

Matthew 24 – Signs of Christ’s Second Coming^{1,2}

Matthew 24:44 – For this reason, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.

Let’s take a brief digression from *Revelation*.

***The Gospel of Matthew* also addresses the End Times and Jesus’ Second Coming. There, His major point is that we need pay attention and always be ready, because we don’t know when He’ll come. But how does it fit in with *Revelation*? Let’s see.**

(See also corresponding passages in [Mark 13](#) and [Luke 21](#))

¹ An excerpt from *A Revelation of Love: A study of the Bible book of Revelation* by Karl Schank, Copyright © Karl Schank, 2024. See also kspubs.com.

² All Scripture quotations are from the *Berean Standard Bible*, public domain (see <https://berean.bible/licensing.htm>)

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Three questions – three indirect answers (Matthew 24:1-3)

Jesus’ disciples asked Him three different questions, apparently thinking that they were one and the same. Jesus didn’t directly answer *any* of them – He said He didn’t *know* the answer, only the Father did³!

However, He did indirectly address each of the three questions, telling them the signs to be aware of so they’d recognize the answers when they happened. He addressed each question separately since they each have different answers. Unfortunately, He interleaved His answers and didn’t clearly identify which statements applied to which questions. Even more confusingly, some of His answers seem to overlap and may apply to two or more of the questions.

The disciples’ three questions were:

1. When will these things happen? – the things they had discussed in [Matthew 24:1-2](#), i.e., when the Temple would be destroyed⁴
2. What will be the “sign” of Jesus’ (second) coming?
3. What will be the “sign” of “the End of the Age”?

If you could ask any three questions of Jesus, what would they be?

By the way, What’s your “sign”?

When John used the word “sign” in his Gospel, he essentially meant *miracle*. But when Matthew uses the word “sign,” it simply means an *indication* or indicator – a sign or signpost. So the disciples were not asking for miracles, but were simply asking for something that would show them when these things were about to happen so that they could be ready before it hit them.

What “age” are you?

In [Matthew 24:3](#), the Greek word *aion* or *aionios* for “age” means an era or a period of indefinite duration. For example, the Greek phrase sometimes translated, “unto the age” actually means “forever”⁵. So in verse 3, the disciples are asking about the end of the Christian era (though at the time, they wouldn’t have known to phrase it that way). This is not the same Greek word as “generation” in [Matthew 24:34](#) (more on that later).

So let’s look at all the signs, conditions, consequences, and results one by one, making our best attempt to relate them to the three questions:

³ **Only God the Father knows when: Matthew 24:36** -- No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

⁴ **When would the Temple be destroyed?: Matthew 24:1-2** -- As Jesus left the temple and was walking away, His disciples came up to Him to point out its buildings. “Do you see all these things?” He replied. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.

⁵ “Age”, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*. <https://studybible.info/vines/Age>

Signs of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem

([Matthew 24:15-22](#), [34](#))

Sign / condition / trigger (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) – “When you see the ‘abomination of desolation’ which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet⁶ standing in the Holy Place [of the Temple] ...”^z

- Temporally (in earthly historical time), Roman emperor Caligula commanded that an enormous statue of himself be erected in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in AD 40-41. However, he was assassinated in Rome before that could be carried out. This is one of the several events – including, among others, famine (see below) and Stephen’s martyrdom – that tipped off the Christians to scatter and flee Jerusalem and Judea.
- In 168 BC, the Greek emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes actually did erect a statue of Zeus in the Temple, which was one of the triggers of the Jewish Maccabean revolt against the Greeks.
- This may also be one of those prophecies that has fulfillment on different levels at different times. In addition to the above temporal, historical fulfillments, it is not impossible that it may also have a fuller consummation at the End of the Age and Jesus’ Second Coming. If so, then that would require first that another Jewish Temple be built in Jerusalem and that it then be desecrated with this abomination. That remains to be seen (and is not *specifically* prophesied elsewhere in Scripture).

