

# The Great Tribulation and the Church

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the concept of tribulation in the New Testament and being prepared to stand up for one's convictions in the face of persecution and hardship.*

**Duration:** 1:08:36

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:21, Romans 8:37, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, Revelation 2:10

**Topics:** "Tribulation", "Perseverance"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for tribulation and persecution as a faithful follower of Christ. It highlights the need to love the truth, seek salvation from sin, and be faithful in little things to withstand the challenges ahead. The speaker warns against deception and false teachings, urging believers to stand firm in their faith and be ready to face tribulation with grace and courage.

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## Transcript

Today I want to speak about a word which is never found in the Old Testament, but is found frequently in the New Testament, which means it's a distinctively new covenant word. And it'll surprise you what it is. It's the word tribulation.

Have you ever thought of that as a new covenant word? We always think of new covenant as overcoming sin, overcoming Satan. But here is a word that's never found once in the entire Old Testament, which is three quarters of the Bible, because that was not the way God led the Israelites. The Israelites had what we could call a health wealth gospel.

It was good news for them. Gospel just means good news. And the condition was that they should obey God's commandments.

Deuteronomy 28 is the perfect example of the health wealth gospel. If you obey me, I'll give you health, I'll give you wealth. There's one more thing they say there, which today's preachers don't say, I'll give you many children.

They don't preach that part today. But everything else they preach today, it's an old covenant gospel. And if you don't obey me, you'll be poor and you'll be sick.

That's Deuteronomy 28. That's not the new covenant. And there's no tribulation in the old covenant at all, not even the word.

But when it comes to the new covenant, Jesus spoke about tribulation as one of the main signs of his second coming, deception and tribulation. So turn with me to Deuteronomy, sorry, Matthew chapter 24. Matthew 24, where the disciples asked Jesus specifically when he said to them in verse two, see all these stones in the temple, they're all going to be destroyed.

Not one stone will be left on the other. The whole thing is going to be flattened. And that happened about nearly 40 years after Jesus said it, when the Roman soldiers came and destroyed the whole temple.

But they asked him then, when will this be? That means when will this temple be destroyed? Second, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? The end of the age is really when Christ comes again of this particular age. So they asked him two questions. This temple is going to be destroyed.

When's that going to be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? And many people think of the things mentioned in verse six and seven, wars, rumors of wars, nation rise up against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines and earthquakes. These are the things most people think of, but that is just mentioned in two sentences and that's it. But two other things that Jesus mentioned frequently in this, as the answer to their question was deception.

Verse four, see to it that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name. That means they'll come in Jesus name.

And they will say that I am the Christ. That means they will say that's right. Jesus is the Messiah.

And then they will mislead you. He's not saying that somebody will stand up and say, I'm Jesus Christ. Who will deceive, who will be deceived by that? See, there should not be an inverted comma there.

There are no inverted commas in the original language. Many will come in his name saying he is the Christ. That's what he's saying.

Many will come in my name and saying I'm the Christ, but they will deceive you. So in other words, these are Christian preachers who not saying that they themselves are Christ. They are saying Jesus is the Christ, but they will deceive you.

They'll come in Jesus name. And he again repeats deception later. We've looked at that earlier.

And then he says, but there's wars and rumors of wars. And we see a lot of the evil in, you know, the suicide bombers and people being killed and terrorism, just increasing day by day. But he says in verse eight, these are only the beginning of birth pangs.

There's a new age being born and Jesus compares it to the birth of a baby. And every mother who's had a child knows that before the baby is born, there's this time of tremendous pain before the delivery of the baby. Part of the sorrows that God said to Eve, she would have in childbirth.

And those are called birth pangs or the birth pains before the baby is born. But wives still want to have babies because, see, that's only for a short period, the birth pain. But think that I can have a child after that.

It's gonna be a joy and a pleasure for me for a lifetime. So that's the picture, a short period of birth pain that a mother is willing to go through because as a result of it, at the end of it, she gets a child. That'll be a tremendous joy to her forever.

And like Jesus said, later on, he said in another place, she forgets about her birth pains when the baby is born. So the coming of the Lord and the new age is compared to the birth of a baby and a new development. But it's gonna be preceded, like in every childbirth, the period of birth pains.

And he says there's famines and earthquakes and wars and rumors of wars and all is gonna be just the beginning of those birth pains. And then what are the continuing of those birth pains? You know, the birth pain becomes more and more. So I understand from mothers that before the baby is born they scream and cry, but they don't, but they still want a baby.

And one who's gone through that will want to have another baby. How is that? Because the baby brings so much joy. The first one brought so much joy.

They say, I don't wanna stop with that. But what about the birth pain? Oh, I'm willing to go through that. That is the attitude that Jesus was saying we should have as we approach the end because here is the continuing of those birth pains that before the new age is gonna be born.

Then they will deliver you to tribulation. The first time the word occurs in the Bible, birth pains, tribulation from men, not tribulation from God. There are a couple of verses, I think only two verses in the Bible that speak about tribulation as coming from God, one in Romans 2 and the other in Revelation 2. But every other place where tribulation is mentioned, it's always tribulation from men.

There's a difference between tribulation from men and the wrath of God. Wrath of God is God's anger against sin. Tribulation is almost always given from men and the two places where tribulation is mentioned as coming from God is like a period of punishment for some sinful way somebody lived in.

It's a reaping of what they have sown like it says in Galatians 6. So that's not the wrath of God. Not even in those two references in Romans 2 and Revelation 2. But tribulation throughout Scripture is generally always referring to man troubling Christians because of their faith. Man persecuting Christians for their faith.

