**Title:** Trouble in River City (Matt. 24:15-31) – The Tribulation.

**Introduction:** “Ya got trouble, trouble with a capital T.” So says “Professor” Harold Hill to the good but gullible people of River City, Iowa in the award-winning production “The Music Man.” He doesn’t say this to them because he is concerned about their safety. No, his concern is for his own bank account. Harold Hill is a con man, and like all con men, he’s selling something. His particular merchandise is band instruments and band uniforms. But the people aren’t buying. They don’t see the need. River City is a quiet, comfortable, peaceful place. Life is good. Why should they buy musical instruments? They don’t have a band.

Hill is in a quandary of what to do. How do you sell something to people who don’t see a need? But that’s what good salesmen do. They find a way to create a need you did not know you had. They hope you will buy the thing you did not need from the salesman who is more than happy to sell it to you at a hefty profit. Hill discovers his opportunity when he learns a new pool table was just delivered to the billiard hall owned by the town’s mayor. [play video of “Ya got trouble”]

“Trouble with a capital "T," and that rhymes with P, and that stands for pool!” It’s all a con. Hill creates unnecessary fear to take advantage of good people and make money. That’s the accusation – sometimes deservedly – leveled against those who communicate what the Bible has to say about the future of the human race. “Your message is nothing new. People have been repeating that message for centuries. The trouble hasn’t come yet. Why are you trying to upset our comfortable way of living? You’re just a fraud. You want people to buy your books, subscribe to your YouTube channel and donate to your ‘ministry.’ You guys are just scaring people unnecessarily.” (2 Peter 3:3-4)

I recently heard of a church where the pastor spoke about End Times prophecies, and a little girl got so scared that she didn’t go back to church for weeks! I said it last week. Prophecy is not about being scared; it’s about being prepared. But a little bit of scare can be a good thing. Do you want your children to have a healthy fear of the stovetop, of water and strangers? A healthy fear can cause us to take the future seriously and prepare for it.

We’re going to talk about some scary events this morning – trouble with a capital T. It’s called the Tribulation. The word tribulation means trouble. It’s a seven-year period in which there will be more catastrophes, more pain, more death and more evil than there has ever been (Matt. 14:21). The most thorough explanation of the Tribulation is in the book of Revelation, and we may look there in the days ahead. But for now, we’re going to take a look at what Jesus told His first disciples about this terrible but wonderful time in the history of the world.

1. **Trouble starts at the Temple.** (vvs. 15-20)

“Professor” Hill was right. Trouble is coming. But it won’t start at the pool hall – the place of entertainment. It will start at the Temple – the house of worship. “Pastor, trouble at the house of worship? Whoever heard of such a thing?” Anybody who thinks the house of worship and trouble don’t go together hasn’t been in the house of worship for long. You pick up your church bulletin. You read the church is going to have a special called business meeting about the construction of the new building. Immediately you know there’s going to be trouble. You walk into the auditorium and see drums on the platform. Trouble. You see [the name of a loud but well-liked person who can handle being the brunt of a joke] walk into a room, and you know trouble has arrived!

Jesus often encountered trouble at the house of worship. It had happened to him just a short time before He said the words we will examine in a moment. On another day, He *created* trouble at the house of worship by tossing the tables of the money-changers (John 2:14-15).

The trouble Jesus speaks of is much more severe than any of these others. He speaks of “abomination” and “desolation” (Matt. 24:15). You may not know exactly what those words mean yet, but immediately you know they don’t sound good. I’ll do my best to explain them to you in a minute, but first I need to give you some background information.

The Tribulation has two parts that are equal in length but not equal in severity. By the time the “Abomination of Desolation” happens, the first half of the Tribulation will be over. It begins with a man called the Antichrist establishing a seven-year peace treaty with Israel. He convinces them to dismantle all their defenses based on his promise of protection (Dan. 9:27).

You may have heard of the “four horsemen of the Apocalypse” or the Seal Judgments. The Antichrist, or at least what he promises, is represented by the rider on the white horse in Rev. 6:1-2. The verse indicates he is doing battle. Not everyone is happy about his treaty or his rise to power, so he uses the military to bring about the “peace” that he has promised. But it’s a peace much like the *Pox Ramona*, the forced peace of the Roman Empire. And like what happened in the Roman Empire, rebellions break out all over the planet.

