

Message #63 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"The Great And Terrible Day Of The Lord"

With Randy Smith

(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, write, or send e-mails)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk to you about the Bible event which is referred to as, "The Great And Terrible Day Of The Lord." And first, and foremost, I'd like you to recognize that this Great Day of the Lord is an event that is completely separate from the Great Tribulation. There's quite a bit of confusion in the church today concerning these two events, and the proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture attempt to equate the Great Tribulation with the Great Day of God's Wrath. But the Great and Terrible Day Of The Lord is not the same thing as the Great Tribulation.

The Great Tribulation, referred to in Matthew 24, and, the Great Day of God's Wrath, mentioned in the book of Joel and numerous other places, are two main events of end time prophecy which are separated from each other by another Biblical event which is referred to as, "The Sun and Moon Darkening." Let's go to some scriptures, and I'll show you what I mean.

First, let's read Joel 2:31. It says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes." Now, this is a very significant Biblical statement. Some people, probably most people, don't realize the importance of this simple Bible verse. Let's read it one more time, but this time, I want you to pay particular attention to the three specific parts of this verse. This verse can be broken down into three distinct points. The first point is the reference to the Sun and Moon becoming dark. The second point is the six letter word, before, and the third point is the reference to the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. These three parts of the verse make up the whole verse. Are you ready? O.K. I'm going to read it again. It says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into

blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD comes.” You see? It said, “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.” That was the first part. Then it said, “before.” The word, before, is the second part. Then it said, “The great and terrible day of the Lord comes.” That's the third part. Notice that the first part, the sun and moon turning to darkness, is separated from the third part, the great and terrible day of the Lord, by the middle part, which is just the simple six letter word, before.

When we slow down and recognize this emphasis of the three parts, we begin to see that the scripture is telling us that the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord is an event which is separate from the Darkening of the Sun and Moon. The Sun and Moon darkening is one event of itself, and the Great Day of the Lord is another event of itself.

Now, you might say, “Randy, aren't you just splitting hairs a little bit too much. What's so significant about that?” But I will answer you that this is what our program is all about. We don't just skim over the surface all the time, but we take our time and dig beneath the surface of scripture in order to understand more of the intricate explanations of God. And when we do this, we are many times able to uncover very significant concepts which help us to better understand scripture as a whole. And this particular part of scripture which we are digging into is especially helpful, if only people can grasp the importance of the seemingly minor points of it. But if you'll look at this closely, you may find that it will ultimately clear up a major misunderstanding which plagues today's current church in the area of the pre-tribulation rapture and post-tribulation rapture controversy.

So, let me emphasize the particular points of the scripture we have just read. Joel 2:31 has just told us that before the great and terrible Day of the Lord comes, the sun and moon will be darkened. It's very important to recognize that the event of the sun and moon darkening is a separate event from the great and terrible Day of the Lord, and that this darkening of the sun and moon takes place prior to that great Day of the Lord. This means that until the prophetic event of the sun and moon darkening takes place, the great Day of the Lord cannot take place. What we have here is an order of events. First, the sun and moon are darkened, and then after that happens, the great and terrible Day of the Lord takes place.

Now, let's take a look at something else that's very interesting. Keep in mind that we have established an order of events. The sun and moon are first darkened, and this is followed by the great and terrible Day of the Lord. Then, when we read Matthew 24:29, we will find one more piece of a puzzle which will complete the picture for the order of events for the end time prophecies. Matthew 24:29 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

Did you catch that? Did you recognize what the first two words of Matthew 24:29 said? The first two words of this verse say, “Immediately after.” This verse is telling us that immediately after the tribulation, the sun and moon shall be darkened. Notice that the sun and moon are going to be darkened, but only within their proper order of events. The first thing that happens is the

Great Tribulation. We know that the tribulation that Matthew 24:29 is referring to is not just a reference to some minor tribulation time period, for verse 21 of Matthew 24 tells us that this tribulation is a tribulation which is greater than ever has been since the beginning of the world, and greater than any succeeding tribulation ever will be. From these verses of Matthew 24 we can make a very simple deduction that if this tribulation is greater than ever was or ever will be, then we are talking about none other than the Great Tribulation. Now, notice once again that Matthew 24:29 has just told us that the sun and moon will be darkened and the stars will withdraw their shining immediately after this Great Tribulation time period.

What Matthew 24:29 and Joel 2:31 have established is an order of events where the darkening of the sun and moon takes place immediately after the Great Tribulation, but takes place before the great and terrible Day of the Lord comes. This means that the event of the sun and moon darkening separates the Great Tribulation from the Day of the Lord. Think about this. If the darkening of the sun and moon takes place after the Great Tribulation but before the Day of the Lord, then we can plainly see that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are two completely separate events. Do you follow me? Can you see this?

Many people have been told by various Bible scholars that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are the same event. But, when we compare Matthew 24:29 and Joel 2:31, we can see that they certainly are not the same event, but that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are two separate events which are separated by what the Bible refers to as the sun and moon darkening and the stars ceasing to shine.

Now, let's take a look at another verse that shows us something interesting. Keep in mind that Matthew 24:29 says that the sun and moon will be darkened and the stars will fall from heaven, immediately after the close of the Great Tribulation time period. Now let's read a scripture from the book of Revelation. Revelation 6:12-13 explains to us that the darkening of the sun and moon, takes place at the opening of the sixth seal. It reads, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell onto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind."

