

Christ's Introduction to Apocalyptic Prophecy

A Matthew 24–25 Study

**Events during earth's Last Generation –
which we have entered**



Unbelievable details!

**Prophetic clocks
that are ticking**

**The exact sequence
it all happens**

**How Satan
pretends to be Christ**



Franklin S. Fowler Jr.

CHRIST'S INTRODUCTION TO APOCALYPTIC PROPHECY

A COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 24–25

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These conclusions are always subject to progressive understanding.

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Preface to Mathew 24–25

The blending of Christ's two end-time applications of Matthew 24 provocatively invites careful study to distinguish each message:

1. End of the Jewish Nation and Jerusalem's destruction (70 A.D.)
2. End of the world with Christ's Second Coming

Much of His discourse aims at the behavior of the wicked and their predetermined end. This pattern is replicated in many of the apocalyptic messages found in Revelation.

Christ is also interested in conveying the key signs and their sequences to show when the end comes! For those wanting greater details of the period surrounding Christ's Second Advent, He gives the counsel: Go to Daniel where the "abomination that leads to desolation" (24:15) is discussed. That is distinctly related to the end-time *ha hazon* visions of Daniel 8–12.

- The events, warnings and sequences that Matthew outlines is a **template** that is accurately replicated throughout all other apocalyptic prophecy!
- From the collective signs of wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilence and celestial events (Luke 21 adds the latter), to the sun, moon and stars drama immediately preceding the Second Advent, the **pattern** is never broken elsewhere.

Jesus takes the student through instructive parables that determines one's eternal end through the choices he makes. All types of personalities can find a sympathetic chord with at least one of those stories.

Finally, Jesus comes in a second rendition of his discourse – this time executing humanity's eternal sentence (Matthew 25).

Understanding/mastering this template will aid in the study of all other end-time prophetic material. If Daniel's prophecies are combined with it, the book of Revelation suddenly becomes excitingly meaningful.

Though denied by the aficionados of Matthew 24:36 (day and hour theme), Christ embraces many timing prophecies when bonded with Daniel, which matures a sense of urgency.

Christ's missive is not only predictively informational, but he seeks to lead one into the proper response to earth's last events through their friendship with heaven.

SIGHTING THE “END”

God’s Ideal Thwarted

“It was God’s design that the **whole earth** be prepared for the first advent of Christ, **even as today** the way is preparing for His Second Coming.”¹ The colorful, intricate rites and ceremonies of ancient Israel’s worship experience pointed to a spiritual kingdom that the Messiah would inaugurate at His coming. But His arrival was virtually unknown and He was unhonored. Tragically, the Hebrew people, assigned to represent God’s holy ideals, failed to recognize their Savior. The **fullness of time**, however, demanded He not delay. Jesus came and visibly manifested throughout His life the nature of that kingdom. His life and death became an illustration of that elevated spiritual kingdom of which every person might become a citizen. The Holy Spirit was then sent to establish in each willing human heart the moral beauty of holiness. *“Even the Spirit of truth; ... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”* (John 14:17). God had to then identify a new people described as those *“whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:21-22).

The failure of the Jewish nation is a lesson book filled with fearful warnings. God had assigned to them a rescue mission for planet earth. Their elevated calling was marred, then shattered by open rebellion against their Leader. *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not”* (John 1:10). Why?

“God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world’s buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. ‘The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.’ Malachi 3:1-3.”²

In spite of the massive failure of that ancient people, their worship types and incidents recorded in the Bible provide word pictures for us by which God still teaches us spiritual truths. In them we are to see things in a worldwide scope with corresponding likeness in God’s spiritual kingdom, which is ‘spiritually discerned’ (I Corinthians 2:14).³ They can help rescue us from their failures.

¹ White, Ellen G.; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 703-704.

² White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 161

³ Were, Louis F.; *Three Angels* (LMN Publishing International, Inc.; St. Maries, ID), p. 31.

Ancient Israel – End-Time Metaphor

The Christian world is so riveted on the Jewish people continuing as God's specially chosen, that many scholars misapply prophecy.^{4,5} This limits greatly their understanding of what "present truth" is for the last generation.

Jesus, however, used the failure of the Jewish nation to develop remarkable metaphors for apocalyptic prophecy related to another people called the 144,000 and a "remnant." The failure of "Jerusalem" and its leaders parallels the story of "Babylon" and its fall at the end. Each serves as a stunning warning of what "might have been" and what "will be" if rebellion is cherished.

God's rejection of the Jewish nation as His special corporate body is a stark notice to all end-time believers that rejection of the covenant conditions of grace will lead to eternal loss.

Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God warned them not to forget that the blessings they were to enjoy there if they cooperated with Him would come as divine gifts (see Deut. 8:7-14), not primarily as the result of their own wisdom and skill (vs. 17-19). Solomon made his great mistake when he failed to realize the secret of Israel's prosperity, and with a few noteworthy exceptions, leaders and people sank lower and lower from generation to generation until apostasy was complete (Isa. 3:12; 9:16; Jer. 5:1-5; 8:10; Eze. 22:23-31; Micah 3).

"The kingdom was divided following Solomon's death (see 1 Kings 11:33-38). This division, though tragic, served to insulate, for a time, the southern kingdom, Judah, from the tide of idolatry that soon engulfed the northern kingdom, Israel (see Hosea 4:17). In spite of the bold and zealous efforts of such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, the northern kingdom rapidly deteriorated and was eventually carried into Assyrian captivity. Its people were given 'no promise of complete restoration to their former power in Palestine' (PK 298).

"Had Judah remained loyal to God its captivity would not have been necessary (PK 564). Again and again He had warned His people that captivity would be the result of disobedience (see Deut. 4:9; 8:19; 28:1, 2, 14, 18; Jer. 18:7-10; 26:2-6; Zech. 6:15; etc.). He had told them that He would progressively diminish their strength and honor as a nation until they should all be carried away into captivity (Deut. 28:15-68; 2 Chron. 36:16, 17). God designed that Israel's experience should prove to be a warning to Judah (see Hosea 1:7; 4:15-17; 11:12; Jer. 3:3-12; etc.). But Judah failed to learn the lesson, and a little more than a century later her apostasy, also, was complete (see Jer. 22:6, 8, 9; Eze. 16:37; 7:2-15, 12:3-28; 36:18-23). The kingdom was overturned (Eze. 21:25-32) and the people removed from the land, which had been theirs only by virtue of the covenant relationship (Hosea 9:3, 15; Micah 2:10; cf. Hosea 2:6-13). Deported to Babylon, they were to learn in adversity the lessons they had failed to learn during times of prosperity (Jer. 25:5-7; 29:18, 19; 30:11-14; 46:28; Eze. 20:25-38; Micah 4:10-12; DA 28), and to impart to the heathen Babylonians a knowledge of the true God (PK 292, 371, 372).

"God did not forsake His people, even during the Captivity. He would renew His covenant with them (Jer. 31:10-38; Eze. 36:21-38; Zech. 1:12, 17; 2:12), including its accompanying blessings (Jer. 33:3, 6-26; Eze. 36:8-15). All that had been promised might yet come to pass if they would only love and serve Him (Zech. 6:15; cf. Isa. 54:7; Eze. 36:11; 43:10, 11; Micah 6:8;

⁴ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 879.

⁵ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Publishing Group; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 561.

Zech. 10:6). According to His beneficent purpose, the covenant promises were to have 'met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God's design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as to-day the way is preparing for His second coming' (PK 703, 704).

"It is important to note that all the Old Testament promises looking forward to a time of restoration for the Jews were given in anticipation of their return from captivity (see Isa. 10:24-34; 14:1-7; 27:12, 13; 40:2; 61:4-10; Jer. 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 25:11; 29:10-13; 30:3-12; 32:7-27, 37-44; Eze. 34:11-15; 37; Amos 9:10-15; Micah 2:12, 13; etc.). Daniel himself so understood these promises (Dan. 9:1-8). Captivity, he said, had 'confirmed' the 'curse' that came because of disobedience (vs. 11, 12), and Jerusalem lay desolate (vs. 16-19). Then Gabriel came to reassure him of the restoration of his people and the eventual coming of the Messiah (vs. 24, 25). But, said the angel, Messiah would be rejected and 'cut off,' because of the abominations of Israel, and Jerusalem and the Temple would once more lie waste (vs. 26, 27). Between the return from Babylon and the rejection of the Messiah, Israel was to have its second and final opportunity as a nation to cooperate with the divine plan (see Jer. 12:14-17). 'Seventy weeks' – 490 years of literal time – were 'determined' upon the Jews, 'to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness' (Dan. 9:24).

"Eventually, however, it became apparent that the Jews would never measure up to the standard God required of them, as Malachi makes evident (chs. 1:6, 12; 2:2, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17; 3:7, 13, 14; PK 705). Formal worship took the place of sincere religion (D 29; cf. John 4:23, 24; 2 Tim. 3:5). Human traditions came to be honored in place of the revealed will of God (see on Mark 7:6-9). Far from becoming the light of the world, the Jews 'shut themselves away from the world as a safeguard against being seduced into idolatry' (PK 708; see Deut. 11:26, 27; cf. Mark 7:9). In their meticulous attention to the letter of the law they lost sight of its spirit. They forgot that God abhors a multiplication of the forms of religion (Isa. 1:11-18; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:7; Mal. 2:13), and asks of man nothing 'but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly' with his God (Micah 6:8; cf. Matt. 19:16, 17; 22:36-40). Yet, in mercy, God still bore with His people, and in due time Messiah came (Mal. 3:1-3; DA 37). To the very last, 'Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him' (PK 712)."⁶

But their rejection was complete. This is occurring once again in the Christian world. The issues behind "Babylon's" failure are similar to those of the Hebrew people. Knowing the details is important. A call to come out of Babylon must be accompanied by a reason "why!" This is one reason for these studies. God's reaction to this repeated apostasy? *"And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird"* (Revelation 18:2).

Developing Lessons from that Rejection

Drawing upon the familiar agrarian life of the Jewish people, Jesus gave a convicting parable regarding "His vineyard" (Matthew 21:33-44). A landowner planted a vineyard, encircled it with a protective hedge and made a winepress and tower. It was complete, awaiting only the vintage. He put its care and management to caretakers, called husbandmen.

⁶ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 31-32.

This story was drawn from Isaiah 5:1-2. God chose a people out of this world to be trained and educated by Christ. But they turned against Him! His plaintive cry is heard: *"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it"* (Isaiah 5:4-6).

"Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man."⁷

"The priests and teachers were not faithful instructors of the people."⁸ God sent His prophets and messengers to those caretakers – but they were treated as enemies. Then the owner sent His Son. Surely they will reverence Him! He, too, was killed.

"Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. They envied Christ's beauty of character. His manner of teaching was far superior to theirs, and they dreaded His success. He remonstrated with them, unveiling their hypocrisy, and showing them the sure results of their course of action. This stirred them to madness. They smarted under the rebukes they could not silence. They hated the high standard of righteousness which Christ continually presented. They saw that His teaching was placing them where their selfishness would be uncloaked, and they determined to kill Him. They hated His example of truthfulness and piety and the elevated spirituality revealed in all He did. His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel. When they were asked to choose between Christ and Barabbas, they cried out, 'Release unto us Barabbas!' Luke 23:18. And when Pilate asked, 'What shall I do then with Jesus?' they cried fiercely, 'Let Him be crucified.' Matthew 27:22. 'Shall I crucify your King?' Pilate asked, and from the priests and rulers came the answer, 'We have no king but Caesar.' John 19:15. When Pilate washed his hands, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person,' the priests joined with the ignorant mob in declaring passionately, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' Matthew 27:24, 25."⁹

The Jewish leaders pronounced their own sentence of doom and eternal loss. As the meaning of this parable suddenly became apparent to these men (that ***they were the evil caretakers***), Jesus concluded: *"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matthew 21:43).

Jesus is about to describe a template for end-time prophecy (Matthew 24). There, He will objectively show what the final outcome is for those in rebellion – and for those who remain loyal.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 286.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-294.

He anticipates another apostasy and has already warned: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). The Jewish nation would soon become a metaphor for another group claiming to belong to God – “Babylon.” It, too, will become cursed and come to an end (Revelation 16:19). Apostasy ends in desolation – eternal loss. Prophecy matures how the whole world must face a final moral choice between God and Satan. Then there will be no turning back – all decisions will be irrevocable. The risk of being in a similar state as the Jews is high, and their example serves us as a warning.

With a heart aching in a struggle of separation, Jesus pronounced a series of curses on the nation (Matthew 23). These **woes** were related to a progressive failure over a 1500-year span of the Jewish nation. They were also Christ’s preamble to the apocalyptic messages that would shortly follow in the next chapter. They remain a warning today.

In that last temple discourse He denounced the Jewish leaders – especially the Pharisees. He concluded with these scathing words:

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33).

“Verily I say unto you, All these things [curses] shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36).

In verity a generation had just ended when the temple was burned, the city of Jerusalem destroyed and over a million people were killed by the Roman armies. The ultimate divine **end** that He had predicted of “desolation” occurred. Then another *desolation* was foretold by Christ, related to earth’s apocalyptic end (Matthew 24:15). The woes He just portrayed would be replicated for a people called “Babylon.”

It was difficult emotionally for Jesus to “depart” that day from the “central precincts” of His people – the temple. Earlier in the week He wept over Jerusalem. Now, with pathos in His voice, the rending of His heart with a “last goodbye” and knowing this “closure” would be permanent, He cried out: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you **desolate**”* (Matthew 23:37-38).

Christ’s curses were not a vague message of generalities. He outlined the core issues that mock and defy the heavenly kingdom. Looking at Luke’s record, we see even greater details presented:

- *“For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation”* (Luke 19:43-44).
- In the past, similar devastating judgments came to this nation because of apostasy. This narrative is written in future tense. Jesus conveys the **final** devastation of the Jews. They are facing their last chance to repent. A final **end** is in sight.

The Jewish people did not respond to the Messiah's eschatological warning.¹⁰ With the deepest of emotion, Jesus outlined the fearful consequences of their willful ignorance. Their curse would be twofold:

1. Against the physical city: "they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another."
2. Against the inhabitants – illustrated in its most tender portrayal: "and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee."

"Christ's words to the priests and rulers, 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate' (Matt. 23:38), had struck terror to their hearts. They affected indifference, but the question kept rising in their minds as to the import of these words. An unseen danger seemed to threaten them."¹¹ And – it eventually came.

The Temple Exit – a Paradox

"Could it be that the magnificent temple, which was the nation's glory, was soon to be a heap of ruins? The foreboding of evil was shared by the disciples, and they anxiously waited for some more definite statement from Jesus. As they passed with Him out of the temple, they called His attention to its strength and beauty. The stones of the temple were of the purest marble, of perfect whiteness, and some of them of almost fabulous size. A portion of the wall had withstood the siege by Nebuchadnezzar's army. In its perfect masonry it appeared like one solid stone dug entire from the quarry. How those mighty walls could be overthrown the disciples could not comprehend."¹²

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple" (Matthew 24:1).

This structure was a Solomon's temple "replacement," begun under a decree of Cyrus' and finished by Darius I (515 B.C. – Ezra 6:15). Herod later embellished its architecture, making it "gleaming with beauty."¹³

Though its physical marvels are now drawing the disciples' attention, the glory of God's presence ***never*** returned after its difficult departure (Ezekiel 11:22-23) in 586 B.C., just before the destruction of that first temple (predicted in Jeremiah 9:14, 9:11; Micah 3:12). ***The disciples must have wondered if this second temple demise might signal the end of the world.***

Christ's departure from this worship center did signal the last divine appeal – in the person of the Messiah – that the Jewish nation would ever have. "Slowly and regretfully Christ left forever the precincts of the temple."¹⁴

The Jewish nation was to cease being God's chosen people. Its leaders had been cursed. It is as if the disciples are saying: "Is it really that bad? Look how beautiful the temple really is!"

¹⁰ Bock, Darrell L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 1563.

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 627.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Hagner, Donald A. (quoting Josephus, 6.4.8, p. 267), *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers), vol. 33b, p. 687.

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 626.

This structure had symbolized the **moral character** of the nation. It was where God had been worshiped and honored.

This structure was renowned for its beauty and known throughout the Roman world.¹⁵ The disciples undoubtedly regarded it as a most holy site, in the world's most holy city. Cursing its leaders seemed like a curse on the temple **and** the people. Jesus does respond shortly.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple" (Matthew 24:1a).

Associating this phrase with Mark 13:1-3 suggests that His departure was an **abandonment** (cf. I Samuel 4:21-22; Jeremiah 12:7; Ezekiel 8:12, 9:9, 11:23) of all that the temple represented.¹⁶ This was shortly highlighted.

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matthew 27:50-51). It ceased to have any divine value.

They made their way across the Kidron Valley, then ascended the slopes of the Mount of Olives. From the temple mount to the Olivet heights was direct and didn't require going through Jerusalem. They were likely above the elevation of the temple and looking back when the disciples drew Jesus' attention to that edifice. But He had a different reaction!

"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" (Matthew 24:2).

If the disciples had any desire to diffuse "tension" that Jesus exhibited towards the Jewish leaders and the temple, it failed.