The Antichrist has to work feverishly to put down those rebellions. War breaks out, represented by the red horse of Rev. 6:3-4 and the second Seal Judgment. War naturally proceeds to a shortage of resources, and with that comes an increase in prices. The best way to defeat an enemy is to starve them. You cut off their supply chains. You blockade ports so that no food or medical supplies can reach them. That’s what the black horse of Rev. 6:5-6 represents. This is the third seal judgment.

War and the famine that it creates can only lead to one thing – death. That’s the fourth Seal Judgment – the pale, ashen, gangrenous colored horse of Rev. 6:7-8. One-fourth of the world’s population will die as a result of the first four seal judgments. Using current world population numbers that would mean that almost 2 billion people will have already died by this point in the Tribulation![[1]](#endnote-1) Many of those who die at the directive of the Antichrist will be Christians. These martyred Christians are represented by seal #5 (Rev. 6:9-11). Though they will die a painful death, they will be kept eternally safe in the throne room of God.

Let’s stop and pause here for a minute and evaluate. Who has been creating trouble up to this point – God or man? It’s man! It’s as if God withdraws His hand from the affairs of man for a while – something man has wanted God to do for a very long time – to give humanity a taste of what life without God’s intervention looks like. Ain’t it pretty?! No, it’s *UGLY*. Life without God’s active involvement is *always* going to be ugly.

God doesn’t get involved with earthly affairs until Seal #6 recorded in Rev. 6:12-14. The picture is of a universe trembling with fear and anticipation. God is angry. The enemy has murdered His saints (seal #5). Judgment is getting ready to happen. That brings us to Seal #7 in Rev. 8:1. (Stay silent for at least 30 seconds) Silence. There is silence in heaven for what John describes as one-half of an hour.

This is quite possibly the first time in the history of the universe that there has been complete silence in heaven. The martyrs of Seal #5 have ceased their pleas for justice. The worshippers of Rev. 4-5 are quiet. Even the Seraphim who continuously cry out, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty” (Is. 6:3) make no noise. Why? What is it they see that is so breath-taking they can’t speak? One possibility is the devastation the Trumpet Judgments will bring (Rev. 8:2ff). Another possibility is they see what Jesus spoke of here in Matt. 24:15 – the “Abomination of Desolation.” So let’s see if we can understand the nature of this event.

Whenever I am trying to understand something, I find it is valuable to define my terms. “Abomination” means “anything greatly disliked or abhorred; intense aversion or loathing; detestation; a vile, shameful or detestable action, condition, habit, etc.” Think abominable snowman. “Desolation” means “devastation, ruin; dreariness, barrenness; deprivation of companionship, loneliness, sorrow, grief, woe.”[[2]](#endnote-2) Both of these are rough enough on their own, but Jesus tied them together. They make you depressed just reading the definitions.

When you look at them spiritually not just grammatically, it gets worse. The word abominable is used to describe such things as “lying lips” (Pr. 12:22) – an offense to the God Who is Truth (John. 14:6). It is also used to describe the practice of adjusting the scales to overcharge someone (Pr. 20:23) – an offense to the sacrificial God who is just (Isaiah 61:8) and homosexuality (Lev. 18:22) – an offense to the God who created us male and female (Gen. 1:27). Finally, it is used for idolatry and the practices associated with idolatry – an offense to the God who demands and deserves all our worship (Ex. 20:3-4). Particularly offensive was the practice of those who worshipped the gods Chemosh and Molech by burning their own children as a sacrifice (2 Kings 16:3)![[3]](#endnote-3)

So the idea of abomination is that which substitutes man’s purposes for God’s and causes worship to go to anyone other than God. It’s perverting the things He designed to bring glory to Himself and reflect His character. They become a means of self-worship or idolatry. The thought of using them later for their original intended purpose becomes repulsive. It’s like cleaning the toilet with your toothbrush and then trying to bring it back to your mouth to clean your teeth. You just wouldn’t be able to bring yourself to do it.

Jesus said the first person to refer to the Abomination of Desolation was Daniel. Three passages mention it: Daniel 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11. The most significant of these is Dan. 9:27:

*“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*

All three references make it clear that the God-ordained sacrifices in the Temple meant to be an act of worship toward God would be halted in some detestable kind of way. Some saw the fulfillment of this prophecy in the acts of Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled Palestine during a portion of the time in between the Old and New Testaments. To Hellenize Israel, he halted the Temple sacrifices and placed a Greek altar where the Hebrew one had once stood. Then he defiled the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar.[[4]](#endnote-4) [[5]](#endnote-5)

The act of defiling an altar was a common practice. The Jews did it purposefully toward one of Baal’s temples by converting it into a latrine (2 Kings 10:27). They unwittingly did it to their Temple by painting images of the false gods they worshipped on the temple walls (Ezek. 8:6-18).

Others believe that Daniel was referring to the event that was the subject of Jesus’ teaching – the destruction of the present Temple approximately 40 years in the future. The difficulty with either of these interpretations is that Daniel says that the person who performs this evil action will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel. Neither of these past events fulfills that prophecy.

What Jesus spoke of is still in the future and will be fulfilled by the Antichrist. In 2 Thess. 2:3-4, Paul says that the “man of lawlessness” which is another name for the Antichrist will position himself in the Temple and proclaim himself to be God. In Revelation 13, John says the Antichrist (“the beast”) will declare war on the saints (v. 7) and that he will set up a statue of himself in the temple for people to worship (v. 14). The Abomination of Desolation refers to either the Antichrist or his image being placed in the Temple so that people can direct their worship away from God and toward him.

Jesus gave only one word of admonition for the Jews who would witness this event happen – RUN (vvs. 16-20)! It will be the clear sign to the Jewish people. The Antichrist was just a con man like Professor Hill. He was not there to help them but to drain them dry. His covenant with them was just a ploy to get them to lay down all their defenses and make them easy prey. Instead of being their defender, he now becomes their attacker. Once again, the Jewish people are on the run. The Jews have always been on the run.

One of the things that we are going to learn as we examine prophecy is that the Jews are the focus of the Tribulation. God works to save them. At the same time, the Antichrist, empowered by Satan, works to destroy them. The book of Revelation speaks of Israel’s escape into the wilderness where God protects them from the Antichrist's wrath (Rev. 12:14). They will survive. But that doesn’t mean the journey will be easy or that there won’t be dangers along the way. In these verses, Jesus says the key to their successful escape is haste and a light load. That’s the point of the situations Jesus mentions – winter, pregnancy, Sabbath, and nursing.

Each of these conditions would make a journey more difficult. Winter requires shelter from the elements and limits both available food and foliage to hide behind. Pregnancy would make travel slow and dangerous for the baby, the mother and anyone with them. Traveling on the Sabbath would be difficult because of the closed city gate. Since there would be few traveling on Sabbath, hiding in a crowd would be impossible. A nursing baby has needs that can’t be delayed and gets very loud when those needs are ignored. The baby would expose the group’s hiding place. These issues of timing are beyond a person’s control. But there’s something else they can control. It’s the temptation to hesitate.

It always amazes me the number of people requiring rescue from an imminent natural disaster. They knew it was coming. They were warned – even ordered to evacuate. But they stayed. Why? They stayed because they didn’t believe the warnings, because they had no means of escape, or because they wanted to protect their property. Material possessions can be a hard thing to give up even when your life is on the line. People who see a forest fire approaching have to decide whether to save themselves or go back into the house to save some piece of their belongings – the pictures, the pet, the laptop. That’s the choice, and it can be a difficult one. “That’s my life in there! I can’t just leave it!”

This attachment to material things and to a familiar, comfortable way of life is ancient in its hold on humanity. When the angels told Lot of God’s imminent judgment, he believed the warning. He tried unsuccessfully to warn others. But when it came time to leave, he hesitated. The angels had to drag him to safety (Gen. 19:16). The angels told him and his family not to look back, but his wife just couldn’t help herself. Her hesitation and her longing cost her life. It is in this context that Jesus said, “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Luke 17:33) Hundreds of years after Jesus, another man said it this way:

*“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”* – Jim Elliott.

*Whatever* Jesus tells you to leave (“things” [v. 17], “cloak” [v. 18]), leave (Matt. 5:29-30). *Whenever* Jesus tells you to run, no matter how inconvenient or illogical or dangerous, RUN (2 Tim. 2:22)! And run as fast as you can. Danger has arrived, and it’s only going to spread.

1. **Trouble spreads to the whole world.** (vvs. 21-22)

Fire is bad. A fire that spreads is “badder.” Contained fire is still burning, but you can breathe a sigh of relief because you know it’s not going to affect you. There will be NO PLACE on planet earth that will not be affected by the “fire” of the Tribulation, particularly the second half of it!