This is what we need to understand clearly. They, men will deliver you to tribulation and they will kill you. Birth pains.

That's why the early Christians were willing to be killed when they were thrown to the lions or burned to the stake. They said these are birth pains. A baby is going to be born.

A new age is going to come. You ask the mother, are you willing to go through this? Or you don't want a baby? No, I'm willing to go through it. I want the baby.

That is the attitude. These are the birth pains is going to usher in a new age. The kingdom of God on earth.

They will kill you. And listen to this. You'll be hated by some nations.

No, you'll be hated by every single nation on the face of the earth because you have my name. Now, some nations are in the olden days used to be called Christian nations. They are no longer called Christian nations now because they don't behave like Christians.

But once upon a time, they were called Christian nations because there were high percentage of people in those countries who were Christians, just like a high percentage of India are Hindus. So a high percentage

in many Western nations were Christians. Not today.

Today, most of them are atheists and even those who call themselves Christians are either old covenant Christians or nominal Christians. Even those who are born again are mostly old covenant Christians. So they're not really new covenant Christians at all.

But once upon a time, they were called Christian nations. And then in those days, those nations did not persecute people for the Christian faith. But today it's changing.

Even in those countries, things are changing that if a person stands up for their convictions, for example, a simple thing like a court registrar says, I cannot sign a certificate of a marriage between two men. Somebody did that in a Western country. You know what happened to that lady? She was imprisoned because the Supreme Court said two men can get married.

And she was standing up for a Christian conviction. That's just one example. There are many other examples.

There was another case of Christian Baker who refused to bake a cake for the marriage of two men. He says, I won't celebrate that type of thing. And he was the court ordered him to pay a huge fine.

He had to close down his shop because he stood up for Christ. Can you imagine? I mean, that doesn't even happen in this country. So so-called Christian nations are no longer Christian.

You will be hated in all nations for my name's sake because you stand up for Jesus. These are little, little tribulations. It will gradually build up to greater things.

Imprisonment. It happened, as I said to this person. And it can be for worse things and you stand up for the Lord.

And it can happen in this country, too. So don't think it's only sort of countries which are predominantly non-Christian in religion. When Jesus said, all nations, you'll be hated.

Tribulation in all nations of different degrees. Finally, the final ultimate end is being killed. Verse nine.

And when these tribulation when the tribulation begins in the last days. Remember the question at the beginning. When what is a sign of your coming? And he didn't speak much about the famines and earthquakes and wars, but he speaks a lot about tribulation.

At that time, many will fall away from the faith. And that is going to happen. Many will follow me, not one or two.

They say, hey, they will deny the Lord like Peter. No, I don't know him. They won't say Jesus Christ is Lord.

They'll be even willing to say some other name as their Lord to save their life. You know, like the three Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and Daniel story, how they were told to bow down to the idol or will be thrown into a furnace. And we had a drama on that once where the compromisers tell them, hey, listen, listen, God looks at your heart, man.

The compromisers say, what does it matter if you just bow down in your heart? You're not bowing down. And then even if you do bow down, get up and then confess your sin to God. He forgives you.

You're OK. And you'll save your life. And they said, no, it's like teaching it, telling a child to cheat in the exam and afterwards ask Jesus to forgive you.

You'll pass. Isn't that a better way than failing? Now, don't get any ideas. I'm saying that's not the way.

You're denying the Lord. So when they will fall away because they don't want to pay the price of even in a little thing, like in an office where you won't get a promotion because you stand up for Christ. And so some Christians don't want it to be known too much that they are wholehearted disciples of Jesus.

Non-Christians are not afraid to be known as non-Christians. They have marks on their forehead showing that they are non-Christians. They have calendars near their table with some idle picture that show they are non-Christians.

But you'll never find a Christian or hardly ever find a Christian with a calendar with a verse on it near a table. They are a little ashamed of it. These are the ones who will fall away.

They'll be ashamed to be seen carrying a Bible. You see, these are the little, little things by which I remember when I was in the Navy, I wanted, I couldn't openly preach. But I said I wanted every ship and every naval base I'm in, wherever I work, without openly preaching, I want people to know that I'm a Christian.

So I'd keep a Bible on my table and keep some Christian booklets there. And those days we didn't have these calendars with verses, but if I had one, I'd hung that up too. And I never preached to anybody, but that's my table and that's my little office.

I can put what I like there. And there were people who were offended. There were people who marched me up before the commanding officer because of what I did.

I say, fine. Those are the days when I was 23 years old where God gave me a spiritual backbone and prepared me for the ministry he had for me to stand up for the truth. And I believe many of us young people, God is preparing you now.

The little, little tests that you find in your office is not tribulation. It's a very small thing. But if you're faithful there, God will lead you to higher and higher levels of tribulation where you can be a great witness for Christ.

And maybe one day, if it is the Lord's will, it'll be a great honor. I think it'll be a great honor if you are martyred for Christ's sake. There's no greater or better way to die as far as I'm concerned.

I don't want to die of old age or cancer or... I'd rather be a martyr for Christ any day. Don't you want to be that? And not only they'll fall away, they'll betray one another. They will join up with the anti-Christian people and say, okay, I'll tell you where these people are and I'll give you their addresses and their phone numbers.

You can contact them to save their own life. That's what it says. They will deliver up one another and verse 10, they will hate one another.

This is not non-Christians hating Christians, they are Christians hating one another. Christians taking one another to court. It's already happened.

So it'll happen more because they're not going to be true to the Lord. And these little, little things are what's going to prepare us for a great thing. It's a great honor to be taken to court for Jesus' sake.