"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things?" (vs 2a)

This question seems rhetorical on His part. It is as though He is saying: "I want **you** to look carefully at these magnificent structures. "Are you seeing all of them?" They *had been* the ultimate symbol of God's glory (cf. Jeremiah 7:4). "There is another emotion I want you to have!"

What now follows is symbolic of the ultimate end of all apostasy – **desolation**. Repeatedly in apocalyptic messages there is a sin/transgression (abomination) that God says will provoke His wrath and terminate in **desolation** (nothing is "structurally" left).

"Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (vs 2b)

This stunning revelation, associated with the curse he gave the Pharisees with the question, *"How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"* (23:33), led the disciples again to conclude that He was referring to the very end of the world.

¹⁵ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 559.

¹⁶ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 958.

This would be the destruction of the second temple! It **must** signal the “end of the age.” Having not one stone upon another refers to total destruction and symbolizes a reversal of the building process – a “decreation” process (Haggia 2:15).¹⁷

In Luke’s narrative (19:42, 44), he notes that judgment will come because they knew not the **time** of the Messiah’s eschatological coming.¹⁸

A framework has been constructed for Jesus to now explain in greater detail earth’s **final** apocalyptic end and the special meaning that surrounding the Second Advent. In viewing the terrifying end of the Jewish nation, we discover a greater horror for the end of the world. However, in sighting that end, the consummation of redemptive hope shines with brilliance.

¹⁷ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 688.

¹⁸ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1563.

END-DRIVEN CONCERNS

“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?” (Matthew 24:3)

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately,” (vs 3)

Christ’s ominous words that the temple would be destroyed appear to have suggested to the disciples that He was referring to the eschatological judgment at the end of the world. Their heightened concern had to be delayed, however, because it was given in the hearing of a large number of people¹ – perhaps even some of the Greeks whom He had just addressed. They anxiously waited to hear more definitive statements from Jesus.²

The next scene finds Him sitting on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3), with the temple in view (Mark 13:3). It is interesting that it says the disciples came unto him “privately” (Matthew 24:3). Undoubtedly, many issues were in collision in their thinking! They wanted and needed to be alone with Him to feel free to inquire further. But Mark notes that on this occasion only four disciples (Mark 13:3) were able to make that Olivet visit.

It is uncertain as to what the disciples were fully struggling with. Christ’s ministry was coming to its end. He had predicted the passion (16:21, 17:22-23, 20:18-19). Jesus revealed that He would be the eschatological judge of humanity (7:21-23, 13:40-43, 16:27). Then the suggestion that He would be coming in power (23:39; cf. Psalm 118:26) rang in their ears. Now, suddenly, they were told that the temple was to be destroyed! The questions that follow reveal that the disciples wanted significant clarification!

Several scholars have concluded that Mark’s discourse about this event was written before 70 A.D. and Matthew’s afterwards.³ That greatly helps to clarify the distinction between the anticipated destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world settings portrayed between these two narratives. Matthew’s discourse softens the concern that the *parousia* (Second Coming) might be delayed till after 70 A.D. Though over the centuries, hope in the imminence of His return has been a key message, the anticipated signs have actually been a “delay notice.”

The destruction of the temple **was** quantifiable and heralded a distinct **end** for the Jewish people. For Matthew the *events* that Christ outlined take on a more important eschatological orientation. They have less value to Jerusalem’s apocalyptic end.

The historical **distance of time** between the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. and the yet future coming of Jesus may obscure the prophetic link between the two events. Yet, the Matthean record, associated with Luke’s details, does offer objective, sequenced information

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

² *Ibid.*, p. 627.

³ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 564 (cf. F. F. Bruce 1972, Brown 1979).

about “another future” – “another end.” That “distance” was detailed by Daniel. Jesus will even tell us to go there for deeper understanding. It has only been in the recent past that that instruction has been looked at closely.

“the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?” (vs 3b)

“Tell us, Master, explain to us **when**.” Their first question relates to **time**! This is something we must also focus on.

“**When** shall these things be?” Mark and Luke also support this introductory questioning. Such timing concerns are silver threads which bind prophecy together. Similar prophecy-based questions have been asked elsewhere: Gabriel – “**How long** shall be ...?” (Daniel 8:13); Daniel – “**How long** shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (Daniel 12:6); martyrs – “**How long**, O Lord, holy and true ...?” (Revelation 6:10a).

Without a framework of **time**, prophecy could be disposed of into irrelevance. Unless it can be objectively shown to be “present truth,” these passages have limited merit. If God only says “by and by you will see the king,” it would convey disrespect and mar mankind’s hope. God is precise, objective, and provides affirming clues to make deeper Biblical study rewarding, relevant and filled with contemporary hope. The “when” **will be answered** in amazing detail!

When?

- For the destruction of Jerusalem – within one generation (Matthew 23:36 – implied; Matthew 24:34 – specific)
- For the end of the world – Daniel was to be consulted (Matthew 24:15), which would include the Hebrew portions of chapters 8–12, where many timing prophecies are given.

“what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (vs 3)

Their two-part question appears to be asked in “one breath,” again suggesting that these men could not distinguish between the destruction of the temple and the eschatological end.⁴ Their phrase “these things” ties together Christ’s eschatological coming (23:39) and the temple destruction (24:2).

Though the question suggests that a single *sign* might herald the eschatological end, we will discover that Jesus gives two answers: one defining the end of the world, and the other, the sign of His coming.

The Greek word for the noun “coming” is *parousia*. In the Hellenistic world, it referred to the arrival of a dignitary or the manifestation of a deity.⁵ Here, it is prophetically used to refer to the **second** “coming of the Son of Man.” Jesus will use it also in His answers to the disciples

⁴ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers) 33b, p. 715, vol. 33b, p. 688.

⁵ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 962.

regarding His return! (verses 27, 37, 39). That later becomes a referenced link to Pauline end-time messages.⁶

Matthew had earlier allusions to the anticipated coming of Jesus using another word (*erchomai*), simply implying His appearance or arrival.

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” (Matthew 10:23).

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:27-28).

The other gospel writers do not use the word *parousia*. Since this Matthean narrative is oriented to after Jerusalem’s destruction, the answers to these questions are of major eschatological importance to us. The end of the world will relate to the evangelization of mankind. The sign of the Second Coming will be the appearance of “clouds” – at the *parousia*.

The questions were brief and to the point. One can only imagine that the four were seated in front of Him, sharing anticipatory curiosity and anxiety. For over three years, their Master never said anything so apocalyptic. Jewish understanding included some kind of Messianic *rescue mission* and an *earthly kingdom*. Was this what Jesus was alluding to?

Reflecting on this, expositor White collectively notes: “Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples **to study out the meaning for themselves**. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but **for those who should live in the last scenes** of this earth’s history.”⁷

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:4-5).

Before He answers their queries, He warns of deceptive claims related to end-time prophecy! Warnings of the danger of being misled occur frequently in Christ’s discourses (24:11, 24; Mark 13:5-6, 22; Luke 21:8). Advanced knowledge of falsehood and deceptive teachers alerts them to how important it is to distinguish truth from error: *“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”* (Matthew 24:25).

⁶ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 688.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

The implication is clear. The signs and end-time events will be unmistakable (Luke 17:20-37, 21:25-28). However, the end will not be “announced” by anyone claiming to be Christ, in His name,⁸ **or** that the “time” is near **without** the associated descriptive events He is about to unfold (Luke 21:8).⁹ **They** will authenticate the eschatological end that God’s true messengers give. False messiahs were a concern to the Bible writers (II Thessalonians 2:3, I John 2:26, II John 7) in the early Christian era. Why is this of last-day concern? False teachers have already come who are deceiving many (Matthew 24:1) and leading many astray, teaching “signs” that are not part of Christ’s specific end-time prophecy (Matthew 24:24).

Discernment will be needed by Christ’s followers against these false eschatological claims. The Second Advent will be preceded with unmistakable evidence (Matthew 24:27). Jesus explicitly denied that the end time would come immediately after Jerusalem’s fall. Thus, He placed a wedge of time between those two events (Luke 21:9b).¹⁰ Most scholars conclude that the setting “assumes an interval between His departure and His return.”¹¹

Perhaps the greatest purpose of Christ’s warning comes from Paul: “*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*” (II Corinthians 11:14). Satan will appear as the Christ. The protection for God’s people must come through faith in these end-time prophecies that clearly reveal this “angel” to be an imposter!

Expositor White notes: “As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: ‘Christ has come! Christ has come!’ The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is ‘the great power of God.’ Acts 8:10.”¹²

This issue is of such a magnitude that Jesus will bring it up several more times before the discourse ends. Jesus adds another caution that is important for us today:

⁸ Marshall, I. Howard, *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI – 1978), p. 763.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 766.

¹⁰ Green, Joel B.; *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 735.

¹¹ Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), vol. 2, p. 1664.

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 624-625.

“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” (Matthew 24:6).

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: (vs 6)

In the next verse a list of calamities, which introduces the time of the end, includes wars. Jesus is here making a definitive statement that “wars” **by themselves** do not constitute a sign.

Jesus echoes similar “war” expressions from the Old Testament (II Chronicles 15:6, Isaiah 19:2, Jeremiah 51:46 and Daniel 11:44).¹³ His counsel tells us that we will often hear of wars and rumors of conflict. But He puts a check on their meaning!

“for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (vs 6)

The unique wording “these things must come to pass” reveals that God’s sovereign plan is moving forward. There is a template of prophetic events that will herald the end. War is part of the human condition – but by itself, it is not an apocalyptic sign.

Luke adds the word “first” (*proton*) to the warning about war. When the special signs occur, the *time* will be clear. These “wars” are matters of concern preceding or before the final events.¹⁴

The terror of war that the Jews experienced with Jerusalem’s fall is not eschatological. But He did reveal how to escape its ravages. No Christian lost his life. That was a horrible end to their rebellion – but was not preceded by the signs Jesus will shortly give.

He now begins to fill in the eschatological details:

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7).

All civilizations throughout history have viewed major destructive events as omens from a power greater than themselves. Often they have seen them as signs of the impending end to the world. The Jewish people often saw God’s judicial wrath to their apostasy in famine (Amos 4:6-9), earthquake (4 Ezra 6:13-15, 9:3) and pestilence (4 Ezra 9:3, 13:30), often bringing some “end” to their life patterns.¹⁵ But these served as only temporary alarms to change their rebellious course.

Christ is now presenting a **unit of events** that are **collective signs** of His imminent return. Many scholars minimize the impact of their importance, citing “these have always been” (often quoting Tertullian, Apol. 40:2-3, 10, 13, 15). Many skeptical expositors even claim that all of the “natural signs” are the result of war, except perhaps earthquakes.¹⁶

However, this narrative, when reviewed with Luke’s record, is filled with critically objective data that elevates this missive! It is unique in prophetic discourses. Luke adds to this **unit** “great signs shall there be from heaven” (Luke 21:11). Contextual evidence, therefore, reveals that

¹³ Keener, *op. cit.*, p. 568.

¹⁴ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1666.

¹⁵ Keener, *op. cit.*, pp. 568-569.

¹⁶ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 963.

wars by themselves do not portend the end of the world – no matter how severe. However, when war is associated with earthquakes, famines, pestilence **and** celestial signs, they announce that the end is in sight.

Luke even emphatically notes: “**And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh**” (Luke 21:28).

When God’s people see these things **collectively commencing or beginning**, it is reason to believe Christ’s Second Coming is in sight (vs 27): “**And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**”

Some challenge Luke’s word “**begin**” (*archomenon*). However, since in Matthew 24:8 Jesus noted that these specific events were also the “**beginning**” of sorrows, evidence suggests that these do herald the **onset** of the apocalyptic events. **These signs begin the time of the end** (cf. Luke 21:8-27).¹⁷

The conclusion by some expositors that this does not imply imminence of the end turns the stunning material Christ gave into meaninglessness. Since Christ will invite us to use Daniel to complement this message, its explicit time prophecies affirm that the end is at a defined “appointed time.” Christ does not encourage us to generalize such information. Again, Luke says that it is so important that we are to “lift up your heads” “your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

“All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8).

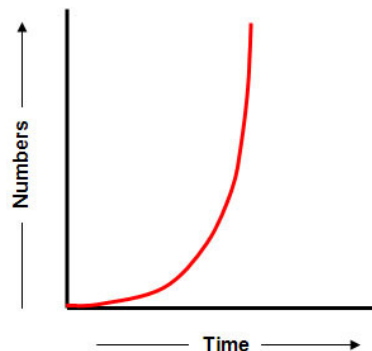
Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and celestial signs (Luke 21:11) herald the **onset** of a period of time when identifiable sorrow comes to planet earth. In verse 6 the “end is not yet.” But, here, we are told what **begins** (cf. Luke 21:28) the time of the end.

What clue might give us a signal that these collective “signs” have reached a critical mass? The next word serves as a vital signal to our end-time understanding:

“of sorrows” (vs 8)

Sorrows (*odionon*) refers to **labor pains**. The pains of a woman in labor, as a metaphor for eschatological trouble, is common in Jewish literature (Isaiah 13:8, 26:17, 66:7-8; Jeremiah 4:31, 6:24, 22:23, 30:5-6, 48:41; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9-10, 5:3; 1QH 3.7-10; 1 Enoch 62:4; 2 Esd. (4 Ezra) 4:42; Targum Ps. 18:14; Mark 13:8; John 16:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Revelation 12:2; cf. Galatians 4:19, 27).¹⁸

At the “end” of the labor pains a baby arrives. This graph illustrates how labor pains follow what is called an **exponential curve**.¹⁹



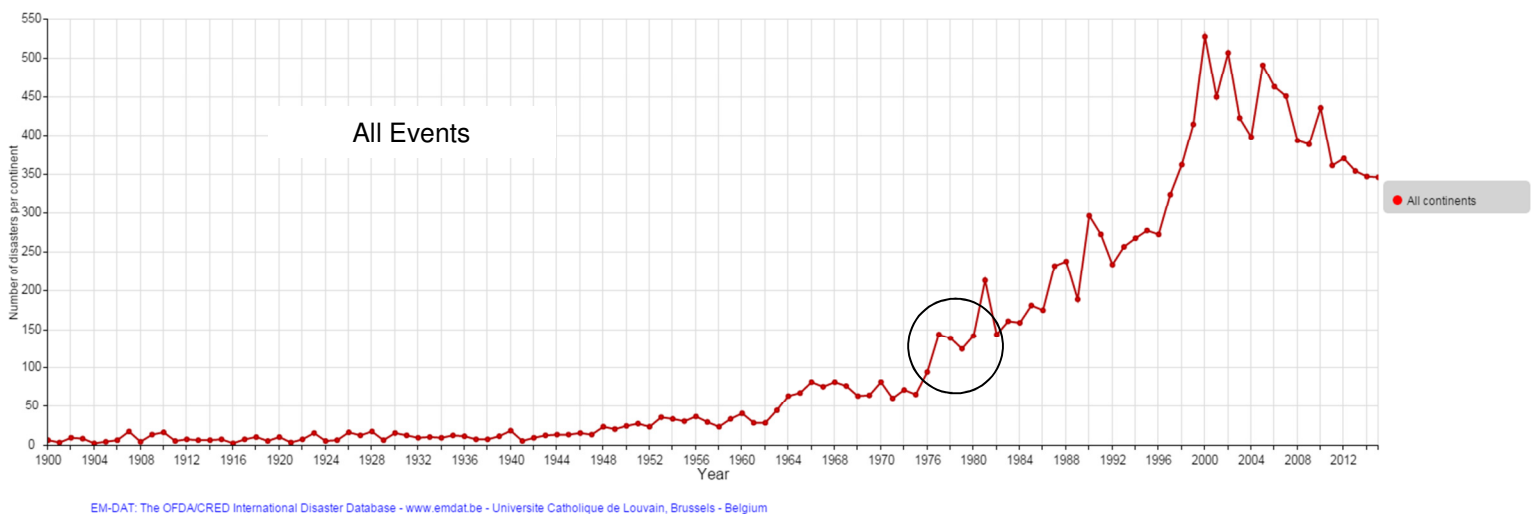
¹⁷ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 777, quoting Zahn, p. 658.

