

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B1220 – May 20, 2012

Pre-Tribulation-The Matthew 24 Criticism

We're dealing with four arguments against pre-tribulationism. The heaviest criticism is that John Nelson Darby invented the rapture teaching in 1830 after getting it from a little Scottish lassie named Margaret McDonald who had demonically inspired visions. Understand that one day when someone finds out you're a dispensationalist you could very well be charged with this, they think you're a cult. The answer to that is the biographical evidence that Darby realized it in 1827, three years before he ever crossed paths with this little teenage girl. He actually realized it through Bible study while convalescing after a riding accident. The other thing that shows the dubiousness of this charge is that Margaret McDonald didn't even believe in a pre-trib rapture, she was an Irvingite. So it seems incredible to me that Darby, a man who knew six languages fluently, a man who was a tremendous scholar, got the pre-trib rapture from some teenager girl who didn't even believe in it. That takes a real stretch of the imagination. So people who make this attack either do not have their historical ducks in a row or frankly they're just deceptive people.

Also we showed you can go find pre-trib rapture statements before Darby. Morgan Edwards was one of them; look at the dates on Edwards (1722-1795). He had already outlined a dispensational scheme as early as that. He wrote in 1742, "...the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ's "appearing in the air" (I Thes. iv. 17);" notice the passage quoted, it's the same passage we quote, "and **this will be about three years and a half before the *millennium***, as we shall see hereafter: but will he and they abide in the air all that time? No: they will ascend to paradise, or to some one of those many "mansions in the father's house" (John xiv. 2)," again, another major rapture passage, "and **disappear during the foresaid period of time**. The design of this retreat and disappearing will be to judge the risen

and changed saints; for “now the time is come that judgment must begin,” and that will be “at the house of God” (I Pet. iv. 17).

Then there was the Grant Jeffrey find; he’s a Canadian prophecy teacher and a few years back he found a very early pre-trib rapture statement in a sermon by Pseudo-Ephraem. His dates are ca. 374-627, meaning we’re not sure exactly when this guy lived but there’s no doubt he’s long before Darby. The sermon he found this in was a 1500 word sermon, the quote says, “All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.” That clearly separates the rapture from the return. And apparently this sermon was translated into several languages, so it was popular, it was widespread; these ideas didn’t originate with Darby. So that’s objection one, that the pre-trib rapture is a recent development and therefore wrong. Sorry, that’s just not true.

Today we’re going to deal with the second objection and that’s Matt 24. The accusation is that pre-tribulationism misinterprets Matt 24. A lot of people find this difficult so let’s turn to Matt 24 and while you’re in Matt 24 also look at Zech 14 so you can flip between those two passages, that’s where we’ll be working for the rest of the time. Matt 24 is a crux in eschatology, obviously because it is a major discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ. What did I tell you a few weeks ago to be thinking when you come to Matt 24? Who should you have on your mind? The Church or Israel? Israel, Israel, Israel. Why? Because otherwise you misinterpret it. That’s our position; our position says the opponents to our position misinterpret it because they come with the Church in mind. Their charge is exactly the reverse. That’s what we’ll be looking at.

Now, inevitably when a person comes to Matt 24 with the Church in mind what do they do? They start finding the rapture. Notice verse 31, if the Church is in Matt 24 then verse 31 becomes the rapture. “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” If that’s the rapture of the Church that would support a post-tribulation timing of the rapture because v 29 said this is “after the tribulation of those days,” so post-tribulationist’s lean hard on Matt 24:31. They link it with the trumpet in 1

Thess 4 and the last trump in 1 Cor 15. What does mid-tribulationism do with this? It gives them real difficulties because this is after the tribulation, not in the middle. What about the pre-wrath people? How do they deal with it because they've placed the rapture $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the tribulation and this is not $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through, this is after the tribulation. Well, it gives them trouble too. The bottom line is there are only two stable positions of the four futurist views; pre-trib and post-trib. Mid-trib and pre-wrath are unstable positions and you tend to slide one way or the other, either to a post- or pre-trib explanation. So the only two stable positions are post-tribulationism which identifies Israel with the Church and pre-tribulationism which distinguishes Israel and the Church. What post-tribulationism does is start with later revelation about the Church in 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15 and read back the rapture of the Church into Matt 24. What pre-tribulationism does is start with prior revelation in Deut and Isaiah and Zechariah and read forward to the return of Christ and gathering of Israel into the kingdom.