Once the Antichrist deals with his enemies and consolidates his support, he will reveal his true agenda and begin to act out on his anger. He will direct it toward the Jews primarily and also to those Gentiles who express faith in Jesus during the Tribulation. God will begin to pour out His wrath through three more series of judgments – the Trumpet Judgments, the Thunder Judgments, and the Bowl Judgments. We have no explanation of the second of those – the Thunders. God tells John to keep them sealed up. They are a secret yet to be revealed one day. But John, under the inspiration of the Spirit, does his best to explain the other two sets.

Imagine the difficulty of John’s task! He was describing events, technology, and creatures without having a frame of reference that is constant and common across the ages! Try describing a helicopter or a nuclear explosion to people living in the first century. What terms would you use to describe them? John didn’t understand all that he was seeing! He readily admits that (Rev. 7:13-14). Daniel also didn’t understand when he received his visions (Dan. 8:15). So don’t be surprised that we can’t know for sure the substance of each celestial or terrestrial event prophecy records.

For now, let’s examine the thing we do know for sure – the results of these judgments. There will be a reduction in light. At first, that doesn’t sound so bad. But what does light give us? Safety, power (solar), heat, productivity (that’s why we have daylight savings time each year), and release from the depression darkness brings. Less light also means a shorter growing season. That leads us to the second result: a dramatic reduction in food supplies. The first of the Trumpet Judgments destroys one-third of all vegetation. Creatures in the sea – a critical source of food for many countries – die and begin to stink. To make matters worse, ships that could have transported food from unaffected areas to places where it is most needed are also destroyed. Freshwater will also be contaminated – a portion at first but all of it by the end of the Tribulation. Other factors compound the food and water shortage resulting in the death of at least three-quarters of the world’s population! Jesus says here in Matthew 24 that one of the reasons the Tribulation is seven years long is that if it were any longer, *no one* would survive it (v. 22)!

Before there is death, there is pain. It comes from physical sources first. Fiery projectiles raining down from the sky scorch the planet. Hunger and panic cause people to attack each other to acquire limited resources (Gal. 5:15). Pain will also come from spiritual sources. Satan, like the Antichrist, will reveal his true nature. God will release Satan’s forces to inflict unbearable pain on all the remaining people of the earth for five months. The pain will be so severe they will long for death, but for that period, they will be unable to die (Rev. 9:5-6).

You would think that with the world falling apart around them and their bodies in so much pain, the people of the earth would repent and submit to God’s authority. But sadly they do not. Revelation 6:16 says people will run into caves to escape the judgment they *know* is coming from God and will instead call out to the rocks to crush them (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9-10). They would rather die at the hands of Creation than submit to the hands of their Creator (Rom. 1:25)! As Jesus, the true Savior, was being led to His execution, He prophesied these events.

*“But Jesus turning to them said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"* (Luke 23:28-31)

People will be looking for someone to save them, but they won’t be looking to Jesus.

1. **Trouble sparks interest in *a* not *the* Savior.** (vvs. 23-26)

Like Professor Harold Hill, the problem the Antichrist creates is a problem he is all too willing to solve…for a price. The price is a hefty one. He wants the world to worship him as a god. In a crisis, people will do things they typically would not and accept leadership they normally would reject. The Rapture will create that kind of crisis.

Millions of people from all over the world will suddenly disappear for unknown reasons. Basic services will go dead or become unreliable. The internet will crash as will the stock market, not to mention the downed airplanes and impassable roads due to all the accidents. If your phone still works, dialing 911 will only get you a busy signal. The Rapture will accelerate the Antichrist's rise to power. Frightened people will be looking for leadership.

We spoke of the Abomination of Desolation at the beginning of this message. That event will happen at the mid-point of the Tribulation immediately after the Antichrist successfully kills God’s two witnesses. (Rev 11:7). This accomplishment along with his “miraculous resurrection” will serve as the perfect catalyst for him, with the help of the false prophet to proclaim his worthiness to receive worship.

A god demands ultimate control. The Antichrist will be no different. He will demand ultimate control over every aspect of their lives. He will accomplish this control through a mark that he places on the hand or the forehead. He benefits from the fact that people are all too willing to believe a lie. Believing the truth would mean they had been wrong all along about the identity of Jesus. Being “wrong” is not something they are willing to admit. So they go with option B. When option A disgusts you, option B begins to look really good.

When you don’t want Jesus, you find yourself willing to listen to the people who point you to any other “messiah” no matter what that messiah requires from you. Today, people find their messiah in Scientology, Hinduism, Baha’i or any other number of faiths. Some reject faith altogether. Not then. The majority of the world will place their faith in the one who stands on the throne in Jerusalem. Someone who is against Christ; someone who is instead of Christ. That’s what “anti” means. You put antifreeze in your car. What do you want to happen? Anything but freeze. And the Antichrist wants anything but the true Christ.