- Jesus’ foretelling the signs of the Temple’s destruction did warn His first century Christians to flee the city before it happened and not get caught up in the carnage as the Jews did. Many of Jesus’ disciples were martyred for believing in Him, but few were killed in the Roman-Jewish war.
- Action required (Matt 24:16-18, 20) – When that abomination occurs, “get outta Dodge”; flee as quickly as you can⁸.

⁶ **The abomination of desolation in the Temple:** Daniel 9:27 -- And he will confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of the temple will come the abomination that causes desolation, until the decreed destruction is poured out upon him.

[Daniel 11:31](#) -- His forces will rise up and desecrate the temple fortress. They will abolish the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation

[Daniel 12:11](#) -- And from the time the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation set up, there will be 1,290 days

[Luke 21:20](#) -- But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that her desolation is near

^z **Condition or sign that it's time:** [Matthew 24:15](#) -- So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination of desolation,’ described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand)

⁸ **Action required:** [Matthew 24:16-18, 20](#) -- Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his cloak ... Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath

[Luke 21:20](#) -- But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that her desolation is near.

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- Because Jesus counsels them to flee *Judea* specifically, it seems that He is talking about what happens when the Temple (and, as it turns out, all Jerusalem and Israel) is about to be destroyed, not about His return nor events “at the End of the Age”.
- This actually happened in the Jewish-Roman war of about AD 66-73, with the destruction of the Temple occurring in AD 70. At the time that Jesus said (prophesied) this during Holy Week, that was still around 40 years in the future.
- Historically, because the Christians knew what Jesus had said here, they did flee before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The Jews, not knowing what Jesus had said, did not flee.
- Further prophetic description (Matt 24:19, 21-22) – There will be great tribulation, worse than there’s ever been or ever will be⁹ (See also [v.9](#) and [v.29](#), below).
 - This seems like another of those prophecies that has fulfillment on different levels at different times. Temporally, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Judea was a truly terrible and gory time. The streets of Jerusalem literally flowed with blood, the Temple was completely destroyed with “not one stone left upon another”¹⁰, and the city of Jerusalem was nearly as completely destroyed. The Jewish defenders at Masada committed mass suicide in AD 73 rather than surrender to the Roman siege.
 - On another level of meaning, this may also refer to the time of Jesus’ Second Coming, at which time, even worse **tribulation** will occur (see below). (See also Who are “the elect”, below.)

⁹ **Further prophetic description:** [Matthew 24:19, 21-22](#) -- How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! ... For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short

¹⁰ **Temple completely destroyed:** [Matthew 24:2](#) -- “Do you see all these things?” He replied. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.

Signs of the End of the “Age” ([Matthew 24:6-14](#); see also v.21-22, 29, 35, 34)

What is the “age”, anyway?

The “age” that Jesus and His disciples were talking about is we might call the Christian era – that time from Jesus’ first coming until the consummation and renewal of all things and the coming of the New Heaven and New Earth in Revelation chapters 21-22. Beginning this strange “already but not yet” parenthesis in time, Jesus came to earth and redeemed us by paying our sin penalty on the cross, has been resurrected and ascended back to Heaven and sits on the throne next to the Father. That leaves us as redeemed sinners not yet perfected, in a still-fallen world containing sin and the operation of Satan. However, we have the promise of complete sanctification and restoration when Jesus returns in the Second Coming and restores all things to the way God intended them to be (in Eden) before the Fall.

Jesus’ disciples were asking when the end of *that* age – *this* age that we are still in – will be.

What is the difference between the time of the Second Coming of Jesus and the time of the End of the Age?

It’s hard to say, since they clearly seem to be related. It appears as though the Second Coming of the Son of Man is an event within the broader period of the End Times, that is, of the times of the End of the Age. But it’s hard to be definitive in these matters. In any case, since some of Jesus’ statements specifically mention the end, we can only assume that they are intended to refer to the “End of the Age” about which He was asked.

However, the destruction of the Temple (above) is something else that has already occurred almost 2000 years ago (unless, of course, another temple is eventually built and destroyed).