Now, I should add that there are some pretribulationists who have argued that the Church is in Matt 24. They typically drop down to vv 36-41 to support their view. Their argument is that here we find similarities with rapture passages, things like, nobody knowing the time of His coming, two men being in the field, one being taken, one being left, two women at the mill, one being taken, one being left. Those they say are similarities and therefore that's the rapture. The problem is that the ones taken are not taken to a place of safety, they are taken in judgment, their bodies are left to be eaten by the vultures. But you need to know that argument is still around by pre-trib people. I just heard a paper at the pre-trib conference in December 2011 making the argument and it didn't get a very good reception. It's not a majority position anymore because you wind up having a hard time separating vv 36-41 from verse 31 and v 31 is clearly post-tribulationist. So if you try to find the rapture in Matt 24 you end up connecting these passages and sliding toward post-tribulationism. What I and others are saying is that the context is Israel and by importing later revelation about the Church into the context you are undercutting the distinction between Israel and the Church. And once you've undercut that distinction then post-tribulationism is the logical end.

In opposition to these objections pre-tribulationism maintains the distinctions between Israel and the Church and therefore a distinction between the rapture and the return. This is something we've noticed as we've studied; Israel and the Church are not the same. Israel is on calendar time, the Church is not on calendar time; Israel is a nation, the Church is composed of people from every nation. Israel is destined for judgment followed by the kingdom; the Church is immune from judgment in the rapture followed by the judgment seat of Christ. There are all these distinctions that pre-tribulationism is known for. Our argument is that Matthew 24 is Jesus addressing his Jewish disciples as representative of the nation Israel here, so this is not addressed to the Church which will not be formed until several weeks after this discourse. So right away the question is who is Jesus addressing in Matt 24? Our answer is the disciples, but the disciples are all Jewish, they represent Israel. Some will say, well, yeah, but in a few weeks they're going to become Christians, they're going to be the foundation of the Church, so isn't Jesus talking to the Church by extension, doesn't this passage apply to the Church? If you think about how carefully we went through the Book of Acts, charting the five steps of the gradual realization of what God was doing, let's review this and think.

What did we say happened during the career of the Lord Jesus Christ before He was crucified? What was Jesus' message? His message was repent for the kingdom is at hand. Was it or was it not imminent? Could it not come at any moment? I am the King and if you receive Me you will have your kingdom. We studied the Matt 22 parable where the invitation was given, the invitation to what? The invitation to the Kingdom and to whom was that invitation given? It was given to Israel. So prior to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we had invitation number one. That invitation was rejected. Jesus was crucified, He rose again from the dead, and what did Peter do in Acts 2 and Acts 4? He turned around and he did what? Offered the kingdom again. Offered it to whom? The nation Israel. Where was he? Jerusalem. Who was he talking to? The leadership of the nation Israel. You rejected your King, you crucified Him, now what? Repent and return so that your sins may be washed away and the times of refreshing can come, the times of restoration. That's all OT language for the kingdom, the kingdom would come and be restored if the nation repented. So we have invitation number two going out in the Book of Acts. But in the parable the Lord said this time they would reject the invitation again but something else would start to happen.

The Lord's messengers would be killed. And what happens through the Book of Acts? Stephen is killed; James the brother of John is killed. Just like the parable predicted. Then the parable says their city would be destroyed. What was their city? Jerusalem. When was it destroyed? AD70. Finally it says the invitation will go out to the riff raff of society and in the Book of Acts you see Samaritans respond, you see Gentiles respond, they're the riff raff and they start coming into the Church uncircumcised. Early Jewish believers really struggled with that. They didn't know what to make of it. In Acts 15 at the Council of Jerusalem they're still struggling with that. Finally they agree that hey, something is going on here new, a new thing called the Church that is entered by faith alone, there's no necessity to come in through Judaism, no necessity to circumcise these people. The point is that it took them several years to realize what had begun on the day of Pentecost. That's not an argument that Jesus can't address Church age truth in the Gospels in the sense of revealing things that would be for the Church like in the Upper Room Discourse of John 14; things that the Holy Spirit would explain more about later on but which have no parallel in the OT. But it is to say that you can't race into Matt 24 and claim the disciples are sitting there representing the Church weeks before the Church even begins and years before they realize the Church has even begun. Especially when you have OT parallels that go precisely along with Matt 24. How do you know they're not representing the nation Israel that hasn't yet received its second invitation?

Let me show you why that's a problem. Go over to Matt 10, the same disciples now; now the question is all right, if Matt 24 is addressed to the disciples as representatives of the Church, what do you do with Matt 10. In Matt 10:1, He "summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." He lists them, and in verse 6 where does He tell them to go? Does He tell them to go out into the world and preach the gospel? No, He says "but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 7, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Who are they to go out to? To the nation Israel. They're not going out to all people to make disciples of every nation; look at the context of the passage. They are going strictly to Israel; they are the remnant of Israel addressing the nation of Israel with a very Jewish message.

So in Matt 10, summary of this point, the disciples are clearly *not* representative of the Church, they are representative of Israel. Therefore it is not true that you have to have them representing the Church in Matt 24, particularly since the Church hadn't even formed yet. And not only has it not formed, Israel hasn't even totally rejected the Messiah yet. There's a contingency to the kingdom. Now you have to be careful, I believe in the sovereignty of God and I'm not undermining the sovereignty of God in any way, but let's face it; God has contingencies in history that are very real. Now how He has contingencies and yet is totally sovereign is a mystery, we don't know how He does that. But what did the Lord Jesus Christ say when the Roman cohort came to arrest him and one of Jesus disciples cut off the guy's ear? He said put that away, I could pray to My Father and he would send twelve legions of angels to defend Me. I don't need your little sword. Let's suppose Jesus had prayed that, then where would the cross be? The cross wouldn't have happened. But clearly that was a contingency because Jesus spoke about it. He said I could pray now and I could be rescued from all the Romans right now, I could have thousands and thousands of angels come and protect Me. The Lord Jesus Christ could have done that. He's not faking it; that was a live option. So also when we come down here and Peter in Acts 2 and Acts 4 is offering the kingdom to the nation Israel they could have repented at that point and the Kingdom would have come, the times of refreshing would have come. But they didn't and God knew they wouldn't, but God gave a legitimate invitation any way. In fact He had already revealed in the parable that He knew there would be two invitations, both would be rejected but they were genuine invitations nonetheless.

So Matt 24 first of all does not have to have the Church in it just because these guys later come to represent the Church and a reason for saying that is that Matt 10 does not have the Church in it. Let's go further. In Matt 24 where are the disciples seated? What's the location? They are located up on the Mt of Olives, verse 3, where they can see the Temple. The Mt of Olives overlooks the Temple from the East. What does that have to do with anything? The Mt of Olives is mentioned in OT prophecy as a very significant place. And here you have Jewish guys who know OT prophecy; they know the significance of the Mt of Olives. So hold the place and turn to the prophecy, Zech 14.

Remember when Zechariah was written? Zechariah was one of the post-exilic prophets. After the southern kingdom of Judah had gone into Exile to Babylon and spent 70 years in that dump they were restored, so this is preparatory for the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had to come back to the land so the Messiah could be born in the land, to fulfill prophecy. And Zechariah gives some parting prophecy about the future of the nation Israel. So to a Jew in Jesus' day the most recent prophecies that he would have had are prophecies like these in the book of Zechariah. Do the disciples have the NT? No, they didn't have the NT; their Bible ended a few years after Zechariah with Malachi, Malachi was known as the seal of the prophets meaning the OT canon was closed, so chronologically it ended with Malachi, in the order they laid down it ended with Chronicles, but chronologically it ended with Malachi, a few years after Zechariah. So this prophecy is right near the end of their OT.

Look at Zech 14:1 and I want you to pay close attention to the sequence, "Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you." It's talking of a day when Jerusalem comes under siege. Verse 2, "For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." So we have the city of Jerusalem under attack by Gentiles but it's not a complete defeat, a very important observation. Verse 3, "Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle." So the Messiah is going to come and rescue the Jews and notice where His feet will stand, verse 4, "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south." That's some pretty big movement for a mountain to split in half and move apart creating a valley in between, that takes some serious power. Verse 5, "And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah." So there's a rescue, the Jews are under siege but they are rescued, "Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! 6And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. 7For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night; but it

will come about that at evening time there will be light. 8And in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. In verse 9 we've clearly shifted to the kingdom. "And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. 10All the land will be changed" So on and so forth. Verse 11, "And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security." That's all the kingdom, Jerusalem is restored to its former glory, the nation dwells in safety.

