

The End of the Age and the Return of Jesus Part 1 – (Matt. 24:1-31)

**I. In These Days**

- A. As COVID-19 continues to plague our state, country, and world we want to set our hearts to respond to the Lord and to press into Him. The Lord has sovereignly given His church various passages to focus upon in this season to help us position our hearts in understanding and to respond as intercessors.
- B. This passage is often currently highlighted as many believers are considering whether or not the corona virus is a sign of the return of Jesus. I want to encourage you all to press into this passage in this season. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding and draw you nearer to Jesus through it.

**II. Overview of Matt. 24**

- A. The Context – Jesus had presented Himself to the nation as their messiah, but they rejected Him. Just a few days before, Jesus had been accepted by the people as their messiah on Palm Sunday. However, in only a short amount of time, because of unmet messianic expectations, He had been rejected by all but a few followers. Jesus entered the temple for the last time and upon His exit proclaimed that, “Desolation was coming and that they would not see Him again until they asked for Him to return.” Upon leaving the temple the disciples pointed out how amazing the buildings of the temple were. Jesus announced to them that everything they were pointing out would soon be destroyed. They then walked out to the Mount of Olives where they were going to spend the night. Mark’s gospel tells us that it was Peter, James, John, and Andrew who came to Him privately to talk to Him about what He said concerning the destruction of the temple.
- B. Inductive Outline – In my opinion Matt. 24:1-51 can be broken down into 3 main sections with subsequent subsections.
  - 1. Matt. 24:1-3 - Jesus was asked to give clarity concerning the timing and events of the destruction of the temple and His return to the earth to set up His Kingdom.
  - 2. Matt. 24:4-31 - Jesus answers their question clearly and prophetically
  - 3. Matt. 24:32-51 - Jesus reinforces his answer through pastoral counsel in order to ready his followers to position their hearts and minds in righteousness and intimacy.

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**III. Section 1 – The Question**

- A. Section 1 – Jesus is asked to give clarity concerning the timing and events of the destruction of the temple and His return to the earth to set up His Kingdom. (Matt. 24:1-3)
- B. When will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the age? – Even though there are multiple levels to this question, it is very important to recognize that it was asked in the context of one question and one event. There is an assumption in this question that the temple destruction would happen at the same time as the return of Jesus to the earth. It is also very important to note that in the original Greek language His coming and the end of the age were the same event.
1. The Disciples want to know the exact timing of when the temple will be destroyed and when Jesus will return. This is not so different from most Christians that I know. All of us would love to know the exact timing of His return. We must settle on the truth that it is best for us NOT to know the exact timing or else He would give it. When it comes to exact timing of His return Jesus insists that we will not and should not know. (Deut. 29:29; Matt. 24:36; Acts. 1:7; 1 Tim. 6:13-16)
  2. They want to know the signs that will lead up to this exact timing. This is also a great desire of most Christians that I know. On this, Jesus is eager to give multiple signs that will happen in the days leading up to His return to the earth. When it comes to knowing the signs that lead up to His return, Jesus insists and commands that we all must understand and know them. This is what Jesus and the writers of scripture refer to as, “knowing the hour or days in which you live.” (Lk.19:44; Matt. 24:43; 1 Thess. 5:4-6; Rev. 1:19)

**IV. Section 2 – The Answer**

- A. Four Part Answer - Jesus answers their questions clearly and prophetically. You can break His answer down into 4 parts. (Mat. 24:4-31)
1. Part 1, He gives an overarching warning of rampant deception concerning Himself and His coming.
  2. Part 2, He gives four progressions of trends leading up to the end of the age.
  3. Part 3, He gives two underlying movements of His church in conjunction with the four trends.

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4. Part 4, He gives three primary signs of His coming and the end of the age.