Jesus himself was taken to court by religious people. It's a great honor to lose a promotion in your job for Jesus' sake. It's a great honor if some customer won't accept the product you're trying to sell and you lose your reputation as a salesman because you're known as a Christian.

I'm not saying we should go around openly preaching, but you should not be ashamed to be known that you're a Christian. And especially if you have a non-Christian name, people think you're a Hindu. Don't let them get away with it.

Let them know you're a Christian in some other way. And false prophets will arise and mislead many. And that's mostly on television.

All over the world now in Christian television, there are false prophets. 90% of them teaching you the old covenant teaching that you can be rich and you can be healthy. That Jesus came to give us wealth and health.

He came to give us spiritual wealth and spiritual health and spiritual children. That's how I read Deuteronomy 28 converted to new covenant language. Spiritual wealth, spiritual health, spiritual children and no spiritual sickness.

That's how I read Deuteronomy 28. But these folks don't read it like that. False prophets leading misleading many mainly because they want their money.

You almost never find a preacher nowadays who doesn't take a collection. Jesus never took a collection his entire life. The apostles never took a collection.

They never took money from people they prayed on healed. There's a world of difference. These are the false prophets of today.

It's mainly by their, Jesus said by their fruit, you shall know them, not by their gifts. Very important to distinguish gifts and fruit. False prophets may have gifts, but they won't have fruit.

If you turn with me to Matthew chapter 7, you see there, Jesus said that at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he said, this way is narrow. Very few will find it. Matthew 7 verse 14.

And connection with that, he says beware of false prophets. That means false prophets are those who will not preach the Sermon on the Mount. You go to a church which does not preach the Sermon on the Mount.

It's full of false prophets. You watch a television program. Tell me the television programs where you've heard people speaking against dirty thoughts and anger and the love of money.

These are the things mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount, anxiety. They're not even mentioned because they ignore this narrow way. Those are the false prophets and you will know them, verse 16, by their fruits.

Again, in verse 20, you will know them by their fruits. See a lot of, what about gifts? Gifts are mentioned in verse 22. Those who cast out demons, heal the sick, do miracles, prophesy.

They are sent to hell because there's sin in their life. Fruit and gift are contrasted there. And there you see the false prophets.

That whole section, verse 13 to 23, shows false prophets may have gifts. They go to hell because of sin. They don't preach holiness and they're not holy themselves.

By their fruit, the fruit of the spirit marks out a true prophet. The gifts of the spirit, a true prophet may have, Jesus had it, but a false prophet may also have it. So you won't be able to distinguish by gifts.

So never evaluate a man by his spiritual gifts. Nobody who preaches in this pulpit should ever be evaluated by his preaching ability. Don't evaluate me by my preaching ability because that's a gift.

God can give it to others. It's by the fruit of one's life, particularly one's attitude to money. That's one of the clear tests.

And one's attitude to poor people. Most false prophets only hang around with the rich people and the big shots and the bishops and the cardinals. Okay, and there's going to be a tremendous amount of sin.

Verse 12, lawlessness is going to increase in the last days and many people's love will grow cold. Love for Jesus will cool off when there's a lot of sin in the world. You can ask yourself, did you love Jesus more when you were converted many years ago? Why is your love for Jesus less today when you started earning more money? Maybe you're earning today six or seven times what you earned when you were converted or 10 times what you earned when you were converted.

Those days you were poor and you loved Jesus. You didn't have much of this world's goods, but you love the Lord. But now you have so much money.

You have time to go into restaurants endlessly. Those days you couldn't even afford to go to a restaurant once in a year. But now you go every week.

You have a lot of money to throw around. It's your money, right? Not God's money. You can spend it as you like.

Your love has grown cold. You don't realize it. You don't have so much time to study the Bible now.

You have plenty of time. Those days you didn't have the internet. Now you have the internet.

No time to read the Bible. No time to study the Bible. Those days you never went to a movie.

Oh, there are interesting movies that you watch. The love of many will grow cold because sin is going to increase all around the world. And it's not gross sin like adultery and murder.

It's very subtle by which the devil makes God's people compromise and lose their love for Jesus Christ. If you love Jesus, you'll want to spend time with him. When a boy and a girl are in love with each other, they always want to spend time together.

When we love Christ with all our heart, we want to spend time with him. We want to know his word. We want to know his ways.

We want to understand him. If you want to spend more time with the internet and the movies than with Jesus Christ, you know where your heart is. Love will grow cold.

And when love for Christ grows cold, love for one another will also grow cold. It'll be easily offended with people, easily get hurt. Yeah, it's going to be true in the last days.

I decided many years ago that I'll never get offended. Never, no matter what somebody does or what somebody does not do, what somebody says or what somebody does not say, I am the one who decides whether I'm going to get offended. Getting offended is because of pride.

Many will get offended. But verse 13, the one who endures in love till the end will be saved. I want to be saved.

And here it says I can be saved if I endure in love to Jesus and love for one another. I want to do that. I want to endure in fervent love for Jesus Christ, increasing love.

In other words, I want to love Jesus more today than I loved him 56 years ago when I first gave my life completely to Christ. Much more. Otherwise, I'm not going in the right direction.

The Bible says the path of the righteous is like the shining light that shines brighter and brighter and brighter until the perfect day means more and more love. Like I always ask married people, do you love each other more than the day you were married? I tell people on the day of their marriage, this is the day when you should have loved each other the least. On the wedding day, it should be the day when you loved each other the least.