Notice that this event of the darkening of the sun and moon, and the stars falling, is the same event in Matthew 24:29 and in Revelation 6:12-13. In addition to this, notice in Revelation 6:12-13 when this happens. The sun and moon are darkened and the stars fall from heaven at the opening of the sixth seal. Now, if we compare this scripture with Matthew 24:29, we can see another interesting thing. It is just one more simple deduction to recognize that the opening of the sixth seal also takes place immediately after the Great Tribulation. Think about it. If the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars fall from heaven at the opening of the sixth seal, as we just read in Revelation 6:12-13, and the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars fall from heaven immediately after the Great Tribulation, as Matthew 24:29 tells us, then we can see that the opening of the sixth seal immediately follows the Great Tribulation also.

Now, this may not be a great earth shaking discovery, but it gives some very useful guidelines in the understanding of Bible prophecy for the end times. But, let's not stop here. Let's compare Matthew 24:29 and Revelation 6:12-13 with what we read in Joel 2:31. Joel 2:31 told us that the great Day of the Lord takes place after the sun and moon are darkened. This means that the great Day of the Lord takes place after the sixth seal. Here again we can see that an order of events has been established.

So, as a summary, what we have, as an order of events, is first, the Great Tribulation, then second, the opening of the sixth seal, at which time the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars fall from heaven onto the earth. Following this event we have the third part of the equation, the playing out of the great and terrible Day of the Lord. It is this three part sequence of events that helps us to recognize that the Great Tribulation is not a tribulation from God, for the great day of God's wrath will not occur until after the sun and moon are darkened. Because the Great Tribulation occurs prior to the darkening of the sun and moon, and the great day of God's wrath occurs after the darkening of the sun and moon, we know that the Great Tribulation is not God's wrath, but rather a tribulation for the Saints of God caused by the wickedness of Satan. The Great Tribulation is not the outpouring of God's wrath in judgment, but rather the wickedness of Satan attempting to make an all-out final attack against God's people.

Much of the current doctrine we hear concerning end time prophecy continues to give the impression that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are one and the same. However, as has just been explained, this is an impossibility. Not only do we see that the event of the sun and moon darkening, and the stars falling from heaven take place at the opening of the sixth seal, but we also see that the darkening of the sun and moon is an event that separates the Great Tribulation from the Day of the Lord. It is important to put the great and terrible Day of the Lord into proper perspective, and to stop equating it with the Great Tribulation.

Scripture plainly points out that the Great Tribulation will be experienced by the church. However, because many Bible scholars have incorrectly assumed that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord's Wrath are the same, they also have made the incorrect assumption that Christians will not go through the Great Tribulation. Now, before we go on any further, let's take a look at what the incorrect doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture stems from.

Proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture theory base their assumptions on a specific point of scripture. This point of doctrine is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, where it says, "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

Certainly, this scripture is true, and God's children will in no way suffer the wrath of God. However, those who think that the Great Tribulation is identical with the great and terrible Day of the Lord, have had to come up with some kind of explanation of how Christians can escape the Great Tribulation in order to escape the wrath of God in the great and terrible Day of the Lord. And, I guess, if the Great Tribulation was the same as the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, then I would too. But, seeing that the Great Tribulation and the Great and Terrible Day of

the Lord are two different events, there is no need to come up with an escape from the Great Tribulation.

Let's take a look at some other scriptures which refer to the Day of the Lord's wrath, just so we can get a proper feel for what this event really is. First, let's read Isaiah 2:12-21. It says, "For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, 15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth. 20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth."

Wow! Isn't that an awesome picture of the Day of the Lord's Wrath? Notice that verse 12 said that this day of the Lord will be upon the proud and lofty. It is not indicating that the children of God who have humbled themselves will be brought down, but that those who have exalted themselves will be brought low. The great and terrible Day of the Lord is a day for the destruction of wickedness, not a day for persecution of Christians.

Next, let's read Jeremiah 46:10. It says, "For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates." Here again, it says that the Day of the Lord is a day of the Lord's vengeance against his enemies. We are the children of God, not the enemies of God, therefore the great and terrible Day of the Lord is a day when the Lord shall cleanse the earth from wickedness, and not a time for wrath to be on God's people.

Next is Joel 1:15. It reads, "Alas, for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." Here again it is plain to see that the Day of the Lord is God's wrath poured out upon the wicked.

Now Isaiah 13:6 & 9. "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty 9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners out of it." Notice that these verses state that it is the sinners in the land who shall be destroyed, not Christians.

Now, Acts 2:19-21. "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into

blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes: 21 And it will come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

We see by this last scripture that the great Day of the Lord will take place after the sun and moon have been darkened. And, it is during this time that the Lord will save his children. But then, this is not something new. We know that the wrath of God is not directed against his children, but against the wicked people of earth. The problem which Christians face is not fear of the Lord's wrath, but the deception of Satan by trying to cause confusion in the church by equating this great Day of the Lord's Wrath with the Great Tribulation. When Christians are told that the Great Tribulation and the Great Day of the Lord's Wrath are the same, then Christians get the idea that Great Tribulation will not occur while God's church is still on earth, and this causes the people of God to become lazy and complacent instead of strengthening themselves in the word of God and in the faith of Jesus.

To incorrectly preach that Christians will not go through the Great Tribulation period is to bring confusion to the church by causing Christians to ignore the end time warning messages. Satan knows that Christians will take precautions when they receive warning of impending disaster. But he also knows that if Christians think the warnings aren't meant for them, they won't take any precautions, and they won't seek the Lord. Satan wants the Great Tribulation to come upon Christians without them knowing it, and therefore they will be unprepared for it. The many books and movies on the market which attempt to portray the Great and Terrible Wrath of God as being the same thing as the Great Tribulation, is Satan's attempt at giving Christians a false sense of security, making them think that they will not have to face the Great Tribulation.

Christians, don't be duped, but rather, seek the Lord with all you heart, all your soul, and all your strength. Satan is trying to tell God's people that nothing is coming and to go back to sleep. But God is trying to warn his people to wake up, before it is too late.