

Thoughts on:
MATTHEW 24

In the prophecy of Matthew 24 Jesus mixes signs that are specifically for the *early Church*, and for the *middle-ages Church* in the wilderness, and for the *last generation* of Gods people. While Jesus mingled the signs to watch for He left it to His people to study out what specifications were applicable to their time and place in accordance with historic events.

“The future was mercifully veiled from the disciples. Had they at that time fully comprehend the two awful facts-- the Redeemer’s sufferings and death, and the destruction of their city and temple-- they would have been overwhelmed with horror. Christ presented before them an outline of the prominent events to take place before the close of time.” {GC 25.3}

MATTHEW 24: AD 31 to AD 70

1 AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples [Peter, John, James, and Andrew] came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Verse 2, Jesus tells them plainly the Temple will be utterly destroyed. Jesus here refers to a second destruction of the Temple, the first was by Babylon. The disciples see this second event as “the end of the world” and ask for the signs of this time.

It was commonly understood among the Jews that the Messiah would at some point leave for a time and then return from an unknown place. Consider **Matthew 25:14**, the landowner who planted a vineyard and then went on a journey before returning to see how his vineyard had been cared for.

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Verse 4: The primary reason for “taking heed” is to avoid being deceived, or led astray. In one form or another, Jesus repeated this warning again and again: see verses 4-6, 11, 23-26, 36, 42-46.

What does Jesus mean when He says, "Take heed"? It is the same as Him asking you, "Do you love Me? Do you love the truth?" Not just believe the truth, the devils believe and tremble. Not just a declaration that you believe. Does your belief manifest itself in obedience? Adam loved the truth, but his actions manifest that he loved Eve more than he loved the truth. When truth is presented, and conviction stirs the soul, will you act on that truth? Will you be obedient to it? Only those who have cultivated a love of the truth will be led into all truth. This is not a question that concerns itself with high, or low, intelligence. You do not need a degree in theology. You do not need to understand Greek and Hebrew. This is a matter concerning the heart. Do you love the truth? Do you demonstrate that in your daily life? Do you love to speak of Jesus? Do you love to study His word? Do you love to share it with others and share it in love?

Verse 5 is the first of the many signs that down through the coming ages Gods people were and are to look for. In this case, the primary application of verse 5 was the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. As this date drew nearer, many would claim to be the Messiah who had returned (from a long journey), as He promised He would. This sign was only one of several that were especially significant from AD 31 to AD 70 for the early Church. For more on this, see "Desire of Ages", chapter 69, pgs 628-631.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

The period of time from AD 31 to AD 70 was particularly filled with the calamities Jesus warned would come to pass. There were a series of earthquakes, the period was filled with war and there were famines. Acts 11:28 alludes to a famine, which history records in AD 44. All the above signs in verses 6 to 10 were literally fulfilled before AD 70.

Many of the disciples were delivered to authorities to give a reason for their faith. Among them were Peter, James, John, and Paul. These happenings did not portend to the 2nd coming of Christ but were signs pointing to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Christ would speak of persecution to come after the fall of Jerusalem in verses 21-22.

11 And many false prophets [those bearing false doctrine] shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The Greek word for “world” in verse 14 means the “inhabited world”. Paul affirmed that the Gospel had been preached to all the “inhabited” world before the destruction of Jerusalem came. See Romans 1:8 and 10:18. The world was a much smaller place, metaphorically speaking, in Paul’s day than it is in our day.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

The banners of the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem when Cestius, the Roman commander, laid siege to that city in AD 66. This was seen by the Jews as an abomination. The Christians understood this was not only an abomination but a warning of desolation to come, as spoken of by Daniel and by Jesus. They waited for their opportunity to escape the city, which came when Cestius suddenly withdrew from the siege. The desolation came in AD 70 when Titus returned and a million Jews perished, yet not a single Christian was lost. A parallel passage in Luke reads, “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh”, Luke 21:20.

Verse 15, “Let him understand” demonstrates that Jesus was a student of the prophecies of Daniel and much of it could be understood in His time. Which is how the Shepherds’ and the Magi knew of the Messiahs soon appearance.

The people of God recognized the next abomination, which would lead to devastation, when the Papacy was setup in AD 538. When Gods people saw that they knew they must flee for their lives.

The people of God will recognize the last abomination, yet to come, when the U.S.A. passes a Sunday law. Devastation will follow that abomination.

It is noteworthy that the Jewish leaders forbade the study or reading of the book of Daniel because it pointed out the signs and time of when the Messiah would come and much more. Today there are many who claim the book of Daniel is still too difficult to understand, to controversial to study. In some cases, Churches actually forbid study groups who desire to look into the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. History repeats itself, are we doing as the Jews had done before us? As the events of a prophecy draw near, it is essential that the people of God be diligent to understand the warnings and signs.

16 Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:

The Jews had fled for centuries when under attack. Many of those who would heed this warning in Jerusalem fled to Pella, a city in the foothills east of the Jordan River. Not one Christian lost their life because they "took heed" and understood the prophecy of the "abomination of desolation" for their time.