Jesus mentioned several signs of the beginning of the End of the Age, some of which have unique consequences or required actions, and some of which have consequences or actions common to all:

Sign ([Matt 24:6a, c](#)) – *Wars and rumors of wars*¹¹. (See also first two seals in Revelation 6 [12](#).) But as noted below, this isn’t the end, but just a signpost to it.

- *Action required* ([Matt 24:6b](#)) – *Don’t fret, don’t be scared, don’t get wrapped around the axle*¹³.

¹¹ **Sign 1:** [Matthew 24:6a, c](#) -- You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. ... but the end is still to come

¹² **First two seals:** [Revelation 6:2-4](#) -- So I looked and saw a white horse, and its rider had a bow. And he was given a crown, and he rode out to overcome and conquer. And when the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” Then another horse went forth. It was bright red, and its rider was granted permission to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. And he was given a great sword

¹³ **Don't be scared:** [Matthew 24:6a, b](#) -- You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. These things must happen ...

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Sign (Matt 24:7a) – Wars and insurrection¹⁴. (See also first two seals mentioned above and also [Revelation 13:7](#) ¹⁵).

Sign (Matt 24:7b) – Famines¹⁶ (See also the third seal or Revelation 6 [17](#))

Sign (Matt 24:7c) – Earthquakes¹⁸ (See also the sixth seal¹⁹ and seventh bowl²⁰)

Sign / caveat (Matt 24:8) – Merely the beginning of birth pangs. That is, they’re not the end, but are indications of the *beginning* of the end²¹.

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

-- Winston Churchill, 1942

- We can view this as either a sign in and of itself, or as a caution or caveat that we need to keep looking for more signs (see also note on [v.36](#), **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Sign and/or Consequence (Matt 24:9) – Tribulation, murder, hatred ²².

- The tribulation, martyrdom, and hatred are clearly stated to be a resulting *consequence* of believing in Jesus, however they also seem to be *signs* in their own right pointing to the End of the Age and/or the Second Coming of Jesus. (See also [v.21, 29](#), below)

Sign and Consequence (Matt 24:10a) – Many will fall away²³, probably because of the tribulation and being hated because of their association with Jesus – it’ll be too much for them – and

¹⁴ **Wars and insurrection:** [Matthew 24:7a](#) -- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ...

¹⁵ **Wars:** [Revelation 13:7](#) -- Then the beast was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation

¹⁶ **Famines:** [Matthew 24:7b](#) -- ... There will be famines ... in various places

¹⁷ **Third seal famines:** [Revelation 6:5-6](#) -- And when the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" Then I looked and saw a black horse, and its rider held in his hand a pair of scales. And I heard what sounded like a voice from among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not waste the oil and wine.

¹⁸ **Earthquakes:** [Matthew 24:7c](#) -- ... There will be ... earthquakes in various places

¹⁹ **Sixth seal earthquakes:** [Revelation 6:12](#) -- And when I saw the Lamb open the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black like sackcloth of goat hair, and the whole moon turned blood red

²⁰ **Seventh bowl earthquakes:** [Revelation 16:18](#) -- And there were flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder, and a great earthquake the likes of which had not occurred since men were upon the earth—so mighty was the great quake

²¹ **Beginning of the end:** [Matthew 24:8](#) -- All these are the beginning of birth pains

²² **Tribulation, persecution, hatred:** [Matthew 24:9](#) -- Then they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name

²³ **Many fall away from the faith:** [Matthew 24:10a](#) -- At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another

because of the general lawlessness²⁴, self-centeredness²⁵, and lack of faith. So this seems to be both a sign in and of itself, and a consequence of other signs and conditions.

Sign (Matt 24:10b) – Hatred and betrayal²⁶. again, probably because of the general lawlessness, self-centeredness, and lack of faith. (Perhaps related to the second seal²⁷?)

