritual deception multiply. At the second coming of Jesus Christ vultures will actually feed on the flesh of the armies of the Antichrist after they have been destroyed on the mountains of Israel. *(Ezekiel 39:17-20) (Revelation 19:17-18)*

The nations are turning against Israel today because God is preparing to bring them down from the plains of Megiddo into the valley of Jehoshaphat to destroy them with fire. This great battle is described in the books of Joel, Zechariah and Revelation. *(Joel 3:1-3) (Zechariah 12:2-5 14:1-5,12) (Revelation 19:17-21)*

Today right now we see Russia, the European Union, the United Nations and America trying to force Israel to accept a Palestinian state and comply with the 'road map' for peace in the Middle East. At present they are trying to force Israel to withdraw from the borders they gained during the 1967 six-day war. The Arab nations, especially Iran and Syria want to see Israel destroyed. The president of Iran constantly calls for the destruction and extermination of Israel. There can be no real and lasting peace in the Middle East until the Prince of Peace comes to reign and to rule over the kingdoms of this world!

Ultimately the nation of Israel and Jerusalem will be devastated. They will have their backs against the sea just like the children of Israel had their backs against the sea in the time of Moses. At this moment of desperation the Lord Jesus will return, rapture His saints and with His powerful angels destroy those armies by the powerful word coming out of His mouth! Then all Israel will be saved! Hallelujah! What happened to Pharaoh and his armies in the book of Exodus will happen again to the Antichrist and his armies on the mountains of Israel. Pharaoh's armies were destroyed by water but the Antichrist's armies will be destroyed by fire.

(Zechariah 14:12) "This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot (melt) in their sockets, and their tongues will rot (melt) in their mouths."

(2 Peter 3:10,12b) "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare... "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat."

Peter was a first century man but the language he used to describe, "the elements will melt" in the original Greek text actually describes the splitting of the Atom or a thermonuclear reaction. How could a first century fisherman know about this? Well he didn't but the Holy Spirit did and gave it to John by a supernatural revelation.

Now let us continue with the text.

(Vs 29) "Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be

shaken."

As the armies of the nations converge on Jerusalem these signs will be occurring in the heavens. These cosmic signs actually teach us about what will be happening on the earth at this time. In the Bible Jesus is called 'The Sun of Righteousness' (Malachi 4:2) but the sun is no longer giving its light and the moon is no longer reflecting the light of the sun. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun so the faithful Church reflects the light of Jesus. In Revelation chapter six John tells us that the moon will actually be turned to blood. What could this mean at that time?

The Moon represents the Church no longer reflecting the light of Jesus on the earth at this time because it will have almost been exterminated by the persecution of the Antichrist. (*Daniel 7:21*) The stars falling from the sky indicate the multitudes of Christians falling away from the faith.

John picks up on this in Revelation chapter twelve. In this account Satan as the dragon persecuting the Church sweeps a third of the stars out of the sky and flings them to the earth. (*Revelation 12:4*) These stars falling to the earth coincide with the great falling away of Christians in the last days mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. In the Old Testament stars are symbolic of Christian believers as well as Jewish believers. (*Genesis 15:5 22:17*) (*1 Chronicles 27:23*) (*Daniel 12:3*)

(Vs 30) "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

Just before Jesus comes to the earth there will be the total breakdown of society as the kingdom of the Antichrist is

plunged into chaos. On that day, people will tremble with fear and try to hide from the coming of the Lord. Listen to what the apostle John said,

(Revelation 6:14-17) "The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand."

What the apostle John says in Revelation chapter six corresponds to the same time frame that Jesus speaks about here in Matthew chapter twenty-four verse thirty one. It is at this time that the Lord Jesus sends out His angels to gather His elect.

(Vs 31) "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

In this account in Matthew he said that the Lord Jesus would, "gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." However, in Marks gospel we are told that the elect are not only gathered from one end of the heavens to the other but also from "the ends of the earth."

(Mark 13:26) "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."

Paul the apostle described this event.

(1 Thessalonians 4:14-18) "We believe

that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words."

There are those today who are telling us that the rapture will not happen and that Matthew twenty four only applies to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and has no future meaning for us. The same people are saying that the world will be eventually Christianised and that the Church will take over the world and present it to Jesus at His coming. However, the last thing that will be happening just before Jesus returns will be 'The Time of Jacob's Trouble'. To deny the rapture is to rob Christians of their hope.

If you claim to be a faithful Christian but are chasing after the things of this world then the rapture will not be uppermost in your thinking. However, if you are being faithful to Jesus and wanting to please Him then you will be eagerly watching and longing for His return. In fact, if you are a Christian and have become complacent where spiritual realities are concerned God is going to arrange things in such a way that you will desperately long for his coming again.

The rapture and the resurrection are the same event. Those who have already died in Christ will experience the physical resurrection of their bodies. Their spirit and soul will be clothed with an

immortal body just as Jesus Himself has. Those believers who have survived the persecution of the Antichrist and are still on earth in their human bodies will also receive their immortal bodies at the same time the dead in Christ receive theirs.

After this the plagues of God's wrath will be poured out without restraint and there will be no mercy for the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth with His Saints and the angels to set up the kingdom of God visibly on this earth for a thousand years.
(Revelation 19:11-19) (Revelation 20:1-6)

At His coming, Israel as a nation will recognize Him as their Messiah and turn to Him. (Zechariah 12:10) The Beast and the false prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire. (Revelation 19:20) Satan himself will be imprisoned and removed from human contact.
(Revelation 20:1-3)

For a thousand years the earth will experience a time of peace and tranquility previously unknown in human history. This earth will fulfil the original purpose that God planned for it.
(Isaiah 2:1-5 11:6-9 65:17-25)

In the end His coming will be the only event that will save the world from total destruction.

(Matthew 24:22) "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

We can no longer afford to ignore the prophetic words of Jesus,

(Acts 3:22-23) "For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything He tells you. Anyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut

off from among his people".

Paul the apostle said, "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thessalonians 4:2-3).

Just before Jesus returns to set up His kingdom this earth will experience plagues and catastrophes unprecedented in the history of the world. Isaiah the prophet spoke about this time.

(Isaiah 13:9-13) "See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the noon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of His burning anger."

If you do not know the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour and Lord then call upon His name right now and seek His salvation with all of your heart. God will respond to your prayer.

Isaiah the prophet says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

God's Word says, "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the scripture says," Everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:9-13)

(Jeremiah 30:3-7) "The days are coming, 'declares the Lord,' when I will bring my people Israel back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the Lord. These are the words the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah: "This is what the Lord says: "Cries of fear are heard—terror, not peace. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labour, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it."

BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION

* For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ *

