

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

Matthew 24 is one of the **key end-times chapters** in the Bible. It is known as the **Olivet Discourse** because it was on the Mount of Olives that Jesus **answered the disciples' questions** about the “end of the age”

- **Verse 3:** *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, **when will these things be?** And what will be the **sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**”*

Jesus' first reply in **verse 4** was to “**take heed that no one deceives you.**” In fact, this is **one of the signs** of the end-times – that there would be many **false prophets and teachings**

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

Matthew 24:4-14

*⁶And 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.***

- The “**end**” is the “**Great Tribulation**” (v21), a 7-year period culminating in the **Second Coming** of Christ (v30)

⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

- This is what is **happening now** – there have been **many more wars** in the past **decade** than at any point in recorded history

*And there will be **famines, pestilences, and earthquakes** in various places.*

- Existing conditions right now – the number of earthquakes around the world have increased ten-fold beyond historic averages
- We have seen great **famines** in Ethiopia and other African nations
- And **pestilences** such as AIDS, Ebola, Bird Flu, etc. have been increasing in scope and intensity

*⁸All these are the **beginning of sorrows***

- An indefinite period of time leading up to the Tribulation

*⁹“Then they will **deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations** for My name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will **hate one another.** ¹¹Then many **false prophets** will rise up and deceive many. ¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will **grow cold.***

- Missionaries and Christians being **persecuted** and killed right now; many **false prophets** are loose in the land. And indeed, **hatred** of Christians is **on the rise** all around the world
- We also see that **love of many** is declining and **growing cold** as the spirit of **division** is dividing **Christians** from one another as never before

*¹³**But he who endures to the end shall be saved.** ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and **then the end will come.***

- The “end” is the “**Day of the Lord**” (see separate paper on “The Day of the Lord”) and the remainder of the Great Tribulation
- Those who “**endure**” are believers who will be **raptured** out of the world before the Day of the Lord
- One of the **key** end-time markers is that the gospel will be “**preached in all the world,**” something that could **never have happened** in an earlier age, but is happening **right now** due to great **technological advances** such as the **Internet, satellite TV, videotapes, DVDs, etc.**

*¹⁵ “Therefore when you see the ‘**abomination of desolation,**’ spoken of by **Daniel** the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶“then let those who are in **Judea flee** to the mountains. ¹⁷Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸And let him who is in the field not*

go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

- This is the **sign** that the **Day of the Lord** is **imminent**
- This also **marks** the **mid-point** of the 7-year **tribulation period** (see following discussion from Daniel 9)
- And this is the first of many end-time prophecies that have a **near** and **far** application which has led many to believe that the tribulation has already happened
- The destruction of the **temple in Jerusalem** in 70 AD was a time in which many of these **signs** were fulfilled at a **local level** – but many more **prophecies** remain **unfulfilled**
- One of the mistakes of **eschatology** (the study of the end-times) is to take **one or two verses out of context** – only when the **totality of end-time scriptures** are studied do we get a **clear picture** of how these **latter days** will unfold

²¹For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been **since the beginning of the world** until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²²And **unless those days were shortened**, no flesh would be saved; but for the **elect's sake** those days will be **shortened**.

- The so-called “**great tribulation**” is actually the second 3.5 years of the 7-year tribulation period which follows immediately after the “**abomination of desolation**” that marks the **mid-point**
- These days will be “**shortened**” for the “**elect**” which are the **believers** who will be **raptured out of the world** just before the “**great and dreadful day of the Lord**” (Malachi 4:5)
- This clearly argues **against a pre-trib or mid-trib rapture**, because Jesus clearly states that the **great tribulation** doesn't begin until the **abomination of desolation** which **Daniel** clearly shows is at the **mid-point** of the seven-year period (see following discussion of Daniel 9)

²³“Then if anyone says to you, ‘**Look, here is the Christ!**’ or ‘**There!**’ **do not believe it.** ²⁴For **false christs and false prophets** will rise and show **great signs and wonders** to deceive, if possible, even the **elect.** ²⁵See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶“Therefore if they say to you, ‘**Look, He is in the desert!**’ do not go out; or ‘**Look, He is in the inner rooms!**’ **do not believe it.**”

- Again Jesus warns against **false christs and false prophets** which we are beginning to see in abundance even now, but will see **even more so** when the 7-year tribulation begins
- Some of these **false christs and false prophets** will even perform **signs and wonders** which will cause **many to be deceived**
- This is one of the **reasons** we need to be **knowledgeable** about **end-time scripture**

²⁷For as the **lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west**, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

- Here and in other scriptures, we see that **when Jesus comes** there will be **no doubt** – because it will occur **in the clouds** (1Thessalonians 4:17 – see following discussion)
- His coming will be **as lightning** flashing in the clouds **simultaneously** around the **entire world**
- The reference to **carcass** and **eagles** is described more fully by Jesus in **Revelation 19:21** where the birds fill themselves with the **flesh** of all those **unbelievers** who are killed in the battle of **Armageddon**

²⁹“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

- Jesus points to another **sign** that **several other scriptures** also describe – the **sun darkened**, the **moon diminishing** (or turning **red**) and **stars falling from heaven** (Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7), Joel 2:10)

➤ And again Jesus indicates that this **sign** of His coming **in the clouds** will be **seen by everyone**, for “**all the tribes of the earth**” will mourn

➤ Then Jesus describes the **rapture** of the **elect** as being **gathered** from all parts of the **earth**

³²*“Now learn this **parable from the fig tree**: When its branch has already become tender and **puts forth leaves**, you know that **summer is near**.³³ So you also, **when you see all these things**, know that it is near—**at the doors!**”*

➤ Here Jesus uses a **parable** about the **fig tree** to tell the disciples and us that we are to **watch for these signs** of the end-times

➤ Just as the **fig tree** can tell us when **summer is near**, so too do the **signs** that Jesus described above tell us when the **great tribulation** is at hand

³⁴*Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place**.³⁵ **Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away**.*

➤ This is a verse that has caused **many problems and disagreements**

➤ The **Preterists** use the first part of this verse to **justify their position** that all the events of the end-times have **already taken place** because they must have happened to **the generation** that was alive when Jesus spoke these words

➤ However, the Greek word “**genea**” is more properly translated as “**age, generation, nation, time**” (according to Strong’s Dictionary), with **age** being the **more common and preferred translation**

➤ When we look at the **totality of end-time scripture**, we realize that **many signs did not occur** in the **disciples generation** (e.g. gospel preached to all the world, the worldwide devastation described in Revelation, the mark of the beast, etc.)

➤ Thus, Jesus is speaking **prophetically** about the **Church Age**, not that particular generation

➤ Another interpretation that also leads to the same conclusion, is that the **generation** of which He speaks is the one which **sees the signs** that He has just described, and they will not **pass away** but rather **be raptured**

³⁶*“**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only**”*

➤ While we are exhorted to “**watch**” for these signs (verse 42), we will **never know** the exact **day or hour**

➤ Not even Jesus knew, but **only God the Father**

³⁷*But as the **days of Noah** were, so also will the **coming of the Son of Man** be.³⁸ For as in the days before the **flood**, they were **eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and **did not know until the flood came** and took them all away, so also will the **coming of the Son of Man** be.⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: **one will be taken and the other left**.⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: **one will be taken and the other left**.*

➤ This is called the **Sign of Noah** which tells us that the **world will be oblivious** to the **signs of His second coming** just as the people in Noah’s days **ignored the warnings** given by Noah through the construction of the Arc

➤ In fact, today as then, **most people** are caught up in **worldly ways** and not only **ignore** the **prophetic warnings**, but also **mock** those of us who **believe**

➤ And again Jesus refers to the **rapture**, indicating that **when it happens** some people will be “**taken**” while others right beside them are **left behind**

⁴²***Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming**.*

➤ Jesus clearly **instructs** us to be **watchful** which implies that we **need to know** what to **watch for**

➤ Unfortunately, the **wrong teaching** of a **pre-trib rapture** has **lulled the church into complacency**, not **caring** about the signs because it **won’t matter** to the elect anyway

- This is the **Devil's strategy**, but is clearly **not supported** by **Scripture** – Jesus instructs us to **watch**, not only for **our benefit**, but so that we can **warn the world** and **save as many as possible** (i.e. take them on the Arc with us)

⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

- Jesus expands upon the **theme of being ready** by making a **masterful reference** to the **thief** (i.e. Satan)
- If we **knew** the hour when the **thief** would come to plunder our **house**, we would have **prepared for it**
- All the **more reason** therefore, to **get ready** for the **Lord's coming**
- How do we **prepare**? See separate paper entitled, **“Get Ready”**

⁴⁵“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ ⁴⁹and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Here Jesus expands the parable of the **master of the house** (i.e. we believers) to show that we are supposed to be giving **“food in due season.”** This refers to providing **physical sustenance** (see Isaiah 58) as well as **spiritual sustenance** (i.e. the Gospel)
- But many in the world **do not believe** in **Jesus' second coming** (or first incarnation either), and the **Lord** will find them being **unfaithful** to His commandments to **be ready**
- The **faithful and wise servant**, however, will be **rewarded** with **greater responsibility and authority** in Jesus' Kingdom to come

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Daniel 9:24-27 gives us the timing of the Tribulation period:

- **v24:** *“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and your holy city.”*
 - Each “week” is equivalent to seven years (i.e. a day is a year)
- **v25-26:** *“From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, There shall be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**... And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off.”*
 - Seven sevens = 49 years from 445 B.C. (when King Artaxerxes gave the decree to Nehemiah to rebuild the temple) to 396 B.C. (when the temple was completed)
 - Sixty-two sevens = 434 years from 396 B.C. to 32 A.D. when Jesus Christ was crucified
- **v27:** *“Then he shall **confirm a covenant with many for one week**.”*
 - One week = 7 years, to begin when national Israel enters into a covenant with the future Antichrist
- **v27:** *“But in the **middle of the week**, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering, and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate.”*
 - There will be peace in Israel for three-and-a-half years until the Antichrist breaks the covenant and demands that the blood sacrifices, restored by Israel in the last days, must cease
 - He will then set up his own image in the Jewish temple (which needs to be rebuilt) and require worship of him, which triggers the actual Tribulation period of a second three-and-a-half years
 - **Daniel 11:31:** *“And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall **defile the sanctuary** fortress; then they shall **take away the daily sacrifices**, and place there the **abomination of desolation**.”*
 - **Daniel 12:11** *“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the **abomination of desolation** is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”* (i.e. 3 ½ years)

THE RAPTURE

1Thessalonians 4:15-18

- *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and **remain until the coming of the Lord** will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*
- The word “**rapture**” does not appear in the Bible -- It was formed from a word in the Latin translation of the Bible which uses the word “*rapieumur*” for “**caught up**”
 - There is substantial disagreement over when this “**rapture**” will take place – Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, Post-Trib, Pre-Wrath (i.e. the Day of the Lord) or not at all
 - As described in the prior paper, “The Day of the Lord,” we ascribe to the **Pre-Wrath Rapture** that occurs **right before** the “*great and dreadful day of the Lord*” (Malachi 4:5)

2Thessalonians 2:3-8

- *Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day** will not come unless the **falling away comes first**, and the **man of sin is revealed**, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and **exalts himself** above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he **sits as God in the temple of God**, showing himself that he is God... ⁶And now you know what is **restraining**, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.** ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom **the Lord will consume** with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.*
- Many believe that the “**He**” who is “**restraining**” is the Church – but throughout Scripture, **the Church is always referred to as a she**
 - ⁵*Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,** ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse **her** with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that He might **present her to Himself** a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but **that she should be holy and without blemish.** (Ephesians 5:25-27)*
 - The “**He**” that the above Scripture refers to is the archangel **Michael**, not the Holy Spirit
 - Michael will **cease restraining evil** in the world **right after the mid-point of the 7-year Tribulation period** when the “*man of sin is revealed*” (i.e. the **Anti-Christ**) when he “*sits as God in the temple of God*” (i.e. the “*abomination of desolation*” of Daniel 12:11)
 - Nowhere in the Bible does the Word of God ever indicate that the ministry of the Holy Spirit includes restraining evil
 - The Holy Spirit is our “comforter” and “teacher” who convicts the world of sin (John 16:8)
 - Instead, whenever Michael is referenced, he is involved in warfare against the enemy (e.g. Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1, Jude 1:9, Revelation 12:7)

TIMELINE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

(See Following Chart)