That's the sequence of future things that Zechariah sees and you can see it in this set of boxes. Now put yourselves in the shoes of the disciple's in Matt 24. They are standing on the Mt of Olives overlooking the Temple, it's beautiful, Herod started an expansion project that had been going on for some 60 years and what does Jesus say? Take a peek at Matt 24:1, "Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2And He said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.'" The disciples are shocked; the Temple is going to be torn down!!! It's not even completely built yet. In the context of the OT what would that mean to them? That would mean that Jerusalem is under siege. And what did Zechariah predict? That in the day when the nations come to destroy Jerusalem, who is going to come back? The Messiah is going to come back, he's going to smash the nations, split the Mt of Olives, rescue Israel and bring in the kingdom.

So there's already a way of thinking when you come into Matt 24 that comes from one of the most recent prophecies in Jewish history, Zech 14. And if you are the disciples hearing Jesus talk about the destruction of the Temple what are your feelings? You're excited. So in verse 3 they ask Him, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" They want to know when because they've already identified the Lord Jesus Christ as YHWH. When are you coming to do these things? When will this happen so we can have our kingdom? He answers, verse 4, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." So false Christ's. Verse 6, "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place but that is not yet the end. 7For nation will rise

against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.” Wars, famines, earthquakes. Verse 8, “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.” We’ve analyzed the birth pangs; what did we say about them? They start at the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel and extend all the way through the entire week until what is born? The kingdom. Verse 9, and Jesus shifts to the second half of the 70th week, vv 4-8 are the first half, vv 9-14 are the second half, the key word is “Then,” that’s a shift, so everything from v 4-14 is an overview of the entire 70th week. That bothers people because v 15 is the abomination of desolation and we all know that occurs in the middle of the 70th week, so why are vv 9-14 after the middle of the week. Well Jesus is a Semite right, Jesus talks like a Semite, walks like a Semite, and I think it’s safe to say He’s a Semite. How did Semites analyze things? They give a summary overview of events in sequence, then they come back and highlight the most important details in the sequence. So he’s just summarizing everything in vv 4-14, then he’s going to come back and analyze the key details in vv 15-31. What’s the earlier precedence for reading it this way? There are many but how about Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. People say oh, you’ve got two stories of creation, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 and they contradict. Nonsense, Genesis 1 is the summary overview, all seven days in sequence, Genesis 2 goes back and highlights which day? The sixth day, the most important day. Jesus in Matt 24 is following that same Semitic style, vv 4-14 are the sequential summary, vv 15-31 go back and highlight the most important details in the sequence. This is totally Jewish. So v 9 shifts to the second half of the 70th week, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.” Does that sound like Zechariah? Sure it does. Jews being attacked by Gentiles. Verse 10, “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.” Verse 13, “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” There’s a rescue at the end. Did Zechariah mention a rescue? You bet. Now verse 15 and here he carries us back to the mid-point, now for the highlights, “Therefore, when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet,” in other words I’m giving you a sign to get out of town, when you see this, verse 16, “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” So what Jesus is doing is He’s suddenly quoting Daniel and tying it in with Zechariah.

But we've got a little problem here. Jesus began the chapter by saying what was going to be destroyed? The temple. Yet in verse 15 the abomination of desolation is going to occur in a Temple. How can the abomination occur if the temple is destroyed? We know this temple was destroyed when? In AD70. So if this temple was destroyed then the temple must be rebuilt so the abomination of desolation can occur. But Zechariah didn't say anything about the temple being destroyed and rebuilt. And Matthew doesn't either. So what's going on here?

There seems to be a glitch. So hold your place here and turn also to Luke 21. Luke 21 is parallel to Matt 24 but Luke records an additional element that has no parallel in Matt 24. What he's going to do is explain this temple being destroyed and rebuilt so the abomination of desolation can occur. Matthew doesn't have that, Zechariah doesn't have that, but Luke does have that. Luke has a unique section. It's something that shouldn't be new to you. Sometimes a prophecy in the OT is stretched out into two prophecies. You've seen this before in Daniel 9. Daniel was reading the books of Jeremiah and he read what? We'll be in exile for how many years? 70 years. It's been 68 so he starts confessing his sin and the sin of his nation, he wants restoration, 70 years said Jeremiah, hey, let's get the ball rolling here, I want out of here. This is all good what Daniel's doing but what happened? The angel Gabriel showed up and revealed that there were 70 times seven years till the final restoration. It turns out there were two restorations, a partial restoration after 70 years and a full restoration after 490 years. So that's an example of one prophecy being expanded into two. Now what's happening with the prophecy of the Temple? Don't you see it's the same thing? The disciples want to know, when will the temple be destroyed? Hey tell us because that indicates that Jerusalem is going to come under attack but Messiah will return to the Mt of Olives and rescue us and bring in the kingdom. That's what's in their head from Zechariah. But what does Jesus do? He confirms what Zechariah said, yeah, they are coming to attack you and you will be rescued. But there is another Gentile attack where you're not going to be rescued. This is recorded by Luke and it's said to be before. Notice Luke 21:10, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." Did we see that in Matthew 24? Yeah, we've seen that, that's all future, but notice verse 12, "But before all these things..." Before all what things? Before the things of vv

