

Signs to Those Entering the 70th Week of Daniel: Matthew 24:1-31

In the beginning of this chapter the Lord Jesus is really sweeping aside misunderstood and misplaced hopes relative to the establishment of Christ's kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem. Christ will have a literal messianic kingdom on earth headquartered in Jerusalem. This is a Bible fact and a righteous hope.

The Apostles, however, were entertaining the hope of an imminent (immediately impending, about to occur) establishment of Christ's reign on the earth. Jesus explains that *this is not the case*. Christ will establish His kingdom on earth immediately following the 70th Week of Daniel.

PROPOSITION: Jesus is coming for a *prepared* and *discerning* people. The Antichrist is coming for an *unprepared* and *deceived* people. **MAKE SURE YOU ARE IN THE RIGHT GROUP.** If you are saved, in the right group, **examine carefully the idea that the church will not enter the Seventieth Week of Daniel.** The church will enter the seventieth week but be delivered from the wrath of the day of the LORD. "The Day of the LORD" takes place after the "great tribulation," after definite cosmic disturbances, and after "the sign" of Christ's return. Discerning these things is to your advantage.

In rejecting their King, the Jews with the exception of a remnant, brought an age of desolation on themselves. Jesus made this clear. He would leave them desolate, then return to Jerusalem in power and great glory [Matthew 23:37-39].

Like the Apostles, we naturally want to know "when" these things will take place. Naturally we also want to know "what" shall be *the sign* that the age of Jewish rejection is ending and the reign of Messiah on earth in Jerusalem [...you shall say, BLESSED IS HE THAT COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.] commence.

In Matthew 24 our Lord gave an extended sketch of the 70th Week of Daniel. That prophetic time has three basic parts:

First, "the beginning of sorrows" [first 3 1/2 years].

Second, The "great tribulation [the fifth seal]."

Third, "the Day of the LORD."

The great tribulation and the "Day of the LORD" are *not synonymous things*. One follows the other. Together they constitute the last three and one half years of the 70th Week of Daniel.

Our text for this message takes us through the "great tribulation" and up to the "sign" and "a great sound of a trumpet" [the rapture of the church] that signals the commencement of the "Day of the Lord." The church will not be on earth for any the "Day of the Lord".

I. Acute distresses are the "beginning of sorrows" but not the end of the age. ...the end [of the age] is not yet....All these are the beginning of sorrows. 24:6b,8]

A. There will be ***religious distress*** in the form of *deception*.

1. Many *successful impostors* will promise messianic deliverance: 24:5.

2. Throughout Jewish history there have arisen more than twenty major false messiahs. More are coming with increasing persuasiveness.

B. There will be ***international distress*** in the form of *wars with the anticipation of more wars*. 24:6

1. Wars are no cause for *eschatological panic*. "...be not troubled...these things must come to pass."

2. Compare Revelation 6:3,4 with Matthew 24:6

C. There will be unusual disturbance and *distress in nature*. 24:7

1. "Famine" will result as *war destroys the natural habitats and the economies*

(Compare the hyper-inflation that will turn our currency into worthless paper: Revelation. 6:5).

2. "Pestilence" [various deadly infectious maladies] will be rampant as well, probably as a result of wars.

3. "Earthquakes" with increasing frequency will add to the world's vexation and will gain the attention of forewarned believers.

Application

Fear sin in all its forms and all its degrees. Indwelling sin is your greatest danger throughout the whole of your sojourn. With the opening of the first four seals see how God uses man's sin to punish evil men. The acute distresses of deception, war, famine, and death have largely originated in the evil heart of men.

The "beginning of sorrows," described in 24:5-8, show us *the self-defeating character* of sin much like Romans 1:18-28; providentially ordered by God yet actually man-made. Not so in the Day of the LORD: the expressions of God's wrath in the day of the Lord are direct supernatural vengeance. In other words, the character of the wrath of God in the beginning of sorrows is different from the wrath of the Day of the Lord the same way God's wrath on earth today differs in character from the wrath of God manifest in the lake of fire.

II. The Great tribulation begins in Jerusalem in the Middle of the 70th Week of Daniel¹ and lasts until the "sign of the Son of man" appears in the heavens.