Every other day thereafter, you should love your partner more so that you look back to your wedding day and say that was the day I loved my partner the least. Now I love her much more. Now I love him much more.

And same with Christ. As I look back to the day I was converted and what all I was willing to sacrifice for him those days out of love. Today, it should be much more.

Much more fervent. Remember this. Take these words seriously.

Because of sin, the love of many will grow cold. The one who endures in love to the end will be saved. Another thing, verse 14.

The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world. Now that's not the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. What is the gospel of the kingdom of God? Very important to understand that.

Romans 14, 17 says Romans 14 and verse 17 says the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. It's not going to restaurants and having a lot of fancy food, wasting your money and all that. No, the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness means a life of overcoming sin, a life of partaking of God's nature, a life of holiness. How many people are preaching that gospel today? Peace means perfect peace with God. Clear conscience all the time.

Peace in our heart means complete freedom from all anxiety and fear. And peace with one another. That means you have forgiven everybody.

You've asked forgiveness from everybody. You have returned all money that you've taken wrongfully as peace from your side, even if other people don't love you. Peace.

How many people are preaching that today, that gospel? And joy. Rejoice in the Lord always 24 seven. How many people are preaching that gospel today? I've almost never heard it on television or in any church.

The gospel of the kingdom. Romans 14, 17, Matthew 24, verse 14. This gospel will be preached in the whole world.

How can a few people, very few people who are preaching this gospel, preach it in the whole world through the Internet? I mean, it's not mentioned there, but the Lord knew all about what's going to happen. It will be preached in the whole world. The whole world will hear that you can come to a life of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

And others will oppose it. They'll call it heresy. But that is the gospel of the kingdom.

And if you have heard that gospel in this church, it's your responsibility to share it with others. If you say you don't know how to preach it, get a book that costs the same as the price of a cup of coffee. Can you give a cup of coffee to a friend? Why don't you give him a book? You can't preach it yourself.

Take a little book that preaches it and give it to a friend as a gift for a birthday or a new year gift or something like that. It's very easy to spread the gospel if you want to. We must be inventive in our mind.

How can I spread the gospel? I don't have the gift of preaching or I'm very shy when I go to a person. Maybe I can mail him a book if I don't even want to meet him personally with a note inside saying here's something that's blessed me. This is the gospel of the kingdom.

I want to share it with you which says it'll be preached in the whole world. You can have a part in that. It doesn't say everybody will be converted through it.

No. Maybe 1% of the people you preach to will respond. It says it'll be a witness.

That's all. It'll be preached as a witness to all nations. There is a life of righteousness, peace and joy that you can have.

Then the end will come. It's being preached today around the world. And this is another indication that the end is near.

Because 25 years ago it was not being preached around the whole world as much as it is today. So don't just think of wars and terrorism and rumors of wars. The gospel of the kingdom is being preached.

It's one of the proofs that the end is near. And then it speaks about you know, the first question was when will this temple be destroyed? And Jesus speaks about a few things concerning that first question. Remember two questions.

When will the temple be destroyed? And when will the end of the age be? So first about the temple being destroyed. When you see the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel and that was happened when the Romans sacrificed a pig on the altar in the temple in Jerusalem in 70, 80, 40 years after Christ was crucified. Then he's talking to the Jews of that time.

This is the answer to the first question. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the house stop not go down to get the things in the house.

Just run without your possessions. Like they say, when your plane crashes, don't wait to pick up your bags. Just get out of the plane.

Run. And one who's in the field, don't go back to get your cloak. Run because it's going to be it's going to be very difficult in those days.

Speaking about the Jews in those days when Jerusalem was attacked and those who were pregnant had a very difficult time. And speaking about the Jews, obviously, in verse 20, it says, pray that you won't, it won't be a Sabbath day when you're not supposed to travel too much. Pray for that.

So that's obviously referring to the answer to the first question. And then he combines these two, you know, here's the answer to the second question coming up. And then there'll be a great tribulation.

This is the answer to the second question, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world. They asked two questions together and Jesus answers one and then goes on to the answer to the second one. Great tribulation.

That is an expression referring to what is going to happen just before Christ's coming, a period of three and a half years when the Antichrist will rule the world. And it's called in the Bible a period of great tribulation. So that's going to happen.

And then unless those days would cut short, no life would be saved. And if anyone says to you at that time, here is Christ or there is Christ. Or they say he came secretly without anybody knowing.

He suddenly came and raptured a few people. Don't believe them. There are lots of Christians preaching what is called a secret rapture.

And it is a teaching that Christ's coming will be in two stages. One he'll come secretly in the clouds and take away people. That means suddenly people will disappear from their houses and drivers of cars will disappear and drivers of planes will disappear if they're born again.

And they'll all be taken up suddenly and the others will be left behind to face the great tribulation. As if the great tribulation from men is a punishment from God. No.

That's why you need to distinguish between the wrath of God and tribulation from men. The great tribulation is from men. There are calamities.

In the last days, there have been calamities all through history. And in calamities, even believers suffer. For example, when there are floods, there are believers in those areas who suffer.

When there are earthquakes, there are believers also who suffer. So wherever there's been calamity in all these 2000 years, wherever there are believers, they suffer too. If there's a flu, believers can get it.

So we need to distinguish between that and the wrath of God. Believers will never face the wrath of God. That's clear.

But the great tribulation is not the wrath of God. And then it says, when there are people who say this, as I said, that Christ will come secretly seven years before the end of before his final coming and take Christians out. And I want to tell you something about it because it's a very popular teaching, totally not found in scripture at all.