10-11. Before the global wars, before the global earthquakes, etc...When do all the things of vv 10-11 take place? They're part of the early birth pangs, they're all inside the 70th week of Daniel. So here Jesus says, before all that, pre-70th week of Daniel and He describes what in verse 20, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. ²¹"Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; ²²because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled." Vengeance against who? Vengeance against the Jews. This is not a rescue, this is a destruction. Verse 23, "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;" what land and what people? Israel and the Jews. "24and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." So we have a destruction by Gentiles, but it's a destruction that does not include a rescue. The Zechariah and Matthew destruction include a rescue. Luke says before the destruction with a rescue there will be a destruction without a rescue. And he also adds something neither Zechariah nor Matthew discuss, what is it? A period called the times of the Gentiles. So that's what I mean when I say one prophecy is turned into two, Zechariah predicted Jerusalem under siege but rescued, Matt confirms that but Luke adds, before that siege there's going to be another siege where the Jews are not rescued, they're sent out into exile among the nations where they will remain during the times of the Gentiles. Since Jesus' words are recorded by Matt and Luke, Jesus is the one who separated out and says there are two destructions. That's how you can have the destruction of one temple and the abomination of desolation in another temple, the attack on Jerusalem by Gentiles got split into two attacks, one sending into exile, AD70, the other resulting in rescue and the kingdom, still future.

So the idea here is that Jesus is expanding. The thing I want you to notice is there is a form to this. Don't read the Church back into Matt 24, read Zechariah forward into Matt 24; you can't Monday morning quarterback this thing. They don't have what we have of the Church at this point; they had what Zechariah had and Jesus is expanding their understanding of the future of the nation Israel.

Going back to Matt 24. Matthew doesn't include this part of Jesus' answer to their question, there's simply no parallel, no times of the Gentiles, no exile of the Jews. Luke records all that. Matthew is more interested in staying right with what Zechariah was interested in. So Matthew is growing out of Zechariah.

He goes on in verse 16, when this abomination of desolation occurs in the temple "then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" Verse 21, "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." That's the great tribulation, the last 3 ½ years of Daniel's 70th week and it's all initiated by this abomination that occurs in the rebuilt temple.

Come down to verse 27 and what do we find next in the sequence - astronomical and catastrophic geophysical changes, these are massive, global signs, "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. 29But immediately after the tribulation of those days, **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear." So we have these cosmic disturbances. This is an unparalleled period of time. What did we read in Zechariah 14? The same astronomical phenomena.

Finally verse 31, "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory." There's the return of Christ, verse 31, "And He will send forth His angels with **A GREAT TRUMPET** and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." People say that's the rapture but that's reading a Church truth back into an Israel truth. What we should be doing is reading this as the disciples would have heard it, as growing out of Zech 14 and other OT prophets.