A. The Great Tribulation is worldwide in scope and impact. 24:9-14

1. *Christians in particular* will be hated throughout the world². "My name's sake" 24:9

2. *Betrayal* will be prolific. "**many**...shall betray one another." 24:10

B. The Great Tribulation is *very religious in nature*.

1. False prophets will widely hawk their religious wares. "many false prophets shall arise" 24:11

2. Many who profess *a love for God* will be found false under the trial of unprecedented

¹ There is no reason to suppose that the covenant that the Antichrist breaks at the mid-point of the 70th week was initially made in public. On the contrary, the covenant is probably made in private, the other nations not being privy to it, then it is broken in public. Furthermore, it is commonly supposed that one fourth of earth's population perishes during the first half of the 70th Week. Possibly that is the case, but most likely it is not the case. What is said is, "And power was given unto them over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." In other words *their jurisdiction was limited* to one fourth of the earth. The catastrophes of the first half of the 70th Week *do not necessarily require* the death of one fourth of mankind. *The judgments are simply circumscribed within one fourth of the population*. Israel and apparently other nations will have [*enjoy?*] a relative peace during the first half of the 70th Week.

² Since *only non-conformists will be targeted in the "great tribulation"* it is quite plausible that the non-persecuted world will be more or less asleep saying "peace, peace" right up to the Day of the Lord which will come upon them as a "thief in the night." In other words there is nothing too traumatic for the Antichrist's people in the world during the Great Tribulation [5th seal]. Neither God nor the devil does much to the wicked world during the Great tribulation [5th seal]. Wal-Mart will probably be open and thriving. With the mark you can enjoy the sales. The Dallas Cowboys will probably be kicking field-goals and scoring touchdowns in front of huge crowds. They [the wicked world] won't be especially troubled by the genocide of the non-conformists. Don't forget the apathy during the holocaust during WWII.

"abounding iniquity". 24:12

3. The true people of God will not capitulate to the Antichrist. 24:13

4. The gospel will be courageously preached throughout the world before the age ends and before the Day of the Lord begins. 24:14

("The Day of the Lord" sometimes called the "Day of Christ" is a terminal point for the church; we're here until "the Day of Christ" Philippians 1:6,10; II Thessalonians 2:2,3)

C. The *fiercest features of the Great tribulation* are reserved for the people of Israel³. 24:15-29

The great tribulation is not more or less than the fifth seal: Revelation 6:9,10. The great tribulation will be an unprecedented time of the "Cains" of the earth, energized by Satan, *ravidly* murdering the "Abels" of the earth--in "good conscience" that they are actually making peace by eliminating nonconformists--us.

1. Please notice the grammatical connection of verses 15ff with what preceded in 24:9-14. "When you **therefore** see the abomination of desolation...." The "therefore" goes back to 9-14 which is a summary of the "great tribulation." vs. 16 "Judah": the geography is literal.

2. Wisdom in this time is to unhesitatingly flee. 17,18

3. Delays will hasten fatalities. 19,20

4. The Antichrist will unleash all he has in every possible form. 21

5. The Lord Jesus will halt the persecution by cutting short The Great Tribulation before all [believing] flesh is killed.

Please realize that we are never told that the "great tribulation" lasts either seven, or three and one half years. An unstrained handling of this text and other parallel passages follow this sequence: the "**beginning of sorrows**", then the "**great tribulation**", then **cosmic disturbances** which are the prelude for the subsequent commencing of "the **Day of the LORD**."

III. The coming of Christ and "the sign" preceding His coming will be very visible, not secret. 24:27-31

A. The second coming is *in striking contrast* from the first coming in Bethlehem.

1. This "coming" is a "*parousia*". vs.27 [same as vs.3]

W.E. Vine says that this word, "denotes both an arrival *and a consequent presence with* [emphasis added]." He [W.E.Vine] continues. "For instance, in a papyrus letter a lady speaks of the necessity of her *parousia* in a place to attend to matters relating to her property there."

"The word is also used of the Lawless one, the Man of sin, his access to power and his doings in the world during his *parousia*, II Thessalonians 2:9⁴. He has an arrival *and a consequent presence*."

³ The earlier description [vs.9-14] is universal in scope, the later description [vs. 15-28] like a "close up", focuses in on Israel and the activity of the Antichrist. Marvin Rosenthal, "Matthew 24": ZION'S FIRE Jan/Feb 1992 p.5

⁴ Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, W.E. Vine page 208,9.

