**Transcript**

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The Final Countdown – Tribulation
Mike – announcements Membership class, baptism
Recap -We are in this great and deep, difficult at times series The Final Countdown. We are learning that there is
1) a definite sequence of events, and it starts with what already happened: Jesus came to earth, born of a Virgin, he was fully man, fully God. He did miracles, he taught his disciples, he told them things that would happen, and they happened. He was crucified, a horrific death on the cross. He took on all sin, past present and future, he suffered more than we can wrap our heads around, he died, and God raised him from the dead 3 days later. That is referred to as the first coming of Christ.
2) Next the church age. That is what we are living in right now. The time between the first coming of Jesus and the second time. He will come again. But He hasn’t yet. As we live in the Church Age, we are called to be vigilant and prepared for the next pivotal event in God's timeline—the Rapture, where Jesus will gather His church."
3) The Rapture - that’s what our focus was last week. Jesus comes for his church and he snatches us up in the air with those who believed in him that have died and all living on earth who believe in him.
4) After the rapture there will be a period of 7 years – a period of great tribulation. We will talk about that today. This might be be your least favorite of this series – its hard but its important we understand what it will be like for those left behind.
5) And then at the end of the tribulation, the second coming of Jesus takes place, when he comes with his church and we have the GREAT 1000-year reign, a great period of peace where we are all together with Jesus here on Earth and Satan is bound up.
6) Then comes the great white throne judgment where Satan, demons, fallen angels and unrepented sinners are eternally separated from God, and then the incredible new heaven and new earth.