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:

All the predictions given by Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem were fulfilled to the letter. The Jews experienced the truth of His words of warning: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Matthew 7:2. The Jewish Nation was in revolt against Rome and had slain 1,000's of Roman soldiers. What they meted out they would receive in turn.

In verse 20 Jesus intimates no change in the sacredness of the Sabbath, as many Christians now suppose took place when He came forth from the tomb.

AD 538 to 1798

21 For then [following the destruction of Jerusalem] shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be [1,260 years of Papal Roman persecution]. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Those days were shortened in 1773. Paganism had to be removed as the religion of Rome before it could be replaced by “paganism baptized” as Christian, Papal Rome. This removal began in AD 313, when Constantine abolished persecution of Christians and returned to them their property, taken from them by Rome. Thus ended the ten years of persecution prophesied in Revelation 2:10, **“and ye shall have tribulation ten days”**.

Verse 21 now moves beyond AD 70 to the greatest persecution of Christians this world has ever known; Roman Catholicism would rule and persecute the Church beginning in AD 538. ***Those “days were cut short” as persecution almost wholly ceased in 1773 with the dissolution of the Jesuit order by command of the French Government.*** The 1260 year prophecy itself then terminated in 1798.

Paganism, since the time of Babylon, had “daily” persecuted Gods chosen people. Medo-Persia, Greece and finally Rome were all based on pagan religions. Now, an even more hideous religion, one that startled the Seer of Patmos because it claimed to be Christian, would increase persecution to a level never before seen on the earth.

This new abomination, this transgression, would desolate the people of God. Christians saw this abomination, the papacy first established in AD 508 and understanding Christ’s warning, knew that the desolation of Gods people would soon follow. They, as the Christians had done before them just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, knew they must once again, flee for their lives.

23 Then [after 1798] if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not.

Christ was speaking to the disciples as the representatives of all Christians, warning them to take heed.

24 For there shall arise false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it*

were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. 27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles (vultures) be gathered together.

Verse 27 is the 2nd coming. Verse 28; wherever birds of prey are gathered on the ground, there is found carrion. Otherwise, they continue to circle and search from the sky. Do not go where a crowd is gathered to discover if it is Jesus or not, as the crowd is feeding on false doctrine. Every person on earth will see Him coming in the clouds at the same time when He returns.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days [AD 538 to 1798] shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, [1780] and the stars shall fall from heaven, [1833] and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [this takes place after the close of probation, during the last of seven plagues of vials of wrath].

Verse 29, is after the persecution of Christians by papal Rome has ended when it was “cut short”. Then these signs will appear which point to His 2nd coming. The “powers of heaven” are the realm of the sun, moon, and stars. These will be especially shaken and moved out of their place, rolled back like a scroll when God announces the day and hour of Christ’s return toward the end of the seven last plagues.

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man [a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand, G.C. pg 340] in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

Verse 33 places the emphasis on personal recognition of the signs and an understanding of their import. Christians are to distinguish between the “great signs and wonders” of the false prophets (see verse 24), and the true signs mentioned by Jesus. They are to differentiate between those things which Jesus foretold would mark “the beginning of sorrows” (verse 8) at a time when “the end is not yet” (verse 6), and the signs that would indicate that His return “is near, even at the doors” (verse 33). To do so, we must study the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation [the last generation to be alive who will see, that is, have knowledge of ALL the signs of His return] **shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth** [the atmospheric heavens of and the planet itself, earth] **shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.**

The words “this generation” in verse 34 are in the context of verses 27–51, which deal exclusively with the coming of the Son of Man at the end of the world (see DA 633). The signs mentioned in these verses and in Luke—“signs” in the heavens and “upon the earth” (Luke 21:25)—would take place so near the day of His coming that Christ declared that the “generation” that sees the last of the signs, shall not pass before “all these things be fulfilled.” *The very last sign is Daniel 11:45*, when Israel will be conquered by the king of the north, and then come to his end because none shall help him. Following Daniel 11:45 probation closes for all mankind, see Daniel 12:1.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief

would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. **44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.**

Verse 42, the admonitions to “take heed” and to “watch” constitute the recurring theme of the chapter. To illustrate the importance of remaining alert, Jesus spoke six parables: **Mark 13:34-37**, the “Porter”, which is condensed into one verse in **Matt. 24:42**. The Master of the House did not know when the thief would come, **Matt. 24:43**. The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants in **Matt. 24:45-51**. The Ten Virgins in **Matt. 25:1-13**. The Talents in **Matt. 25:14-30**. The Sheep and the Goats in **Matt. 25:31-46**.

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing [the faithful servant is obedient to Gods commands]. **47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;**

One does not have to literally say, “My lord delayeth his coming”, but by one's actions, that message may be conveyed to others.

49 And shall begin to smite *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Verse 49 speaks to Christians who have abandoned the faith and now hate those who continue to honor and obey Christ.