2. **Justice cries out** for this coming. vs. 28 "...the carcass.....the eagles [vultures]⁵ gathered..."

This was a familiar Hebraic expression, the meaning of which would be, *moral corruption requires divine judgment*. Carcasses and vultures convey the idea of corruption. Divine justice will fall on human corruption. *Can it be otherwise?*

3. Antichrist will lead vast numbers of people to do on a mass scale what Cain did to one individual person, his brother Abel: I John 3:11,12.

B. The second coming is **one coming**⁶ not two comings.

1. There are no syntactical grounds in this chapter for supposing more than one coming.

2. The *usus loquendi* of "*parousia*" is an unstrained expression of one coming.

C. The second coming is **stunningly conspicuous** to all the earth. 24:29,30⁷

1. Cosmic disturbances are sensationally terrifying to Christ's enemies.

2. Christ will appear in something akin to shekinah glory that will fill earth's entire atmosphere. Very much like the mount of Transfiguration, except the *atmosphere surrounding the entire earth will light up*. Compare Matthew 16:28-17:2 with Isaiah 40:5. No wonder Christ's enemies will cry out for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. [This has nothing to do with invention of television! Some have taught that now that we have television, this prophecy can be fulfilled, Jesus can return and be seen by all *on television--hogwash.*]

D. Christ will rapture His people *before He executes the day of His vengeance*. vs.31

1. The trumpet is used to call together for a solemn assembly, and, or war.

2. They will be gathered wherever they are or wherever they were buried. "The four winds, from one end of heaven to the other "

Conclusion

⁵ Ibid. p. 249

⁶ "The Lord's coming is consistently portrayed as a singular event. The Bible is repetitively consistent on that fact: 'And what shall be the sign of thy *coming*?' (Matt.24:3); 'so shall the *coming* of the Son of man be' (Matt. 24:27,37,39); 'afterward they that are Christ's at his *coming*' (I Cor. 15:23); 'in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his *coming*' (I Thess. 2:19); 'at the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ' (I Thess.3:13); 'We who are alive and remain unto the *coming* of the Lord' (I Thess. 4:15); 'And I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ' (I Thess. 5:23) 'Now we beseech you brethren, by the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thess. 2:1); 'whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his *coming*' (II Thess. 2:8) 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the *coming* of the Lord' (James 5:7); 'the *coming* of the Lord draweth near' (James 5:8); 'when we made known unto you the power and *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ' (II Peter1:16); 'Where is the promise of his *coming* ?' (II Peter3:9); 'Looking for and hasting unto the *coming* of the day of God' (II Peter 3:12); 'we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his *coming*' (I John 2:28).

In each and every instance, the word *coming* (*parousia*) is either modified by the personal pronoun *his* or *thy* or, most frequently, with the definite article *the*. And in every case, His return is in the singular; not *comings* but *coming*. **There is not even a hint--anywhere--of two separate comings. That is simple, unadorned, biblical fact. The often-heard suggestion that Christ will come first for His church and then return to the earth a second time seven years later with His church is an assumption with no biblical evidence to substantiate it** (emphasis added):"

Marvin Rosenthal, The PRE-WRATH RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH, p.222,223.

⁷ Compare Isaiah 40:5 "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh (lost and saved) shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

I plead with you to at least consider that things will not unfold sequentially the way most of us have been taught concerning the 70th Week of Daniel. In a way I wish that I could honestly hold the pretribulational rapture theory. I no longer can.

The church will enter the 70th week. The church will encounter the Antichrist. The professing church which swarms with lost people will be excruciatingly, appallingly sifted. Betrayal will probably be prolific: Mark 13:11,12.

Regardless of your exact view of these 70th Week events, God is calling His people to prepare for the return of Christ. If you take the facts mentioned in Matthew 24:1-31 literally--and you should-- then you should also *move with fear for the saving of your house and the souls of your fellow man*. This is what Noah did. Be wise like Noah.

Most of all walk with God. This means be responsive to the divine initiative. Sensational prophetic preaching has sometimes spawned curious foolish responses. Walk with God, be in close responsive communion with Him. That is the preparation for the 70th Week and all other weeks.