Sign (Matt 24:11) – False prophets and false teachers²⁸. (See [v.24](#) and cross-references, **Error! Reference source not found.**)

Sign (Matt 24:12a) – Lawlessness²⁹

Sign and consequence (Matt 24:12b) – Most people’s love will grow cold³⁰, both for God and for people. This seems to be both a consequence of lawlessness (“*because* lawlessness increased ...”) and a sign that we can recognize in and of itself (a lack of love).

Action required (Matt 24:13a) – Persevere, endure³¹. We are exhorted to endure to the end. But note that “to the end” also implies that this deals with the End of the Age.

Consequence (Matt 24:13b) – Salvation³². Evidently, salvation is, at least in part. a consequence or result of endurance. However, this may imply either simple physical salvation from earthly tribulation, or spiritual salvation and eternal life, or both (it’s hard to say).

How will you “persevere to the end” through “great tribulation”?

Sign and result (Matt 24:14a) – The gospel will be preached to all nations³³. (Also see the Great Commission³⁴)

*Result (Matt 24:14b) – Only **then** will the end come³⁵.*

²⁴ **Lawlessness:** [Matthew 24:12a](#) -- Because of the multiplication of wickedness [or *lawlessness*, in most translations] ...

²⁵ **Self-centeredness:** [Matthew 24:12b](#) -- ... the love of most will grow cold

²⁶ **Hatred and betrayal:** [Matthew 24:10b](#) -- At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another

²⁷ **Second seal “take peace from the Earth”:** [Revelation 6:3-4](#) -- And when the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” Then another horse went forth. ... and its rider was granted permission to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. And he was given a great sword

²⁸ **False prophets:** [Matthew 24:11](#) -- And many false prophets will arise and mislead many

²⁹ **Lawlessness:** [Matthew 24:12a](#) -- Because of the multiplication of wickedness [i.e., lawlessness]

³⁰ **Lovelessness:** [Matthew 24:12b](#) -- Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold

³¹ **Persevere, endure:** [Matthew 24:13a](#) -- But the one who perseveres to the end ...

³² **Salvation:** [Matthew 24:13b](#) -- But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved

³³ **The gospel will be preached to all nations:** [Matthew 24:14a](#) -- And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nation ...

³⁴ **The Great Commission to preach the gospel:** [Matthew 28:18-20](#) -- Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

³⁵ **Then the end will come:** [Matthew 24:14b](#) -- ... and then the end will come

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See also [v.21-22](#), and possibly [v.29](#) and [v.34-35](#), below, which may also relate to not only the Second Coming but also to the End of the Age.

Signs of Christ's return ([Matthew 24:4-5, 23-51](#))

What is the difference between the time of the Second Coming of Jesus and the time of the End of the Age?

As noted, it's hard to clearly distinguish between the time of the Second Coming of Jesus and the time of the End of the Age, since they clearly seem to be related. However, since some of Jesus' statements specifically mention His return, we can only assume that they are intended to refer to the "His coming" about which He was asked.

Sign ([Matt 24:5](#)) – *People will claim to be the Christ, the Messiah, the promised One*³⁶. (See [v.24](#) and cross-references, **Error! Reference source not found.**)

- *Action required ([Matt 24:4](#))* – *Don't be fooled, don't believe them*³⁷.

Sign ([Matt 24:21](#)) – *Great tribulation, greater than ever, "greater than any since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will*³⁸. (See also [v.29](#), below, and see [Rev 7:9,14](#). ³⁹)

- This seems like one of those prophecies that has fulfillment on different levels at different times. The context of the remainder of the paragraph ([Matt 24:22-27](#)) suggests that Messianically, this probably refers to Jesus' Second Coming, at which time (as we'll see later in *Revelation*), the Great Tribulation will occur – the worst tribulation the world has ever seen.
- On another level of meaning, this may also refer temporally to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Judea, which was also a truly terrible and gory time (see above).

How will you make it through the "great tribulation"?

- *Consequence ([Matt 24:22a](#))* – "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved ..."
- *Promise ([Matt 24:22b](#))* – "but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short"

Who are "the elect"?

