

Matthew Chapter 24 Continued

Matthew 24:12 "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

"And because iniquity shall abound": Meaning, either the malice and wickedness of outrageous persecutors, which should greatly increase. Or the treachery and hatred of the apostates; or the errors and heresies of false teachers; or the wickedness that prevailed in the lives and conversations of some, that were called Christians.

The consequence of which would be, "the love of many shall wax cold". This would be the case of many, but not of all; for in the midst of this abounding iniquity, there was some whose love to Christ, to his Gospel, and to the saints, did not abate. But then there were many, whose zeal for Christ, through the violence of persecution, was greatly damped. And through the treachery of false brethren, were afraid of the saints themselves.

Not knowing who to trust; and through the principles of the false teachers, the power of godliness, and the vital heat of religion, were almost lost; and through a love of the world, and of carnal ease and pleasure, love to the saints grew very chilly.

And they left; as the instances of Demas, and those that forsook the Apostle Paul, at his first answer before Nero, show. This might be true of such, who were real believers in Christ; who might fall under great decays, through the prevalence of iniquity. Since it does not say their love shall be lost, but wax cold.

Matthew 24:13 "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

"Shall endure unto the end ... be saved": The ones who persevere are the same ones who are saved, not the ones whose love grows cold (verse 12). This does not suggest that our perseverance secures our salvation. Scripture everywhere teaches precisely the opposite: God, as part of His saving work, secures our perseverance.

True believers "are protected by the power of God through faith for ... salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5). The guarantee of our perseverance is built into the New Covenant promise. God says: "I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me" (Jer. 32:40).

Those who do fall away from Christ give conclusive proof that they were never truly believers to begin with (1 John 2:19). To say that God secures our perseverance is not to say that we are passive in the process, however. He keeps us "through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5), our faith.

Scripture sometimes calls us to hold fast to our faith (Heb. 10:23; Rev. 3:11), or warns us against falling away (Heb. 10:26-29). Such admonitions do not negate the many promises that true believers will persevere (1 John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6).

Rather, the warnings and pleas are among the means God uses to secure our perseverance in the faith. Notice that the warnings and the promises often appear side by side. For example, when

Jude urges believers, “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21), he immediately points them to God, “who is able to keep you from stumbling” (Jude 24).

We see the words "he that shall endure until the end". You see, unlike what some ministers would have you believe, there is a terrible time of testing. Many ministers have their congregations believing that there will not be problems, if you have your life right with God.

What about that part of verse 13 that said you must endure to the end, if you are to be saved? God will bless His own, and if you pray and believe, He will help you through the rough times; but trials and tribulations will come to all of us. How we handle the problems is what really counts. When the going gets rough, do we run or stand?

Endure does not mean good times. Endure means hang on in the face of adversity. If we are to be saved, that seems to be our lot. No one knows for sure how soon the end of this struggle will be. Our job is to hang on and give everything we have to God. He will help us, if we will resist the enemy.

Matthew 24:14 "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."

“Preached in all the world”: Despite all the tribulations that would come, the deception of false teachers, the wars, persecutions, natural disaster, defections from Christ, and all the obstacles to the spread of the gospel, the message ultimately penetrates every part of the globe. God is never without a witness, and He will proclaim the gospel from heaven itself if necessary (Rev. 14:6).

“Then shall the end come”: “The end” refers to the final, excruciating birth pangs. This is how Christ characterizes the time of Great Tribulation described in the verses that follow.

The good news (gospel), of Jesus Christ is now being preached throughout the world. Satellite television has carried the message around the world. In the remote areas that do not have television, God has sent missionaries. Everyone has an opportunity to either accept or reject Jesus as his Savior.

If there is one sign more than all others, I believe this is it. The end of the Gentile age is near. The "end" spoken of here, is the end of the age.

Matthew 24:15 "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:)"

“Abomination of desolation”: This phrase originally referred to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria in the second century B.C. He, Antiochus, invaded Jerusalem (in 168 B.C.), made the altar into a shrine to Zeus, and even sacrificed pigs on it. However, Jesus clearly was looking toward a yet-future “abomination of desolation.”

Some suggest that this prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Titus invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. However, the Apostle Paul saw a still-future fulfillment (2 Thess. 2:3-4),

as did John (Rev. 13:14-15), when the Antichrist sets up an image in the temple during the future tribulation.

Christ's words here therefore look beyond the events of A.D. 70 to a time of even greater global cataclysm that will immediately precede His coming (verses 29-31).

"Ye" must be taken generically, since the disciples would not live to see this take place. The "abomination of desolation" refers to (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11); where Antiochus Epiphanes' profanation of the Jewish temple worship would foreshadow a similar and more severe act by the eschatological Antichrist.

Whereas Antiochus offered a pig on the sacred altar of the temple, the Antichrist will present himself (2 Thess. 2:4).

The action of desecration by Antiochus, which Daniel had predicted, will now be repeated in the future by the Antichrist as the signal of the beginning of the Great Tribulation and the braking of the covenant "in the midst of the week" (Dan. 9:27), that is, the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy, whose length is 42 months (Rev. 11:2), 1260 days (Rev. 12:6), or "time, and times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:14).

