



“Days Cut Short”

-Matthew 24:15-28

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Matthew 24:15-28 *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),*

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. 23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 "See, I have told you beforehand. 26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

When our God lovingly created the world, it was His intention for His work to last forever and for his children to live forever. But man had other ideas. Because of the entrance of sin into the mix, everything now has an “expiration date.” Humanity is quick with phrases such as “he passed too young”... “he died too early.” Greenpeace and “Earth Liberation Front” (ELF) surely feel that what is happening to the natural world is aberrant at best and criminal at worst. It is evident that mankind has a clear view that life passes way too fast, and that the earth is not supposed to be falling apart. If there is one thing that both creationists and evolutions can agree on, it is a scenario that sees both the introduction and eventual destruction of mankind and the world as we know it.

It is therefore really no surprise to any of us that the “last days” scenario would encompass words like “abomination.” Perhaps we have grown calloused or we have seen one too many Hollywood horror movies. But it is critical that we understand that this is no movie. This is the real deal and it will certainly reach out to touch every living creature who is alive and present on this earth. It is also very important to know that Israel was **and is** “ground zero” for all that we read of herein. What will play out will play out right there and will be seen by the world on CNN.

It seems that many, *if not all*, of the biblical prophecies have both a near and a far fulfillment...sometimes even fulfillment events in between those! Meaning that the prophecy was partially fulfilled within years of its being given and was or will be eventually fulfilled much later in its fullest degree. Time and history have a strange way of repeating itself, and often seems circular in its form. But that’s a discussion for people far more educated than me!

Just what this “abomination” is, we do not know. Theories abound, as they do for all elements of this passage and for that matter, all of end-times prophecy. Some see this as in reference to the anti-christ, some see it as something that the anti-christ *does* concerning the temple. Such views of course would seemingly preclude the fact that to see that come to pass, the temple would have to be rebuilt. Only small segments of the ancient temple walls exist today, and to further complicate such a task, the “Dome of the Rock,” a holy Islamic shrine,

is built virtually on or so near the original temple location as to be problematic to rebuilding. This of course, is part of the great stress between Israel and Muslim countries, and extremist attempts have been made to “clear the sight” for the new temple, *if you catch my drift*.

The commonly held position, *for what it is worth*, holds that the temple will be rebuilt upon the current sight of the Dome of the Rock, which is *highly unlikely*, or very near...still occupying the understood temple grounds. This latter position is given credence by such passages as Revelation 11:2 where, speaking of the new temple, it says “*But don't measure the courtyard outside the temple building. Leave it out. It has been given to those people who don't know God, and they will trample all over the holy city for 42 months.*” (CEV) (3 ½ years) The idea therein is that where the courtyard would fall in the grand scheme of things would be where the Dome of the Rock sits, and that a tenuous peace will exist through a joint occupation of the temple mount under the political rule of the individual that we call the “anti-christ.”

The “abomination of desolation” spoken of here in its simplest understanding was and is meant as the ultimate in desecration of the rebuilt Holy temple in Jerusalem. The short term prophetic fulfillment of this event...*which should shed light on the far fulfillment yet to come*, occurred in the second century AD.

Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, defiled the temple by offering a pig upon the altar and sprinkling its blood throughout the temple. To understand the magnitude of this “abomination” one must grasp what pigs and pork mean to an orthodox Jew. Epiphanes, in the same motion, also murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews including women and children.

It is clear, though, that there is yet another and greater fulfillment of this prophecy that has yet to come to pass. From the book of Revelation we can gather that the full manifest of the abomination of desolation will occur in the last days in and/or through the person of the Anti-Christ. He will, *one way or another*, find himself in political and thus military control of Israel...which even today is a nuclear armed state.

Verses 16-21 tell us; *“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”*

That passage possesses some of the most fearsome words of prophecy in all of the Bible. What exactly is happening therein we do not know, but one doesn't have to have details to grasp the horror and desperation so presented. Few verses in Scripture illicit more of a stillness of soul than these before us. Pictures of hundreds of years of God's patient care flood the mind with the realization that upon these verses it all is finally coming to a terrible close. The worst horror ever known to man? That's a staggering thought considering I can think of some pretty horrific pictures of man's inhumanity and world disasters. All the wars, the concentration camps, genocides, the “ethnic cleansings,” the disease and famines, earthquakes, natural disasters, dictators and tortures!

Once again, a near fulfillment of this prophecy came to pass in 70AD with the plundering and burning of Jerusalem. Countless lives were lost in terrible ways. Such will pale in comparison to the latter events of the “end of days” tribulation.

Scripture has much to say in evidence as to a “rapture” of the church. A radical and abrupt ‘snatching away’ of all believers throughout the world. This subject too, leaves one wondering. For details are few and information far between. Whether any or all of these events occur before or after the rapture of the church, will determine how it affects the believing world. But it will affect the Jewish world for sure. Why the speed of movement spoken of here? Conjecture reaches from incoming missile attacks, (Israel defense instructions give 30 seconds to 3 minutes of time to run to shelter) to Israel actually sealing off the city from the outside world, something

they can currently do in a matter of minutes due to the constant preparation against terrorism and Palestinian violence.