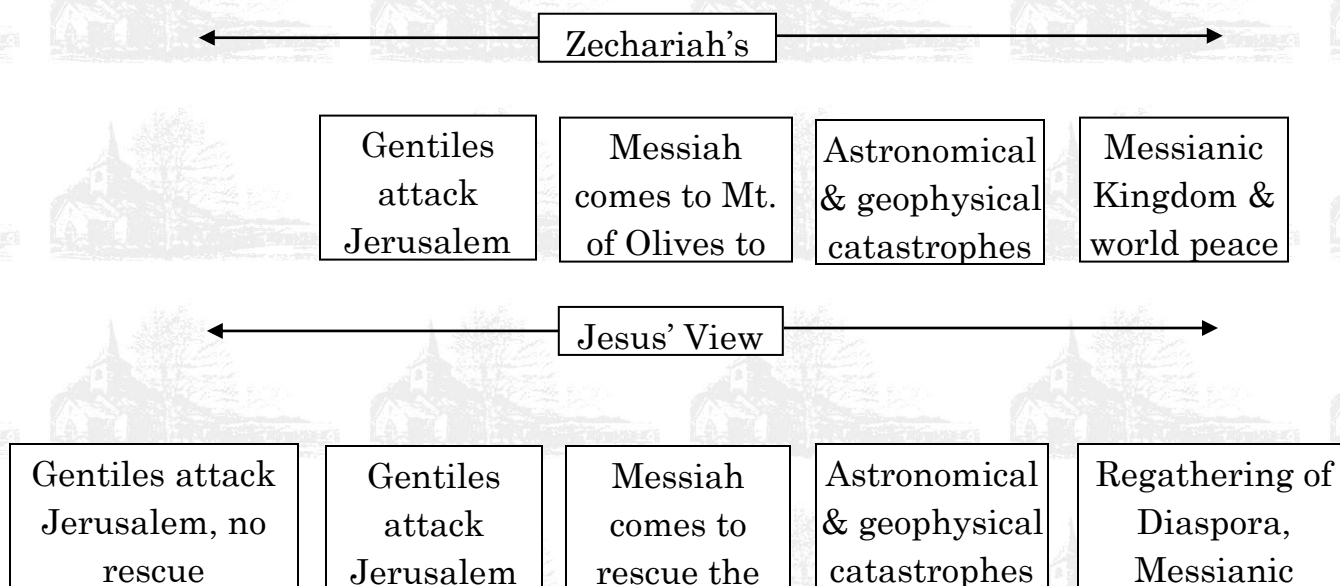
So let's do that, turn to Isaiah 27:12, this has been called a mini-apocalypse. Watch the text because you'll see a final regathering taking place here. "In that day the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel." What did Matthew 24:31 say? God will gather His elect from the four corners of the earth. Accompanied by what? A trumpet. What does verse 13 say, "It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown. What did we read in Matt 24:31? A trumpet being blown. That's not new in Matt 24. That's all OT, in the OT the trumpet blowing has to do with Jews coming back to the land of Israel. It's not talking about the Church getting raptured; it's the Jews coming back to the land.

And by the way, Matt 24:31 does not speak of a resurrection. If it's the rapture where is the resurrection? It's not there, it's a regathering, not a resurrection. The OT spoke of a regathering of living Israel. What's going on in Matt 24:31? Just what the OT predicted would happen to Israel, they would be regathered alive to the land of Israel. Why do they have to be regathered alive? So they can go in to re-populate the kingdom! You have to have mortal people in the kingdom. If you don't you can't have people dying in the kingdom and Isa 65 says you have people dying in the kingdom. They live a lot longer, some people die young at age 100, so the longevity is greatly increased, but there's still death. If this is the rapture though, then you have no mortal people left on earth and then you end up going to amillennialism, that's the slippery end of that slope. So this can't be the rapture, there's no resurrection here; this is the re-gathering of the nation Israel in her land to re-populate the nation in the kingdom, accompanied with a trumpet.

What do we see a little farther down in Matt 24? An analogy with Noah's flood. What's the analogy? Matt 24:37, "the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah," So the Second Coming and the Flood are linked. The Lord says these are the same. Well, question then, who was left after the Flood? Believers or unbelievers? It was just Noah and his family, all believers. Who was taken? The unbelievers. All unbelievers were taken in judgment. So transferring that imagery over to the Second Coming, who will be the one's left after the Second Coming? Believers or unbelievers? The believers. Who will be taken in judgment? All the unbelievers. The imagery is precise, at the Flood and the Second Coming all the unbelievers are taken in judgment and the believers are left to re-populate the new world in the

kingdom. So that's the gathering of Israel alive in verse 31; you can't get the rapture in there because if you put the rapture in verse 31 you've got the unbelievers being left and the believers being taken when the text says exactly the opposite, believers are left behind and the unbelievers are taken in judgment. That is why pre-tribulationists keep insisting you can't mix the rapture and return, these are two events; they are distinct, different.

The argument that the pre-tribulationist is making is that Matthew 24 is growing out of the OT. We respect the distinction between Israel and the Church, arguing Matt 24 should be read in light of OT prophecy, should be understood as addressing Israel, the disciples as representative of the nation. In summary, look at this chart. We started with Zechariah 14, we came forward to Matt 24. In this chart what I'm trying to show is that Zechariah's View, which is on the top and Jesus view, which is on the bottom are basically the same view. The only difference is Jesus does what is often done in prophecy; He takes one prophetic picture and develops it into two. Luke records the new picture, but remember, he says this happens before, so his record includes the AD70 destruction, Matthew sticks right with Zechariah 14 and looks completely to the future.



That's all we have time for, next time we're going to go into 2 Thess 2 because that's the other passage that supposedly pre-tribulationism distorts.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2012

