

What Jesus Believed

by Charles Ryrie

Charles Ryrie's sermon explores Jesus' teachings on the end times, focusing on the themes of anarchy, the Antichrist, and the ultimate victory of Christ at Armageddon.

Duration: 28:23

Scripture: Matthew 24:7, Matthew 24:29

Topics: "Tribulation Period", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of anarchy that will occur during the tribulation period. He describes the various aspects of anarchy that will take place, such as the burning of grass and destruction of trees, leading to a disruption in the cycle of rainfall and food production. The preacher also mentions the famines and earthquakes that will occur during this time. He emphasizes the importance of being a believer in Christ, as those who are will be taken to heaven before the tribulation begins. The sermon encourages listeners to seek forgiveness and eternal salvation through Christ.

Transcript

I do appreciate your coming tonight. I especially appreciate your staying. And, uh, my text is, there shall be earthquakes in drivers' places.

I'm kidding, it happens to be in the passage we're going to look at tonight. I hope you'll not have an object lesson. I invite you to turn in your Bible and New Testament to the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

And we want to look at some of the things our Lord said in what we rather formally call the Olivet Discourse. I don't know why we're so formal about it. Olivet is kind of a forbidding word.

It simply means something that was spoken on the Mount of Olives. Mount is even kind of a word that doesn't convey the right thing, because you may be thinking of the Adirondacks or the Rockies or something like that. And the mountains in Palestine, except in the north, are really kind of hills.

This really wasn't a discourse, it was a conversation that the Lord had with his disciples. So we'll try to call this the conversation that took place on the slope, the side of the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem. It was Tuesday of Holy Week when the Lord spoke these words, and the disciples and the Lord had come out of Jerusalem about sunset, and they had made their way down through the Keturn Valley and up the side of the Mount of Olives.

And the disciples were remarking on the beauty and the magnificence and the grandeur of Herod's temple that they had just left, which they were viewing now as the sun set behind it to the west. And they pointed out to the Lord the temple and the buildings, and the Lord, instead of answering in a nice platitude or a good Dale Carnegie way, he said, verse 2, Do you see all these things? I say to you, not one stone should be left upon another which will not be torn down. What a shock that must have been to the patriotic disciples who were so proud of that temple.

And it was a magnificent structure. It had been started by Herod in 20 B.C. before any of them were born. And it continued to be built a generation after the Lord had died.

And only six years after it was completed, it was destroyed by the Romans under Titus. And the Lord's prophecy here in verse 2 came exactly true as he had spoken it. And Titus overran Palestine, put down the rebellion of the Jewish people.

A lot of them fled ahead of his armies that came from the north. They fled ahead of them to Jerusalem. And when the armies got there, the general said not to desecrate the temple.

But the soldiers were so angry at the rebellious people that they wanted to bring vengeance upon them. And so they did. They did desecrate the temple.

And they even tore up the foundation stones, the most unusual move. If you're going to level a building, you don't usually tear up the foundation as well. But they did because they thought that there was gold buried in some of those immense, gigantic foundation stones of the temple.

Many stones were 10 by 12, and the foundation stones were told were as large as 37 feet in length. That's larger than most dens or living rooms in large homes. Even a 10 by 12 stone is as large as many bedrooms are in homes.

So we're talking about very large stones when the Lord said not one would be left upon another which shall not be torn down. And as they were sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked him, when shall this happen? And the Lord really does not, or at least Matthew does not record his answer to that particular question. Luke does in the parallel account, for it did happen, as I've explained, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem.

But the Lord goes on to answer the other two questions the disciples asked in verse 3. What shall be the sign of your coming and the sign of the end of the age? And here we have before us in this conversation some very significant details about what will happen in those years immediately preceding the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now to make it crystal clear, for I don't want anybody to be lost, let's let the pulpit be a little timeline chart. And here at this corner is the beginning of the tribulation days.

And here where the microphone cuts the pulpit in two is the middle of the tribulation days. And here at this corner is the end of the tribulation days. And the second coming of Christ, which is described beginning in verse 29 of this chapter, is here at this point when he comes to earth to take up the reins of government and to inaugurate his righteous kingdom.