It may help that many Bible versions translate it as "chosen". The Greek word means "selected, picked out, chosen"⁴⁰. In other words, the elect are Christian believers who "were 'chosen' 'before the foundation of the world' in Christ ... [and] the source of their 'election' is God's grace"⁴¹. In short, you are the elect, we are the elect.

³⁶ **People will claim to be Christ and will mislead:** [Matthew 24:5](#) -- For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many

³⁷ **Don't be deceived:** [Matthew 24:4](#) -- Jesus answered, "See to it that no one deceives you

³⁸ **Great Tribulation:** [Matthew 24:21](#) -- For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again

³⁹ [Revelation 7:14b](#) -- ... So he [the angel] replied, "These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb

⁴⁰ **"Elect"**, *Vine's Expository Dictionary* online. <https://studybible.info/vines/Elect,%20Elected,%20Election>

⁴¹ **"Elect"**, *Vine's*, see above

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- *Action required* ([Matt 24:23](#)) – Don’t believe the impostors: “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him”⁴²

Sign ([Matt 24:24a](#)) – *Antichrists*, false Christs⁴³

Sign ([Matt 24:24b](#)) – False prophets and false teachers⁴⁴

Sign ([Matt 24:24c-25](#)) – *Counterfeit miracles* ⁴⁵designed to mislead.

Sign ([Matt 24:26a, c](#)) – *They’ll falsely say here He is or there He is* ⁴⁶

- *Action required* ([Matt 24:26b, d](#)) – then don’t go, follow them, or believe them ⁴⁷

⁴² **Don't believe the impostors:** [Matthew 24:23](#) -- At that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe it

⁴³ **False Christs, antichrists:** [Matthew 24:24](#) -- For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible

[1 John 2:18, 22](#) -- Children, it is the last hour; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour. ... Who is the liar, if it is not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son

[1 John 4:3](#) -- And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and is already in the world at this time

[2 John 1:7](#) -- For many deceivers have gone out into the world, refusing to confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist

⁴⁴ **False prophets and teachers:** [Matthew 24:24b](#) -- For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible

[Revelation 16:13](#) -- And I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet

[Revelation 19:20](#) -- But the beast was captured along with the false prophet, who on its behalf had performed signs deceiving those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. Both the beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur

[Revelation 20:10](#) -- And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, into which the beast and the false prophet had already been thrown. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever

[2 Corinthians 11:13](#) -- For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ

[2 Thessalonians 2:11](#) -- For this reason, God will send them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie

[2 Peter 2:1](#) -- Now there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves

[1 John 4:1](#) -- Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world

⁴⁵ **Counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders:** [Matthew 24:24-25](#) -- For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance

⁴⁶ **They'll say here He is or there He is:** [Matthew 24:26](#) -- So if they tell you, ‘There He is in the wilderness,’ ... or, ‘Here He is in the inner rooms,’ ...

⁴⁷ **Don't go, follow, or believe them:** [Matthew 24:26](#) -- ... [then] do not go out ... [and] do not believe it

- *Illustration* ([Matt 24:27-28](#)) – *Jesus’ coming will be obvious to all*⁴⁸. It will be as obvious to all as seeing lightning in the sky from far away and as seeing vultures circling in the sky and knowing that there’s carrion below them. (See also, perhaps, [Rev 19:17-18](#)⁴⁹?)

Sign ([Matt 24:29a](#)) – *After the tribulation*⁵⁰. In other words, the Tribulation happens *first*, before Jesus’ Second Coming. (See also [v.21](#) and v.9, above.)

How will you “persevere to the end” through “great tribulation”?

Sign ([Matt 24:29b](#)) – *Signs in the sky and on Earth*⁵¹. (See also the sixth seal⁵²; fourth trumpet⁵³; and fifth bowl⁵⁴ in *Revelation*)

Sign and result ([Matt 24:30a, c](#)) – *The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky*⁵⁵. This “sign” **is** the coming of Jesus “in the sky”. It isn’t a sign like a cross or a lightning bolt or something that will indicate His eminent return, rather it is Christ Himself coming in the clouds that is the sign. It is *both* the indication that all will see (the sign) *and* the long-awaited result itself (His coming) at the same time. Basically, we’ll know He’s really coming when we *see* Him coming. (Compare to [Acts 1:9-11](#), [Luke 24:50-51](#), and perhaps [Rev 11:19](#) ⁵⁶.)

