

Sunday Morning Message

October 15, 2023

Title – *The Beginning of Sorrows*

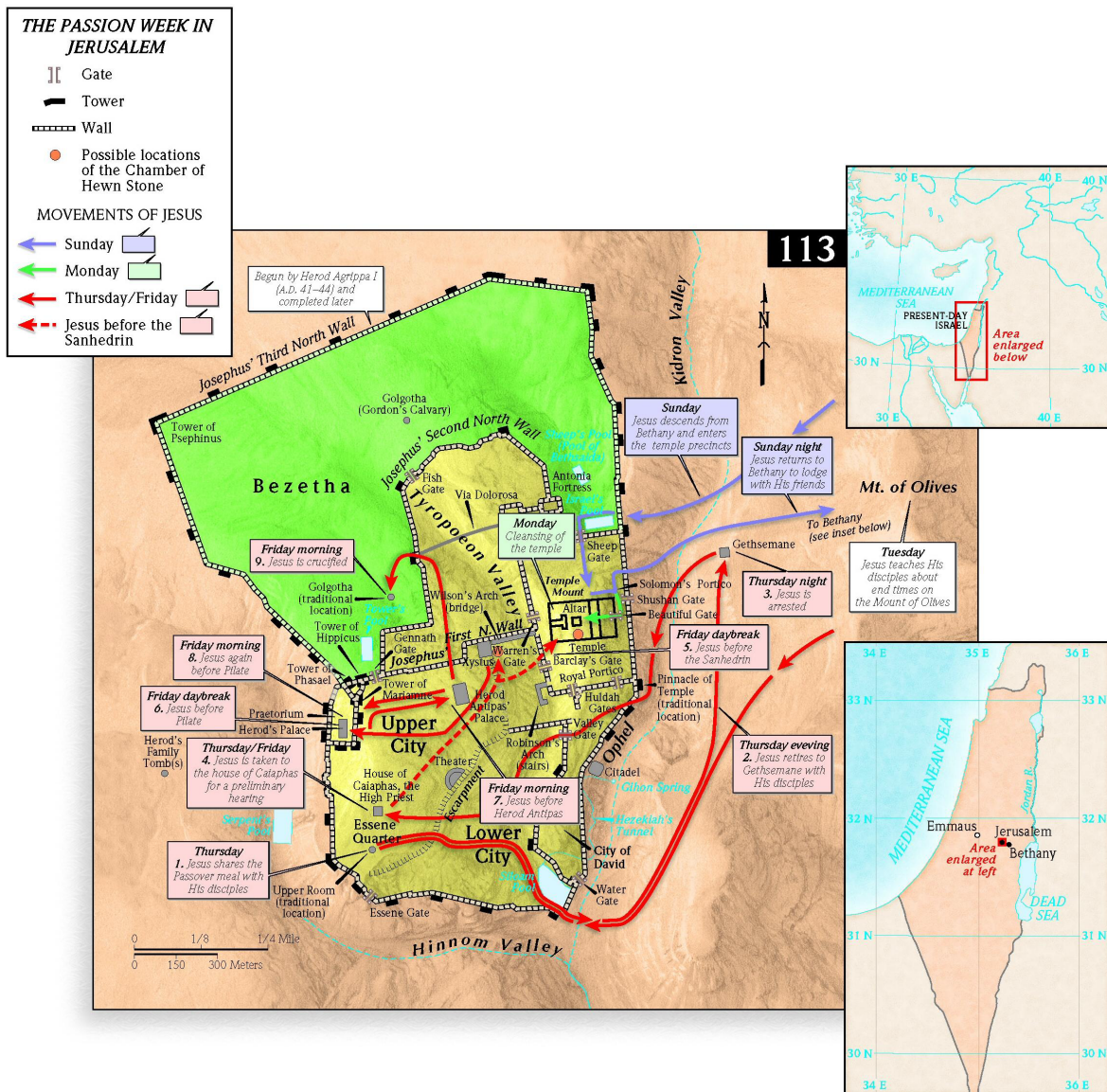
Text – Matthew 24

Congregational Reading – Matthew 24

Introduction

We have been reading through the Gospel of Matthew in our daily devotions, and because of all that is currently transpiring in Israel, I thought it would be good to focus this morning on portions of the Olivet Discourse, which is found here in Matthew 24 and 25.