At this point the tribulation begins. We know it's seven years long from several passages in the scriptures, both Old and New Testament passages. And we know there will be a significant event at the middle point of the tribulation.

Now I do not think personally that Matthew 24 or 25 speaks about the translation or rapture or taking away of the church, of believers of this time, of this period. But if we were to superimpose that event on the information we have in this discourse, it would occur, in my judgment, before all of these events take place. So believers will be taken to heaven before this time begins, and then the time will begin.

Now I want to try to link some of the many thoughts that the Lord gives us in this conversation by using three words, and they will follow in logical order. First of all, he describes anarchy, a condition of anarchy in the world and various aspects of the world's life. A condition of anarchy which will take place in particularly the first part of the tribulation years.

And those conditions are described in verses 4-14, particularly through verse 11. Anarchy, the dissolution of things that bind together in an orderly fashion. Anarchy, the dissolution of the ties of family or society or nature.

The disruption of things that we can count on. Anarchy, in the realm of religion. Verse 5, many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ, and will mislead many.

Or verse 11, many false prophets will arise and mislead many. A disruption of things that you can count on. And there will be many voices crying in those days saying, follow me.

I'll give you the answer, I'm the Christ, I'm a true prophet. And in reality, these people will be false prophets and they will mislead or deceive many people. They will do this, in some cases, by miraculous signs.

And dear people, this tells us that the presence of some unexplained or seemingly miraculous sign does not necessarily mean that the doer is from God. The greatest counterfeit will occur in this time when a false prophet will be able to give life to an image. And that will be not because he is a true prophet, but because he is being allowed to do this through the power of Satan.

There will be anarchy in the realm of societal things. In the realm of those things that bind us in an orderly society, in family and among nations. And verse 6 says there will be wars and rumors of wars.

Verse 7 says nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Treaties will be broken and those things which bind the nations together to try to live in some sort of harmony will all be disrupted when this situation occurs. The family will also be disrupted.

Look in verse 10, at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. That's not normal. And there will be this kind of power struggle between individuals and between nations that will lead to this situation of anarchy.

Even what you can count on in nature will be disrupted during the time of the coming tribulation. And there it is in verse 7, various places there will be famines and earthquakes. And if we should put on top of this the many more details that are given to us in Revelation 6 and 8 and 9 and 16, then we would have an even greater picture, a more detailed picture of some of the disruption in the realm of the natural, which will be a kind of situation of anarchy.

If the Revelation puzzles you, don't worry about reading it all the first time through, or the second or the tenth time even. Read 6, 8 and 9 and 16, because in those four chapters are three series of judgments. 6, 8 and 9 and 16 are three series of judgments which are sequential, they are in sequence.

So if you read 6, then you read 8 and 9 and you turn over to 16, you'll have a pretty good overview or survey of what will go on in the tribulation days. For one thing, we know that the grass will be burned up, trees will be destroyed. Think what that will do to the cycle of rainfall, the things you normally count on.

There will be two great witnesses who can shut up the heavens so it won't rain in certain parts of the world during that time. Think what that will mean to food production. Of course, it will be diminished, and the diminishing of it will increase the famines of those days.

Earthquakes will be in many places. Indeed, in one place in the Revelation it says, It will be included in that time. Anarchy.

Now, anarchy, disruption of trust and hope and faith and the glue of society. Anarchy is the soil out of which often a strong man emerges. If you've ever read, that's an excellent example of what I just said.

Here's an intelligent, educated, civilized, democratic people, who because there was trouble at that moment of history of their nation that they could not handle, and because a man named Hitler stood up and said, I can handle it, I can tell you what to do, they gave to him by legal means the power to try to do it. Out of the soil of anarchy often arises a strong man. During one of our Middle Eastern crises, I heard on the television one noon, the President of the United States say, If someone could tell me what to do, I would do it.

He did not know what to do. And in that kind of situation, if someone would come, people would listen to him. Not many years ago, I walked through Pennsylvania Station here in the city to take a train somewhere, and I saw signs in all the corridors of the station, and the signs read this way, In Baltimore, there is a curfew between the hours of 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. I'm not sure of the exact hours, but they were long.

In Washington, D.C., there is a curfew between such and such an hours. Do not plan to arrive in those cities during those hours, because you will not be able to leave the station. Now, there were riots in those cities, and there had to be strong, unusual measures taken.