I want to say to you, there's not a single verse, not a single verse anywhere in the Bible that says Jesus will come secretly. But yet there are people who believe it. And if you want to know the history of it, I've researched it.

175 years ago, there was a young woman in England, two young women, who they were in their teenage, teenage girls who said they received some spirit and they began to say all types of things. And they were almost the first people who spoke about the secret rapture. From the time of the apostles till 1830, nobody spoke about it.

Not Martin Luther, not John Wesley, nobody. But these women started preaching and some people started listening to it. And there were some preachers there who promoted it along with other things.

And then the leaders of the brethren, it was a man called J.N. Darby, who picked it up and promoted it. And that became something that is widespread and began to spread through all the world over a period of time. And one of the earliest Bible study Bibles was written by a man called Schofield.

The first Schofield reference Bible, he promoted it, particularly after the Second World War and now it has become worldwide. Most people, they get their knowledge from these men without carefully studying the scripture themselves. I want to tell you, I was in the brethren when I was converted.

I didn't know anything about the Bible. And the first four years after I was born again, I believed it myself. And I even preached on it.

But then I was a little baby and I started studying the scriptures. And about four or maybe five years after I was converted, I saw the truth. That nowhere in the Bible as I studied the Bible, those first five, six years after I was converted, I found nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus will come secretly and rapture.

So I said, Lord, I don't care of all the brethren people teaching. I don't care of all the Pentecostals teaching. I don't care of all Christendom teaches it.

I don't see it in scripture. That's how I've discovered many things. Which very few people speak about because it's in scripture.

That's what changed my life. And I would recommend to you that don't just believe what people say. Look for a scripture.

If somebody says there's going to be a secret rapture, ask him, where is it written? Show me the verse. I heard of a man who offered in America \$10,000 check to anyone who can show me one verse in the Bible. He advertised it over television and internet and everything.

Nobody came to claim it. Because there isn't a verse in the Bible. Then he says in the verse 24, false Christ, false messiahs.

You know, there are some Indian godmen also who claim to be messiahs. The word Christ means messiahs. False prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders.

So false prophets can show great signs and wonders. Remember that it's not only true prophets. So don't believe that every sign and wonder that you see, even if it's in Jesus name, because Matthew 7, they come to Jesus and say, Lord, in your name, we did this.

Don't believe it. That's why I say, be careful about all these healing meetings and all these people who pretend to do great miracles on the stage and all. They're not really.

That's a lot of it's hypnotism. They're like magicians. You know, have you, if you've ever seen a magic show on television or something or internet, you'll see that you're really amazed how they do it.

And that's, they're more spectacular than some of these healers in the way they deceive people. It's all hypnotism and tricks. Be careful in these last days.

And Jesus said, behold, I've told you in advance. And I say the same thing. And it says in the last part of verse 24, if possible, even the elect could be deceived.

That means the, these miracles are so convincing that people who don't know the scriptures will be deceived. But those who really know the Lord, part of God's elect, they'll be protected. And so if somebody says to you, hey, he's in the wilderness.

So he came there. He came secretly. Don't believe them.

Verse 26. Twice he said that. Verse 23 and 26.

Don't believe them. Don't believe that he came there. He came here.

He came. People who say Jesus came to see me in my room. Don't believe it.

Have you heard some testimonies like that? Jesus came to my room and talked to me. If they say to you, behold, he's in the inner room. Don't believe it.

I don't believe it. He's in heaven. He's never come back till today.

People saw him in heaven like Paul, Stephen. Okay. And then he said immediately after the tribulation, he's talking about verse 21, the great tribulation.

There's no one who knows the future better than Jesus Christ. And he says immediately after the great tribulation, the sun will be darkened. The moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from the sky. The powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the son of man will appear in the sky.

And that will be verse 27, just like the lightning from the east to the west. So will the coming of the son of man be. There can be no clearer verse than this in the whole Bible that when Jesus comes, it'll be like the lightning.

When a lightning strikes, everybody sees it. There's nothing secret about lightning and thunder. Even if we are asleep, you hear the thunder, lightning from one end to the other of the sky.

Christ's coming will be like that. There is no secret coming of Christ. He will come verse 30 after verse 29, after the great tribulation.

And he will come in the sky and the tribes of the earth will mourn and he will come with power and great glory and with angels and with a great trumpet. And he will gather together his children from the four corners of the earth and take them up. So we're going to go through a period of great tribulation first.

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians now. What did we see just now? If you remember what we just said, when the son of man comes, there'll be angels, trumpet, and the elect will be gathered up. And he will come in the clouds.

Now you see exactly the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 4. In 1 Thessalonians 4, he says concerning the coming of the Lord, verse 16, 1 Thessalonians 4, 16, the Lord himself will descend from heaven. Notice the same things mentioned here. Shout, voice of the archangel, trumpet, the dead in Christ will rise first.

We are alive, caught up together from all parts of the earth in the clouds to meet the Lord. You compare that with what we just read in Matthew 24 in verse 30 and 31, exactly the same. But the time is not mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4. The time is mentioned in Matthew 24, verse 29, immediately after the tribulation.

And the tribulation is verse 21, the great tribulation. Okay, then he goes on to say in 1 Thessalonians 5, you know that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. But brethren, verse 4, you are not in darkness that they should overtake you like a thief.

It'll overtake other people in the world like a thief because they are not expecting the Lord to come. I'm expecting the Lord to come. So it won't surprise me.

I hope you're expecting the Lord to come. And everything around me shows me that I look at the signs and I say Christ is coming soon. So if he comes, I will not be surprised.