The event that we are examining here in Scripture took place during the last week, after Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, but before the Crucifixion.



I. The Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (vs. 1 – 2)

"1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Matthew 24:1-2)

The Lord Jesus and the disciples were looking out at the Temple. This construction for the Temple in Jesus day was begun by Herod the Great in 20 B.C. and would not be finished until 64 A.D., many years after the Lord Jesus was on the earth. Some of the stones in the temple complex measured 40x12x12 ft. and were expertly quarried to fit perfectly against one another.¹

The Temple was a magnificent structure made of beautiful white marble.

This event was already fulfilled in history in 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus destroyed the City of Jerusalem along with the Temple. Luke's gospel gives us a little more detail about how this would be done:

"43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke 19:43-44)

Jesus also alluded to this event in the Parable of the Wedding Feast where story is told of a king was angry with the invited guests who had spurned his invitation to the marriage of his son and had even killed the servants who had delivered the invitation:

"7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." (Matthew 22:7)

According to MacArthur:

Titus, the Roman general, built large wooden scaffolds around the walls of the temple buildings, piled them high with wood and other flammable items, and set them ablaze. The heat from the fires was so intense that the stones crumbled. The rubble was then sifted to retrieve the melted gold, and the remaining ruins were "thrown down" into the Kidron Valley.²

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1438.

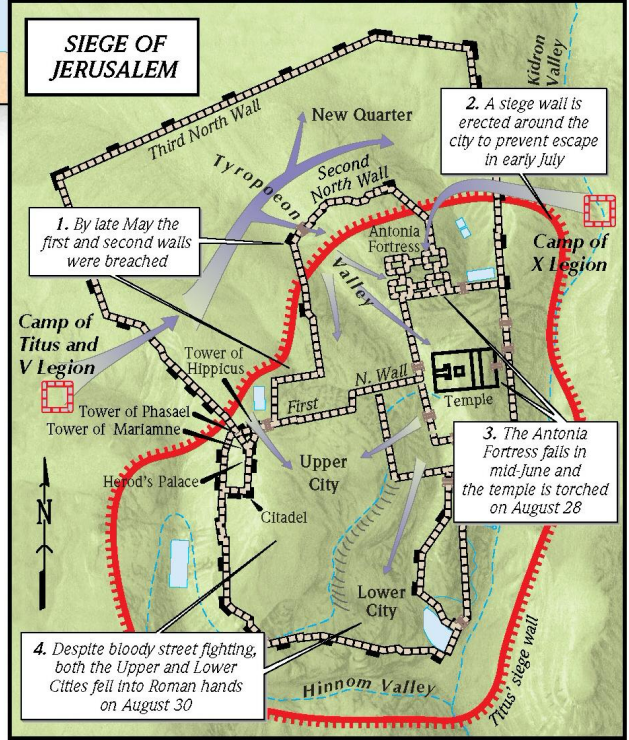
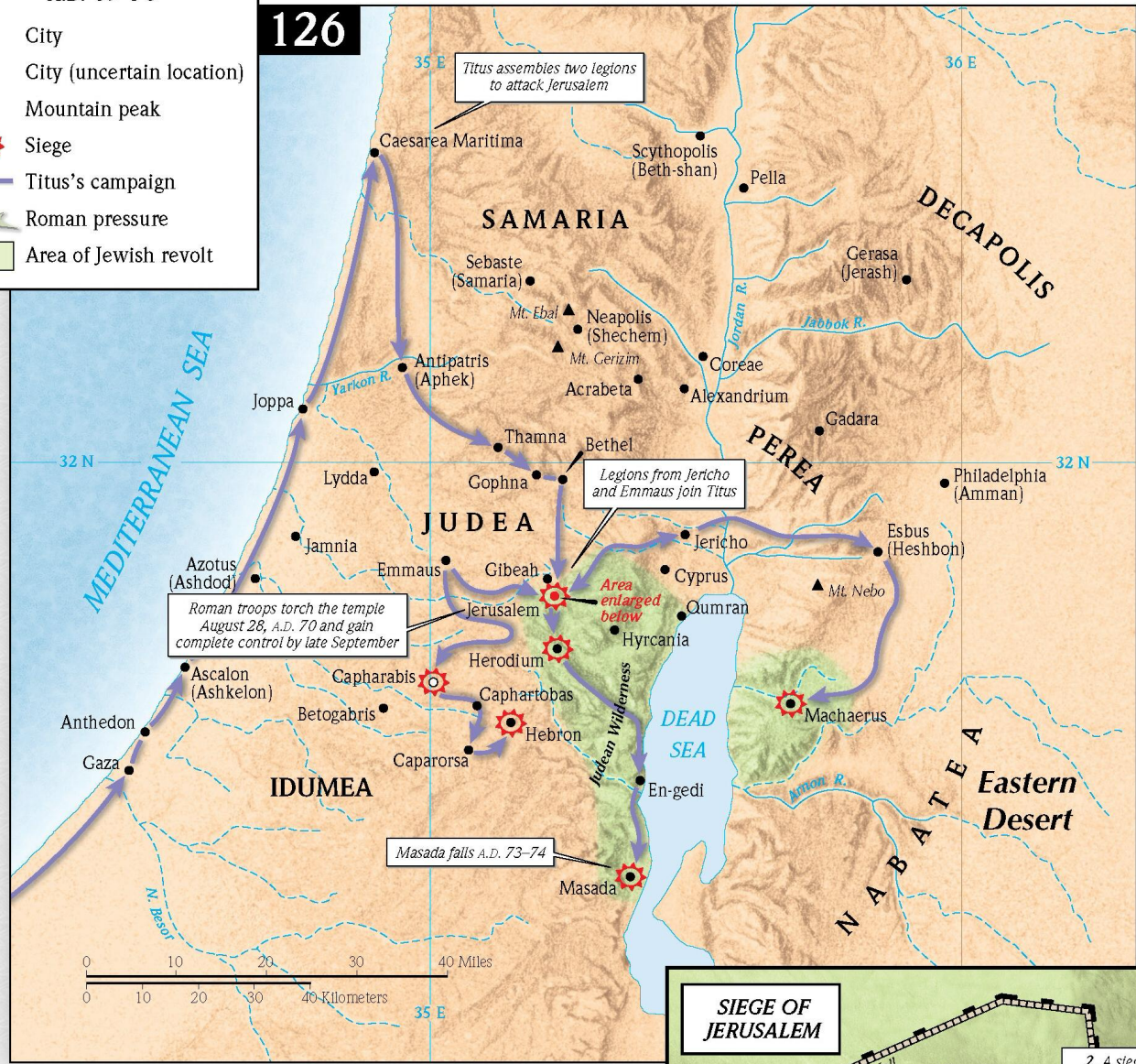
² *Ibid*, 1438.

