

Are You Ready for the Second Coming? (Part 1) - Considered It

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Commentary on Matthew 24

One day, as Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple, Jesus directed His followers to consider the magnificent buildings that made up the temple complex. “ **‘Do you see all these things?’ He asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’** ” (Matthew 24:2) Jesus’ declaration was shocking and the disciples must have wondered what He really meant. The disciples probably thought that pulling apart stones weighing between two and five tons was impossible, so Jesus must have been telling them a parable or sharing a spiritual concept.

To put Jesus’ words in perspective, consider Noah’s story. Noah predicted God would use rain to destroy the whole world. The antediluvians were probably amused and thought Noah was really crazy. They may have concluded there must have been a spiritual meaning to his words because logically, water is so heavy that it cannot rise into the air and then fall from the sky. Prior to the flood, rain had not fallen. (Genesis 2:5) Today, people rationalize in the same way. The book of Revelation predicts that God is about to destroy 25% of Earth’s population and burn a third of the Earth and I believe He is going to do this in our time. Many Christians would dispute this conclusion by saying Revelation is symbolic; it does not really mean what it says. There must be a spiritual application because no one knows what Revelation means.

Later, the disciples approached Jesus while He was gazing at Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. They wanted to know more about the destruction of the temple. “ . . . **‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’** ” (Matthew 24:3) It appears they thought Jesus would destroy the temple when He returned to establish God’s kingdom. Jesus responded with noticeable sadness. First, He gave them an overview of the rejection that His followers would experience after His departure; then, He told them what would happen to the city of Jerusalem; and finally, He told them about His return.

“Jesus answered, ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.’ Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in

the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:4-14)

There are three general elements in this passage. First, wars, famines, and earthquakes are “birth pains” which will grow in frequency and intensity over time, just like birth pains. Second, people will be deceived and due to persecution, many will abandon their faith in Jesus. Finally, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world” to proclaim that Jesus will return and establish His kingdom before the end comes.

Jesus said, **“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel – [Matthew adds] let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.”** (Matthew 24:15-20, insertion mine)

The Romans hated the Jews long before Jesus was born because the Jews endlessly and strenuously opposed Roman authority. This hatred explains why Nero declared Judea and Jerusalem to be utterly destroyed. About A.D. 66, he sent the Roman general, Vespasian to terminate a Jewish revolt. Vespasian destroyed many towns in Judea and killed tens of thousands of Jews. Then, in an effort to eliminate the rebellion “once and for all,” Vespasian besieged the city of Jerusalem. After waiting for the Jews to starve to death for several months, news came that Nero had committed suicide. Vespasian immediately lifted the siege and returned to Rome so that he could become the next Caesar (April A.D. 69). A few months later Vespasian sent his son, Titus, to renew the siege around Jerusalem. This siege began in February A.D. 70 and the Romans destroyed the city in September. During the siege, the temple was burned. The cedar walls fueled an immense fire. Many Bible students believe the gold and silver that decorated the temple melted and ran into the cracks between the stones that made up the walls. After the fire, the Romans separated every stone to recover the precious metals precisely fulfilling Jesus’ words to His disciples.

The interval between the two sieges was the opportunity that Jesus predicted. Jesus told His followers to leave the city after an enemy came and surrounded Jerusalem. The phrase Matthew used, “the abomination that causes desolation” was a religious idiom. To the Jews, it meant that uncircumcised foreigners would arrive intent on destroying God’s property. The Gentile equivalent of this phrase is found in Luke 21:20. Of course, no one could escape during a siege, but Jesus prepared His followers to be prepared to escape the moment the siege was lifted.

Jesus said, “Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath” because winter travel was especially risky for the young and elderly. Jesus also recognized that traveling on the Sabbath would be a consideration. Therefore, before going to the cross Jesus highlighted two key facts about the Sabbath. First, He indicated the fourth commandment would not be abolished at the cross because the seventh day Sabbath should still be considered holy forty years later. Second, Jesus knew that resting in the wilderness on the Sabbath would be risky

because the pilgrims would be easy prey for warlords and gangs who preyed on travelers. Therefore, He encouraged His followers to pray that God would help them avoid both issues and God heard their prayers!

Then, focusing on the end of the world, Jesus gave His disciples a summary statement saying, **“For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”** (Matthew 24:21-22) Jesus told His disciples that He would return when the world was caught up in a time of distress, called the [“great tribulation,”](#) which has no equal in Earth’s history. We know from apocalyptic prophecy that God’s wrath in the form of fourteen judgments will cause this global distress prior to Jesus’ return. The seven first plagues (or [seven trumpets](#) described in Revelation 8, 9 and 11) will inflict a mortal blow on the Earth and kill half its population. The seven last plagues (or [seven bowls](#) in Revelation 16) will follow and they will kill everyone who receives the mark of the beast. These horrific, fourteen judgments will create this great time of distress.