Verses 16-28: The warning to "flee into the mountains" eschatologically looks beyond the first century to the Jews' flight from the persecution of the Antichrist (Rev. 12:6-14). The reference to the "Sabbath day" indicates that these events will occur in a Jewish area where such restrictions would be observed.

"Then shall be great tribulation" makes our Lord's reference to (Daniel 12:1), clearly evident as taking place just prior to the resurrection (in Daniel 12:2). The terrible "days" of that time shall "be shortened" by the sudden return of Christ to destroy the Wicked One (2 Thess. 2:8).

The phrase "if it were possible ... shall deceive the very elect", clearly indicates that those who have been truly saved cannot be deceived and fall away. For even if it were humanly possible; the Lord will stop it by hastening His coming.

The exclamation "Behold, I have told you before" indicates Jesus' belief in the predictive nature of this prophecy. The "lightning" shining from "the east ... even unto the west" refers to the final aspect of Christ's return (not the Rapture), in judgment upon the earth. In (1 Thessalonians chapter 4), He comes in the clouds for the church. In (2 Thessalonians chapters 1 and 2), He comes to the earth with the church to judge the world.

Matthew 24:16 "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:"

The "abomination", spoken of here, has to do with the evil one who is set up in the temple in the end days. (Daniel 11, verses 36 and 37), spoke of this abominable one.

Daniel 11:36-37 "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that is determined shall be done." "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all."

The "abomination", or the abominable one, truly will set himself up in place of God, in the same place where the temple of God sat. There is a Temple sitting there today that is a Moslem temple. Somehow, sometime, in the future, this temple will be destroyed, and the temple of the true God will be restored.

To say specifically what this exact abomination of desolation is would be presumptuous. It appears to be when the antichrist sets himself up as God at about the middle of the tribulation period, and requires all to bow to him instead of God. (In chapter 12 of Daniel), we read about when this will happen.

Daniel 12:6-7 "And [one] said to the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, How long [shall it be to] the end of these wonders?" "And I heard the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that [it shall be] for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these [things] shall be finished."

The one clothed in linen would be the High Priest of God. It is pretty obvious that this "time, times, and half" means three and one half years. My own personal belief is that I believe just before the wrath of God occurs, the Christians will be carried away into heaven to meet Jesus in the clouds.

"The mountains": Probably a reference to the region southeast of Jerusalem, particularly the Dead Sea area, where there are many caves and places of refuge. David hid from Saul in this area (1 Sam. 23:29). This would also include the hills of Moab and Edom.

Matthew 24:17 "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:"

"Him which is on the house-top": The roofs of the houses in Eastern countries were made flat, so that they were favorable places for walking and retirement. The meaning here is, that he who should be on the housetop when this calamity came upon the city "should flee without delay;" He should not even take time to secure any article of apparel from his house. So sudden would be the calamity, that by attempting to do this He would endanger his life.

Matthew 24:18 "Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."

"Return back to take his clothes": His clothes which, in "working," he had laid aside, or which, in fleeing, he should throw off as an encumbrance. "Clothes" here means the "outer" garment, commonly laid aside when men worked or ran.

These directions were followed as it is said that the Christians, warned by these predictions, fled from Jerusalem to Pella, and other places beyond the Jordan; so that there is no evidence that a single "Christian" perished in Jerusalem (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl., lib. 3 chapter 6).

Those in the field, were not to return for personal items, but were to flee for their lives. This is an emergency situation probably, like it would be in the large cities, if a tornado or bomb alert were to go off. The main idea is to get away as fast as they can, not worrying about anything left behind.

Matthew 24:19 "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!"

"And woe unto them that are with child": Not that it should be criminal for them to be with child, or a judgment on them; for it was always esteemed a blessing to be fruitful and bear children: but this expresses the miserable circumstances that one would be in, who, by reason of their heavy burdens, would not be able to make so speedy a flight. As the case would require; or would be obliged to stay at home, and endure all the miseries of the siege.

So that these words, as the following are not expressive of sin, or punishment, but of pity and concern for their misery and distress: and to them that give suck in those days. Whose tender affection to their infants will not suffer them to leave them behind them. And yet such their weakness, that they will not be able to carry them with them. At least, they must be great hindrances to their speedy flight.

Matthew 24:20 "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:"

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter": When days are short, and unfit for long journeys. And roads are bad, and sometimes not passable, through large snows, or floods of water; and when to dwell in desert places, and lodge in mountains, would be very uncomfortable.

Therefore, Christ directs to pray to God, who has the disposal of all events, and of the timing of them, that he would so order things in the course of his providence, that their flight might not be in such a season of the year, when travelling would be very difficult and troublesome.

"Neither on the Sabbath day": For the Jews thought it unlawful to walk above two thousand paces (two miles) on the Sabbath day.

Matthew 24:21 "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

"Great tribulation": The words "such as was not since the beginning" and "nor ever shall be" along with the description that follows. Identify this as the yet-future time in which God's wrath shall be poured out upon the earth. Jesus' descriptions for the cataclysms that follow closely resemble the outpouring of divine wrath described in the bowl judgments of (Rev. 16), and His subsequent appearing in (Rev. 19).