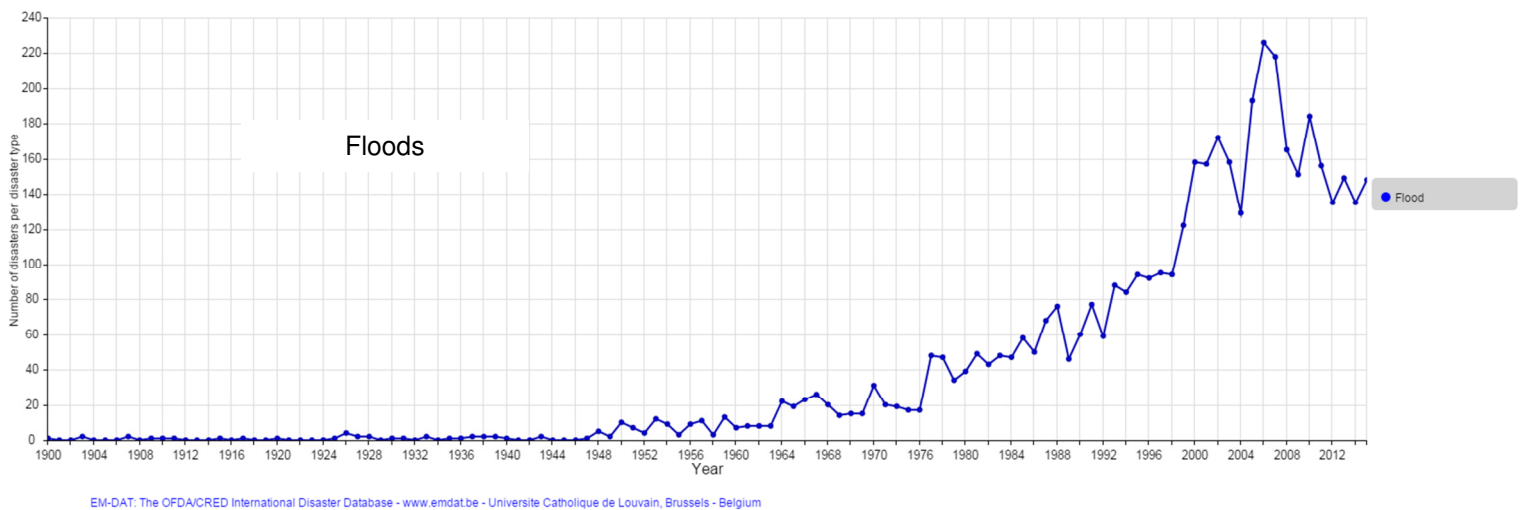
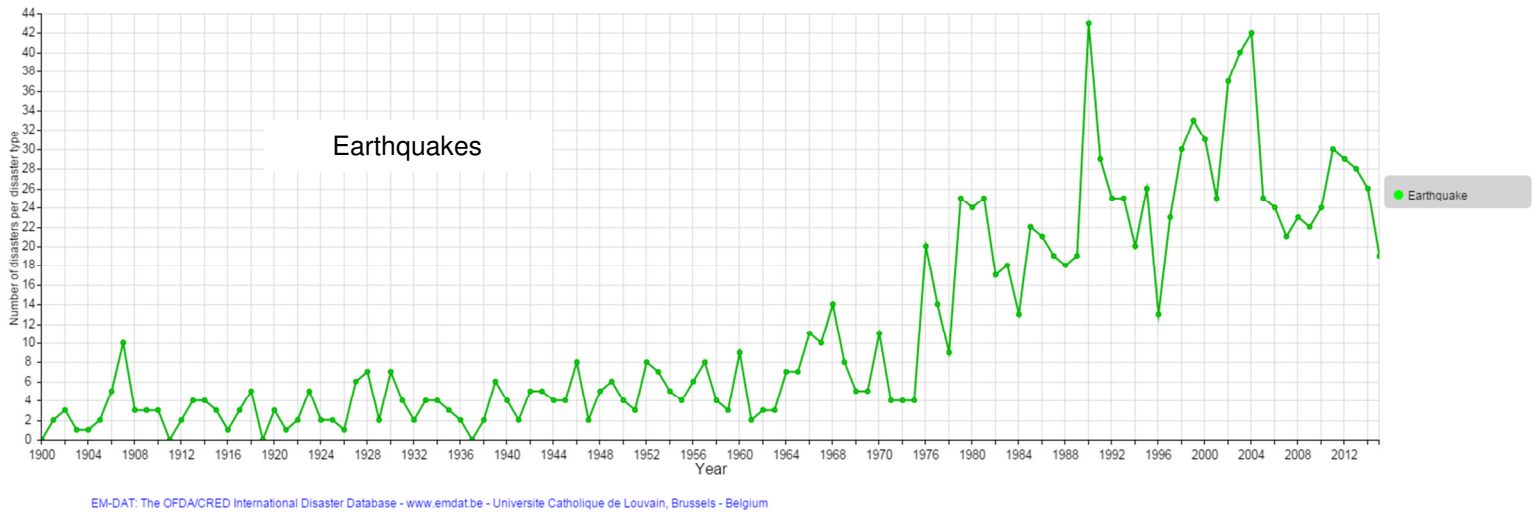
¹⁸ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 573.

¹⁹ http://geopolicraticus.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/exponential_growth.jpg?w=460

When the curve is nearly straight up, the baby comes. These signs follow that curve. When it is close to straight up, Jesus returns. From such **trends** one can mathematically ascertain **when it is significant**. Jesus said that **when** these things “begin” to come to pass, **when** we can accurately tell that a **trend pattern** has begun, **then** we have a “one generation” timing clue.

Much technical work has gone into the analysis of **natural disaster trends** by the Center for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) in Belgium since 1973. The work is housed in the School of Public Health, Catholic University of Louvain in Brussels. The data is posted at www.emdat.be. The trends that Christ collectively presented (excepting war) were established in the 1978-1980 window. Though the *number* of major disasters has recently decreased, their trend had been established. And now the *impact* of those calamities is in a significant upward trend. We are also in the upward arm of the exponential curves in the economic impact from natural disasters **and** the number of people being adversely affected by disasters. These trends are illustrated in the following graphs:





When “these things” **begin** collectively and statistically trending upward as a lady in labor, a transition in the time of the end has occurred. This refers to the “whole package” of events which begins with the calamities and includes even the wars – all combined.^{20,21}

These **trends** are acting as a signal – a sign – a notice – that the unfolding of apocalyptic prophecy has been initiated. There is grave danger that students of end-time narratives generalize messages to the point of minimization – making them of *no effect*. Prophecy is loaded with details like these:

2300-year prophecy was uniquely given to announce when God **begins** to make up His kingdom (Malachi 3:17) (from Daniel 8:14)

1929 is a year derived from Revelation 17, when a church/state **coalition begins** that will lead to global power, immediately preceding the *parousia* (Revelation 16:19, 17:1).

²⁰ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1656

²¹ Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 777.

1978–1980 is when these natural disaster trends were established. All apocalyptic prophesy is to be completed within a generation of that onset (approximately 40 years).

Significant **other** timing prophecies are within Daniel and Revelation, especially a terminal three-and-a-half-year period, ending in deliverance of God's people. We have now entered a period when there are apocalyptic clocks ticking. These issues are no longer subjective.

Why is all of this significant? Jesus said regarding the fall of Jerusalem and His Second Coming: *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"* (Matthew 24:34; cf. Luke 21:32).

This prophecy was given in 30–31 A.D. Desolation came to Jerusalem and the Hebrew people in 70 A.D. What appears to be the beginning of the eschatological signs Jesus gave? Objective trends that will end within one generation (see Appendix I – *One Generation*).

Though the term "generation" has several Biblical meanings, its use here is the time span of a single human generation qualified by the fall of Jerusalem.²² ***"The generation that sees the beginning of the end, will also experience its end."***²³ Thus, these signs are now a driving message that ***we have entered*** this ***"when"*** time issue.

²² Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 989.

²³ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1691.

HOSTILITY DURING THE PRE-ADVENT PERIOD

Introduction

Though other prophecies provide greater detail to this sequential narrative of Jesus, Matthew 24 alerts us to what event-driven sequence He views as foundational to the apocalyptic end.

It is a time of urgency, excitement and anticipation when these unfolding prophecies are fulfilled. We **are** to sense deeply His expectant coming as they are fulfilled. The imperative: *“Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”* (Luke 21:28). But God also has ominous warnings for His people, as it is the zenith of Satan’s hatred.

Thus – though our hope rises toward that glorious finale, these terminal periods of time will contain difficult *testing experiences*. Christ wants to see in His people an honest faith that can claim: *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-39). They eternally represent Him! Their characters must be holy and in an inseparable union with Jesus.

This is why the next few verses must direct our thinking to question: “Am I really ready?”

Persecution and Martyrdom

“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” (Matthew 24:9).

Persecution, hatred and even death must be endured in the last period before the eschaton.¹

“Then shall they deliver you up” (vs 9)

“Then” means the next sequenced event after the calamities have begun. “They” has no clear antecedent. It contextually suggests those who are being negatively affected by the calamities. The impact of the gospel message (vs 14) is ineffective in that group. God’s people are blamed in a similar fashion as were His priests during the draught in Elijah’s day.

“to be afflicted and kill you” (vs 9)

This time of tribulation is imbedded in many Biblical discourses (Daniel 12:1, 7; Matthew 5:11; II Timothy 3:12; Revelation 12:17, 13:12-17). Amazing parallels are drawn from the warning Christ gave to His twelve disciples when they were sent out on their first missionary tour (Matthew 10:16-39).

¹ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers), 33B, p. 693.

“Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake ... fear not them which kill the body ... He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:22, 28, 39).

There, Jesus gave assuring promises:

1. The Holy Spirit would provide the words they were to say (Matthew 10:20; cf. Luke 21:14-15).
2. Don’t fear (Matthew 10:26-28), God even knows the number of your hairs. He knows what you are going through.
3. This can bring **us** courage as we soon experience resistance and hatred while carrying the gospel truths to the world.

This persecution will be a **testing experience** for each of His witnesses.

“ye shall be hated of all nations” (vs 9)

This, again, suggests that a causative blame is leveled at God’s remnant for the disasters. Since all nations are involved, the calamities are occurring on a global scale. Since the gospel is also going to all nations (vs 14) worldwide rejection and backlash is apparent. This witness is unique. It draws attention to a specific body of believers. The reaction to the message by the majority is negative and incendiary. Satan, however, is unable to block the conversion of a “great multitude” that John says is too large to number (Revelation 7:9).

Since severe persecution of God’s people is predicted, additional promises are made:

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

Luke’s review of the same material notes: *“They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake” (Luke 21:12).*

Most Christians today avoid studying about this persecution. But God gave amazing warnings that it was to be anticipated and fully understood. The experience of Daniel’s companions and with fiery furnace (Daniel 3:21-25) gives beautiful insight into a sequel of being faithful unto death.

*“Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, **Blessed be the God** of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God” (Daniel 3:28-29).*

Persecution provides an opportunity “for testimony.”² The heartache that this brings is not permissive vengeance by God. It is a witnessing tool that often is unparalleled in effectiveness.

² Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), vol. 2, p. 1669.

Jesus provided a foundational prophecy regarding this time (Daniel 11–12):

1. It would last three and a half years (Daniel 12:7; cf. Revelation 11:2).
2. During this “appointed time” (Daniel 11:35) God’s people would be “instructing many” (Daniel 11:33).
3. It would be so effective that the antichrist would be “troubled” by what comes out of the symbolic witnessing “east” (Daniel 11:44).
4. God’s people would be specially blessed through waiting and enduring (Daniel 12:12).

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

“He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22b).

Another parallel involves the story of the red and pale horses of the second and fourth seals (Revelation 6:4, 7-8). Following the corrupt hatred of the apostate Christian world, many saints are martyred (6:9-11). But the promise is given: “white robes are given to every one of them” (Revelation 6:11). They are saved.

Defining More Clearly the Wicked

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:10).

“Then shall many be offended” (vs 10)

The “then” (*tote*) suggests a distinct sequence. God’s people are witnessing, being persecuted with that hate-filled momentum spreading throughout the world. This becomes an immediate cause for many who claimed to be Christ’s to “stumble” or be “offended.”³ This prophecy was also given long ago by Daniel: *“Some of them of understanding [God’s people] shall fall”* (Daniel 11:35). That is why the promise is often given: “But he that endures ... will be saved.”

“Betrayal of one another” (vs 10)

This initially suggests another of the heartaches from the persecution. It echoes the words of Luke: *“And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death”* (Luke 21:16). “Commitment to Christ is a costly choice that could even split a family and nullify the ties of blood.”⁴

“shall hate one another” (vs 10)

The loyalty that the saints have for Christ eventually creates from the wicked a spirit of revenge that becomes global: *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake”* (Luke 21:17). Jesus counsels His people to have patience (Luke 21:19), and assures them that “not a hair of your head” will perish (Luke 21:18). This means that nothing will occur without it being within God’s will. Endurance leads to eternal life (cf. Mark 13:13b).

³ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 965.

⁴ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1672.

Here in Matthew, the hatred and betrayal go even deeper. Another issue is also being portrayed: The wicked turn against each other.

This imagery is later embellished in the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9:1-11). The trumpets are numbered, and are thus sequenced. The first four represent the de-creation of planet earth in the first wave of God's desolating wrath. In the fifth trumpet Satan is permitted fury against planet earth for five months. He does have a major limitation: those with God's seal cannot be hurt during this time.

It is a period when Satan causes mental anguish among his own followers. They will want to commit suicide – but no deaths can occur (Revelation 9:6). Betrayal and hatred among Satan's followers will reach intense proportions. Probation's close and deliverance of God's people are in sight. This is when the wicked have King Satan controlling them (Revelation 9:11). The universe will fully see what his character is like – as he operates with few restraints.

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:11).

The danger of being misled recurs frequently throughout this discourse (24:4, 11, 24). Jesus previously warned against sign-working prophets (7:15, 22).⁵ This mirrors Paul's concern: *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders”* (II Thessalonians 2:9).

We must be fully alert to any influence that may distort truth, which could lead away from holiness, Jesus and the urgency that these eschatological messages are to bring. Falsehood would threaten the virtues of discipleship!⁶ Truth must be understood with the deepest clarity!

The basis for all this horror on mankind is now noted:

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:12).

The “iniquity abounding” means “lawlessness” or contempt for God's law, extinguishing love in man's heart. Sin becomes personified through hatred and bringing harm to others. The “flame of decency has gone out” – the heart has become cold.

A global moral crisis is being announced. The impaired love of “many” alludes to “all nations” in verse 9. The end is in sight.

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (II Timothy 3:13).

Expositor White observed:

“The very atmosphere is polluted with sin. Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. Instead of being strengthened and confirmed by opposition, threats, and abuse, they will

⁵ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 567.

⁶ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 574.

cowardly take the side of the opposers. The promise is: ‘Them that honor Me I will honor.’ Shall we be less firmly attached to God’s law because the world at large have attempted to make it void?

“When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few – this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. The nation will be on the side of the great rebel leader.”⁷

Within this apocalyptic narrative, Matthew records this promise:

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

This is an assurance that we have the possibility of reaching the end unscathed by the world’s evil.

There are those who have difficulty in identifying with the “end” (*telos* – G) in this verse. This will shortly be defined as **when** the gospel has penetrated the world. It was also graphically described in Daniel 8 and 12 as **when** evil will reach its peak. The antichrist then comes to his end and God’s people are delivered.

“Looking down through the ages to the close of time, Peter was inspired to outline conditions that would exist in the world just prior to the second coming of Christ. ‘There shall come in the last days scoffers,’ he wrote, ‘walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’ But ‘when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them.’ 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Not all, however, would be ensnared by the enemy’s devices. As the end of all things earthly should approach, there would be faithful ones able to discern the signs of the times. While a large number of professing believers would deny their faith by their works, there would be a remnant who would endure to the end.”⁸

A Sign – with Limitations

“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” (Matthew 24:14).

One of the queries the four disciples made of Jesus: What “**sign**” announces the **end** of the world? His answer relates to everyone on planet earth hearing the gospel invitation.

“When” (a timing statement) this “gospel of the kingdom” reaches the inhabited world (*oikoumene* – G), that end occurs. But Jesus **did not say** that it was an anticipatory sign!

The imagery of His kingdom had been previously developed. It is not of this world (John 18:36). It is to be established in us (Luke 17:21). Christ’s words convey that the **point** in time

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 136.

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 535-536.

when this work is complete, the end comes. All who will respond to the gospel invitation will have Christ in them (Colossians 1:27). Probation can then close.

This draws on the time when Michael will stand up (Daniel 12:1). His venue changes; a transition in history and Christ's work occurs. This echoes Jeremiah 8:20: "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*" Man's last chance to repent has passed. Everything quickly moves towards His Advent.

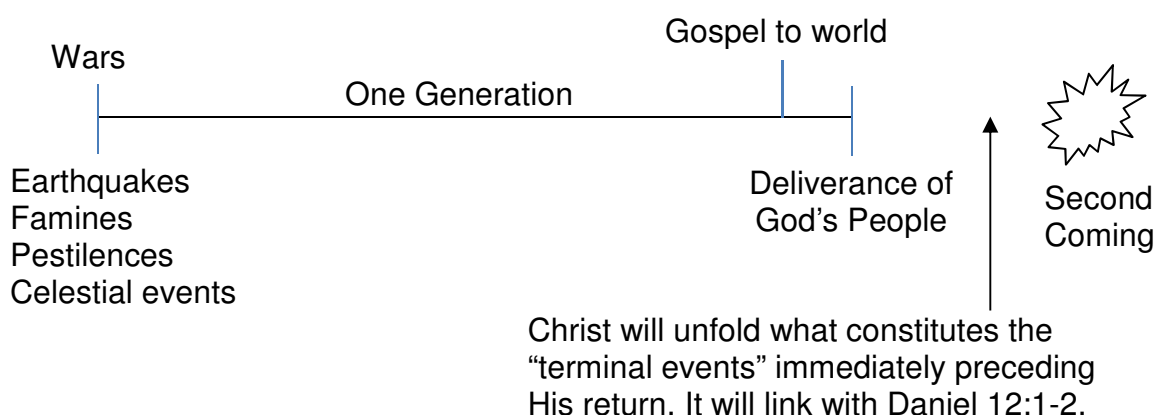
Intriguingly, thirty years after these words of Christ were spoken, Paul affirmed that the gospel had gone to all the world (Colossians 1:23; cf. Romans 1:8, 10;18; Colossians 1:5-6, 8-26). That was a literal fulfillment on a smaller scale, to be repeated at the Second Advent.⁹ Again, Jesus did not convey that this was a "sign" to man – only an end-associated event recognized by heaven (Revelation 14:15).