But if you multiply that in all levels of society and in nature itself, you can see that the time will be right for a strong man to appear in these days of tribulation. So out of anarchy will come second Antichrist. And he is introduced by the Lord in verse 15 of the chapter.

Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of through Daniel the prophet, when you see him standing in the holy place, then get out of Jerusalem and Judea. Antichrist, here he's called the abomination of desolation. What a horrible name, a desolator.

Not a builder, a desolator. Elsewhere, he's called a beast. That doesn't bespeak much kindness, does it? Elsewhere, he's called the willful king, the king that does according to his own will.

He's also called the Antichrist, the one who stands opposed to and in the place of Christ. He's also called in 2 Thessalonians 2, the lawless one. Now, that is irony to the nth degree.

Here's the world not knowing what to do. Society is deteriorating and nature can't be counted on. There are many voices crying that they're the saviors.

And here comes a man who says, I can do something. I can bring order out of this chaos. So many nations will say, do it.

They will give their allegiance to him. And after they do it, then they will discover he is, in reality, the lawless one. The one who is to bring law and order is himself the lawless one.

What irony. Almost a terrible bad joke played upon the world at their own expense. The event that the Lord speaks about in verse 15 takes place at the middle of the tribulation, right here where the microphone divides our timeline.

You see, at the beginning of the tribulation, the Antichrist is going to be a ruler in nations to the west of Palestine. And he wants to get his foothold in Palestine. So he makes a treaty, a pact, a covenant with the Jewish people.

He's going to back them. They will need help, apparently, during those first years of the tribulation. He will offer that help and that backing.

Then, in the middle of the tribulation, he will break the treaty. And he'll put his foothold even stronger in Palestine, not only in a political way, but in a religious way. For he'll stand in the holy place, verse 14, in the temple in Jerusalem, and demand to be worshipped.

2 Thessalonians 2 gives us more detail when it says he will sit in the temple of God, showing himself to be God. Worship me. And then, as he has time and power, military power, he'll try to expand that foothold.

But time will run out on him, and he won't be able to do it. Worship me. Worship me.

Now, the Lord says, so bad is that going to be, and so intense will be the persecution of those who refuse to worship, that the next four or five verses are urgent, urgent commands to get out of Jerusalem. And they will be very pertinent to the people living in those days, at that time when Antichrist sets himself up and demands to be worshipped. Look for example at verse 16.

If you're in Judea, get to the mountains. If you're on a housetop, don't even make a detour inside to get clothes or anything. Go right down the outside stairs and get out.

If you are in the field working, don't go back to get your cloak, that big cloak they use to cover themselves, sort of like a sleeping bag. If you are out working in the field and your sleeping bag is at home, go! Forget the sleeping bag. If you have a child, if you're pregnant, or if you have a nursing child in that day, it will be even more difficult to get out of Palestine because of the encumbrance.

If it's winter, it will be more difficult because it doesn't snow very often in Jerusalem, 2,500 feet above sea level, but sometimes it snows there. When it snows in Jerusalem, it's just like when it snows in Dallas. Nobody knows what to do.

Everything shuts up, we get, that shuts down. There's no snow removal equipment in Jerusalem, and so the city would be paralyzed. If Antichrist set himself up on a snowy day, that would keep the people in Jerusalem.

Pray that your flight be not on a Sabbath day, because again, if it's on the Sabbath, there will be no public transportation, and not everybody has a car in Israel, so it will be difficult, more difficult to get out of the city. For then, verse 21, shall be great tribulation, such has not occurred since the beginning of the world,

until now, nor ever shall. Anarchy will bring Antichrist.

Antichrist, from this midpoint of the tribulation on to the end, will bring Armageddon. Anarchy, Antichrist, Armageddon, because he leads the march down the path to Armageddon. Now, we don't have time, or as it was in my province tonight, to talk about the numbers of battles that will occur here at the latter part of the tribulation.

Armageddon is a war, not just a single battle, and there will be a number of battles in the war. Some will involve nations to the north of Palestine. One will involve Egypt to the south.

