

## The Beginning Of Sorrows

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I want to begin today by asking you a question: Are we living in the last days? I think that most people would say yes, but did you know that we have been living in the last days for our entire life?

Jesus' defeat of sin, death, and Satan actually ushered in the last days. I believe that we are living toward the time of the end. I believe we are living at the time in which Jesus said was, "the beginning of sorrows."

Now before we get into that, let us let the Scriptures show us a little bit of how we have been living in these last days for the past 2,000 years. We will begin in Acts 2, Peter's sermon on that day.

**Acts 2:16-17** But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.'

Now I have mentioned this before, but this "all flesh," "according to the one language expert in his commentary said that: "all flesh" means all *kinds* of flesh, it does not mean each individual person. We are talking about all kinds of flesh, all kinds of people, all age groups; Jews, Gentiles, men, women, old, young, and so on. Continuing on in verse 21,

**Acts 2:22-23** "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."

Peter is saying here that since the coming of Jesus, His crucifixion, and His resurrection, we are now living in the last days. Now let us check this out a little more and turn to II Peter 3.

**II Peter 3:1-5** Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.

**II Peter 3:8** But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

So we are at the end of two days in God’s world. Now let us see what Paul has to say about this.

**Hebrews 1:1-2** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Now we believe that Paul wrote Hebrews, and he is saying here that in the past God spoke to His people through and by the prophets. But in these last days, he says, beginning at Christ’s resurrection, He is speaking to us through His Son. These past 2,000 years God has spoken to us through His Son.

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**Colossians 2:13-14** And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

What did He nail to the cross? It was the death certificate that He nailed to the cross. The penalty for sin is death and He nailed it to the cross! When Jesus was resurrected He destroyed the one who had the power of death. Then he goes on to say in verse 15,

**Colossians 2:15** Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

If you remember in Ephesians 6, the apostle Paul states that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, we are wrestling against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual power of wickedness in high places.

Now what I want to show you is that at the crucifixion of Jesus, Satan's fate was sealed. Satan held mankind captive through sin, fear, and death but Jesus has broken all of that. Turn back to Hebrews 2.

**Hebrews 2:14-15** Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

As I just mentioned, at the crucifixion, Satan's fate was sealed. Now I want to show you something that you may not have put together before and gives further proof that the last days began at that time. We will turn Revelation 12.

**Revelation 12:1** Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

I do not know if you have heard about this or not, but you can go on the NASA website and find this, but the constellation Virgo (the woman, also called the virgin) in September 23, 2017 something happened. It is the first time in history that we know of this happening. In the constellation (Virgo) there was the woman and at her shoulder was the sun, and right below her foot was the moon, and right above her head you could see twelve stars, like a crown.

Then there was one more thing that makes this unique and that was the fact that usually when you are looking at these things as time moves on day after day, the planets continue to move. But at this time, September 23, 2017, Jupiter stopped at the womb of the woman and as time moved on it went back and forth in the womb area, never going out of the womb area. This lasted for nine months and after that Jupiter finally came out and moved on. I do not know about you, but I just thought this was very interesting. Again, you can find it on NASA's website.

**Revelation 12:2-3** Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

Notice that there are seven crowns on the heads. When you go to Revelation 13 and see the same beast with seven heads and ten horns, the crowns are going to be on the horns, no longer on the heads. Now we know that the heads are empires; seven kings; seven kingdoms, and Satan is their ruler. I think what this is showing us is that the time frame of what is going on here in chapter 12, with the beast, is different from the time frame when it picks back up in chapter 13 when we get back toward the end of the Day of the Lord, toward the coming of Christ.

**Revelation 12:4** His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Now we understand back when Christ was born, Satan worked through Herod to kill all the little babies two years old and under. But at that time an angel warned Joseph and Mary and they took off to Egypt. Personally, I have always wondered how long they stayed in Egypt, because Herod died right after that and then they came back. Could it have been three and a half years? Possible, but we do not know, it is interesting to think about though.

**Revelation 12:5** She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

We see the time frame here is at the resurrection of Jesus. He was resurrected and called up to God. Now notice verse 7,

**Revelation 12:7-10** And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

So when was the salvation, the power, the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of Christ made available? At the cross! All power and authority has been given to Jesus.

**Revelation 12:11-12** And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb [We now have atonement from the penalty of sin, it was nailed to the cross.] and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

In other words, Satan's time is limited. He has a limited time when he was cast out. You can reference this to Matthew 8:29, where that demon said to Christ: "Have You come here to torment us before the time?" You see, when he was cast out he had a limited time and he knew it. There was something about the cross then that sealed Satan's doom. Now turn over to John 12.

**John 12:31-33** "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Now turn over to John 16. This is when Christ was trying to say that He would be leaving and the Holy Spirit would be sent once He had gone into heaven.

**John 16:8-11** "And when He has come [speaking of the Holy Spirit], He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

In other words Satan in being sentenced at that time; his destiny set; his fate sealed—and I believe that he will have to pay the ultimate penalty for sin, which is death.