These prophecies have their greater or most important fulfillment at the end of the world. The future "end" is "preaching dependent" to all nations. The calamities heralded the "beginning" of the **end**. The penetration of the gospel throughout the world is a "prophetic termination" of the **end**. They **both** must complement each other at the Second Coming (*parousia*).

Jesus simply notes that the gospel penetration was associated with an end. For the Jewish people, their end occurred in 70 A.D., when Jesus predicted that no stone would be left upon another. The next few verses focus on that time. The global end would occur at the *parousia*, which Jesus soon specifically references (vs 21 on).

Jesus' claim in 24:14 does not imply that all peoples will be converted, but that the end will not come in its fullness until all have had the opportunity to embrace or reject Jesus.¹⁰

Highlighting, once again, the scope of Matthew's narrative, there is nothing intended that has predictive power. The spread of the gospel is only a statement of "universal mission" that must precede the Second Coming.¹¹



⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 498.

¹⁰ Keener, *op. cit.*, p. 572.

¹¹ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 967.

This “time” alludes to John’s pre-Advent (Revelation 14) discourse: “*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*” (Revelation 14:6).

Then a dimension is added, found nowhere else in Revelation. The message is linked with a judicial end. Don’t delay to “fear God and give glory to him for the **hour** of His judgment has come” (14:7). This references John’s invitation to measure the temple, the altar and the living worshipers (11:1). These all link together, revealing a sequenced period when God’s work will be finished (cf. Mark 13:10). Though discussed in another document, this parallels Revelation 4:1-2.

This final message is given in a “loud voice” (14:6). Everyone hears the cry and alludes to the success it will have when all will hear that final invitation and warning.

John the Baptist, at Christ’s first advent, said: “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15).

For us today the warning will be given: the hour of judgment has come and the reaping is soon to occur (Revelation 14:15).¹² “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15).

What now will follow in our Matthew 24 study will be broken into two segments:

1. Verses 15-21 – alluding mainly to the fall of Jerusalem
2. Verses 21-28 (vs 21 overlapping) – alluding mainly to the pre-advent period.

The latter is embellished and reinforced by verses 29-31, which detail apocalyptic issues related to the Second Coming.

¹² Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 534-537.

END TIME BEGINS WITH AN ABOMINATION

With the message still resonating that the **end** comes when the gospel penetrates the whole world, Matthew suddenly moves into another apocalyptic arena. Some **abomination** is going to enter the precincts of the Christian church as a pivotal warning to the saints. When its influence rises with controlling force, God's people are advised to flee, to escape its coercive supremacy (see Appendix IV). Jesus invites us to clearly identify **what** that **evil** is!

This **abomination** is not labeled as a “sign,” but it is perhaps the most dramatic issue in end-time prophecy. When it legally arrives (a Danielic report), timing periods are introduced and dramatic events begin that continue during its terrible tenure. Christ's portrayal of Jerusalem's fall links to a minor application of this evil. But, its eschatological implications threaten the very foundation of the church, which God details in great depth! We are invited to confer with Daniel, where a vast amount of information unfolds regarding this abominable “transgression.”

Many scholars (e.g., Turner, p. 576, Keener, pp. 573-575) correctly associate the abomination with the terminal antichrist. He is actually characterized in several ways in Daniel's prophecies. Jesus envisions a future desecration of His church through his leadership and apostasy that is so profound, it is central to most apocalyptic discourses! He notes: “*Whoso readeth, let him understand* (Matthew 24:15) (i.e., This is what everyone must grasp.).

“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).” (Matthew 24:15).

“When ye therefore shall see” (vs 15)

This is an interesting phrase. There is no preceding narrative that even hints as to what the abomination might be. In the previous verse an “end” (*telos*) was “featured,” unrelated to this verse.

“Therefore” (*oun* – G), in this setting, must “indicate a transition to **something new**.”¹

In our vernacular: “Moving on to another thought, whenever you see ...”

To “see” means that one can literally observe, experience or witness that the abomination is occurring!² It is a materializing **event** at a **point of time** that brings a transition into prophetic history!

What are we to “see?”

¹ *Gingrich Lexicon* (cf. John 1:22, Acts 25:1).

² *Bible Works, Frieberg Lexicon*.

“The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (vs 15)

In the next phrase, this “abomination” will be personified by standing in the Holy Place. Referencing similar statements in Daniel now becomes crucial to our interpretation. “This expression comes directly from the LXX, in the exact words of Daniel in 12:11; without definite articles in 11:31; and with the plural ... of desolations in 9:27.”³ These specific verses are, unfortunately, missing in the textual fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls – but are assumed to be the same.

Intriguingly, in Daniel 11 and 12, where the “abomination” is elucidated, a “daily” is concomitantly **taken away**.

1. The “vile person” (Daniel 11:21) has a cadre of supporters (described in military terms) who pollute the sanctuary and take away the **“daily”** (*hatamiyd*) (Daniel 11:31).
 - a. **Then** the abomination is “placed,” which God warned would lead to desolation.
 - b. “Placed” (*nathan* – H) in this setting is best translated “set up” (NET, NIV, NRSV, NAB). It has become a **legal mandate – a law**.
2. Recapitulating, at the **“time of the end”** (Daniel 12:4, 9), the **daily** will be taken away and the abomination “set up” (Daniel 12:11).
 - a. “Set up,” again, contextually has the earmark of a legal standard that has just been put into place. Christ’s calling it an “abomination” means that God hates it!
 - b. Combining chapters 11 and 12, the antichrist, initially called the “vile person” (11:21), and later “king of the north” (11:40), is identified as the force behind this spiritual travesty.

The “sin” or “behavior” that God calls abominable is described in Daniel 8:12-13 (“the transgression of desolation”)!

1. Because of a **transgression** (*bepesha* – H), truth is cast to the ground (vs 12). This is what God later calls an “abomination.”
2. This **transgression** is what leads to **desolation**.
3. Verse 11 notes that when the “daily” is taken away, the “place” or role God has in His plans for His church (sanctuary) is cast down.
4. Gabriel later observes that this sin (*bepesha*) causes God’s church (sanctuary) to be “trodden underfoot” or persecuted (Daniel 8:13; cf. Revelation 11:2).

This is identified as the one **key** rebellion that God detests, calls an abomination and decrees will lead to annihilation (desolation) of its perpetrators. What does this sin or “the transgression” (*bepesha*) allude to?

A resumé of this word was presented by Gleason J. Archer, Jr., in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, pp. 741-742. It is rebellion against God’s law, authority and covenant. This is pointedly summarized in the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue.

- Authority – He is the Creator (Exodus 20:11).

³ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference and Electronic), 33B, p. 699.

- Law – The Sabbath, within the Ten Commandments, asks us to “Remember,” “to keep” it (Exodus 20:11). Within that “holy keeping” is God’s set-aside time to recall the great meaning of “deliverance” (Deuteronomy 5:15) – physical and spiritual – to His people.
- Covenant – This sacred day is a perpetual covenant sign that total restoration of man will occur (Exodus 31:16-17).

The “imperative” by Jesus to study these issues in Daniel reveals, **for the first time**, a prophecy that clearly states the Sabbath will be an end-time issue, associated with an antichrist! Briefly, summarizing this in Daniel:

1. “Abomination”
 - a. Will be used as a controlling power by the antichrist and his followers
 - b. Will be associated with the time of the end and consummation
 - c. Is a false Sabbath that will be enforced by laws
 - d. Will cover a period of 1290 literal days
2. “Daily”
 - a. Will be removed – this represents the true Sabbath
 - b. See Appendix II (*The Daily*)
 - c. This will be one of the “acts” by an antichrist and his followers
3. Sanctuary – Temple – Church
 - a. Defiled by casting truth to the ground
 - b. The coercive arena of this apostasy infiltrates the Christian world.
 - c. God’s true church will, therefore, be wiped under the feet of the rebellious.⁴

This “movement” will be so strong that the antichrist is depicted as controlling God’s church:

*“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; **so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God**, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”* (II Thessalonians 2:3-4).

The Tarnishing Infiltration

The next phrase in Matthew 24:15 bears careful review.

The abomination will **“stand in the holy place.”**

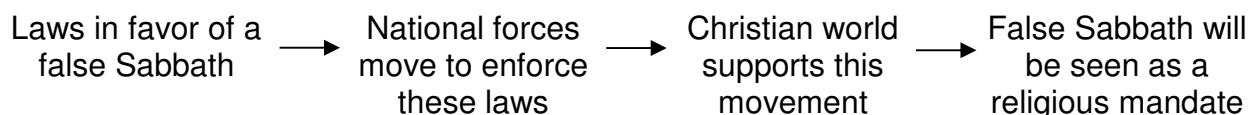
We conclude from Daniel’s prophetic narrative that the antichrist’s rebellion against the Sabbath penetrates the inner precincts of the Christian church. And that would be true. But there is more to this issue. Note this fascinating sequence:

1. When you see Jerusalem (God’s people – the Christian Community) **surrounded** with armies (forces opposing the Sabbath) (Luke 21:20)

⁴ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *End-Time Secrets of Daniel 8–12* (Christian Heritage Foundation; Lucerne Valley, CA; 2005).

2. When you see the abomination “**standing** where it ought not” (Mark 13:14)
3. When you see the abomination “**stand in** the holy place” (Matthew 24:15)
4. Finally, it takes a ruling seat in the “temple of God” (II Thessalonians 2:4)
 - “sitting” in prophecy means ruling over.⁵

This is a progressive narrative of how an alternative sabbath issue will move into the Christian precincts right at the end. Collectively and ever so briefly, tying these three gospel writers to Daniel:



The antichrist becomes the “leader,” the “head” of the Christian Church. Billy Graham noted on CNN’s Larry King Live program that Pope John Paul II was the most influential voice for morality and peace in the world in the last 100 years. This is alarming, since John Paul II and Benedict XVI have both written and spoken about laws to re-establish Sunday as a mandated worship day.

It is good that we briefly pause at this point to address an issue that controls the thinking of much of the Christian world. The desecration of the temple is interpreted by the Christian majority as referring to the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ruling 175-164 B.C.). In 167 B.C. he attacked Jerusalem and did desecrate the temple. But that was ancient history! Jesus is giving us prophecies and a narrative that are associated to the future of this prophetic discourse at the Second Coming.

Though the physical temple is to be destroyed, Jesus looks further into the future and deals with the “spiritual temple” – the body of believers. The horrors of rebellion against truth will take over its precincts. God directed Jeremiah and John to call such apostasy “Babylon.” That study, in itself, holds amazing keys to grasp end-time prophecy in Revelation.

There are **historic** illustrations of what occurs when God’s sanctuary or temple is desecrated (Psalms 74:3-7, 7; Isaiah 63:18). Israel suffered repeated judgments and religious humiliation (cf. 1 Macc. 3:45; 3 Macc. 1:29, 2:14; 2 Bar. 5:1). God often scattered His people (Deuteronomy 4:26-31; Jeremiah 29:12-14, 31:9).⁶ But at the end, eternal “desolation” occurs.

Instructive is the Jewish history, where historians considered the secular Roman ensign of an **eagle** on a pole as the premier abomination or curse (Philo Leg. Gai. pp. 209-210; Jos. Ant. 18:55-59; War 2, 169-174; 3 Macc. 1:29).⁷ It was that abomination that Jesus referred to in Jerusalem’s anticipated military fall in 70 A.D. But the desecration of the Sabbath will be a spiritual abomination or sign at the eschatological end! Thus, that “sacrilege will usher in the end of the age.”⁸

⁵ Aune, David E.; *52C World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 17–22* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas – 1997), p. 930.

⁶ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 575.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 970.

“Truth” will be cast to the ground by the abomination or transgression (Daniel 8:12). It becomes so pervasive that Mark notes that it stands where it should not. It has entered the church. The issues and powers in Revelation also show a progressive story of how the papacy surrounds, enters and finally controls Christianity. There, abominable issues and blasphemous powers are depicted as a harlot and personified through a beast – all referring to the same anti-Christian, dragon-led, apocalyptic antichrist.

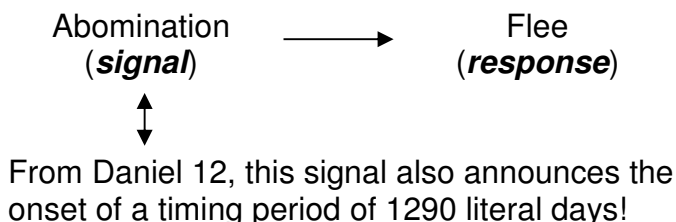
Jesus finishes this verse: **“whoso readeth, let him understand”** (vs 15).

Most expositors assume that this counsel includes a thorough analysis of Daniel. Daniel chose to write these areas which discuss the **abomination** and **desolation** (chapters 8–12) in Hebrew (most other chapters were in Aramaic). This suggests that they are of immense value to God’s people!

Matthew continues:

“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes” (Matthew 24:16-18).

When the Roman “standard” enters the precincts of Jerusalem or, at the end when the Sabbath day is attacked and a false worship day introduced as a legal mandate, “flee to the mountains.” When this **sin**, defined by heaven as an abomination, is “set up” or “put in place,” “flee.”



When the ensign or standard of Rome approached Jerusalem (two furlongs out was considered sacred), the Christians were to flee. A metaphor for the defiled Christian church at the end is “Babylon that great city” (Revelation 14:8). When this abomination has infiltrated the body of Christ (God labels it as in apostasy) – “flee.” Provocative is the note that the eagle was the Roman ensign, which was also the same banner for historic Babylon.⁹

Focusing more deeply on these symbols is the end-time warning to all the world:

“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen ... And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:2a, 4).

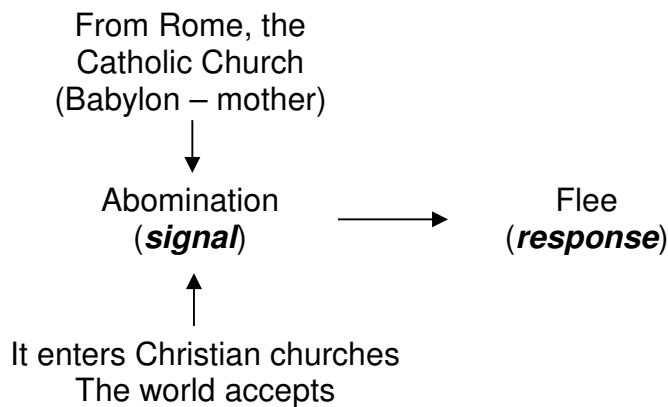
The cry to “come out” is to those still in end-time Babylon – that arena of rebellion. The imperative to those within Judea, housetops or the fields – wherever they are, whatever they are do-

⁹ http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/a-primer-to-catholic-symbolism.htm#The_Eagle_

ing – escape quickly. “Get out – flee!” God’s people will embellish that urgent appeal: “Come out of her!”

Babylon is again depicted as a “harlot” (Revelation 17), a church giving to the world the wine of her fornication (false doctrines). In her hands is a golden cup – full of those abominations (Revelation 17:4-5; cf. Hosea 4:10-19, Jeremiah 3:2-3). Riveting is the narrative in Revelation. This harlot is “sitting on seven hills,” which alludes to Rome, the “city of seven hills.”

Embellishing the previous graph:



Why the counsel to flee? Then there shall be a “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21), a great time of hatred against God’s people – but even more terrifying:

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration” (Revelation 17:6).

“In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. See Revelation 13:11-17. But to the obedient is given the promise, ‘He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.’ Isaiah 33:16. By this promise the children of God will live. When the earth shall be wasted with famine, they shall be fed. ‘They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.’ Psalm 37:19. To that time of distress the prophet Habakkuk looked forward, and his words express the faith of the church: ‘Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’ Habakkuk 3:17, 18.”¹⁰

What did Christ mean by “flee to the mountains?”

Historically, when the Roman armies first approached Jerusalem with their ensign (usually with the lead cavalry horse), Christians saw that as a signal to literally flee. Eusebius (H.E. iii, 5, 3) says that they did escape to Pella, 17 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee (east of the Jordan River). Remains of that settlement exist today.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 121-122.

The literal escape of Christians to Pella and the fall of Jerusalem create word pictures and metaphors for us to see more clearly the meaning of Babylon and its “ensign” at the end – at which time God’s true people will leave that “great city” (apostate Christianity) and escape to a place of safety.

For those Jewish Christians, the hills of Pella became a refuge. What might be the spiritual refuge or “mountains” that Christ is alluding to just before the Second Coming (*parousia*)?

In the Old Testament, mountains (hills) did have wonderful symbolic meaning.