But I know he's not going to come tonight because there's got to be this three and a half year period of tremendous tribulation before he comes. You know, people say, well, if you preach like that, people won't live holy lives. You've heard me say this before.

We are the bride of Christ. And if the only reason you're faithful to your bridegroom is because you feel he may come suddenly, you don't deserve to be the bride. You're a harlot then.

What would you think of a girl who says, oh, my fiance may come any day to marry me. So I better not fool around with other men. But if she knows that he's coming only after a couple of years, then I can fool around with other men.

Is that a bride or a harlot? That's not the reason to be holy that Christ may come anytime. No, you're a harlot if your holiness comes from this thought that he may come anytime. Oh, while I'm doing this sin, he may come.

While I'm watching this dirty movie, he may come. What about if he comes after 10 years? You still watch the dirty movie? You're a harlot. That is not the reason why we are holy.

That is a dead work. We are to repent of dead works. Your holiness must not be because you're afraid Christ may come at that moment.

Your holiness must be because you love Jesus, because you hate sin, because he was crucified for your sin. Even if he comes after 50 years, I want to be holy all these 50 years. He's got nothing to do with his

catching me suddenly when he comes.

Some of you may have this concept still because that's been drilled in you by Babylonian Christianity. Get rid of it from your mind and say, Lord, I want to be holy because I love you, because my sin crucified you. I don't care if you come after 100 years.

I want to be faithful to you every single day, every single moment. So that day will not overtake you as a thief. Why? Because 1 Thessalonians 5, 5, you are sons of light.

We're not sons of the day. We don't belong to the darkness. So let's not go to sleep spiritually like all those other people.

They're in the night. We belong to the day. OK, now we go to 2 Thessalonians in Chapter 2. Paul wrote a lot to the Thessalonians about the coming of Christ.

And in 2 Thessalonians in Chapter 2, he says, first of all, that God will judge with affliction. Verse 6, 1, 6, those who afflict you, you'll go through tribulation. You know, Paul had said to the Thessalonians, if you turn to 1 Thessalonians 1, he says, you received the word that we gave you.

And 1 Thessalonians in Chapter 1, Verse 6, you became imitators of us and of the Lord and you received the word in much tribulation. They'd already faced tribulation. Those early Christians were just used to tribulation.

And he says here, when will Christ come now? 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 2. Now we request you, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being raptured, being taken up together to him, concerning our rapture and the coming of Christ. Don't be quickly shaken by some false teaching or message that somebody says, saying, what are they saying? Oh, the day of the Lord came. You know, the secret rapture happened a few days ago or don't be deceived by that.

It's so clear. Don't be deceived and shaken by saying that day has come because let no one deceive you. And here it is.

That day will not come. The coming of the Lord and our rapture, Verse 1, will not come until first the great falling away comes, falling away when Christians fall away from the faith, when so-called Christian nations fall away from the faith, when they compromise and they no longer respect God, they fall away from God. It's happening all around now.

To me, the great falling away from the faith around the world, falling away from holiness to health, wealth, gospel, that's also a falling away. That's happening everywhere. It's an indication that we're approaching the coming of the Lord, the falling away first and then the Antichrist, the man of sin is revealed.

So that coming of the Lord will not come until the falling away first. That's happening now. The next thing is the Antichrist will be revealed, the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God and who sits in the temple as though he himself is God.

That Antichrist has not yet been revealed, but he's going to come up. A world ruler. Don't you remember that when I was with you, I told you these things.

I repeat it again. But why hasn't he appeared yet? Because the Holy Spirit is restraining him now. It's like a block.

The Holy Spirit moves out and then he gets revealed. And then the one who's coming is going to be with verse 9 with power and sign and false wonders. The world is being prepared for the coming of the Christ with false miracles today.

So when he comes with false miracles, they'll accept him. And there'll be again deception and the people who will be deceived. It's very important to see who will be deceived.

You've heard me speak about this numerous times. Those, verse 10 last part, who do not receive the love of the truth, number one. Those who don't want to be saved from sin, number two.

There are two ways you can escape deception. One, love the truth. Read the word of God, which is the truth.

And when the word of God shows you something which is contrary to what you've always believed, be willing to give up your ideas which you got from some denomination and believe what the word of God says. Accept it. When the word of God says that day of Christ coming will not take place until the Antichrist is revealed, believe it, even if you didn't believe it until today.

That's a test of whether you love the truth or whether you love your preconceived idea. The other aspect of loving the truth is when God shows you some sin in your life, love it, not love the sin. Lord, thank you for showing that to me.

Don't justify yourself. Oh, but because it was this, my wife gave me the fruit. No, no, no, no, no.

Just accept it. Love the truth and hate the sin. Don't justify yourself.

I've seen even some brothers in some of our CFC churches. I'm sorry to say even some CFC elders and not here, but in some of the other churches who have stopped loving the truth. And I want them straight.

You're not loving the truth about yourself. Pride has come in and you don't realize it. It's my job to correct them.

And I do it. I cannot save them, but I can correct them. I seek to be a faithful elder brother to anyone who will accept me as such.

I don't warn people who don't want that correction. And seek to be saved from sin. One, love the truth.

And second, seek to be saved from sin. Be more eager to be saved from sin than from sickness and from poverty and from financial difficulties. Seek to be saved from sin.

You will never be deceived. But if you don't love the truth, you're not wanting to be saved from sin. It says in verse 11.

This is the only verse in the Bible which says God himself will allow you to be deceived. Satan is already deceiving you. The lusts in your flesh are deceiving you.