Jesus told His disciples the Father had shortened the length of “the great distress” for the saints. We know from Daniel 12:11,12, the length of time established was 1,335 days. However, Jesus indicated the original length of “the great distress” was longer. My understanding is that if Israel had been a faithful trustee of God’s covenant, God would have established His kingdom on Earth soon after Jesus began His ministry. (Mark 1:15) If God had done this, the end of the world would have played out in a very different manner than what is coming. The great distress and the end of the age under “Plan A” would have lasted 70 years for some nations and 40 years for others. (See Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 29.) Compare these periods of tribulation with that of Israel in Babylon for seventy years. This means that “the great distress” for the whole world under Plan A would have been longer, but less intense than it will be under the shortened “Plan B.” For this reason, the Father reduced the time of great distress under Plan B to 1,335 days and sealed this information in the book of Daniel until the time of the end. For further study on this topic, please see Appendix D in my book, Jesus’ Final Victory. <https://wake-up.org/Commentary/AppendixD.pdf>

“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ [Messiah]!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.” (Matthew 24:24-25, insertion mine)

Jesus warned His followers to be on the lookout for imposters during the time of “great distress.” The Bible tells us that a great imposter, Lucifer, will appear physically during the [great tribulation](#). God will permit the devil and his angels to exit the Abyss (the spirit realm) and be visible on Earth at the fifth trumpet. The devil will masquerade as Almighty God and perform incredible signs and wonders. Lucifer’s signs and miracles will be so amazing that if possible, the saints would be deceived. (Revelation 13:13,14.) Therefore, Jesus warned, do not go out to see any miracles.

Second Coming

“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he [the Messiah] is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms [a secret meeting place],’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.’ ” (Matthew 24:26-28, insertions mine)

Jesus described His return with a metaphor and a proverb. As lightning illuminates the Earth from horizon to horizon, so He will illuminate the Earth from horizon to horizon. To make His warning even stronger, Jesus used an ancient proverb that had a disgusting association. The proverb says that vultures are naturally drawn to dead flesh in the same way that wicked people are naturally drawn to false miracles. (See Matthew 16:4.)

“Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the Sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ‘At that time the Son of Man in heaven will appear in the sky and all the peoples of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.’ ” (Matthew 24:29-30)

I believe the book of Revelation indicates the seven last plagues ([seven bowls](#)) will last 70 days. Assuming each plague is ten days in length, “the sign of the Son of Man” will appear in the sky on Day 1,325, about ten days before the 1,335 days are concluded. This sign will be a small cloud that grows larger and larger as it approaches Earth. (Luke 21:27) Soon after the cloud appears, a gigantic explosion will fill up the whole sky. The sky will recede like a scroll. The stars will fall, the Sun’s fiery blaze will be snuffed out and the moon will not be seen. With the exception of a fiery cloud that continues to expand in size and brilliance, terrible darkness will cover the Earth. The one thing that will demand everyone’s attention will be this expanding cloud filled with powerful lightning, thunder, and energy. At the appointed time, billions of glorious angels will come out of the cloud and encircle the Earth. They will be visible from horizon to horizon. As Earth rotates inside a sphere of billions of fiery beings, every eye will see Jesus who sits at the right hand of “the Mighty One.” (Matthew 26:64) All nations will tremble for good reason. Jesus has come to destroy His enemies and rescue His children. For the wicked, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. For the saints, He is the Lamb of God. Jesus will speak and Lucifer and all of his operatives will land in a lake of fire. Then, Jesus will speak to the remaining wicked and they will drop dead. The master of the universe will then call His children out of their graves and they will come forth with new bodies, free from the ravages of sin’s curse!

“And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (Matthew 24:31)

When Jesus calls His sleeping saints, the holy angels will descend to each grave, even those in the deepest parts of the ocean, to meet and greet God’s sons and daughters as they come to life. Then, the angels will escort the redeemed to the hovering throne where Jesus and the Father wait. The Holy Spirit will be filling each child of God with the magnificent power of eternal life. He will connect every heart and soul with an excited Jesus and a longing Father. There will be perfect unison in spirit and truth! At last, God’s children will be gathered up and, together

with the Trinity, they will head for Heaven to inherit a glorious city prepared for them from the foundations of the world! The joy and awe of this event cannot be told. It has to be experienced.

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things [the great distress which has no equal in Earth’s history], you know that it [the Second Coming] is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation [the human race] will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Matthew 24:21-35, insertions mine)

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