- They represented God’s power (Psalm 121:1-2), where God dwells (Mt. Zion) (Psalm 2:6, 135:21; Isaiah 8:18; Joel 3:21), where God’s people will go for security and worship (Genesis 19:30, Isaiah 2:2-4, Ezekiel 7:16, Revelation 14:1).
- Additionally, Zion or Mount Zion represented a scripturally unique place for protection, a stronghold (II Samuel 5:7). It is where the “Lord our God” resides (Jeremiah 31:6). Zion is a mount that cannot be moved (Psalm 125:1). It is seen by Isaiah as a place of refuge (Isaiah 14:32), where God has located salvation (Isaiah 46:13)!

In this end-time period, escaping to the mountains means to **flee from Babylon** (apostate Christianity) to a place of **spiritual safety**. Go where God resides – a stronghold of God.

White **initially** made a literal application to “flee:”

“The time is not far distant when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation, in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath, will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.—5T 464.”¹¹

Symbolically, flee to the “mount of God,” a “stronghold of the Lord.” Escape to a spiritual haven, where the influence of the abomination is not apparent! Eventually, it will be necessary to literally hide as did the Jewish Christians.

“The assumption of power on the part of our nation [the United States] in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us.”¹² Escaping to secluded places in the mountains will not occur until close to the end of that final three-and-a-half-year period that Daniel so carefully describes in chapter 12.

The urgency is again depicted by the escape language from a *literal point of origin* before fleeing:

1. Judea – “open country” (likely depicting “any country” you may be in)¹³

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 465 (1885).

¹² White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 180.

¹³ Marshall, I. Howard; *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI – 1978), p. 772.

2. Housetop – relaxing at home (I Samuel 9:25-26, II Samuel 11:2, Acts 10:9) – Don't delay!
3. Fields – area remote from a house (Genesis 4:8) – “Don't even go back to your home!”

Don't delay – that terrible abomination, with its legal force, is about to come and inflict “punishment.” Get out of Babylon – escape for your physical and spiritual lives. Find a refuge away from this influence.

A PORTENTOUS TIME

We are advised, through the Olivet discourse, that when apostasy, that God calls abominable, impacts His people:

- “Flee!”
- Escape to a place of safety (spiritual and physical).
- Disassociate yourself from that “abomination,” detailed in Daniel 8–12.

Luke notes that those are “the days of vengeance” (Luke 21:22). Coercive measures against God’s people will eventually threaten their worship experience.

That time of tribulation is referred to specifically by John the Revelator:

- *“And the holy city [referring collectively to God’s people] shall they tread under foot forty and two months”* (Revelation 11:2). It will be time-limited by divine directives.
- Persecution will begin with legal enforcement of that abomination.
- The immediate Mathian context is: “Flee! The days of vengeance against God’s true people have begun.” Though Christ’s mandate suggests the possibility of escape, persecution does occur. It will be a time of great trial.

God’s command quickly moves from a strong, divine imperative to practical urgency.

“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. (Matthew 24:16-18).

- To broaden this picture, we look at Luke’s parallel record.
- *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto”* (Luke 21:20-21).

Jesus is conveying two commands to two distinct, geographically located people.

1. Those in the city (Jerusalem)
2. Those in the country (Judea)

The “abomination” that “attacks” is described in Luke as a siege against God’s people, in Mark as “infiltrating” their body and in Matthew as “taking over.”

- If you're in the country – don't go to the city
 - If you're in the city – don't go to the country
 - If in the field, don't go to the house
 - If on top of the house, don't go into it
- } Flee to the mountains
- } The imagery: Don't delay for an instant!

Luke's record suggests a focus on the literal fall of Jerusalem, Mark and Matthew have a greater concern for the end of the world.¹ The urgency is so great that there is no time to retrieve possessions or clothing (Luke 17:31).

Most scholars accept Eusebius' report (H.E. 3.5.3) that the early Christians in Jerusalem did flee to Pella in the foothills of the east Jordan Valley.



"Eusebius apparently based his opinion on Ariston of Pella (Lüdemann 1980:165-166 following A. Schlatter; Koester 1989:92) although most writers credit the *Memoirs of Hegesippus*....

"The apologist Ariston was a Judeo-Christian writer, ca. CE 150, belonging to the congregation of Pella (Baus 1990:208; Quasten 1950:195f; Koester 1989:92). Hegesippus was an orthodox writer, ca. CE 180, who traveled about collecting evidence and recording traditions with an orthodox construction thereby linking "correct" tradition and succession with order and unanimity' (Johnson 1976:53)."²

At the time of this Christian escape, Pella was apparently heavily wooded with a good supply of water. The distance from Jerusalem was 60-65 miles. It was under Greek protection, thus a haven for the Christians.³

The response of God's end-time church to the infiltration by the "abomination" will be no less urgent. There will be initial pressure against God's people (symbolized as "Jerusalem") to defy His law. That will be a warning signal that a pending "siege" and "infiltration" against our religious convictions will follow.

- Daniel relates the abomination to attempts at obliterating God's true Sabbath
- **And** concomitantly setting up a false worship day.⁴
- All these moves are enforced by laws described especially in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11.
- The Hebrew word *natan* ("set in place") is used in both verses, contextually suggesting that the abomination will become legally binding.

Scripture contains amazing details of what the church will experience at the eschatological end!

Unique Pastoral and Theological Commentary

¹ Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke*, vol. 2 (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 1678.

² <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/p/pella-flight.html>

³ Robinson, John A. T.; *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA – The Westminster Press), 1976.

⁴ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *End-Time Issues of Daniel 8 & 12* (Christian Heritage Foundation; Lucerne Valley, CA).

It could have been seen as sufficient warning for the safety of the Christian Church if this prophecy stopped at verse 18. But the next two verses bear thoughtful interest.

“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Matthew 24:19-20; cf. Luke 21:16).

This elevates the picture of God’s paternal love. Pray that the “flight” – that urgent escape – fleeing many miles – will not have to be done by a pregnant or nursing mother. The sudden abandonment of everything would be a significant stress, let alone a long journey. Pray that that won’t happen.

Mark adds, along with Matthew, the concern that this flight not be in the winter (Mark 13:18). This divine pastoral concern was meant not only for the Jewish people but for the remnant when anticipating His imminent return.

God is asking us to be prepared to respond at a moment’s notice, to abandon the satanic influences that will try to mar His church. In mercy He appeals that no earthly experience, even as close as a nursing child, will bring harm. He asks that no external event, weather, season or calamity be permitted to veer the saint from a decided move to maintain a commitment to Him. He says “pray ye.” “That’s what I want. You pray for it also.”

There is a deeper issue that Christ brings to our attention. The sign of the covenant that God has made with man is the seventh-day Sabbath (Exodus 31:16). It not only brings to remembrance God’s creative power, but His re-creative work in redemption (Deuteronomy 5:15). Honoring the Sabbath is affirming our confidence in His restoring promises.

Pray that, as you flee from the influences of Babylon, the Sabbath experience will be preserved, that the eternal beauty of that covenant relationship will remain holy and undefiled.

The intimation actually suggests “breaking the Sabbath” by a “flight” during those sacred hours. It is a firm appeal to avoid any experience that alters our relationship with heaven. Pray that nothing will impede the complete fulfillment of God’s covenant **rest** in us (Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 4:9).

The Sabbath and its great principles were not exhausted at the Cross! This prophecy is a strong reminder that Sabbath rest symbolizes our eternal bonding with Christ – our eternal marriage covenant. Pray that the redemptive work seen in the Sabbath will not be tarnished by earth’s final battle with satanic powers.

Transition Two in Christ’s Narrative

A break in prophetic thought occurred with verse 14, where the **end** comes following the global spread of the gospel.

- The intervening verses dramatize the invasion of the Christian church and its thinking by a God-defying religious apostasy.
- We were directed to Daniel 8–12 to detail its meaning and timing.
- Matthew’s narrative now transitions again.

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

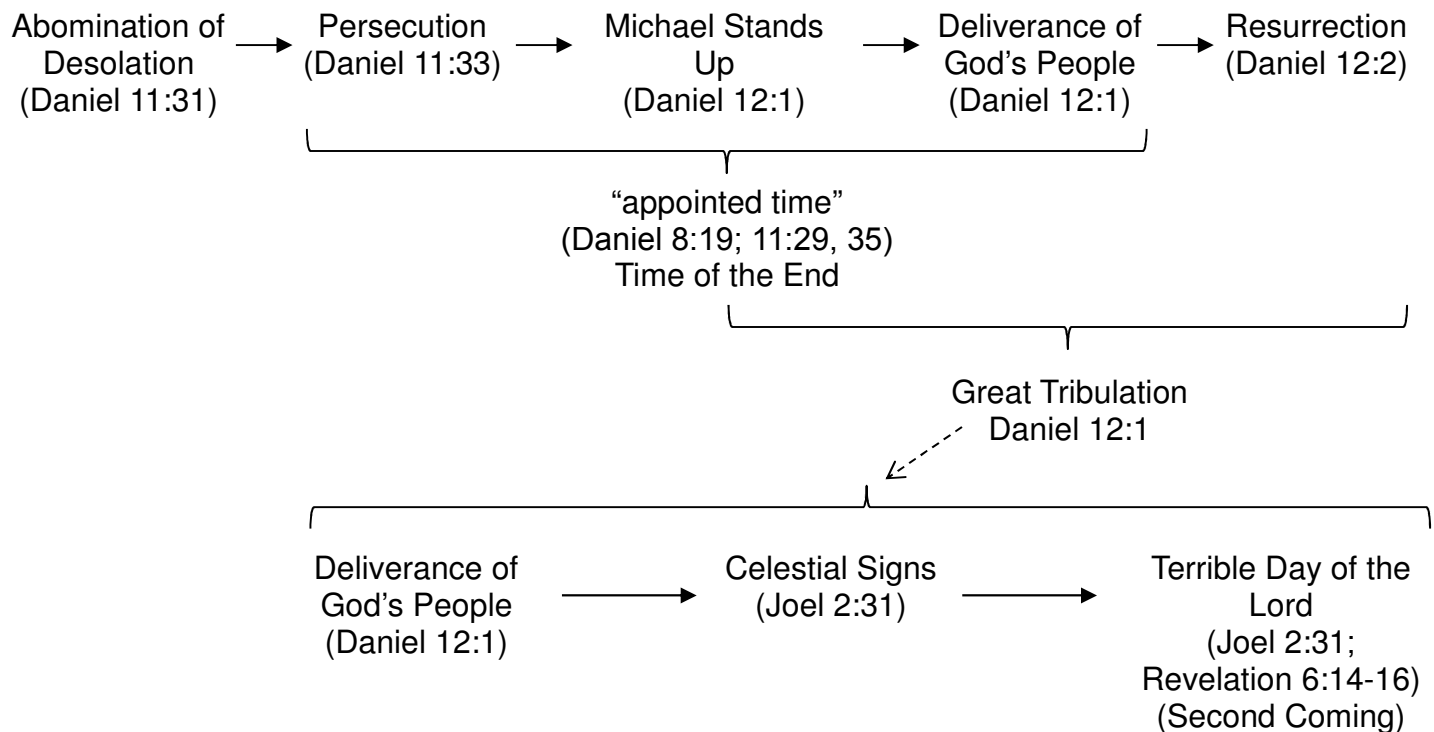
The prophetic setting is eschatological:



Later, additional details:



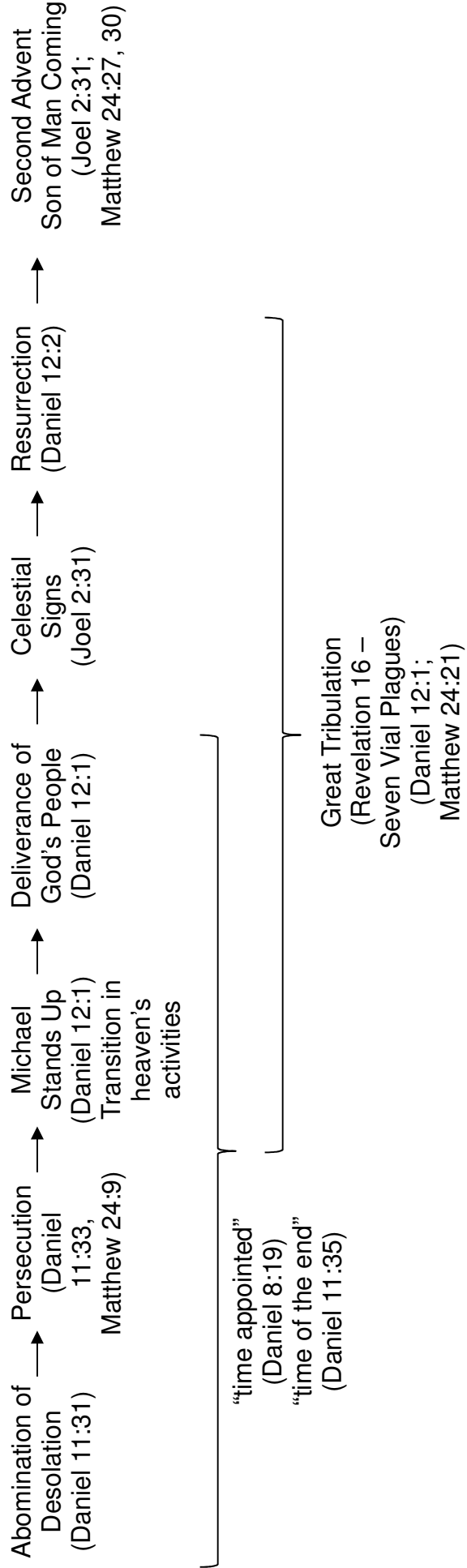
This tribulation, called the “**great** tribulation,” is distinct from the persecution previously described in 24:9. We are aided by Old Testament references to this time.



Matthew 24, with the noted Old Testament ties, is of profound significance to God’s people at the eschatological end! A sequence of end-time events can be constructed as a template for all other apocalyptic prophecy. The use of the words “world” and “never will be” in verse 21 suggests that the fall of Jerusalem is not in mind, but earth’s final end at the eschaton!⁵

⁵ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 975.

Combining these events:



“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

Many contend that God shortens the time period noted as an “appointed time” because of the tribulation. Since it is an experience of affliction not matched since creation nor will ever be duplicated (Mark 13:19-20), this is logical.

But because God’s clocks for the “appointed time” are precise and repeated as time times half, 42 months and 1260 days, it has a deeper meaning. God will limit the suffering and persecution coming on frail humanity.⁶

“The time of suffering is shortened” for the “sake of the elect” (cf. II Timothy 2:10). “Those days” takes on major significance, alluding to the “great tribulation,” the pre-eschatological “horrors.”⁷

⁶ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 976.

⁷ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers) 33B, p. 703.

DRAMA AT THE SECOND COMING

Introduction

From Matthew 24:23 through chapter 25 Christ presents assorted sketches of Second Advent issues. He does this with the clear prediction and concern that His return will be counterfeited and/or incorrectly portrayed!

- His whole discourse **began** with a warning: *“Take heed that no man deceive you”* (24:4).
- The prophecy moved through an event-filled sequence, including earth’s greatest tribulation (24:21-22).
- In the middle of that apocalyptic narrative He warned again of false teachers who would “deceive many” about those end-time events (24:11).

As Christ’s prophetic discourse nears its end, He pauses once again, with special commentary, to further describe this anticipated pre-advent “trickery.”

- The possibility of being misled is **so high** that He warns against **counterfeit claims**, even a staging of the Second Advent!

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Therefore 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” (Matthew 24:23-26).

- He enjoins everyone: “Supernatural displays and miraculous claims will be a reality.”
- At every stage of this Olivet discourse Christ cautions that one could be led astray:
 - By false Christs (24:4-5, 23-26)
 - By false prophets (24:11, 23-26)
 - By miracles (24:23-26)
- This amazing narrative reveals that these false representatives **will** appeal to the **senses** in an overpowering way.

“Modern spiritualism, resting upon the same foundation, is but a revival in a new form of the witchcraft and demon worship that God condemned and prohibited of old. It is foretold in the Scriptures, which declare that ‘in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.**’ 1 Timothy 4:1. Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, points to the special working of Satan in **spiritualism as an event to take place immediately before the second advent of Christ.** Speaking of Christ’s second coming, he declares that it is ‘after the working of Satan **with all power and signs and lying wonders.**’ 2 Thessalonians 2:9. And Peter, describing the dangers to which the church was to be exposed in the **last days**, says that as there were false prophets who led Israel into sin, so there will be false teachers, ‘who privily shall **bring in damnable heresies**, even denying the

Lord that bought them.... And many shall follow their pernicious ways.' 2 Peter 2:1, 2. Here the apostle has pointed out one of the marked characteristics of spiritualist teachers."¹

Twice Jesus uses the wording "*If any man shall say*" – then He concludes "*believe it not.*" What do they claim?

- Christ is said to be here or there (generic), in the desert (open to view) or in a secret chamber (private location).
- "*Don't believe it.*"

All these have ***one thing in common!*** Christ appearing ***ON planet earth*** in ***some location.***

Christ now becomes directive, emphatic and prophetic (24:24):

- There ***will*** arise false Christs and false prophets.
- They ***will*** exhibit great signs and wonders.
 - So impressive will these be that
 - There is a risk that the most intelligent and committed-to-God person might be deceived.