The heart is deceitful above all things, it says in Jeremiah 17. On top of all that, if almighty God himself allows you to be deceived, I want to say there'll be no hope for you. What is deception? You think you're right and you're totally wrong.

That is how people deceive you. People who pass out thousand rupee notes that look like the real note but it's not the real thing and you got fooled. And the same way, the devil deceives Christians.

They think they're saved when they're not saved. They think they're filled with the spirit when they're not filled with the spirit. There are thousands like that in the world today.

There's no fruit of the spirit coming on. They still lose their temper, they get angry, there's no joy, there's anxiety. But I'm filled with the spirit because I speak in tongues.

Deception, deception, deception. If you love the truth and you want to be saved from sin, you will not be deceived. Turn with me now to Revelation.

In Revelation chapter 1, there are verses in Revelation which are not symbols, those you can take clearly and accept it. But when it comes to the symbols in Revelation, be very careful because clever people can interpret symbols in different ways. So don't try to get a doctrine out of an interpretation of a symbol because another fellow cleverer than you can interpret it another way.

We must not get doctrine out of interpretation of parables because clever people interpret the parables also in different ways. I'll give you one example. Jesus once said a parable of a mustard tree, which is the smallest of all plants, but it grows up, becomes a huge plant and the birds of the air nest in it.

Some people interpret it as Christianity started very small but spread all over the world and so many people came in. That's not the meaning. The birds of the air and the other parable of the sower of the seed were the agents of the devil who came and took the seed.

So he's talking about a Christianity which is supposed to be a pure but small testimony for Christ. People make it big. Like many, many big denominations.

Then the demons come and sit over there. You see how you can completely misinterpret a parable and you'll see that in books written by evangelical Christians. So don't try to get a doctrine out of a parable and don't try to get a doctrine out of symbols in the book of Revelation.

You'll get deceived. But get doctrine out of the clear statements of Jesus immediately after the great tribulation. The son of man will come in the clouds.

That's not a parable. That's not a symbol. Revelation chapter 1. John says, I John your brother.

Revelation chapter 1 verse 9. Your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation. He was facing tribulation. He was exiled to the isle of Patmos because he was true to the faith and to the church to a good church in Smyrna.

Chapter 2 verse 8. Verse 9. Chapter 2 verse 8. To the angel of the church in Smyrna write. Verse 9. I know your tribulation and your poverty. Which was the churches that was facing tribulation? Those who were faithful.

The compromising churches did not face tribulation from man. No. You read about it.

Smyrna was the one faithful church. The other ones were facing tribulation. They are poor.

Most of God's people are poor. It's very often wealth. Believe me.

Very often it is wealth that takes a man's heart away from God. And I want to say to you if God has given you money and you earn much more than you were earning when you were first converted. I want to say this seriously to all of you who are earning a lot more money today than you were on the day you were first converted.

Seriously examine your life and see if your wealth has not taken you away from devotion to Jesus Christ. See if you have backslidden inwardly where you don't have so much time for the Lord now. Like you think back to those days when you loved Jesus so fervently when you were first converted and you were poor and you were happy with what you had.

You didn't covet this and covet that want to buy this and want to buy that and go to every restaurant for a meal. No. You were happy.

You were happy to eat at home. You were simple. But it's all gone now.

You become wealthy. You got so much money to throw around like other people and your love for Jesus is gone. You read the Bible less.

You read Christian books less. You don't have time to read Christian books. What's happened? Examine yourself.

He was yours to hear. Let him hear. But this church he says, I know your tribulation and your poverty but spiritually you're rich.

Revelation 2.9 Don't fear what you're about to suffer. Verse 10 The devil is going to cast some of you into prison. Not the other churches.

The worldly churches. The other five churches. The devil doesn't cast them into prison.

He doesn't take them to court but you will be tested. You're being put into prison is a test and you will have tribulation. This is spoken to not the Ephesus church which lost their first love.

Not the Laodicean church which says I'm rich and increased with goods. It's spoken to a poor church that was faithful to God. You will have tribulation but I will determine the number of days.

10 days. Praise God for that. God determines the period where he allows others to take us into tribulation.

Maybe 10 days or 10 years but God is the one who determines it. Be faithful unto death. I'll give you a crown of life.

And this is the one verse in Revelation 2.20 where God says to the to Jezebel that if you continue in your sin I will punish you verse 22 with great tribulation. That is from God's punishment. That's not from man.

And which is the other faithful church? The other faithful church is the church in Philadelphia and the church in Philadelphia also he warns them you're going to have an hour of testing verse 10 but I will keep you in that time that you will not fall. He's not saying I'll protect you from testing that you will not be tested but I'll keep you that you don't fall and hold fast to what you have. When you move on in Revelation chapter 7 verse 9 after these things I looked a great multitude this is referring to believers in heaven a great multitude but no one can count from every nation, tribe, people, tongue standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes this is definitely referring to believers and they cry out with a

loud voice our salvation is due to our God not to anything in ourselves our salvation is due to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb and John asks the angel verse 14 Who are these people?

Now the angel asked John where they come from? verse 13 and John says I don't know you tell me and the angel says these great multitude that you saw in verse 9 these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation what does that mean? Does he say these are the ones who escaped the great tribulation? No when you say somebody came out of a pit what does it mean? Was he in the pit or not? When you say I came out of Tamil Nadu into Bangalore were you in Tamil Nadu? Always when you say I came out of I came out of a sickness does it mean you never got sick?