There will be kings from the east, nations from the east of Palestine that will be involved. But the climax of it all will be at Armageddon, and throughout all of Palestine. Armageddon is a location in the north part of Palestine, but Zechariah tells us that there will also be wars in Jerusalem itself, so that there will be the whole land engulfed in the massive campaign of Armageddon.

Antichrist will lead the world to Armageddon. Now, the Lord doesn't describe Armageddon in great detail here, but there is one thing I focus your attention on in verse 28. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Armageddon is a time of horrendous carnage, death. So much so that if God didn't call, as we're told in other places in scriptures, if God didn't call the birds of the heavens to come and clean up the corpses, the resulting diseases and pestilences would be just incomprehensible. So wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The sun and moon will be affected, verse 29, and the stars of the heavens will be affected, and then the Son of Man, verse 30, will be seen coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. Why Armageddon? Because for all these thousands of years, man has been in rebellion. The harder question to answer than why Armageddon is, why hasn't it been sooner? Because rebellion has to be put down.

If Christ is to reign, he must put down the rebels. And during this time of coming awful tribulation, people will give vent to the worst within them, and will delight in it. And they will not repent of their murders and adulteries and sorceries and thefts, but will continue to practice all of them and spread them.

And if Christ is to reign, he must put down that rebellion, and he will, when he comes in power and great glory to defeat the armies of the world that are in rebellion against him at Armageddon. Why must there be a kingdom on earth after that? Because Christ must reign in victory in the arena where the rebellion has occurred and has persisted all of these years. Reigning in heaven? Of course.

But he must also reign on earth, because on earth has been the scene of the long rebellion of man against God. And on earth must be the reversal of that which will occur after he comes and on into his millennial kingdom. Anarchy will bring Antichrist.

Antichrist will lead the world to Armageddon. One final word of assurance. I want to add to this a word of Christ, also, that's found in Revelation 3, verse 10.

This is also the word of the living Lord at Philadelphia, after his resurrection and ascension. And it's a word of great assurance for those who follow him, who name his name, who have believed in him. Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, the hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those that dwell upon the earth.

One of the characteristics by which people will know that the tribulation has arrived is that it's worldwide. There are bad times, there have been bad times in history. There are bad troubles in many parts of the world today, and the church is being persecuted in many parts of the world today.

But this is not the tribulation. It is tribulation, but not the tribulation. Because it's not worldwide.

And here the Lord says it will be worldwide when it comes. And Revelation 6 says the same thing. It will be worldwide when it comes.

But here's the promise of the risen Savior. He says, I will keep you from the hour of testing. Now, people, you can go to a function, and you can be in one room when something's going on in another room, and you miss the event from the other room.

But you can't be kept from the hour of something if you're there where time is ticking off. The only way you can be kept from the hour of a worldwide tribulation is to be somewhere where clocks aren't measuring time. And that's no place on earth.

That's heaven. And that's one of the reasons I believe that our Lord will come and take us to be with himself before it begins because of his promise, I will keep you from the hour. In order to come to this week of conference, I gave a test.

Students always love to see their teachers go away because they can count on a test. Now, if I'd gone to that class and said, I'm going to give you a test next Tuesday, and I will make you a promise, I will keep all the A students from the test, they probably would have puzzled over that. How is he going to do that? That's a little ambiguous promise.

Well, here's what I would do. I would pass, or have the student pass out the test, and I would hand all the A students the answers. They would have been kept from the test.

They would have sat there and done it, but it was no test. But if I said to the class, I will keep all the students, or all the A students, or some class of students, from the hour of the test, I wouldn't have to explain that to students. They are smart enough to know that means don't come.

There's no way you can be kept from the hour of the test if you show up for the test. There's no way we can be kept from the hour of a worldwide tribulation if we're here. And the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and forever to be with him. Praise God. That's the word of assurance.

I hope you're a believer tonight. If you're not, you may die before all this happens, or you may live through this, horrible as it will be, but that's not nearly as bad as eternity in hell. I hope you know the one who is life, who offers living water, who offers forgiveness, eternal salvation for the asking.

To contemplate these things, it sobers us, but it makes us realize too how serious it is to be in rebellion against God, a holy God, that we took the place of a sinner and received salvation through grace, outcast his children. Lord, we pray you'll speak to the heart just now and make the hope of your coming to thank you that we know from the wrath to come.

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