In no other period of history (past or future), of the world will there be so much suffering and universal destruction as during the seven years called the Great Tribulation. These years are fraught with wrath (Ezek. 7:19), judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5, 7), darkness (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18, 20), indignation (Isa. 26:20-21; 34:1-3), and sorrow.

The scriptural representations of the Great Tribulation are wholly negative with no attempt to minimize the severity of human suffering in that time. During the Great Tribulation, God will pour out His wrath on mankind and will judge all of creation, just before the peace of the Millennium is ushered in.

If Christians do not realize that they will be taken out of the world before the Great Tribulation begins, they could become very discouraged looking forward to those years. The realization of what awaits the unsaved following the Rapture ought to motivate every believer to win souls before it is too late.

In this verse, you can easily see why the rush to get out. If this was the siege that took place when Jerusalem fell to the Romans, then close to a million were estimated to die. I tend to believe that this Scripture was not only for that terrible time, but is also speaking of another terrible time that will come when the antichrist begins his rule in the Tribulation period.

Matthew 24:22 "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 shall be shortened”: If the afflictions of this time were to continue, “no life would have been saved,” i.e., no one would survive. But “for the sake of the elect” (so that redeemed people do not suffer more than they can bear), the time is “cut short”, i.e., held short of total destruction. Both (Dan. 7:25 and Rev. 12:14), suggest that the actual length of time the Beast will be permitted to terrorize the world is fixed at 3-1/2 years.

These "elect" had been praying for Jerusalem and her people, and God heard their prayers and answered. God will not allow total annihilation; He will always save a remnant.

Matthew 24:23 "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here [is] Christ, or there; believe [it] not."

"Then if any man shall say unto you": Either at the time when the siege shall have begun, and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place; or during the days of tribulation, while the siege lasts. Or after those days were shortened, and the city destroyed, and the Roman army was gone with their captives. Or when some that was in the country; would insinuate to their countrymen, that the Messiah was in such a place.

They would say: “lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not”: for both during the time of the siege, there were such that sprung up, and pretended to be Messiahs, and deliverers of them from the Roman power, and had their several accomplishments.

One would say he was in such place and another that he was in such a place; and so they stirred up the people not to leave, nor to deliver up the city; after the city was taken and destroyed.

Matthew 24:24 "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

“They shall deceive the very elect”: This clearly implies that such deception is not possible (John 10:4-5).

Here, “very elect” is definitely speaking of the Christians. These false christs are all around us today. Some of them are openly proclaiming to be Christ; others are just subtly suggesting that they are.

False prophets are doing even more damage to the Christians. At least, if someone proclaims he is Christ, those of us that know the Scriptures recognize right off that he is not. False prophets are another thing, they come in with a message so close to the truth, and many times doing miracles.

The only way you can tell the difference is to listen carefully to every word, and check it out with the Bible. Any message that does not elevate the name of Jesus is a suspect right off. God the Father is to be revered. Christians must be a peculiar, separated people.

You might ask, separated from what? The answer is, "the world and its ways". As I have said before, if it pleases the flesh, there is something wrong with it generally. God will not be mocked. He wants His people holy and righteous (without spot or wrinkle). We cannot have one foot in earth and the other foot in heaven.

We have to make up our minds who we will follow, God or Satan. The only way that it is not possible to deceive the very elect is, because they have studied and understood, (through the Holy Spirit), the Scriptures. Just one wrong word will trigger a red flag in their brains. Pharaoh's magicians could do signs and wonders. Just be careful and check out everything with the Bible.

Matthew Chapter 24 Continued Questions

1. Why shall the love of many wax cold?
2. Who shall be saved?
3. What should we focus our lives on?
4. What must we do in verse 13 to be saved?
5. What is our duty toward other Christians?
6. What must happen before the end comes?

7. What does gospel mean?
8. The one sign, more than all the rest, that we are near the end, is what?
9. Where does Jesus say this "abomination" is spoken of in the Old Testament?
10. What is this abomination?
11. This "abominable" has one statement made of him that indicates he has no involvement with women, what is it?
12. The temple sitting in the Holy Place today, is what?
13. What will happen to this temple?
14. When does the "abomination" show itself?
15. What does the man clothed in linen indicate?
16. What does the time, times, and a half indicate?
17. When does the author believe the Christians shall be caught away into heaven?
18. Why will the Israelites in Judaea need to flee?
19. Verses 17 and 18 remind us of what other flight?
20. In verse 19, what is the "woe" spoken?
21. Jesus told them to pray to God that their flight would not be in _____ or on the _____.
22. How is this tribulation described?
23. For whose sake will the days be shortened?
24. If someone told you that Christ is somewhere you have to go looking for, what should you tell them?
25. Even more dangerous than the false christs are whom?
26. Why are they most dangerous?
27. How is the only way we can tell the difference?
28. What kind of a message is a suspect right off?
29. In what two conditions, does God want His people?

30. Why can the very "elect" not be easily fooled?