B. Answer Part 1 – Warning of Deception (Matt. 24:4-5)

1. Jesus gives the disciples a lot more information than they actually asked for in the first place. The reason He gives for such a lengthy answer is because of the current and increasing levels of deception that He knows will come as they await His return. The issue of not being deceived takes up 9 of the 27 verses in His answer. (Matt. 24:4-6, 11, 23-28)
2. The two deceptions that He directly addresses are false messiah's, and false perceptions concerning the timing and event of the end of the age and His coming. (Acts 5:36-37, 8:9-10; 20:30; 2 Thess. 2:1-3, 9-12; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:26; Rev. 13:13-14, 19:20)

C. Answer Part 2 – Progression of Trends leading up to His Coming

1. Beginning of Sorrows (Matt. 24:6-8) – Jesus starts out His answer by telling the disciples what are NOT the signs of His coming so that they are not deceived into believing that they are. He tells them wars and rumors of wars are not to make us think Jesus is coming soon. He tells us the same of famines, pestilences, and earthquakes.
  - a. This can be a little confusing since we know that there are wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes that are part of the great tribulation. Jesus, however, is not telling about what will happen during the great tribulation but rather the signs that lead up to it.
2. Then, Persecution/Martyrdom (Matt. 24:9) – The word “then” is key in this passage. After years of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes the disciples of Jesus will experience world wide persecution. I believe strongly that the “then” marks the transition from the beginning of sorrows to the tribulation or time of sorrows. The body of Christ has always seen persecution in various nations and at various times, but has never seen every nation hating them at the same time. We will come back to this point when Jesus gives the first primary sign that marks the end of the age, which is the revealing of the Antichrist. (Matt. 10:21-22; John 15:20, 16:2; Rev. 2:10)

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- a. Persecuted for His Name – Followers of Jesus will not be persecuted just for their faith in Jesus, but also for standing with Him in the truth of who He is and what He loves. They will call things wrong that He calls wrong, they will call things right that He calls right, and they will be hated for it.
  - b. Hated by All Nations – This means that every nation or ethnic people group on the earth knows enough about Jesus and His followers to hate and persecute them. I believe that this means the great commission has been fulfilled at this point in the timeline.
3. Then, Great Offence at Jesus (Matt. 24:10) – “Then” again refers to the previous trend. Worldwide persecution and the hatred of all nations leads to great offence at the Lord for allowing His people to go through such things. I believe this refers to the time spoken of by Jesus and the Apostolic writers known as the “great falling away”. (2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; Rev. 2:4)
  4. Then, False Prophets (Matt. 24:11) – “Then”, it only makes sense that a false prophetic messages and doctrines would arise to answer the offence. Historically, false messages and false prophecy will come to give people license for lawlessness rather than bear the persecution of love for Jesus and holiness. (Rom. 16:17-18; Phil. 3:17-19; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-3)
- D. Answer Part 3 - Underlying Movements of His People – The progression trends of the end of the age produce two responses in the people of God. They stand as the two great incompatible lifestyles that recur over and over in the scriptures: lovers of Jesus or lovers of the lusts of the world. As the days of this age draw to a close, Jesus will force everyone off the fence and provoke them to choose a side and widen the gulf between them.
1. Persecution Produces Lawlessness (Matt. 24:12-13) – The scriptures tell us plainly that the response of many who have love for Jesus before the worldwide persecution end in offence and come out of the persecution hating and forsaking Him. (2 Thess. 2:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5)

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2. Persecution Produces the Gospel of the Kingdom Preached in Every Nation (Matt. 24:14) – The original Greek language speaks of an ongoing powerful witness of preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God throughout the tribulation up until the very end. (Acts 1:8; Rev. 11:3; 20:4)

a. Gospel of the Kingdom – The preaching that is being talked about here is not worldwide evangelism of how to be saved from your sins. Evangelism is absolutely part of the good news, but the fullness of the kingdom message in its biblical context would be the preaching of the great promises of the messianic kingdom and the restoration of all things. (Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Acts 20:25, 28:31)