TITUS'S CAMPAIGNS

A.D. 69-70

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ⊗ Siege
- ← Titus's campaign
- ← Roman pressure
- Area of Jewish revolt

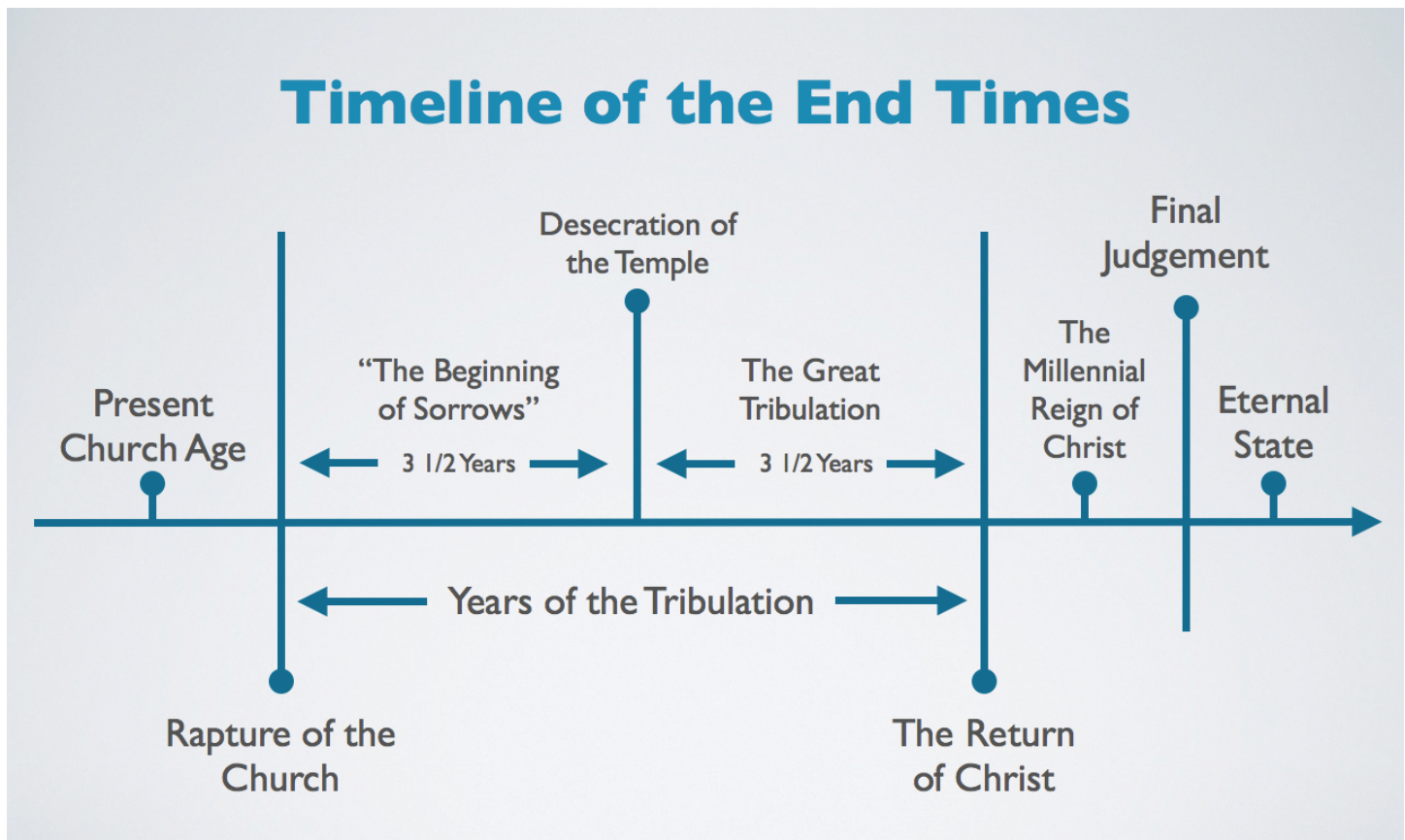
126



II. The Description of the Future (vs. 3 – 15)

The disciples and Jesus are on the Mt. of Olives overlooking Jerusalem below, and the disciples ask the Lord about future events.

Jesus at first warns them not to see every event that takes place on earth as the sign that His return is imminent. It has been two thousand years since Jesus ascended back into Heaven, and His Church has been through many horrible events during that period; things far worse than anything we have experienced.



We need to understand that although things are getting much worse on the earth, and that we can see the world moving in the direction of a "one world government," we cannot be sure that we are at the very end. Personally, I believe that we are close, and The Rapture of the Church could be today, but it could also be years away.

A. "The Beginnings of Sorrows" (vs. 3 – 8)

The word, "sorrows" ($\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\nu$ from $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu$ – $\acute{o}din$), literally means "birth pains." The contractions that come in childbirth start out small but become more intense. At first they are spaced apart, but when the time to deliver the baby gets closer, they come more frequently.

The events spoken of in this passage – the earthquakes, pestilences, famines, and wars - have always existed and been part of life here on the earth, but they will become more frequent and more intense as we get closer to Christ's return.

*"13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
(2 Timothy 3:13)*

These "beginnings of sorrows" have already happened and will continue to happen before Christ physically returns to the earth set up His Kingdom.

B. The Tribulation Period (vs. 9 – 15)

Somewhere during this passage of Scripture, the events described are clearly characteristic of the Tribulation, which is seven-year period that is preceded by the Rapture of the Church and concludes with the physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth to put down all rebellion and to set up His earthly kingdom. The wars and rumors of wars, the pestilences, famines, and earthquakes have all been around forever. They will get worse as time goes on, but the events spoken of in vs. 9 – 15 seem to specifically reference events that are within the actual Tribulation Period.