In combining verses 25 and 26c, we note:

- "*As I've shared with you before: 'believe it not.'*"
- "Contrary to all sensory evidence, rely in faith on the vast prophetic knowledge base I've given you regarding the end."
- And again, this emphatic warning: "***Go not forth***" (24:26).

Why does Jesus advise us not to even come in contact with those agencies? Why not hear them out? This was best addressed by expositor White:

"Some tamper with Spiritualism to gratify their curiosity. They have no real faith in it, and would start back with horror at the thought of being mediums; yet they place themselves in a position where Satan can exercise his power upon them. They do not mean to enter deep into this work; but they know not what they are doing. They are venturing upon forbidden ground; and the mighty destroyer considers them his lawful prey, and exercises his power upon them against their will. They have yielded their mind to his control, and he holds them captives. Nothing can deliver these ensnared souls but the power of God in answer to the earnest prayers of his faithful followers."²

A false Messiah is in view. The dynamics of Christ's warnings must become compelling truth! Fully trust in the possibility you might be deceived – because:

1. ***At a time*** of stress and trouble – and likely loss
2. A "Messiah" will appear

¹ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 686.

² White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, November 13, 1884.

3. Attracting the hearts of individuals longing for relief and tangible hope.
4. Beware!!!

“As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: ‘Christ has come! Christ has come!’ The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is ‘the great power of God.’ Acts 8:10.”³

The Real Messiah

This warning drama has now set the stage for Christ to reveal **how** the true Messiah is **to appear – to come** to earth again!

- He will not be confined to an earthly geographic location
- Not with signs and wonders, wooing the curious mind
- But in **celestial glory**

“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” (Matthew 24:27).

- Note: Jesus will pick up the prophetic narrative from verse 22 in verse 29!
- Here in this verse the Second Coming message is a distinct commentary insert to be compared to the false-Christ warnings!

Jesus portrays that His return to planet earth will be unmistakably different from any other “messianic” event.

- It will be as lightning flashing across the sky from east to the west (cf. Exodus 19:16, Isaiah 62:1, Ezekiel 43:2, Zechariah 9:14).
- *“Behold, he cometh with **clouds**; and **every eye shall see him**, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen”* (Revelation 1:7).

³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

Luke's rendition notes also that Jesus' return will be with **power and great glory** (Luke 17:24, 21:27). He comes as a unique, **regal figure**⁴ (cf. Zechariah 9:14).⁵ It will be a global event.

The word **parousia** for coming is even used by Paul (I Corinthians 15:23; I Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13) as a **specific word** usually related to Christ's **Second Coming** (cf. James 5:7–8:2, II Peter 3:4, I John 2:28).

It is crucial to observe that “signs and wonders” by themselves are inadequate to demonstrate a prophet's authenticity (Matthew 7:21, II Thessalonians 2:9, Deuteronomy 13:1-5).⁶

- But here the Messianic drama is distinctive for the *parousia* accounts.
- Christ's return will be dramatic and sky-oriented – we will **“look up!”**
- All of the false-Christ prophecies are **earth-related**.
- This suggests that Satan and his minions will be limited in their exhibition possibilities.

A Stunning Pause

“For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together” (Matthew 24:28; cf. Luke 17:37).

- Christ has come
- Then this strange, yes, morose, commentary

The word for eagles is *aetos*. Contextually, it alludes to vultures eating carrion, but is used here to symbolize an end-time event.

- Later, we are told that just before the *parousia*, God's witnesses will be killed (silenced), bringing “joy” and “celebration” to earth's wicked inhabitants (Revelation 11:9-10).
- Here in this Mathian message, God has the “last word.” The wicked will be destroyed at the Second Advent of Christ.

Though the wicked seem to have an advantage at first over the saints, at the end Christ and His followers triumph.

- The imagery puts the wicked on notice: They will lie in the open and be food for the vultures!

Even more pointed is a reminder from Paul that the brightness of Jesus' coming spells out death to the wicked.

- **“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming”** (II Thessalonians 2:8).

⁴ Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), vol. 2, p. 1686.

⁵ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers) 33B, pp. 706-707.

⁶ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 582.

- cf. ***“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb”*** (Revelation 6:15-16).

From ***persecution*** (24:9) to a time of ***great tribulation*** (24:21), it appears that Satan triumphs. Jesus is saying, “Just wait.” The final eschatological battle reveals the universal death of the wicked. The thoroughness is depicted by those vultures eating the dead bodies – symbolically depicting that nothing will be left (Luke 17:37).

- Just as Christ’s Second Coming will be visible to everyone (Revelation 1:7)
- So will be the destruction of the wicked. It will be universally seen and affirmed.⁷

This moment in time reveals when the final separation of the wheat and the tares occurs. It is ordained to occur at the *parousia*.

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30).

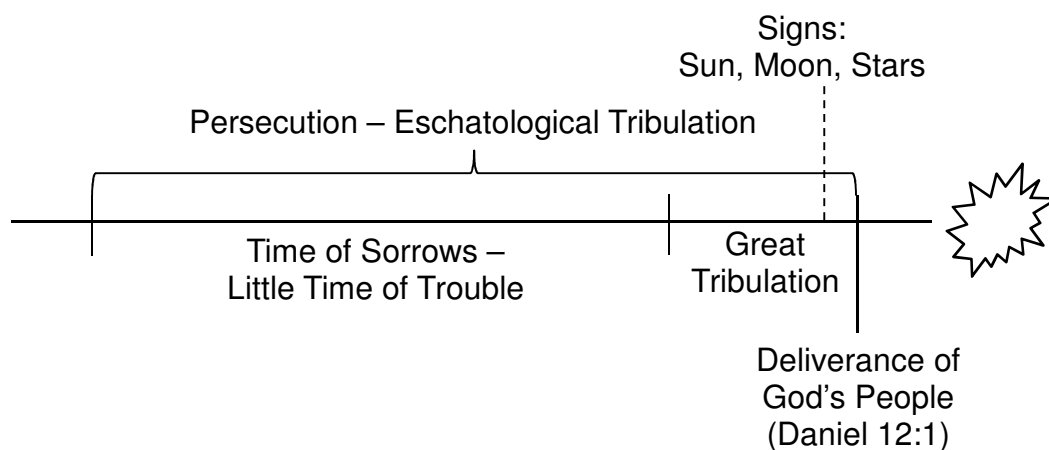
In Matthew 24:29 the final prophetic events surrounding that *parousia* are presented.

That Transition Now Begins

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man 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” (Matthew 24:29-30).

Contextually, the great tribulation (vs 21) has just come to an end. These verses provide clarifying information related to the *parousia*! Matthew is the only writer to use the words “immediately after.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 583.



The use of the word “immediately” suggests that there is no delay between the end of the great tribulation (portrayed through the seven-vial plagues – Revelation 16) and the onset of celestial signs. They occur sequentially, rapidly and just preceding Jesus’ return.

“It is very difficult to believe that the words ‘immediately after’ refers only to something general in the indeterminate future.”⁸ It is a specific time marker!

There is an antecedent, and it is found in Daniel 8, 9, 11 and 12. A general tribulation is there seen within a timing context. It ends with the deliverance of God’s people! That is also a grand finale of the great tribulation of Daniel 12:1. Thus, it is a general time of stress and great time of heartache at that night of deliverance and immediately afterwards.

- The sun becomes dark and the moon does not giving her light.
- Originally prophesied in Isaiah 13:10 (cf. Joel 2:10)
- Matthew associates these events with the *parousia* (cf. Isaiah 34:4) and the falling stars.

A parallel prophecy was revealed to John while on the island of Patmos.

- “*And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places*” (Revelation 6:12-14).
- An earthquake is introduced as occurring **at the same time** as the celestial events.

This short time period (45 days from Daniel 12⁹) sees the power of heaven shaken (Matthew 24:29).

“It is at midnight that **God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people**. The sun appears, shining in its strength. Signs and wonders follow in quick succession. The wicked

⁸ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 712.

⁹ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *Scriptures Most Important Time Prophecies* (Christian Heritage Foundation; Lucerne Valley, CA).

look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance. Everything in nature seems turned out of its course. The streams cease to flow. Dark, heavy clouds come up and clash against each other. In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying: 'It is done.' Revelation 16:17.

"That voice shakes the heavens and the earth. There is a mighty earthquake, 'such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.' Verses 17, 18. The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. ***The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea.*** Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. Mountain chains are sinking. Inhabited islands disappear....

"Thick clouds still cover the sky; yet the sun now and then breaks through, appearing like the avenging eye of Jehovah. Fierce lightnings leap from the heavens, enveloping the earth in a sheet of flame. Above the terrific roar of thunder, voices, mysterious and awful, declare the doom of the wicked. The words spoken are not comprehended by all; but they are distinctly understood by the false teachers. Those who a little before were so reckless, so boastful and defiant, so exultant in their cruelty to God's commandment-keeping people, are now overwhelmed with consternation and shuddering in fear. Their wails are heard above the sound of the elements. Demons acknowledge the deity of Christ and tremble before His power, while men are supplicating for mercy and groveling in abject terror.

"Said the prophets of old, as they beheld in holy vision the day of God: 'Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.' Isaiah 13:6. 'Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.' 'In that day a man shall cast the idols of his silver, and the idols of his gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth.' Isaiah 2:10-12, 20, 21, margin.

"Through a rift in the clouds there beams a star whose brilliancy is increased fourfold in contrast with the darkness. It speaks hope and joy to the faithful, but severity and wrath to the transgressors of God's law. Those who have sacrificed all for Christ are now secure, hidden as in the secret of the Lord's pavilion. They have been tested, and before the world and the despisers of truth they have evinced their fidelity to Him who died for them. A marvelous change has come over those who have held fast their integrity in the very face of death. They have been suddenly delivered from the dark and terrible tyranny of men transformed to demons. Their faces, so lately pale, anxious, and haggard, are now aglow with wonder, faith, and love. Their voices rise in triumphant song: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.' Psalm 46:1-3."¹⁰

Intriguingly, Peter details this event-driven period:

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 637-638.

- *“And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come” (Acts 2:19-20).*
- These celestial events announce to mankind that a dramatic end is in view.
- These celestial signs bring one to the very edge of the eschaton.
- These also represent the celebration of the celestial wedding that is occurring between the Lamb of God and His bride! We will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb!

The falling of the stars is seen elsewhere, always related to an eschatological scene (Amos 8:9, Ezekiel 32:7-8; cf. Haggai 2:6).¹¹

When He returns shortly thereafter, with dazzling brightness, the celestial celebration will peak!

Another insight filled with stunning thought: When the tribulation ceases, it will be on an Atonement Day. This is when Satan, as the scapegoat, receives all the forgiven sins of the righteous.¹² The wedding can then proceed between Christ and His church. God’s people then receive the everlasting covenant that symbolizes that their union with Him is complete!

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:7-9).

He Comes

The dramatic arrival of Jesus is now described (Matthew 24:30). The next few verses will fill in explanatory details surrounding that *parousia* or coming.

1. The universal awareness of supernatural cosmic change announces the end of the tribulation and this expected return of Jesus.
2. Distinct sequences in these apocalyptic events have been established:
 - a. Collective horrors – wars to calamities – on planet earth (Matthew 24:7-8)
 - b. Then – persecution (vs 9)
 - c. Then – universal hatred among man (vs 10)
 - d. For them – great tribulation (vs 21)
 - e. Immediately after – celestial signs (v 29)
 - f. Then – The Son of man comes (vs 30)

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man 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” (Matthew 24:30).

- This verse is a blending of Jeremiah 4:13, Daniel 7:13-14 and Zechariah 12:10, 12.¹³
- The “sign of the Son of man” is His coming on the **clouds** (Daniel 7:13, Jeremiah 4:13).

¹¹ Keener, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 640.

¹³ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 582.

- “Clouds” are presented as a recurrent motif associated with the *parousia* (Acts 1:9, 11; I Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 1:7, 11; 14:14).
- “Clouds” are prophetically associated with the movement of the Son of man.¹⁴
- The association of a figure “riding on the clouds” is often tied to the authority of God.¹⁵ (Exodus 14:20, 34:5; Numbers 10:34; Psalm 104:3; Isaiah 19:1).
- The imagery pointedly reveals comprehensive visibility at Jesus’ return. There will be no secret appearing – again highlighting the nature of the coming of a false Christ.

Lest there be any question regarding **who** this “Son of man” is, in the next verse we learn that He will send His angels to glean the harvest. This “Man” is divine, having authority to dispatch His angels to gather His elect.¹⁶

- Within this elevating narrative comes a sad thought:
- *“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”* (vs 30b).
 - There will be a point in time when all the wicked collectively realize that they are lost.
 - This verse depicts that moment.

Matthew is not alone: *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb”* (Revelation 6:15-16).

- The appearance of “great glory” is eschatological (Sib. Oracles 3.282; cf. Isaiah 40:5, 60:1-2, II Thessalonians 1:9).
- Repentance is no longer possible.
- For those who have spurned God’s last invitation, it will be a time of unparalleled anguish.

The “gathering” together of the saints is now described:

“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” (Matthew 24:31).

The “four corners” or “four winds” allude to the extreme points of the compass. They come from the whole world and include Jew and Gentile.¹⁷ The theme is universality of this gathering.

The Trumpet Call

The “great sound” of a trumpet is the signal to begin the harvesting. Such a gathering of the righteous was noted by Isaiah: *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet*

¹⁴ Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 776.

¹⁵ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1685.

¹⁶ Keener, *op. cit.*, p. 586.

¹⁷ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 714.

shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (Isaiah 27:13). The "holy mount" is Mount Zion, a symbol of where Jesus will be with the saved (Revelation 14:1-5).

Similar imagery is noted in Paul and Zechariah's writings:

- *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **trump of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first"* (I Thessalonians 4:16).
- *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trump**: for **the trumpet shall sound**, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (I Corinthians 15:52).
- *"And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall **blow the trumpet**, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south"* (Zechariah 9:14).

The picture of the last trumpet draws from the dramatic series of the seven apocalyptic trumpets.

- John notes that when the seventh trumpet angel begins to sound, the "mystery of God" will be finished (Revelation 10:7).
- Then that seventh angel sounds and the redemption issue comes to an end.
"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

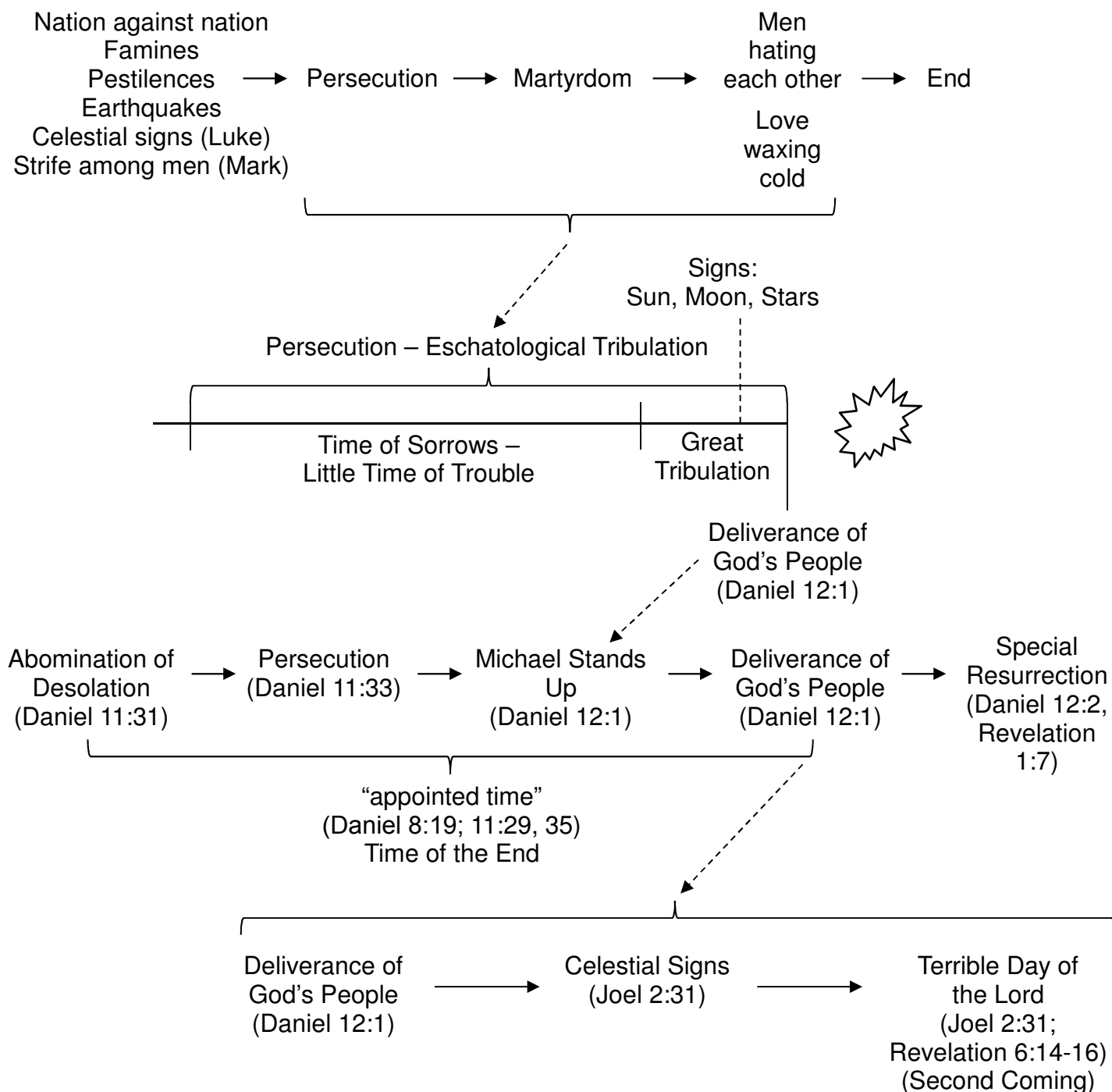
The separation of the wheat and tares, involving all humanity, has just occurred.¹⁸

¹⁸ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 583.