E. Answer Part 4 – Three Primary Signs of the End of the Age and His coming (Matt. 24:15-31)

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Sign - “Abomination of Desolation” Antichrist –When you see the “abomination of desolation” – Jesus tells us to reference Daniel the prophet to understand what it is He is talking about. The prophet Daniel was shown a great vision that culminated with a king invading the temple sanctuary in Jerusalem and stopping the sacrifices there and setting up the “abomination of desolation”. Historically, Antiochus IV (190BC) fulfilled this vision when he set up an image of himself in the temple and ordered sacrifice and worship to be made to it. Jesus wants us to understand that the vision of Daniel was awaiting a still coming greater fulfillment of this same “abomination of desolation”. (Dan. 9:27, 11:31, 12:11; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15; 20:4)

a. In the progression of trends that will culminate with the end of the Age, the main theme is the worldwide great persecution that will come and accompanying tribulation that follows it. This is the theme of the “therefore” of verse 15. It’s my opinion this means that time of great persecution and accompanying tribulation starts with this sign. (Dan. 7:21,25; 8:24-25, Dan. 12:1; Rev. 6:9-10, 7:9-17; 12:11, 17; 13:6-7; 20:4)

b. Great Tribulation – The original Greek word that is translated “tribulation” means pressure, or a pressing together of an object. The scriptures tell us in many places

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that we have and will experience tribulation currently.

However, Jesus tells us that there has never been a season of tribulation in the history of mankind like the one that follows the sign of the Antichrist. Jesus showed John many times in the book of Revelation the great tribulation would be marked by the “abomination of desolation” and it would last 3 ½ years. (Dan. 7:25, 9:27, 12:7; Rev. 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5)

- c. Great Persecution and Tribulation - Jesus said He will bring these days to end supernaturally for the sake of the elect. He tells us once again that during this time of great tribulation and persecution there will be a propensity to be deceived into believing false wonders and false prophecies and to follow or worship false Christ's. (Matt. 24:16-26; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; Rev. 13:11-15)
  - d. Impossible to miss His coming - Jesus insists that we will not miss His coming. Like lightning flashes across the horizon of the sky blindingly bright, and so loudly that the thunder shakes our house, so too will His coming be. Just like the impossibility of missing lightning, it will impossible to miss His return. (Zech. 9:14; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 1:7)
  - e. Carcasses and Eagles – Not only will His coming from heaven be unmistakable, so too will His immediate destruction of the wicked; namely, the antichrist and his followers. The coming of the Lord and the slaying of antichrist and his army's go hand-in-hand in multiple scriptures, and yes it tells us more than once that God will invite flesh-eating birds to gather where the wicked lay. (Ezek. 39:17-20; Zeph. 1:7-9; Rev. 19:11-21)
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sign - “The Sun, Moon, and Star's Darkened” Cosmic Signs – The next great and unmistakable sign that the end of Age and His coming draws nearer still will be great cosmic signs. These are once again attesting to the fact that the coming of the Lord will be impossible to miss.

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- a. Every prophetic voice in both the new and old testament agrees that great cosmic disturbances will cause the earth to be dark even in the daytime. No sun, moon, or stars will give light for some days. (Is. 13:10, 24:23; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10,30-31, 3:15; Amos 8:9; Zeph. 1:15; Rev. 8:12, 16:10)
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Sign – “The Sign of the Son of Man” He Comes – The final sign that it is the end of the age and that Jesus is returning will be that He will actually appear in the sky for all to see. Imagine total darkness in the sky for days and then the brightest light you can bear to look at piercing through the darkness. As your eyes adjust to the light you see that it’s Jesus himself coming on the clouds of heaven with all the saints in bright white, riding white horses and radiating the light of His glory. (Ps. 18:1-19; Is. 59:9-60:22, 62:1-5; Dan. 7:13; Hab. 3:3-5; Matt. 16:28-17:2; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:11-16)
- a. This bright light that radiates from Him will actually remain and replace the purpose of the sun as He restores all things and renews the earth. (Rev. 21:22-25)