Jesus’ warning here about the proclamation of false messiahs raises a question. What are the signs of a true savior? How can you tell? It can be confusing. Jesus says there will be people directing others to a savior in the wilderness. He may have had in mind the reaction of people to John the Baptist. They considered the possibility that John might be the Messiah and asked him to either confirm or deny this. John, unlike the false spiritual leaders Jesus warns about, flatly denied his role as Messiah and directed people to the true Messiah – Jesus (John 1:19-23, 29). But still, we have our question.

How do we test the claims of a proclaimed Messiah to authenticate those claims? Simple. See if he can do what he claims to do. If I claim that I can bench press 300 lbs., the first thing you’re going to do is put a weight bench in front of me – probably up here on the platform in front of everyone – and say, “DO IT!” What does a Messiah do? Rescue people from their greatest threats, provide for people at the areas of their greatest need, and give them hope in the midst of their darkest fears. The Antichrist will *not* be doing this during the Tribulation. But Jesus will.

Even as the judgment of God is falling on humanity, He will pour out His mercy in equal measure. A powerful missionary force – 144,000 Jewish evangelists – will go out to share the love of Jesus Christ. And just to make sure they can accomplish their mission without hindrance, they will be “sealed.” This means God will protect them from the effects of all the calamities around them, and they will be immune to the Antichrist’s attacks against them. God’s two witnesses will proclaim His message as well.

The Antichrist will successfully kill them, but God will resurrect them three and a half days later. And as they are resurrected and ascend into heaven, the whole world will be watching! The Antichrist will not be able to block that testimony out of people’s minds. There are some things you just can’t un-see. God’s even going to send an angel to write the Gospel message in the sky (Rev. 14:6). Add to that the testimony of all those who are saved during the Tribulation and refuse to submit to the Antichrist’s threats. The message will be unstifleable.

God’s great desire is to save people not to condemn them (John 3:17; 2 Peter 3:9-10).

*"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”* (John 3:17)

Jesus, the true Messiah, will save so many during the Tribulation that John describes the throne room of God as being surrounded by people from “every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” (Rev. 7:9-10). Jesus will rescue throughout the whole Tribulation, and He will complete that rescue at the end of the Tribulation when He brings it to its violent conclusion.

1. **Trouble stops when Jesus arrives.** (vvs. 27-31)

Every story has its climax. Since this is Jesus’ story, the climax is when Jesus returns. It’s all about Jesus. It all revolves around Him. Jesus compares His return one day to a flash of lightning (Matt. 24:27). According to Luke, the comparison here seems to be that just as a person can easily see lightning from one side of the sky to the other, so Jesus’ return will be seen by everyone (Luke 17:24). Jesus’ first return for His saints before the Tribulation was only witnessed by those who rose up into the clouds to meet Him (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). He came that time *to get* His saints. But His return at the end of the Tribulation will be *with* his saints to bring both an end to the Antichrist's rule and an end to all those who served him. *Everyone* will see this return (Matt. 24:30).

Jesus’ return will affect people in one of two ways depending on which messiah they have chosen. For those who have chosen the Antichrist as their messiah, Jesus says they will “mourn” (v. 30). They had a choice – door #1 (Antichrist) or door #2 (Jesus). The problem was they could not see what was behind door #2 – Jesus in all His power and glory. All they had was a teaser, a temptation, and a tempter. “If I’d only been able to see what was behind the door, I would have made a better choice.” That’s where faith comes in, and without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). We don’t get to see everything we might like to see. We have to make choices based on the evidence we have.

Every choice carries consequences. Good choices have good consequences, and bad choices have bad consequences. They will mourn. Mourning happens when you understand the consequences of your bad choice. In this case, the consequence is not that you go home empty-handed. The consequence is that you die. The vultures are already gathering. They're ready for a feast (Matt. 24:28; Rev. 19:17-18).

Not everyone though will mourn Jesus’ return. Some will rejoice because His return means the defeat of His enemies – the same enemies who have been inflicting pain on Jesus’ followers. Jesus’ full glory will now be evident. That’s what every Jesus worshipper is longing for. His followers too will shine. The Jesus-rejectors who painted Christians as fools will recognize the wise choice we made.