⁴⁸ **Jesus’ coming will be obvious to all:** [Matthew 24:27-28](#) -- For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather

⁴⁹ **Birds eating flesh:** [Revelation 19:17-18](#) -- Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying overhead, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and commanders and mighty men, of horses and riders, of all men slave and free, small and great.

⁵⁰ **After the tribulation:** [Matthew 24:29a](#) -- Immediately after the tribulation of those days ...

⁵¹ **Signs in the sky and on Earth:** [Matthew 24:29b](#) -- ... [then] “The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

⁵² **Sixth seal:** [Revelation 6:12](#) -- And when I saw the Lamb open the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black like sackcloth of goat hair, and the whole moon turned blood red

⁵³ **Fourth trumpet:** [Revelation 8:12](#) -- Then the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun and moon and stars were struck. A third of the stars were darkened, a third of the day was without light, and a third of the night as well

⁵⁴ **Fifth bowl:** [Revelation 16:10](#) -- And the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness, and men began to gnaw their tongues in anguish

⁵⁵ **Sign of Christ in the sky:** [Matthew 24:30a.c](#) -- At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, ... [and] They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory

⁵⁶ [Acts 1:9-11](#) -- After He had said this, they watched as He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.

[Luke 24:50-51](#) -- When Jesus had led them out as far as Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was carried up into heaven

[Revelation 11:19](#) -- Then the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple. And there were flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and a great hailstorm

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- *Consequence* ([Matt 24:30b](#)) – *Nonbelievers will mourn*⁵⁷. Christian believers will rejoice, but the unbelieving nations will mourn because they w/ill realize that it’s all true: He is Who He always said He is (every knee will bow ...), and because they will realize that their judgment is coming. (See [Rev 11:10](#); [18:9-11](#); [15-16](#), etc.⁵⁸)
- *Consequence* ([Matt 24:31](#)) – Angels will gather believers to Him⁵⁹. (See Revelation 14 and the last, seventh trumpet at [Rev 11:15](#); [1 Thes 4:16-17](#); [1 Cor 15:52](#) ⁶⁰)
 - The gathering seems to be speaking about the “rapture” (a topic for another time), when Christians are taken up to “join Him in the sky”⁶¹. The end result of this will be for the Wedding Supper of the Lamb and for reward.
 - The angels’ trumpets seem to refer to Revelation chapters 8-11 (which we’ll get to, later)

⁵⁷ **Nonbelievers will mourn:** [Matthew 24:30b](#) -- ... and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. ...

⁵⁸ **Revelation 11:10** -- And those who dwell on the earth will gloat over them, and will celebrate and send each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented them

Revelation 18:9-11 -- Then the kings of the earth who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her will weep and wail at the sight of the smoke rising from the fire that consumes her. In fear of her torment, they will stand at a distance and cry out: “Woe, woe to the great city, the mighty city of Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come.” And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, because there is no one left to buy their cargo

Revelation 18:15-16 -- The merchants who sold these things and grew their wealth from her will stand at a distance, in fear of her torment. They will weep and mourn, saying: “Woe, woe to the great city, clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls

⁵⁹ **Angels will gather believers to Him:** [Matthew 24:31](#) -- And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other

⁶⁰ **Revelation 11:15** -- Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and loud voices called out in heaven: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 -- For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord

1 Corinthians 15:52 -- In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed

⁶¹ **Rapture:** [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#) -- For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord

1 Corinthians 15:52 -- In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed

The urgency of staying alert – Matthew 24.32-51 and Matthew 25

Now, Jesus shifts from the signs to recognize His coming and of the end, to the importance and urgency of staying alert to those signs. He does that largely by stories, illustrations, and parables:

- *Illustration* ([Matt 24:32](#)) – Nature, e.g., fig trees blossoming foretells summer⁶².

