

Matthew 24:1-28  
Jesus' Portrait of the End of the Age  
by Lee Smith

The events of 2020 have caused many people to fear what is to come. That premonition is valid in light of the portrait of the end of the age that Jesus paints in Matthew 24. Things will get much worse before they get better.

Jesus' prophetic words in Matthew 24 are his answer to questions posed by his disciples after his shocking remark that the beautiful majestic temple which had been enlarged and beautified for forty years would be leveled to the ground. His words, of course, came true when the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The disciples' three questions as they sat on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem were:

- (1) When will these things happen?
- (2) What will be the sign of your coming? and
- (3) What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Matthew doesn't record Jesus' answer to the first question which Luke 21 records, but he does record Jesus' answers to the second and third questions in reverse order. In verses 4-28 he answers their question about the sign of the end of the age. Then in verses 29-31 he answers their question about the sign of his return.

Before we delve into the details of Jesus' prophetic word I must give you a disclosure about where I am coming from in terms of biblical prophecy. Theologically I hold to a pre-millennial pre-tribulational eschatology which means that I believe the Bible teaches that Jesus will come in the clouds to take his church from this world before the final period of Tribulation and his Second Coming to establish his Millennial Kingdom.

I also believe that the events Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:1-28 are not a description about current events but about what will transpire during the Tribulation Period at the end of the age. I may be wrong but I believe verses 4-14 refer to the first half of the Tribulation and verses 15-28 to the second half of the Tribulation. The coming of Jesus to rapture his church is not revealed in this text.

Practically, Jesus' prophetic teaching is not given merely to relay information but to encourage and impact the behavior of his disciples.

The basic message of this text is that

Though the close of this age will be horrific and chaotic and Jesus' followers endangered, the Judge is coming. Followers of Jesus should not be deceived, or be alarmed, but stand firm.

### **1. Jesus gives evidence that the end of the age is coming. [4-14]**

Though in one sense the things Jesus predicts here are characteristic of the entire age, they are particularly characteristic of the first half of the Tribulation. There are remarkable parallels to the Seal Judgments of Revelation 6

Matthew 24	Revelation 6
False messiahs V. 4-5	The Conquering Rider V. 2.
War V. 6-7a	War V. 3-4
Famine V. 7b	Famine V. 5-6
Earthquake V. 7c	Earthquake V. 12
Persecution of God' People v. 9	Martyrdom V. 9-11

There will be spiritual decline, false prophets, civil and moral lawlessness and a diminishing love for God and others. For people committed to self-interest as their prevailing motivation loving God and others will diminish

Verse 13 may be taken in one of two ways. The word "saved" could be understood in a spiritual sense, so that Jesus is saying that those who stand firm in their faith by the power of God will have eternal life or he

may be saying that those Tribulation believers who survive the chaos and persecution will be physically delivered out of this mess by his return.

All these things don't show that the end of the age has arrived [v. 6] but that the beginning of the end has arrived [8].

The end will not come until after the message of the kingdom has reached the entire world, when everyone has heard the truth that God's kingdom is coming and is available to everyone by faith in the person and work of Jesus.

## **2. Jesus then details indications that the end of the age is getting close. V. 15-25**

What is this devastating abomination Jesus predicts? [15] He says it is the one spoken of in Daniel. Where? Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 predict the desecrating of the temple by a coming evil prince. This is the same event that Paul speaks of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 and spoken of in Revelation 13:14-15. These texts predict that the Anti-Christ or world Political Ruler will set up his throne in a future temple and demand worship.

For followers of Jesus then living it will be the time to immediately flee Jerusalem without delay [16-20]. Jesus says that there will be such devastation coming that if God had not decreed a short period of time no one in the world would survive. [22] Jesus then warns the future disciples living in those times to avoid being deceived by false messiahs and false prophets [23-25].

## **3. Jesus unveils the sign that the end of the age has arrived. [26-28]**

What is the sign that the end of this age has arrived? It is the sudden, visible, public, awesome, glorious return of the Messianic Son of Man. He will not come in some remote place or some secret place out of the sight of ordinary people but visibly in his glory and power. [26-27]

And he is coming to judge the world for its wickedness and unbelief. Verse 28 is a picture of widespread death. The coming of the Son of Man is not only for the deliverance of God's people but also for the judgment of the unbelieving.

So, if Matthew 28:4-28 does not directly refer to us and the time in which we are living, but to the future Tribulation at the end of the age what practical value does it have for us in our lives?

**First**, I would suggest that this prophecy of Jesus gives us **assurance**. Jesus has complete knowledge of the future. None of this predicted chaos will surprise God or overthrow his plan. We don't need to be alarmed at anything which happens in this world. God has everything in control to accomplish his purpose for our eternal good and for his glory. Remember Romans 8:28, 35-39. Hebrews 13:5-6

**Second**, though this text directly speaks about conditions at the end of the age during the Tribulation in a general sense it pictures the nature of this world throughout the entire age. The characteristics of that future age and ours only differ in intensity. Just as those future followers of Jesus will need to stay alert against false teaching and to stand firm in their faith, so we have the same responsibility.

**Third**, the chaos will end. The world as we know it will end. Wars will end. Deception will end. Famine will end. Natural disasters will end. Persecution will end. Sorrow will end. Revelation 21 paints another picture. Rev. 21:1-4

**Fourth**, if you have never put your trust in Jesus now is the time to do that. You and I are only a heart-beat from meeting God. We will either meet him as our Father because we have been redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus and reborn by putting our faith in Jesus or we will meet him as our judge. You don't want to do that!