

I. Review - What will be the Sign of Your Coming and the End of the Age?

- A. All of Matthew 24 and 25 are a single discourse of Jesus, in answer to the question His disciples asked in (Matt. 24:3). They rightly understood that judgment, His coming, and the end of the fallen age transitioning into the Messianic age all happened in the same season of time. The prophets refer to this season as the “Day of the Lord”. The disciples wanted to know the exact time frame (day, month, year) this would happen and what signs would proceed it. (Is. 2:10-21, 13:6-13; Jer. 46:10; Joel 2:11, 3:12-21; Amos 5:18-20; Obad. 1:15; Zeph. 1:7,14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6-10; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10)
- B. Jesus on many occasions told His disciples it was not for them to know the exact timing of the “Day of the Lord” but He did want and expected them to know the signs leading up to it. The reason Jesus went into so much detail concerning signs and trends was so they would not be deceived and fall away as they waited for Him to return. (Matt. 24:10-12; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4)
- C. Jesus answered their question in the following progression.
1. Do not be deceived, for deception concerning the timing and event of the Day of the Lord would be pervasive. (Matt. 24:4-5)
 2. Wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes were not signs of the Day of the Lord, but would be wrongly interpreted as such. (Matt. 24:6-8)
 3. Worldwide persecution and tribulation would be the first sign of the Day of the Lord being upon us. We know from other passages concerning this that the time period will be three and one-half years. (Matt. 24:9-10)
 - (a) The catalytic event and sign which would precede worldwide persecution and tribulation would be the “abomination of desolation”. This refers to a time when the antichrist sets up an image of himself in the temple of God and demands to be worshiped as God. (Matt. 24:15)
 4. Worldwide persecution will produce two different results
 - (a) Many of His disciples will take offence towards God and towards one another and many false prophets will rise up and condone lawlessness in order to get out of the persecution. A great falling away from the faith will occur and their love for Jesus will grow cold. (Matt. 24:10-12, 23-26)
 - (b) Other disciples will become bold witnesses of Jesus and His coming kingdom as they defy the antichrist and resist deception, staying faithful to the end in every nation. (Matt. 24:13-14, 22)

The End of the Age and the Return of Jesus Part 2 – (Matt. 24:32-44)

5. After the three and one-half year's time of persecution and great tribulation, the sun, moon, and stars will be shaken and darkness will cover the earth. (Matt. 24:29)
 6. Jesus will then appear in the sky in glorious light with the hosts of heaven with Him as He descends to the earth and there will be a supernatural great gathering of believers to be with Him. We know from other passages concerning this event that this will be the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the living who placed their faith in Jesus. (Matt. 24:30-31)
- D. After Jesus gives the trends and signs in great detail concerning the timing of the Day of the Lord, He then goes to great lengths to give pastoral counsel to His disciples concerning how to carry their hearts as they see the day approaching. It is very important to not think all of these encouragements deal with the entirety of the Day of the Lord (Great Tribulation, The Return of Jesus, and the End of the Age). (Matt. 24:32-25:46)

II. Parable of the Fig Tree (Matt. 24:32-35)

- A. The first of Jesus's pastoral encouragements at the conclusion of His answer to their question is a word picture in the form of a parable. He uses the word picture of a fig tree coming out of a dormant winter state into the spring. The branches begin to become pliable and put forth leaves. When you see this you know for sure that summer is coming.
1. Fig Tree – There are many who feel there is significance in the choice of using a fig tree as the illustration versus some other kind of tree or plant. The most popular of these theories is that the fig tree represents Israel. This is highly doubtful since there is absolutely no biblical proof of this. Israel is never referred to as a fig tree any other place in scripture. Luke's gospel says, "look at all the trees." (Luke 21:29)
 2. So you also when you see all these things – When you see the trends and signs He just gave, which start with the abomination of desolation (antichrist image set up in the temple) know the coming of Jesus and the end of the age is at the doors. (2 Thess. 2:1-4; Rev. 13:13-15)
 3. This generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place – The generation that sees the *abomination of desolation* will see everything he spoke of come to pass. (Dan. 7:25, 9:27, 12:7; Rev. 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5)

III. As in the Days of Noah (Matt. 24:36-44)

- A. This next pastoral encouragement concerns staying vigilant to watch for the signs and to keep from being deceived. He compares the Day of Lord coming to the flood which came in the Days of Noah and the Days of Lot. This can be seen in the parallel passage in Luke. (Lk. 17:22-37)
1. As in the days of Noah – We want to be careful not to say or think it will be "exactly" like the days of Noah and Lot, but rather it will be very similar to them. Jesus alludes to the specific similarities He wants us to understand.

The End of the Age and the Return of Jesus Part 2 – (Matt. 24:32-44)

- (a) **God was bringing great judgment to correct great lawlessness** - The flood came about in the first place because of the severity of lawlessness and wickedness. (Gen. 6:5-7, 11-12)
 - (b) **They did not heed the warning** – God gave multiple warnings of the coming flood but they chose to ignore them. (Gen. 5:27; 6:3, 13; 2 Pet. 2:4)
 - (c) **They were going about life as normal** – In the face of all the warnings that a great flood was coming, everyone, except for Noah’s family, went about life as if there was no judgment coming. (Gen. 6:22)
 - (d) **They were unprepared and in deception, so the flood came suddenly** - The flood came so suddenly that they did not have time to build anything to sustain them through the flood and they died. (Gen. 7:10-12)
2. The flood came and took them – Jesus says that as in the days of Noah, the flood came and took everyone in judgment besides Noah and his family. So too, the Day of the Lord will come and take those who have not built their life upon the rock to sustain them through the storm. (Matt. 7:24-27; 1 Cor. 3:10-15)
 3. One taken and the other left – There is much debate here concerning whether being taken is a good thing or a bad thing. Some think being taken here refers to the Lord taking you away from the tribulation and keeping you from experiencing it. Others think being taken means taken or destroyed in judgment. I believe the passage clearly favors the later opinion. In both illustrations of Noah and Lot the wicked were taken/destroyed in judgment.
 - (a) In Matthew’s gospel it says, some will be “taken” just like the flood came and “took” them all away.
 - (b) The parallel passage in Luke’s gospel sheds more light on this portion. In Luke’s gospel Jesus also gives the example of Lot, specifically how his wife looked back in order to hold on to the life she had in Sodom. Then Jesus uses the same language of those who are taken and left. His disciples ask Him where are they taken? He answers them by saying they are taken in judgment and become dead corpses for the birds to eat.
 - (a) Jesus actually gives His judgment and destroying of the wicked upon His return as an unmistakable sign that it truly is Him who is the Messiah (Matt. 24:28). The biblical narrative is clear that in the Day of the Lord, upon the return of Jesus, He will destroy the antichrist and his followers and birds will come and devour the bodies. (Ezek. 39:17-20; Zeph. 1:7-9; Rev. 19:11-21)
 4. Watch therefore so you don’t get taken – Just like the flood of Noah and the fire from heaven upon Sodom, the persecution and tribulation comes suddenly and unexpectedly upon mankind. However, there will be those like Noah and Lot who know the times and the Day of the Lord coming and are not destroyed by it. Jesus tells us to be those who see it coming and are not deceived and taken away in His righteous judgment against lawlessness. (Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:1-7; Rev. 3:2-3, 16:15)