1. The Covenant With Many (Daniel 9:27)

- The “*covenant with many*” that Daniel prophesied marks the **beginning of the 7-year Great Tribulation**
 - This will be a **peace treaty** between **Israel** and the **reconstituted Roman Empire** (see below)

2. The Rise of the First Beast (i.e. the Anti-Christ) (Revelation 13:1-10)

- The **first “beast”** which rises up out of the **sea** is the **Anti-Christ**
 - The description “*seven heads and ten horns*” is the same as the description of Satan in Rev. 12:3)
- The **seven heads** represent the **seven worldly empires** that have raised up to **rule the world** over the course of world history (see Rev. 17:9-11)
 - The **ten horns** refer to the **ten kings** who will serve the **seventh and last empire** (i.e. the **reconstituted Roman Empire** that will come forth through the current **European Union**)
 - The **ten crowns** symbolize the **political authority** that **conferred on the kings**
- Its appearance like a **leopard** with the feet of a **bear** is quite similar to Daniel’s vision of **four beasts** which rose up out of the “*great sea*” (Daniel 7:1-8) with the combination of the leopard and bear representing the new **Roman Empire** which “*was and is not*” (Rev. 17:11)
- There is a **false resurrection** of the first beast (i.e. the Anti-Christ) in v3
- Note that verse 4 clearly says that the **power behind the throne is Satan**
- Verse 5 states that his reign will be for “*forty two months*” – i.e. 3 ½ years
- He becomes the head of what we call today the **New World Order** – “*authority was given him over every tribe and nation*”

3. The Rise of the Second Beast (i.e. the False Prophet) (Revelation 13:11-18)

- The **second “beast”** rises up out of the **earth** and is the **False Prophet** (i.e. the False Holy Spirit)
 - Its **two horns** represent its **dual nature** – appearing to be **pure and holy “like a lamb”** while speaking “*like a dragon*”
- The False Prophet “*causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast*”
 - He does this through “*great signs*”
- He is also the one who “*causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*”
 - The “**number**” of the False Prophet is **666**, the “*number of a man*” leading to widespread speculation about who this might be (e.g. the Pope)

4. The Rebuilding of the Temple

- In order for the Anti-Christ to “*bring an end to sacrifice and offering*” (Daniel 9:27), the **temple of Israel must be rebuilt** for only in the temple can these ceremonies be performed – this will probably be part of the “*covenant with many*”
 - There are a sect of **Israeli priests** who are presently preparing for such a time
 - In addition, the **perfect red heifer** required (Numbers 19:1-3) has also recently been born and is under heavy guard

- This is what is being “**measured**” in John’s vision in Revelation 11:1-2
 - *Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and **measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.** ²**But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.***
 - However, Israel will not be allowed to rebuild the **outer courts** which these verses indicate are still **under the control of the Gentiles** for the first 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation

5. The Abomination of Desolation

- The “**abomination of desolation**” spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus marks the **mid-point** of the Great Tribulation
 - *But in the **middle of the week** he shall **bring an end to sacrifice and offering.** And on the wing of **abominations** shall be one who makes desolate. (Daniel 9:27)*
 - *And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall **defile the sanctuary** fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there **the abomination of desolation.** (Daniel 11:31)*

➤ *Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

- The **abomination of desolation** is when the **Anti-Christ declares himself to be God**

➤ *Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day** will not come unless the falling away comes first, and **the man of sin is revealed**, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and **exalts himself** above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he **sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.***

6. The Day of The Lord

- The “**great and dreadful day of the Lord**” prophesied throughout the Old and New Testaments occurs **after the mid-point of the 7-year Tribulation**

➤ As discussed in full in the previous paper, “**The Day of the Lord**”, both the **rapture** and the “**day of wrath**” (Zephaniah 1:15, Romans 2:5) occur when the **sixth seal** is opened by Jesus

➤ After this time, the earth is **fully destroyed** as the **trumpet and bowl plagues** continue God’s wrath upon the earth

- Then, comes the **new heaven and new earth** to replace the old one we defiled so greatly that God had to destroy it

➤ *¹Now I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had **passed away**. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.** ⁴And God will **wipe away every tear** from their eyes; there shall be **no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**”*