Last week we talked about the Rapture that Jesus promises – to take all those who have died that believe in him and those of us who are still living and believe in him to snatch us all in a moment into the air with Him and each other.
And we briefly touched on the fact that there will be those left behind – remaining here on earth. He has given us the warning but some haven’t and will not take this storm warning seriously and will be left behind – they won’t be raptured when Jesus comes and there are many reasons for that.
Think of Noah and when he started building the huge weird boat on dry land – his neighbors probably laughed at him. Or Jeremiah when he warned the people of Judah that unless they quit their evil lifestyle the country would fall to the Babylonian army – Jeremiah was tied and thrown in jail and tossed down a well. People don't like pessimism.
Pessimism and optimism are irrelevant in every situation where God’s word has clearly spoken. The Bible warns, but it also graciously provides a way of escape. Today, in our lives, people are provided with God’s view but bombarded with man’s solutions. But as time moves forward, the tempo of world events will provide an undeniable sense of impending crisis that will accelerate with speed. The warning signs are all around…Remember nothing has to happen for the Rapture to take place. It can come at any time. The signs that are outlined in the bible are for when Jesus comes back the second time and there will be 7 years between the rapture and his second coming. So the signs tell us that his coming is getting closer and if his coming is getting closer than the rapture is getting even more closer.
This 7 year period is what we are talking about today – The Tribulation or the Great Tribulation. And some people believe different things about the sequences of events – like I talked about in the first message on Prophesy - you might hear words like pre trib, post trib. If you miss any of the messages in this series go to our Youtube channel – Joy Church NH and catch up. Based on what the bible tells us, What we believe is the rapture comes first - Jesus comes in the air, no one sees him but he literally takes us from this earth, all who believe in him, along with those who have died who believed in Him so he can rescue us from the horrific devastation that is coming called the Tribulation 1 Thess 1:10 – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath….
The 7 year tribulation starts here on earth. What is that? That’s our focus today. What is it and what will it be like for those left here on earth, those who did not believe and give there lives to Jesus before the Rapture occurs.
I can tell you you don’t want to be here for it. It will be a brutal 7 year period filled with horrors, persecutions, natural disasters, a political turmoil unlike anything we have experienced to this point. Massive death tolls that will last the whole 7 year period.
This is the time when God will pour out His judgment on the rebellious. Those left behind for the Tribulation will see with their own eyes the events happening. The moment after the Rapture – remember all believers will have been removed – it will be like the removal of a dam, the world will be engulfed with evil and swamped by sin.
Rev 6-18 describes the tribulation period. We might not understand it completely or even much the first time through…I certainly didn’t and don’t. But we need to read it. Its full of Judgments, the scroll which is the title deed to the earth and it has Seals, Trumpets and bowls all representing multiple phases of God’s wrath. You will read about riders on colored horses. We would be here for weeks going thru each one – again I highly recommend the book – After the Rapture if you want to dive deeper and understand the book of Reveleation better. You will read about the war or the battle of Armageddon which will be different from any war man has ever experienced in history. Supernatural events that our minds cannot comprehend.
Jesus talks about the Tribulation in Matt 24 – In vs 21 he doesn’t sugar coat it at all “ 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”. It will be the worst days the earth has ever faced…by far. In many verses in Matt 24 he tells what will unfold in the first 3.5 years of the tribulation and how it will continually get worse….
Vs 5 thru 21 ( see page 29 after the rapture) – all the D words
The word Tribulation comes from a translated greek work thlipsis which means “designating the giant weight used to crush grain into flour – so the idea behind tribulation is utterly crushing, pulverizing, or grinding a substance into powder. It will be a time of terror and trouble. Some bible scholars use the words affliction, persecution, trouble, suffering, misery, distress, or oppression.
Nowhere , in all of the bible, is there one word or description that says anything good about the Tribulation period (other than the promise it will end after seven years). Moses called it the day of their calamity (Deut 32:35,, Zephaniah said it was the day of the Lord’s anger (Zeph 2:2), Paul referred to it as the wrath to come (1 Thes 1:10), John called it the hour of trial (Rev 3:10) and the hour of His judgement (Rev 14:7). Daniel described it as a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation (Dan 12:1).
It's not a pretty picture at all – A quarter of the world’s population will die from war, starvation, beastly predators. Giant earthquakes will destroy cities. Mountains will crash into the seas, killing a third of the fish. Tidal waves will sink a third of all the world’s ships. Ashes and smoke will hide the sun and moon. Thinking again, of the 9/11 videos that show the smoke and debree when the trade centers collapsed. Swarms of demonic insects will darken the sun and inflict painful stings. Epidemic plagues will kill ¼ of all mankind. People – will flee cities to hide in caves and under rocks. Rev 6:2-17; 8:8-13; 9:1-20; 16:1-21.
I don’t even like talking about it and I certainly don’t want any of my family and friends, any of you here today or listening online, left behind to be here during this time. But we have to talk about it. It gives us the reality of the urgency. Do you sense the urgency ? Do we feel the incredible gift God has given us and that He expects us to share with others? I believe He doesn’t want anyone suffering through this time either. We are here to spread the good news and allow God to work through us to every person we come in contact with.
Now again we have to remember – Paul tells us in 1 Thess 5:1-11 “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. The day of the Lord is another term for the time of tribulation. And since the Rapture comes first, Paul is telling us no one could know when the Rapture was going to occur any more than you can know when a theif is planning to ransack your house! No burglar sends a letter announcing – Hey Mike and Kathy, I will be at your house at 2am to steal from you. It comes unexpectedly…..

What else? Oh there is more.
This is also the time the Antichrist will rise to power. This is a maniac person having so much power over people and using it cruelly. He will be more demonic than Hitler. He will demand total allegiance to to his satanic program and those who resist will be barred from selling or buying food or any other product.
The thing about this person – the Antichrist is he will totally oppose Jesus yet he will pass himself off as Jesus. He is like Satan’s superman who persecutes, tortures and kills people of God – the most despicable person ever to walk the earth. He is a charismatic leader. It will look like he is running things, calling all the shots and just like now, the hand of God is ruling and seeing everything that is happening. He, GOD is still in control.
The AntiChrist takes life, Jesus gives life. The antichrist is the man who would be God. Jesus is the God who became man. He took on humanity to die on the cross in your place and rose from the dead. He is Savior. He is Lord. He will give you eternal life and forgiveness if you call upon his name in faith – now AND during the Tribulation.
Another important piece to talk about is something we hear called the Mark of the Beast. It comes half way thru the Tribulation – 3.5 years in. The closest my mind can relate to this is the way things occurred with the COVID shot and this is not a message about whether you got it or didn’t get it or believe it was good or bad. Just an analogy – I think we can agree that the world told us things about this vaccine and stopped us from doing things: Some people lost their jobs if they didn’t get it, some people couldn’t go to arena’s or shows if they didn’t have proof they received the shot. The Mark of the Beast will be like that in the sense you will struggle to survive without it – you will be stopped from buying groceries, conducting financial transactions etc. The Mark will identify those who bear it as worshipers of the Beast. If you are left behind and are here for the tribulation, you will see the worst days of your life on earth and no matter what don’t take the Mark. Refuse it despite the hardship – it literally will mean heaven or hell. It will make your life better during the tribulation and that’s why many will take it but then God’s judgement will come and those who take it will be separated from God forever. Matt 10:28 says And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
People here during the Tribulation will be in that position because they failed to receive Jesus as their Savior before the Rapture. They neglected God’s gracious offer of salvation through Jesus. That’s bad news because the 7 year Tribulation period will be the most horrible time you have ever experienced BUT the good news is you will still have hope, you can choose your eternal destination. It won’t remove you from the Tribulation you are experiencing, but it will guarantee your eternity with Jesus.