Paul told the believers at Rome:

"25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans 11:25)

It is during this Tribulation Period that the blinders are taken off the eyes of Israel.

Zechariah prophesied about this day:

"10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (Zechariah 12:10)

Initially, Israel will be deceived by the Antichrist and will even believe that he is their Messiah, but when he enters the Holy of Holies, they will realize that they were wrong about Him, and wrong about Christ.

Notice in v. 15, the reference to Daniel's prophecy:

"27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)

Paul spoke about the Antichrist to the church at Thessalonica:

"1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

During the Tribulation Period, Antichrist will be revealed and though he starts out offering peace, eventually he will demand that all the world worship him. The end of the Tribulation comes at the Battle of Armageddon when Jesus returns and puts an end to Antichrist and everyone else on earth who rejected Christ and rebelled against His authority.

III. **The Deliverance for the Bride (Acts 1:11; John 14: 1 – 3; 1 Corinthians 15:50 – 58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18; 5:1 – 10; Revelation 4:1; 2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10)**

The Scripture teaches that before this period of Tribulation gets started, the Bride of Christ, which is the Church that is made up of all believers, will be removed from the earth. Theologians call this "the Rapture." Though the word, "rapture," is not found in the Bible, it is taught in several places.

*"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, **shall so come in like manner** as ye have seen him go into heaven." - (Acts 1:11)*

*"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you unto myself**; that where I am, there ye may be also." - (John 14:1-3)*

*"25 But that which ye have already hold fast **till I come**." (Revelation 2:25)*

To the church at Philadelphia, Jesus said:

*"10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."
(Revelation 3:10)*

*"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on*

immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." - (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

*"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. **For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout**, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then **we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together** with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." - (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)*

"1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

"1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." (Revelation 4:1)

Enoch is a picture of the Church – “God took him” translated him – picture of the Rapture.

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" - (Genesis 5:24)

Noah and his family are a picture of Israel who will be saved through the tribulation; but they must go through it.

Jewish Wedding Illustration

All the above passages deal with the Rapture of the Church, but there is another wonderful picture of this event taken from the tradition of the Jewish Wedding. In Bible days when a marriage was arranged, the Groom first came to the bride's home and paid the price for the bride. Then the Groom would return to his father's home and prepare a home for himself and his new bride. When all the preparations were finished, the Groom would return to pick up the bride and take her to the new home. By the way, the bride never knew when the Groom was going to come, so she had to be ready all the time. A celebration would take place for several days back at the father's house, and then the whole procession would return to the bride's parents' home. All of this is a wonderful picture of Christ coming to earth (the Bride's home) and paying for our sins. He is now back in Heaven preparing a place for us, and someday soon He will return for us and bring us to our new home in Heaven where we will celebrate for seven years (Marriage Supper of the Lamb). At the end of the seven years, we will return to the earth with the Lord.

Once the Church is in Heaven, it is no longer a church, but is rather a Bride – the Bride of Christ.

Before the rapture takes place, there will be trials and tribulations for the Bride while living here in a godless world. But God will give us everything we need to live for Him and He will give us the grace that we need to suffer for Him and in some cases die for Him.

"7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Conclusion

If my understanding of Bible prophecy is correct, there may be some difficult days in store for believers leading up to this rapture of the Church, or it may be that the Lord takes us all up out of here now. One thing that we all can be absolutely sure of is that God says:

"20 lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:20b)

He also said that He *will never leave [us], nor forsake [us]* (Hebrews 13:5)

He also said that His grace would be sufficient to get us through any trial that we may have to face today (2 Corinthians 12:9).

He also said He would not allow us to go through something that we could not handle:

"13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Jesus said that with Him, we could have peace even amid all the craziness going on around us:

"33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Like Esther, God put you and I on this earth for "such a time as this." These are truly perilous times that we are living in, but they also provide a tremendous opportunity for us to shine the light of the gospel to the world around us.

Don't focus on problems that are going on the world today. Instead, keep your eyes on the Lord and look for opportunities to share Christ and minister peace to the people in this world who do not have the same hope that you have and are scared to death.

"15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" (1 Peter 3:15)

And know this, before things get really bad here on the earth, Christ will come back to rescue us.