The name Satan, according to some Hebrew scholars, actually means "adversary," like an opponent in a court of law. Satan was on trial, but here he has already been judged and sentenced and his fate is sealed.

Now, if I am correct in my understanding of this, "the last days" began with the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus and Satan's fate was sealed and he was cast out of heaven and has been sentenced to death. Now we see ourselves approaching the end of the last days and are headed toward the end of this age and the return of our Savior. The question I have is: are we about to enter into that time Jesus referred to as the "beginning of sorrows?"

Let us take a look back at Matthew 24, the Olivet prophecy, where the disciples asked what the signs of His coming and the end of the age would be. The very first thing that Jesus tells us is:

**Matthew 24:4** And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.”

I think Richard’s commentary shows us that we have to be careful not to be deceived by false “facts.” The world believes statistics and false “facts,” but we need to be very careful not to get caught up in it and believe it as they do.

**Matthew 24:5** “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

So there will also be some religious deception also, which we know has been going on for quite a while. But there is going to be a religious leader—a false prophet—that will be coming on the scene just before Christ returns.

**Matthew 24:6** “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

Now in Luke’s account (Luke 21:9) it says “hear of wars and commotions.” Commotions is the Greek word that means instability; disorder. Continuing on back in Matthew 24, He goes on to say,

**Matthew 24:7-8** “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

Now this “nation against nation” does not describe nations as we think about them today, like China versus the US, or Israel versus Iran. This is described in the next phrase, where it says “Kingdom against kingdom” meaning government against government. But the Greek word for nation is a different word, it means race or ethnicity, describing different cultures, traditions, and

backgrounds that are living inside the same country. The only other place that I know of that can relate to this is in Isaiah 19, where it says:

**Isaiah 19:2** “I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.”

The word “rise” in the Greek means to awaken; rouse. Even now we have a powerful “awakening or rousing” going on between people in this country, but it is not only going on here. The world is also plagued by corrupt governments and there is just no peace anymore. It seems to be constant conflict and our society looks like it is crumbling. There is no order anymore, it is complete chaos and there is no justice anymore.

Now going back to Matthew 24, it also mentions famines. That continues to be a problem in many areas in the world. I will give some statistics here. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations it is estimated that about 795 million of the 7.3 billion people in the world, or 1 in 9 people, are suffering from chronic undernourishment. In April of this year, David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Program, painted a grim picture of 135 million people facing crisis levels of hunger or worse. He also says that this is coupled with an additional 130 million on the edge of starvation that is probably because of Covid 19.

Oxfam America, a global movement of people working to end the injustice of poverty, in April released a paper that stated, “Widespread hunger due to the Covid19 pandemic could push half a billion people into poverty.” In May they stated, “As Covid 19 marches across the world, the threat of illness and death is meeting an ever-greater concern as disease threaten places that already suffer from poverty, conflict and drought.” In July, they warned that as many as 12,000 people could die by the end of the year as a result of hunger linked to Covid 19. Potentially more could die from the disease.”

Now again, take these statistics with a grain of salt, but the fact is that people believe it and it is driving people into fear. People are losing their jobs, businesses are being shut down, and there are people in these poor countries that are probably suffering even more due to not being able to get food.

The Greek word for pestilence can have a broad range of meanings, including any sudden fatal epidemic such as, Spanish flu, Covid 19. When we look at these things we are looking at global pandemics, these effect the whole globe. Now you couple these things with war and disturbances with the nations and governments wanting to fight each other, pretty soon we will be at that point where a quarter of the world will be killed by these things.

I think that this is enough to show that the last days began at the crucifixion, when Satan's fate was sealed and that we are at the end of these last days and we are headed toward that time of the end, that Jesus said was the beginning of sorrows.

*Thayer's* definition of "sorrows" means the pain of childbirth, prevailed pain; birth (labor) pains. Once labor pains start they do not stop until the baby is born. We can reference this to Romans 8:22-23.

So if we are living in the last days of man's rule on this planet, which I personally believe that we are, then we know it is critical to develop a close relationship with God. This relationship should be based not on fear, but rather on hope. Did you know that one of the most quoted phrases in the Bible is, "do not be afraid" or "do not fear"? Depending on the translation you look at, it is quoted close to four hundred times!

We have hope for a better world, where there will be no more deception, no more wars, no more corruption and violence, no more famine, no more diseases. Christ's return should be a much anticipated event, longed for by all those who love God.

I will close with this quote from an evangelist that was in Worldwide back in the 70's, his name is Ronald Dart, and he says:

He is coming when we think He is not. What if the race turns out to be longer than we originally thought that it was? We must pace ourselves and finish the race no matter how long it may turn out to be. The only thing that we can do is be ready. He also goes on to say, "Our motto should be two short sentences: be ready, but live life; and live life, but be ready."