Thus, if this enemy of God is in charge (which we understand he will be), he will be able to sew up Jerusalem in minutes and those who do not escape will no longer be able to. At that point, mankind will begin to realize a truth that has always been there: in the grand spiritual scheme of things, all of our stuff isn't going to matter. Possessions will be the last things on their minds. Leave it all and *run*.

The world will go from a time of great prosperity and peace to utter chaos in a matter of minutes to hours. As verse 38 of this chapter tells us "*For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark...Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;*" Mankind will be carrying on in the same manner as they have always *until suddenly...*

We here in our part of the US can clearly grasp the "winter" part of verse 20. After all, we're from Wisconsin! We know what it is like to travel in winter. The second half may be a little harder to understand if you're not Jewish. For a Jew, the Sabbath has a great deal more significance than for the average Gentile believer. In Israel on the Sabbath, things do not run as they do on other days of the week. Public transit is reduced, many businesses do not operate, and there are lots and lots of rules; many of which have to do with travel. It is safe to say, that if this all happens on the Sabbath, it is going to be very difficult to make it out and flee.

"...unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Those days...in all of their ambiguous horror, will graciously be "cut short." But what does that mean for you and me, and/or those who remain post-rapture?

Psalms 23:4 says "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*" Despite our desire for it to be otherwise, God's promise has never been that He would guide your walk always *around* the valley of the shadow of death. No, sometimes we have to walk *through* it. But remember the promise... "*you are with me.*" Our God will always walk that walk with us and because He does, we need not fear. But please note one other promise from that passage in Psalms; "*...your rod and your staff comfort me.*" These two tools of the trade are used to steer the sheep onto the right path, (the staff) and to both protect and discipline the sheep. (the rod). All of these aspects are part of the loving care a shepherd uses with His sheep, even if some of which the sheep do not care for. HE is the shepherd, and WE are the sheep. And never will these two positions be reversed, no matter how we might try.

*"And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved;
but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."*

"*those days...*" herein is a period of approximately three and one-half years. A period so terrible that no one will survive unless Jesus intervenes. Throughout all of the horror, Jesus never loses His love for His chosen people, even those who reject Him. It is for these that He comes to the rescue, along with all those of every nation who come to believe in Christ after the rapture has occurred. These in the latter camp will be no doubt be few, as we have every scriptural interpretive reason to believe that the church "en masse" along with the Holy Spirit *...that which pricks a man's heart and soul*, will now be patently absent. (assuming the rapture has indeed occurred at this point.)

One might be apt to have a hard time with this face of our Lord. Many unbelievers are quick to cry "*if this God you claim is so loving, how could He...*" Let us remember, it has been a minimum of 6,000 to 8,000 years, and ultimately this is man's fruit. This is the fruit of the life and world we wanted and we lived. A "world without God." We sought for it, and now we got it!

Even in this horrific scene, God's mercy will be evident. Throughout history we have seen God take his committed followers out of harm's way before judgement was meted out. Further, we see that with knowledge, awareness of truth, blessing and position, comes accountability and responsibility. The more aware we are, the more accountable we will be held. Luke 12: 45-48 says *"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."*

Because of God's history in dealing with these matters, I hold the pre-tribulation rapture position. Meaning that the true believing church will be snatched away from earth before all this plays out in its fullness. What such will look like and how it will play out, I have no details to offer. But I know that God has always "cut short the days" of the pain of judgment and His wrath when it comes to his followers, and I have no reason to believe that He will suddenly change His "M.O." I cannot be dogmatic on the timing of the rapture, as there is scriptural evidence to the contrary positions. And such does not mean, even if the pre-trib position is accurate, that we will not have to endure any testing and trials...both personally and corporately as Christians. For in many places on earth such is already a fact, and even we who staunchly hold to scripture in the USA are already being actively persecuted by unbelievers and false church attenders alike. However 1 Corinthians 15, speaks of what is understood to be the rapture of the church, tells us the following: *"But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed."* (1 Cor 15:51-52 NLT)

The bottom line in all of this for us that are followers of Christ, is that even in these last days, God does not abandon us. He is still fully engaged in His care and love of His chosen. The fact that He will "cut those days short" for all of us is reflective of the fact that He has not lost His temper and has not turned His back on His creation. *1 Thessalonians 5: 9 "For God hath not appointed us to wrath..."* And no matter where you are, according to this passage you will not need any "secret knowledge" to attest to His return as some religions claim. You will need no "holy man" to point Him out. No, the whole world will see His return, for *"... as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*

Despite what seems to be cryptic words, Jesus is not being mysterious and secretive concerning His second coming. He is being open and loving; clearly warning man of the truth, for any that would truly hear. Details we do not have, and further, we frankly do not need. God has indeed given us little to hold onto concerning the details of those final days. But His point is unmistakably that the final days **are** indeed coming and He **is** returning. And thus the question that matters is: **How then shall we live?** He gave us a little concerning the end times, but He gave us whole chapters and books of instruction as to how we should live, in good times and in bad. He called us to "be holy as he is holy." And upon His physical departure He reminds us that *"...I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen.

Amen, indeed...

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For **You are with me...**"*