Jesus says on that day, the givers of light (sun and moon) He originally established (Gen. 1:15; John 1:2) will not give their light. Maybe you’ve witnessed a solar eclipse. You can’t see the light of the sun or moon because one object is now blocking the view of the other. Both are still giving light, but you can’t see it. Maybe a better explanation is to consider what happens when a candle is lit outside in the middle of the afternoon. No one pays attention. In the darkness, it’s easy to see and value the light of a candle. In the light, it is almost invisible and goes unnoticed. What’s the difference? During the day, a much greater light is present.

In Genesis, when God created these two celestial light givers, He described them as a “greater” one and a “lesser” one (Gen. 1:16). The greatest Light, Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:12) will now be present. Compared to Him, all other lights are inconsequential. (Rev. 22:23) And compared to Him, all other “powers” are impotent (Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

There’s one more reason why the Jesus followers rejoice at His coming. It’s because they will no longer be alone. As Jesus returns accompanied by those who have gotten to enjoy His presence in Heaven, He sends out His angels to gather the rest of His children (Matt. 24:31). They have faithfully lived for Him during the worst period in human history. They have suffered, they have endured, and they felt utterly alone at times.

Yes, they knew by faith that Jesus was with them even as He had promised so long ago (Matt. 28:20). But it was still hard. Their troubles and their loneliness are over now. Jesus is here. He gathers them to himself from every nook and cranny of the planet. They come before their commander not as limping wounded soldiers but as victorious warriors bringing with them those who had once been held captive by the enemy. A kingdom awaits because the King is here!

**Conclusion:** Professor Harold Hill couldn’t have possibly known how prophetic his words were. Trouble is coming, and it’s trouble with a capital T. Don’t let anyone fool you. It’s got to get a lot worse before it can get better. That doesn’t sound very encouraging, but it’s true.

If you’re a Christian, I’ve got some encouragement. You won’t have to experience *this* trouble. Oh, you’ll have plenty of trouble. Jesus told His original disciples that persecution was going to arrive long before the Antichrist ever made his debut. But you won’t have to go through the Tribulation. That doesn’t mean though that you can just ignore this message. Let me point out some areas of application for you.

First, when God tells you something or someone is dangerous, and you need to run from them, run as fast as you can! Don’t hesitate as Lot did. Don’t try to take as much of your old life with as you can so you can have a mixture of the old with the new (Matt. 9:17). The old life is passed away; behold, everything is new (2 Cor. 5:17). Don’t get so encumbered with this life that your journey is slow (2 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 12:1). Jesus anticipated the difficulty a baby would bring when the things of God were under attack. A baby is not bad; it’s just that a baby slows you down (Matt. 24:19). You can’t get away from danger as quickly or as easily as you otherwise could. And don’t look back with longing like Lot’s wife did. Look forward toward the prize that awaits you (Phil. 3:14) and toward the One who is encouraging you to finish well (Heb. 12:2).

Second, you know some people who, if nothing changes, and if they live long enough will go through the Tribulation. Jesus loves them. That’s why He gave this warning. Do *you* love them enough to warn them just as Jesus warned the people of His day?

If you’re not a Christian, I’ve got bad news and good news. The bad news is judgment day is coming. You might have to experience the Tribulation and you might not. I don’t know when it’s going to happen. No one on earth knows. It could start next week, or it could still be 1000 years from now. But regardless of when the Tribulation happens, *your* judgment day is coming.

Here’s the good news. Jesus already took your judgment. He wants you to be anticipating His return not dreading it. I know. The Enemy, the deceiver, the trickiest con man there has ever been is telling you to doubt every word that I am presenting. “He’s just a con man trying to sell you something.” I’m not trying to sell you anything but Jesus.

I’m not going to lie to you. What Jesus has to offer is both the least expensive and most expensive option at the same time. Jesus paid the cost. You can freely receive it. But then He, like the Antichrist, asks for your everything – your allegiance, your money, your life (Rom. 12:1-2; Matt. 16:24). There are two differences between the offer He makes and the one the Antichrist makes. One, He tells you the cost up front instead of concealing it until you’ve made your decision. Two, he delivers on every promise He has ever made or will ever make. What will it be – door #1 or door #2. Choose.

1. ”Current World Population; worldometers; retrieved Feb, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Online dictionary [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, p. 5; retrieved Feb, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Illustrated Bible Dict., Vol. 1, p. 72; retrieved Feb, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “Antiochus Ephiphanes IV Bust”; Bible History Online; retrieved Feb, 2018 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)