What does the word come out of mean? In every place you use that expression it always means you were there and you came out of it I came out of poverty into wealth I came out of sin into salvation what does it mean I came out of great tribulation? They went through the great tribulation and came out of it not they escaped it such a clear verse and yet people believe that Christians will escape the great tribulation the amount of deception the devil has put upon Christians around the world for centuries and I want to tell you another thing and that is this teaching as I told you it started only about 175 years ago and it did not start in countries which faced persecution countries that face persecution like China, Eastern Europe and all these countries they would never never believe this teaching they're facing it all the time tribulation where did the teaching of the Christians will escape the great tribulation come from?

England went to America countries that never faced any persecution against Christians for hundreds of years for hundreds and hundreds of years before 1800 1930 there was no persecution in these lands for Christians and from there came a doctrine from a comfortable Christianity and from a very wealthy Christianity these were among the wealthiest Christians in the world in the 1800s America and England no wonder such a doctrine came out of countries that did not have any persecution and had plenty of money if they were like the church in Smyrna persecution they would never have evolved this doctrine there was a great saint of God called Corrie ten Boom by the way you know this doctrine of church going through the great tribulation has even been believed by some of the greatest saints like George Muller he stood against J.N.

Darby and saying I believe the church will go through the great tribulation A.W.

Tozer Charles Spurgeon all these people believe the church will go through the great tribulation and every person who studied the scripture can only come to this conclusion Corrie ten Boom was another great woman of God who was imprisoned in Germany by the Nazis escaped out of it she also believed church will go through the tribulation and she says when she went to China and talked to some of the pastors there they told her the missionaries came to China and told us for years we will escape the tribulation we'll be taken up we'll be taken up Christ will come but it's not Christ who came the communists came and we face tribulation what is the result? so many people lost their faith in Christ because they were not expecting tribulation for 30 years or more I have preached for perhaps for 40

years all the period of the of our CFC's existence I preached we are going to face persecution and we must be ready for it and you can't be ready for it in one day be faithful in the little things today love the truth be faithful be faithful with money be faithful with your time don't be ashamed to stand up for Christ in little things be willing to lose your promotion if that is the price you have to pay to stand up for Christ be honest be faithful and then when the great tribulation comes God will give us grace I mean I I often think you know they used to pull out people's nails and stretch their limbs and torture them in so many ways in the 1400s

and all Christians were persecuted by the Protestants were persecuted by the Roman Catholics and I've read of all this there's a little

there's a book called Fox's Book of Martyrs which I read I got my children to read books about martyrs little booklets and all I got my children to read them because I say I want my children to be prepared for the days to come and there when I read all those things I said Lord how am I going to stand with all these things and what the Lord showed me is if you're faithful with little things now at that time I'll give you grace and you'll be able to handle it you know like you send your son to the market to buy something worth 20 rupees you give him 20 rupees if you send your son to this market to buy something worth 200 rupees you don't give 20 rupees you give 200 rupees so when we go through little trials God gives us enough grace for that trial when the trial becomes bigger he's going to

give us more grace that son will have enough money to buy what he has to get because you've given him the money it's exactly like that so don't be afraid that you'll deny the Lord when the trouble becomes so much they start pulling out your nails and stretching your limbs and torturing you you will stand for the Lord if you seek to receive grace for the little things today seek God for grace and the Lord will make us triumphant one last verse Romans chapter 8 and we'll close Romans chapter 8 this is the triumphant cry of the Apostle Paul as he concludes the message of the gospel in Romans verse we know verse 28 God causes everything to work for our good including tribulation so that we might be conformed to the image of his son verse 29 Romans 8 29 if that is true and it is true verse 31

what shall we say to these things in a time of tribulation small or big if God is for us who can be against us that is what we say today in our office factory somebody persecutes us because we're standing up for righteousness if God is for us who can be against us one day in the future when non-Christians persecute us or kill us if God is for us who can be against us who will bring a charge against us who shall separate us verse 35 from the love of Christ tribulation that's the first thing he mentions you think tribulation will separate us from the love of Christ it may take me away from the world through death but it won't separate me from the love of Christ no distress persecution famine nakedness peril sword today gunfire those days sword and they're using the sword again nowadays in

some places chopping off people's heads is that going to separate us from the love of Christ no we are already being put to death all day long we were considered and we are considered a sheep for slaughter I remember this hearing of a story in the 1800s there was a missionary from England who got onto a ship young man in his late 20s to preach the gospel to the Fiji Islands in those days they were all cannibals there nowadays it's a little more civilized but in those days cannibals in the 1800s and this man got onto a ship with his wife to go there to preach the gospel to these cannibals and that when they reached the Fiji the captain of that ship said hey you're gonna die here you know what he said he said we died before we got onto the ship we died before we got onto the ship it's those

who have died in Christ and who don't care for this world and its attractions who will stand true who say if God be for us who can be against us for thy sake we are being killed even today all the day long in different situations that come up in life I die I die I die and the result verse 37 in all these things we are more than conquerors because of him who loved us let's follow in the footsteps of these godly men especially that man who said I died before I got under the ship so what is it if somebody kills me now for preaching the gospel to them we're going to meet that man in heaven and he'll ask you for your testimony I hope you won't be ashamed in what you have to say let's pray heavenly father we've spoken about solemn things today and we believe it's a word that you have to prepare

us for the days to come what is exciting because at the end of it we see you face to face and that's the joy we have thank you thank you we praise you that we are a fellowship that we can encourage one another along this way and be prepared for the days to come bless everyone here lord we pray that we'll all be ready all that happens is going to happen in the future because we know that you'll be with us you said I'll never leave you nor forsake you you'll be with us till the end of the age in Jesus name amen

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