TIME OF THE GENTILES

Introduction

We digress initially to look at the sequences thus far developed in our study.



God's people have an escape message: "Flee!" For those who don't heed Christ's warning comes these fearful words:

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

As previously mentioned, Luke's narrative is more focused on Jerusalem's literal fall, whereas Matthew 24 leans towards the time of the Second Advent. The transition events to the advent in both applications describe the tribulation horrors. Luke notes:

- Great distress in the land (21:23), alluding to Judea.¹
- God's wrath against His people (the apostate Jews) (21:23).
- There is no narrative suggesting a shortening of the persecution (as in Matthew).
 - a. Fall by the edge of the sword (cf. Jeremiah 20:4-6, 21:7)
 - b. Led away captive (cf. Romans 7:23, II Corinthians 10:5, II Timothy 3:6).
 - c. Jerusalem will be trodden down (10:19) (Zechariah 12:3; Daniel 8:10, 13; Isaiah 63:18; Psalm 79:6; Revelation 11:2).

This tribulation period describes one of Gentile war and violence on the literal city of Jerusalem. But – it is also used as a metaphor for an end-of-time time of trouble.

When does that "Gentile" time begin? Paul gives us insight in Romans:

- *"... rather through their fall [Jewish apostasy] salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (Romans 11:11b).*
Since the fall of the Jewish nation, the opportunity for salvation for the Gentiles has been opened. It became their "time."
- *"I [Paul] am the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13b).*
- *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in**" (Romans 11:25).* At the end, everything regarding God's chosen people will become clear!

When the word "mystery" is used, it normally refers to the **end of time** in Jewish apocalyptic thinking.²

Here, and in I Corinthians 15:51, it refers to the **"end of history."**

- The "time of the Gentiles" transcends the devastation of Jerusalem's fall – and
- Extends to the eschatological end!

When the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled, this follows (part of Luke's sequence):

¹ Marshall, I. Howard, *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI – 1978), p. 773.

² Moo, Douglas J.; *The Epistle to the Romans* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI – 1996), p. 714.

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars” (Luke 21:25a).

- We suddenly return to the familiar celestial signs noted by Matthew (24:29).
- If Matthew’s sequence is preserved, then the “great tribulation” should be associated with the Second Coming.

That is exactly what is seen.

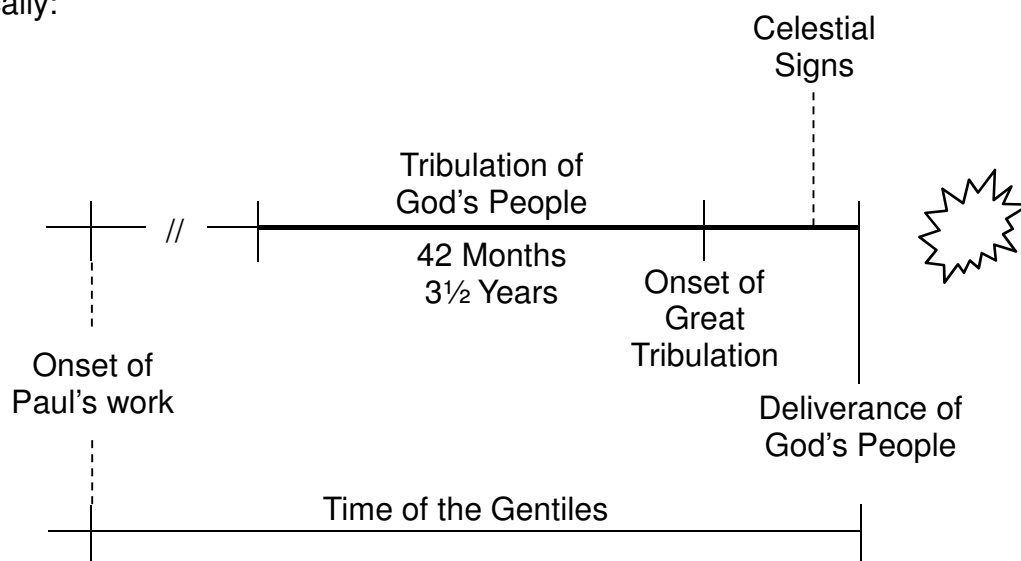
- *“And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory”* (Luke 21:25b-27; cf. Isaiah 57:20-21).
- We are once again reminded of the prophecy under Seal Six:
“And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places” (Revelation 6:13-14; cf. Isaiah 34:4). They all refer to the same time and events.

Paul also portrays this time:

- *“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven”* (Hebrews 12:26).

“It is of no little consequence that, especially when read against the background of their OT precursors, these images portend the advent of the Day of the Lord and, so, portray the coming of the Son of Man as a theophany.”³

Graphically:



³ Green, Joel B.; *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 740.

Time of the Gentiles – Looking Deeper

The word “Gentiles” had many meanings to the Hebrew people. In its wider use, it referred to non-Jewish nations or peoples.

- This thinking came especially into focus as the Israelites realized their nationhood at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:6).
- The “other nations” were seen as being apart from them (Exodus 34:10, Leviticus 18:24-25, Deuteronomy 15:6). Even the mixed multitude were placed outside the organized “camp” till the third generation.
- God would bless Israel, but those “other nations” would be blessed ***through them*** (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

That nation, chosen out of all others to bless mankind, finds responsive echoes throughout the Old Testament (I Kings 8:41-43; Isaiah 19:24-25; Jeremiah 4:2; Zechariah 8:13, 9:9-10).⁴

- But the allurements of the Gentiles led to the Jewish nation disavowing the covenant promises.
- This blurred and eventually destroyed the Jewish “peculiar people’s” mission.

When Christ came as the Messiah, He revealed that the redemptive purposes extended to all.

- Prophecy had noted that the Gentiles would also be seeking the Lord (Isaiah 11:10; Malachi 1:11; Isaiah 42:6, 49:6; Zechariah 9:9-10).
- The mission of the “seventy” (Luke 10:1) was to the “nations.”
- Jesus would bring peace to the “nations” (Matthew 21:5).

Jesus commissioned the disciples to:

- *“Go ye therefore, and teach **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew 28:19-20).
- *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the **uttermost part of the earth**”* (Acts 1:8).
 - The greater mission was to the uttermost parts of the earth – the Gentiles.
 - It wouldn’t be until then, and only then, that the end could come (Mark 13:10).

This inclusiveness led Paul to include in his Galatian letter:

- *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:28-29).

⁴ Harrison, R. K.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 697.

The “time of the Gentiles” extends to the end of God’s people being “trodden underfoot” (Revelation 11:3). Then Luke’s prophecy would be fulfilled.

- The Jewish people created an outer court in their sanctuary, which was where Gentiles could come, segregated from the worship experience of the inner court.
- It was there that Jesus met with Greeks who told Philip, “We would see Jesus” (John 12:21).
- When the Jewish nation was finally rejected by heaven, the gospel of Jesus went with fervor to the Gentiles!

The “Gentile” imagery changes in John’s apocalyptic book.

- The word “Gentiles” becomes a label for the wicked.
- *“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”* (Revelation 11:2).
- It was to be excluded in the “measuring” (judging) of the temple (its body, worshipers and leaders) (Revelation 11:1).

The distinction between judgment of the “living church” and the Gentile area reveals that God made a distinction between the wicked and those who claim His saving grace (cf. Revelation 2:9-10, 3:9).⁵

- Divine permission to persecute God’s people (those in the temple) for 42 months links many other apocalyptic prophecies to this (cf. Revelation 13:5).
- Intriguingly (though not part of this study), the sea beast (Revelation 13) and the little horn of Daniel 8 are categorized through exegetical ties to those in the outer court.
 - *“And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.... Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily [sacrifice], and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be **trodden under foot?**”* (Daniel 8:10, 13).

This means that for a time God’s people will be subject to the hatred and revenge of the “Gentiles.” That parallels Christ being delivered into the hand of sinners (Mark 9:31).⁶

- However, **their witness** will be victorious during this same period (Revelation 11:5-6).
- *“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth”* (Revelation 11:3).

The time of the Gentiles began formally when the apostles, especially Paul, started their global mission, and ends **when** this 42-month period is completed.

- The Gentiles are portrayed as the wicked, especially “Christians” in terminal apostasy (the antichrist imagery with his followers).

⁵ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 569.

⁶ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 413.

- This 42-month period is “concentrated persecution time” that precedes the eschaton.⁷

During this last phase, the measuring of God’s “temple people” sets the stage for the final sealing of the saints (Revelation 7:2-8). Those of the outer court reflect the wicked.⁸

- “Therefore no one will assign you land in the Lord’s community.” (Micah 2:5 – NET).
- They will not be protected from God’s judicial wrath nor inherit the “land” of Canaan.

Summation Thoughts

“The disciples were not endowed with the courage and fortitude of the martyrs until such grace was needed. Then the Saviour’s promise was fulfilled. When Peter and John testified before the Sanhedrin council, men ‘marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.’ Acts 4:13. Of Stephen it is written that ‘all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.’ Men ‘were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.’ Acts 6:15, 10. And Paul, writing of his own trial at the court of the Caesars, says, ‘At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me.... But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.’ 2 Timothy 4:16, 17, R. V.”⁹

“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; ... To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:23, 27).

We are in the “time of the Gentiles.” As the “appointed time” comes to a close, that period will be completed or fulfilled. It will be **then** that Christ’s Olivet prophecy terminates and the “end” comes (Matthew 24:14).

“The gospel invitation is to be given to all the world,—‘to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.’ The last message of warning and mercy is to lighten the whole earth with its glory. It is to reach all classes of men, rich and poor, high and low. As surely as this message shall be proclaimed in all the earth, so surely shall be fulfilled the prophecy given through Malachi: ‘From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.’”¹⁰

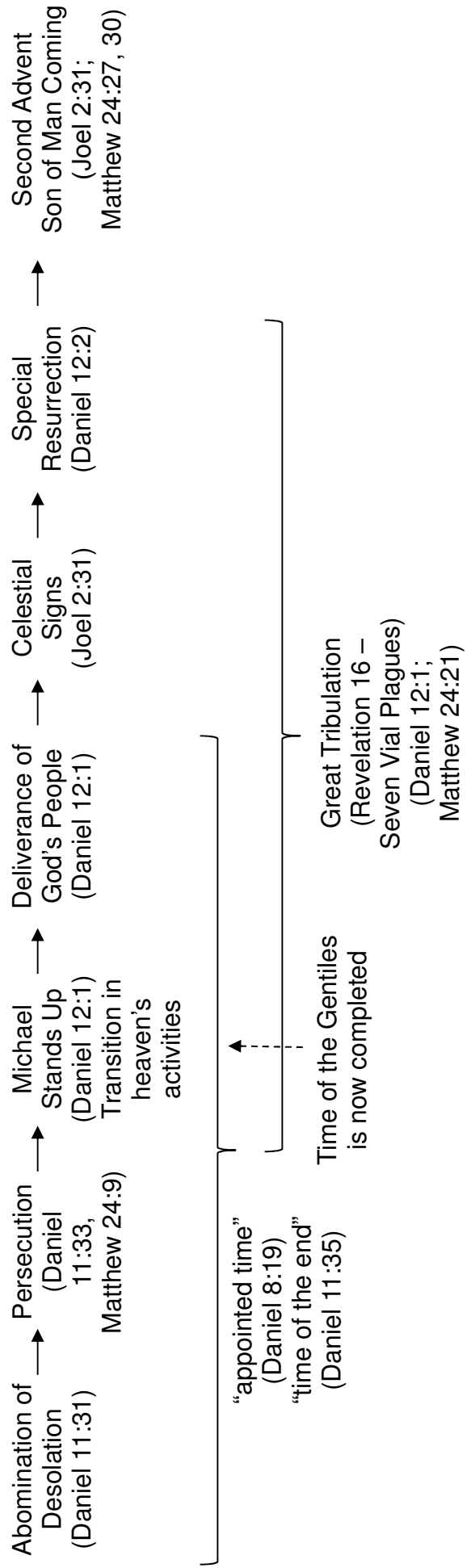
⁷ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

⁸ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 559.

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 354.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Southern Watchman*, January 10, 1905.

Summation graph:



“WHEN” YOU SHALL SEE YOU WILL KNOW

Introduction

Jesus has just finished His end-time narrative. The disciples’ questions have been answered. An end-time **template** of sequenced events was outlined. A post-tribulation Advent was riveted into the prophecy. The nature of His coming was uniquely portrayed.

Now – Christ begins to present “anchor points” to help one develop a correct eschatological perspective!

- Preterists are motivated in the coming verses to use the “one generation” **time** to justify a past fulfillment of this prophecy *only*. Matthew 24, however, describes **two** ends!
- The Second Advent has yet to occur. The 70 A.D. destruction of the temple application is now of secondary importance. The global language in the narrative suggests that Christ’s deepest interest is in **our** time.¹
- His imperative to review the abomination/desolation prophecies in Daniel, directing one to the “time of the end,” adds boldness to one’s understanding!

Jesus chose to make the **first** “anchor point” relate to time. When events occur in a distinct way, it is time for Jesus to return!

Parable of the Fig Tree

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors” (Matthew 24:32-33).

- The fig tree in Bible lands had two crops:
 - In June on old wood
 - In August/September on new wood.
- The old wood figs were a delicacy and were called the “firstripe” figs (Hosea 9:10, Micah 7:1 RSV).²
- Christ’s words are focused and accurately describe the fig crops:
 - The baby fruit buds begin to appear in February before the leaves and new wood growth.
 - The leaves and new wood appear in April and May.³

¹ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 584.

² SDABC8, Bible Dictionary, p. 348.

³ Tenney, Merrill C.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, MI – 1937), vol. 2, p. 534.

- The first crop is ready for harvest (June) after those leaves and new wood appear!

Jesus relates that new wood and leaves to His prophetic end-time events.

- When “**all** these things” are seen
- Summer – harvest time is near, right at the door.

There has been debate regarding the meaning of “**all these things**.” Since that statement might contextually include the Second Coming in His narrative (which wouldn’t be logical), scholars have concluded that this statement **must** refer to only the “preliminary signs.”⁴

- That analysis is affirmed in Luke’s record:
*“And when these things **begin** to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.... So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand”* (Luke 21:28, 31).
- Since the prophetic narrative is sequenced and covers a period of time, the **preliminary signs** of earthquakes, pestilences, famine, wars and celestial events collectively **begin** the time of the eschatological end. **When** they occur like a lady in labor (an exponential curve) (Matthew 24:8), they signal that:
 - Our redemption draws near
 - The kingdom of God is close
 - The summer harvest is about ready
 - Jesus’ coming is imminent – “**even at the doors**”
 - Those five collective signs are shown to have begun in the 1978–1980 window!

Christ then introduces another fascinating time period!

This Generation

The Master often used the phrase “this generation” (Luke 7:31, 9:41, 11:29-32, 50-51; 16:8; 17:25), signifying a “category of people who are resistant to the purpose of God.”⁵

- In Matthew’s, Mark’s and Luke’s prophetic narrative, He uses it as **a timing marker** for an apocalyptic end!
- “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be **fulfilled**” (Matthew 24:34).
- “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be **fulfilled**” (Luke 21:32).

These messages assure us that an end is certain! There, that “generation” word means everything to our study!

⁴ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 586.

⁵ Green, Joel B.; *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 742.

The Second Coming has just been presented (24:29-31). The context suggests that all will be ready for His return **within a generation** from when those signs **begin!**

“So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:31).