The book of Revelation reveals that there is a great revival in the Tribulation. Even in the darkest time of human history, Jesus is still seeking and saving those who are lost! That’s the best news .

There is more but that’s enough….we get the picture as much as we can.

But - What’s the purpose of the tribulation? Why is a loving God pouring out such wrath on the earth?
It’s because of humanity’s rebellion and sin. God’s hand is heavily involved, just like it was when he brought the plagues on the rebellious nation of Egypt in the book of Exodus. It’s so important for us to understand the Tribulation is a planned, prophesied program and period designed to accomplish 2 things – 2 goals.
The first purpose is to urge out from the jewish people those who refuse to turn to Jesus and bring about the final conversion of the Jewish nation. Through the troubles of the time of tribulation, God will accomplish His purpose and bring a remnant of the Jewish people to trust in jesus as their Messiah. The overall purpose of the Tribulation is to execute God’s wrath upon those who oppose Him – first the Jews who have rebelled and then the rebellious Gentiles. Romans 1:18 – For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. We like to talk about the love of God, but not so much about His wrath. But wrath goes hand in hand with judgement, and it is as much an expression of God’s goodness as His love.
So the purpose of the Tribulation is to expose unregenerate, lost people, both Jews and Gentiles, to the wrath of God. God’s wrath hardens some hearts and softens others. It depends on how people respond to it. During the Tribulation – if you are still here, you can allow Jesus to soften your heart.
We have seen a mass of hurricanes this year – devasting ones, houses torn apart yet some stand – those built according to the building codes weather the storms. The same thing is true for us. Build our lives according to the divine building code, the firm foundation of Jesus – any other foundation will fail you.
So people left behind still can come to Jesus – God, in His grace extends more time. As long as you are alive there is hope.
We want to be part of the Rapture – everyone of us and all our families and friends. We don’t want to be left behind and be here, part of the next phase, the tribulation. The bible tells us Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation –
Do you know Him? Have you surrendered your life to him? Have you asked Him to forgive your sins and be your Lord and Savior.
Today is the day of salvation. If you haven't yet surrendered your life to Jesus, don't wait. Take his free gift and assure your place in Heaven and avoiding the Tribulation.
Pray – invitation – let’s bow our heads and if you would say today. I don’t know Jesus as my Lord and Savior. There hasn’t been a point in time where I have surrendered my life to him and as we talked today about the rapture and what is coming – you felt good and a sense of oh I will be taken before the tribulation, or were you thinking I am not sure where I stand. Today you can know for sure. You can be 100% confident in eternity with Jesus. I will lead you in a prayer in a minute and we don’t want you to feel singled out so at Joy Church we all pray together, but if that is you and you want to make the decision to accept Jesus today – pray after me and you won’t be praying alone Jesus, forgive me of my sins, I surrender my life to you, be my Lord and Savior, fill me with your Holy Spirit, I give you my life today. Thank you for saving me . and allowing me to spend eternity with you. Amen
Just keep your heads bowed and eyes closed for a minute. If you just prayed that prayer for the first time, would you just raise your hand so I can see it, just me, everyone else has their eyes closed. Online just type it in the chat – I gave my life to Jesus or I said yes today. I want to pray for all of you. Thank you, God, for those who just gave their lives to you for the first time, those in the room and those online. Thank you for forgiving their sins, saving them and empowering them to live their lives fully for you. Give them peace and excitement today as they begin a brand new and awesome life with you Jesus. We love you so much Lord. Amen!