What's special about fig trees as opposed to any other tree? Don't all trees get buds and new leaves in the spring, which indicates that summer's coming?

Jack Jones points out that Judea is quite desolate and there aren't many trees of any kind except palms and olives. But those behave more like live oaks and don't drop their leaves in the winter, get new spring-green leaves and buds in the spring, and get dark green leaves and fruit in the summer. But fig trees were also common, and fig trees do behave like normal deciduous trees. So it's not that fig trees are special, it's that they may be one of the few ordinary trees that Judeans would be familiar with and that Jesus could point to in Jerusalem as an illustration.

- *Action required* ([Matt 24:33](#)) – When all this happens, it's time⁶³! In other words, pay attention, be alert, and recognize the signs. I (Jesus) can't tell you the calendar date (see [v.36](#) and notes, below), but I've told you what to look out for (which is really better, anyway). So when you see it, take heed and take action!

Sign ([Matt 24:34](#)) – *All these things will happen*⁶⁴. Literally, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

Which generation “won't pass away”?

The Greek word “generation” in [Matthew 24:34](#) is not the same as the Greek word for “age” or “era” in [verse 4](#). The word *genea* for “generation” in [verse 34](#) means a family or group of contemporaries living at the same time, or the common lifespan in which they lived⁶⁵. That's interesting and useful to know, but it's not the key to the passage.

The key to the passage is the antecedent to the pronoun. In [Matthew 24:34](#), when Jesus says, “*this* generation will not pass away until all these things take place,” ***He doesn't mean the first century generation of his twelve disciples.*** Rather, He means the (future) generation that *experiences* the various signs and *conditions* that He has just specified. In other words, the generation seeing all those things happen will be the same generation seeing the Second Coming and the end of the Christian era. It won't stretch out or delay any longer. So when these signs happen, Jesus and the end will then come quickly.

⁶² **Fig tree illustration:** [Matthew 24:32](#) -- Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near

⁶³ **When all this happens, it's time!:** [Matthew 24:33](#) -- So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door

⁶⁴ **All these things will take place:** [Matthew 24:34](#) -- Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened

⁶⁵ “Age”, *Vine's*, see above

Matthew 24 – Signs of Christ’s Second Coming.

- This seems to say two things: Firstly, that any single sign isn’t enough. There will be earthquakes⁶⁶ and eclipses⁶⁷ throughout history, but that doesn’t mean that every one of them is an indication that Jesus will return immediately. There will be other signs that are much more rare and perhaps even unique. But when *all* of these things occur round abouts the same time, then *that* is significant and is a sign of Jesus’ impending return.
- Secondly, when the signs occur, Jesus’ return will be soon; He won’t delay: the human generation that sees all these signs will be the same generation (essentially, the same people) who see His return.
- *Emphasis* ([Matt 24:35](#)) – “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”
 - Jesus is emphasizing and attesting to the truth and reliability of all of this (as when He says “Truly, truly I say to you ...”).
 - He is also affirming the timelessness of His words, both his words to the disciples then (i.e., of these prophecies) and of His eternal Word of God, the Bible.
- *Caveat* ([Matt 24:36](#)) – “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”
 - That’s why He could not give an exact calendar date of these things: while He was “emptied” and humbled on earth in human form as a servant⁶⁸, He simply didn’t know. (One may assume that since the Resurrection and Ascension, as He is back in Heaven at the right hand of the Father on the throne (Rev 4-5), that He now knows and is simply waiting for the Father’s command to come.)
- *Illustration* ([Matt 24:37-39](#)) – “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.” While Noah took ages to build the ark, the start of the rain was quite sudden and the populace was neither expecting it nor prepared.

Similarly, Jesus’ Second Coming will happen quite suddenly and unexpectedly. Since we don’t know when that will be, we’d better stay alert, be prepared, and be expectant at all times.

Sign and/or result ([Matt 24:40-41](#)) – “Then [at the coming of the Son of Man] there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.”

⁶⁶ **Earthquakes:** [Matthew 24:7](#) -- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places

⁶⁷ **Eclipses:** [Matthew 24:29](#) -- 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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

⁶⁸ **Jesus emptied and humbled as a human servant:** [Philippians 2:7-8](#) -- But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross

- This seems to be speaking about the “rapture” (a topic for another time), when Christians are taken up to “join Him in the sky”⁶⁹.
- It’s unclear to me whether this is another sign pointing to the Second Coming (which seems likely), or whether it is a result of the Second Coming (since it is mentioned after it).
- Either way, the real point is that it will be sudden, unexpected (by those who don’t know the signs), and “surgical” in that some (i.e., believers) will be “taken” and others *even right next to them doing the same thing* (but unbelievers) will be left.

How will you recognize Jesus when He comes?

How will you recognize false messiahs claiming to be Christ?

Does all this encourage you or frighten you? Why?

Where is your heart— with Jesus or with the world? How could others tell?

⁶⁹ **The rapture:** [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) -- After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord

[1 Corinthians 15:52](#) -- In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed

Matthew 24 – Signs of Christ’s Second Coming.

Conclusion: Be alert, pay attention, be prepared **([Matthew 24:42-51](#))**

- *Action required* ([Matt 24:42](#)) – *Stay alert!*⁷⁰
 - *Illustration* ([Matt 24:43](#)) – *You’d stay alert if you knew when your house was about to be robbed.*⁷¹
- *Action required and summary* ([Matt 24:44](#)) – *Be prepared!* “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”
 - *Illustration* ([Matt 24:45, 48-49](#)) – *Servants faithful vs wicked and partying while master is gone.*⁷²
 - *Result* ([Matt 24:46-47, 50-51](#)) – *Faithful servant put in charge; wicked, partying servant decimated.* ⁷³

⁷⁰ **Stay alert!:** [Matthew 24:42](#) -- Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day on which your Lord will come

⁷¹ **House robbing:** [Matthew 24:43](#) -- But understand this: If the homeowner had known in which watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into

⁷² **Servants faithful or partying:** [Matthew 24:45, 48-49](#) -- Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household, to give the others their food at the proper time? ... But suppose that servant is wicked and says in his heart, ‘My master will be away a long time.’ And he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. [but see below for their respective fates.]

⁷³ **Results of faith vs. wicked partying:** [Matthew 24:46-47, 50-51](#) -- Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ... The master of that [other, wicked] servant will come on a day he does not anticipate and at an hour he does not expect. Then he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So what? A summary

How do we fit the three parts together – the destruction of the Temple, the End of the Age, and the return of Christ?

The destruction of the Temple happened in AD 70. While it is not impossible that at the End of the Age, another temple could be built and destroyed (if so, it fits in with the End of the Age, below), it is at least true that Jesus' foretelling the signs of this did warn His first century Christians to flee the city before it happened so they did not get caught up in the carnage as the Jews did.

It is impossible to precisely fit the timing of the Second Coming of Christ into the End of the Age from the information in Matthew 24 alone. Even with the insight and inspiration of all the rest of Scripture, it is difficult and quite likely not possible. However, it does seem as though the End of the Age is a broader period of time in which the Return of Christ is one event at or near the very end of that period. There are also many other events and occurrences during the End-of-the-Age period leading up to the climax of the Second Coming. And there are several things that will happen as a *result* of the Second Coming (e.g., the coming of the New Heaven and New Earth, etc.).

That's about all we can say for certain at this point.

What does it all mean for us?

Jesus has provided signs of His Second Coming and of the end of the world as we know it, and He's done it because He wants us to be prepared spiritually.

So pay attention and always be ready, because we don't – and can't – know when He'll come. However, He wants us to always be prepared and ready *no matter when* it happens – even if it's today!

Are you ready? Are you alert and paying attention?