In Luke’s book, God’s kingdom is presented in three ways:

1. “Not yet” come – will come in the future (Luke 11:2, 14:15, 19:11)
2. It is already here (Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20; 17:21; 19:11; cf. Matthew 3:2, 10:7; Mark 1:15)
3. When the consummation or Second Coming occurs (Luke 21:28)

The latter is contextually implied in our prophecy as an “anchor point” and is beautifully described in Revelation 11:15:

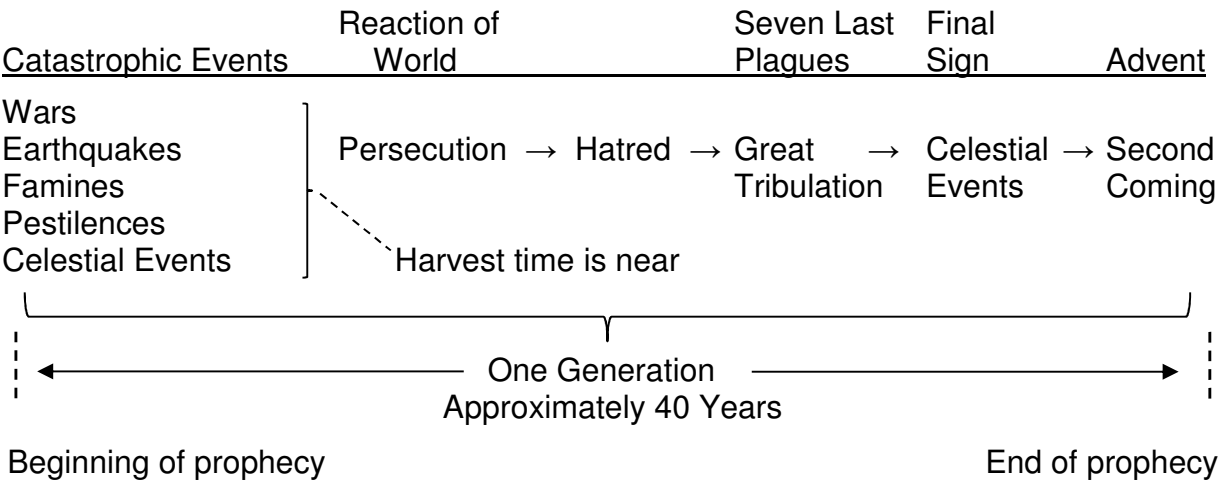
“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

Again, *Luke notes its **consummation*** in an earlier verse!

- “And when these things **begin** to come to pass” (Luke 21:28a)
- In one generation your hope will be complete.

“When” “all” these things come to pass (vv 4-28) (are **finished**) at the end of a generation – He is ready to “walk through the door.”⁶

We can construct a distinct sequence of events related to time:



An objective point in time can be made that distinctly announces this onset.

⁶ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

“this generation” – a deeper look:

“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34).

- Though the word “generation” (*genea* – G) has a range of Biblical meanings, it consistently refers to a time span of a single human generation.⁷
- This reveals that the eschaton is not “delayed” indefinitely.
- The noted events signal when this ***sequenced timetable*** begins.

The “end” comes within a ***“climactic generation.”***⁸

- Since the fall of Jerusalem occurred 40 years after Christ’s first application of this prophecy, it is felt that the same “final generation” of approximately 40 years is also associated with the Second Advent after those initial “signs.”

The fall of Jerusalem guarantees the same timing completion of the eschatological events in a climactic generation.

- Jerusalem’s destruction is a type of that end.
- ***Contextually, the generation that sees the events Jesus gave, associated with the “beginning of the end,” will experience the end!***⁹

When the signs start, the end is in sight. It does not transcend over many generations. All is accomplished in this final generation. The tribulation of 66-70 A.D., ending the initial 40 years, telescopes into the future *parousia* (Second Coming). That 40-year “climactic generation” will also end with a three-and-a-half-year period (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 11:2-3, 13:5).¹⁰

The “beginning” of the generation period is to be as distinct as the new wood and leaves of the fig tree parable!

- What ***clue*** did Jesus give to ***know*** that the sequenced events have begun?
- It would be like a lady in labor (Matthew 24:8).
 - The collective signs would be ***trending together*** and ***could be affirmed***.
 - ***It would be clear*** that the trend was firmly established.
- No cry of a delay would then be proper.

*“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this ***they willingly are ignorant***” (II Peter 3:3-5a).*

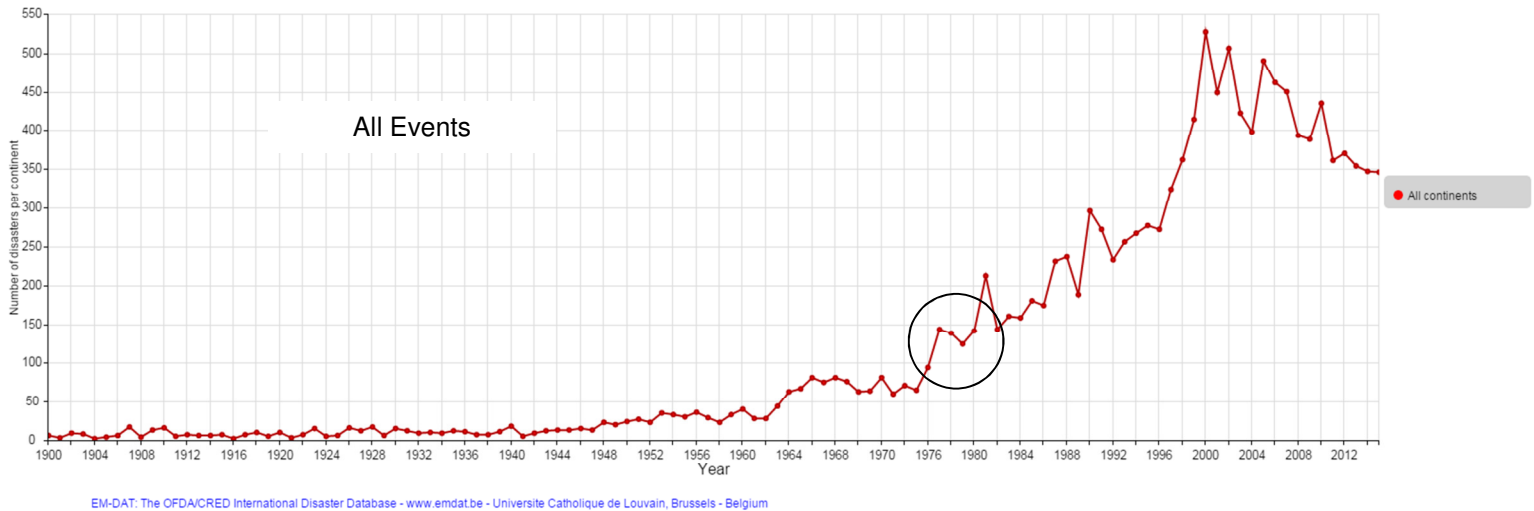
⁷ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 988-989.

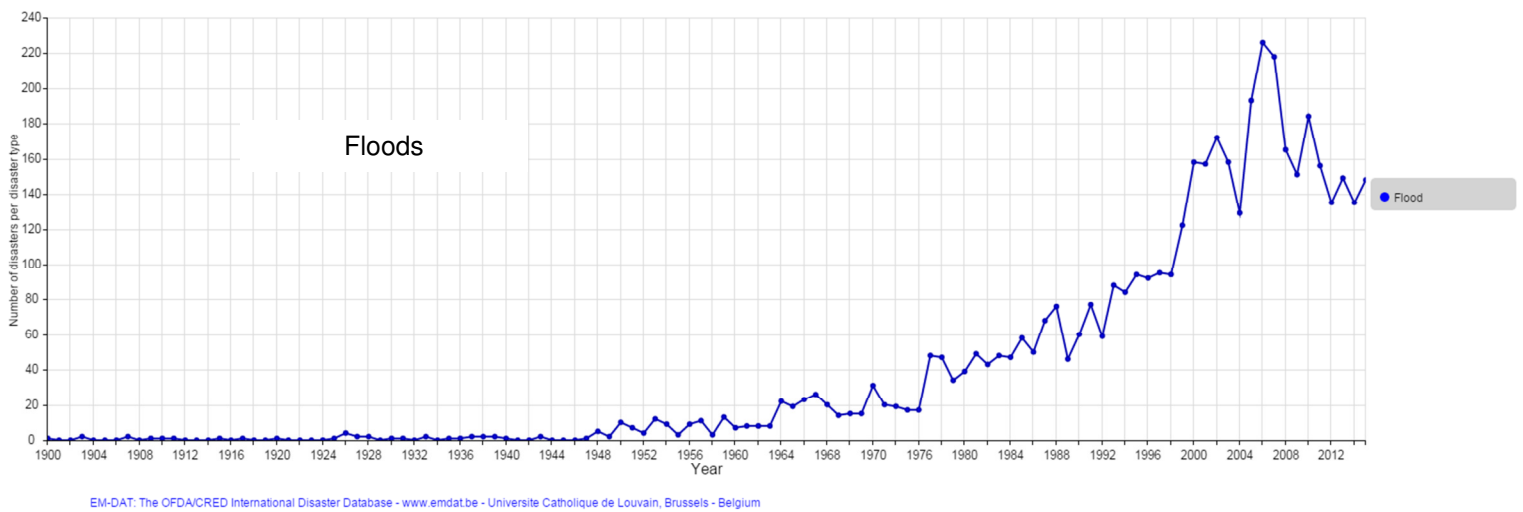
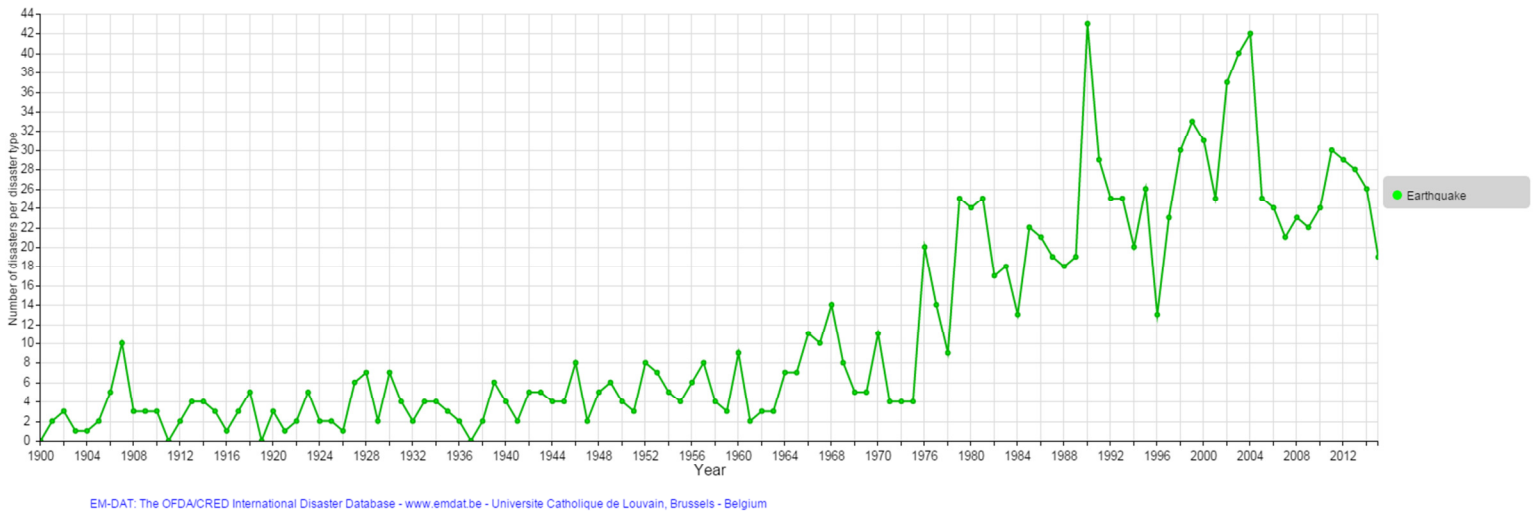
⁸ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 589.

⁹ Bock, Darrell L; *Luke*, vol. B (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI – 1996), p. 1691.

¹⁰ Keener, *op. cit.*, pp. 578, 589.

- We have reviewed this “starting point” previously!
- See Part 2 of this series.
- See also Appendix I (*One Generation*) for the greater meaning of “one generation.”





Jesus now makes a divine affirmation statement:

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

- Heaven and earth, seemingly so permanent, could end – terminate (cf. Isaiah 51:6, II Peter 3:7).
- But this prophecy – given in His own **words** – will endure forever.

This heralds a divine principle: Christ’s words in this prophecy are authoritative, precise and predictive of the future end.¹¹

- Creation is less permanent than truth (cf. Matthew 5:18, Luke 16:17).¹²
- The temporary nature of creation was observed in the Old Testament (Psalm 102:26, Isaiah 51:6, Jeremiah 4:23-26, Amos 9:8).

But this prophecy is ***firmly established***.

¹¹ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 716.

¹² Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1692.

INVITATION TO BE “CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT”

Introduction

A major transition now occurs in Christ’s amazing end-time discourse. Up to now Jesus has spoken predictively (including His referencing a segment of Daniel!) – but now He moves to teaching parenthetically.¹³

- He is not adding new prophetic information until 25:31.
- His new illustrations and counsel orient the student in how to respond to the information He has completed.

His purpose in giving the following messages is clearly to avoid misuse of that prophetic material. Yet, even today, many misuse Christ’s important explanatory illustrations!

Up to this point, Jesus has been emphasizing the nearness of His coming in the context of specific signs! That understanding is a unique key to all apocalyptic prophecy. Daniel was told that certain segments of his prophecies were for the “time of the end” (8:17; 11:35; 12:4, 9). When the events **begin** to unfold, the prophetic messages would be unsealed – understood then as present truth – and be fulfilled. John was told that Revelation’s narrative would “shortly come to pass” and that “the time is at hand” (1:1, 3). However, it must be read within the **con-text** of that prophecy **entering** future history. It wasn’t for his day. Gabriel quickly oriented his thinking by stating **when** that urgent period was: “Behold he cometh with clouds” (1:7). Thus, we are sensitized that John’s whole book is in an eschatological context (Revelation 1:1, 3 and 7 are linked together).

Another eschatological end-time “anchor point” that Christ gave relates to specific **time**. Christ had recently referenced Daniel and his narrations on the “abomination” and “desolation” issues (Matthew 24:15), which are associated with **prophetic time periods**! A 1335-day, a 1290-day and a three-and-a-half-year period are described, which terminate at the “deliverance” of God’s people (Daniel 12:1). Daniel was told that this was an “appointed time” directly related to the “time of the end” (clearly just preceding the eschaton).

- Expositor White knew this:
 “To the period just prior to the appearing of the Son of man, the prophecies of Scripture point, and here their warnings and threatenings pre-eminently apply. The **prophetic periods** of Daniel, extending to the very eve of the great consummation, throw a flood of light upon events then to transpire. The book of Revelation is also replete with warning and instruction for the last generation”¹⁴ (written in 1883).

¹³ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 587.

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1883.

- We've recently heard another distinct Mathian period: "one generation," when all the major events would be completed in approximately 40 years.
- Christ also revealed that as close as predicting the anticipated harvest season of a fig tree, one can interpret the end-time signs pointing to His return.

What now follows matures the timing prophecies Jesus wishes to present in this Olivet discourse. It should be noted that when all of these "clocks" are put together, a dramatic story of accelerated urgency is apparent – a "present truth" narrative that one must not risk missing.

Jesus now continues his Mathian discourse.

His Orientation Thoughts on "Time"

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

This verse has given many scholars anxiety. Jesus has spoken of the nearness of His return – now its timing can't seemingly be determined. This appears at first blush to be a declaration of eschatological ignorance. More problematic – even Christ appears to be pleading naivety!

There are two unfortunate reflex reactions to this verse – each tries to justify ignorance regarding its real eschatological meaning.

1. We must not focus on time since Jesus said that He didn't even know "when."
2. The ignorance of Jesus must mean a distinction between the "Son of man" and the "Son of God." The incarnation "limited his divine attributes" (cf. Philippians 2:6-8). Some even say that this implies that God withheld information from Jesus – and certainly us.

The issue: "What must be differentiated ... are the signs of the approach of the eschaton and the eschaton itself."¹⁵

- That explanation is profound!
- We are to discern those obvious signs that do point to the imminence of the end!
- But – its precise **moment** will remain a mystery.

Expositor White penetrated this understanding long ago:

- "The definite time ... [is] beyond the ken of mortals."¹⁶
- "The exact time ... is not revealed."¹⁷

Each of those statements alludes to the "day and hour" reference. Thus, one must be cautious in using this verse. "That day and hour" is specific and refers to the **exact time** of the second **return** of Jesus. That won't be known.

¹⁵ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers), vol. 33B, p. 716.

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 307 (1879).

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1889.

Since Jesus quickly inserts, “not even the angels of heaven ... but my Father only,” it suggests that the “Son of man” didn’t know also (some translations even insert this explanation).

- Jesus is not appealing to His divine nature.
- He is emphasizing that the precise day and hour is withheld from mankind – and even the angels.
- But we have already been told that it would occur within one generation of specific signs.¹⁸
- The “approach” of the eschaton is to be our emphasis!

We can know when it is even “at the doors” (Matthew 24:33). Ignorance of the timing of the end has no excuse. There is simply too much informative prophecy to neglect that orientation. The subsequent illustrations elevate this further!

Day of the Lord as the Days of Noah

Christ persistently inserts “contingency messages,” restating His end-time positions. He implies that “these are principles and facts that must not be misunderstood.” Here is another:

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 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, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37-39; cf. Luke 17:26-30).

For the majority of the earth’s inhabitants, life appears untroubled and routine. Yet – they had been warned of a pending cataclysmic end – and the opportunity for repentance had been given.

- All summons to prepare were rejected.
- Noah faithfully forewarned earth’s inhabitants of a coming omen.
- Its reality was denied. God’s messenger was not held in esteem.

The next phrase in verse 39 is critical: *“And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matthew 24:39).

They “knew not” suggests that they were not emotionally expecting that the end would arrive. They had been untroubled by Noah’s “loud cry.” It physically and cognitively took them by surprise. They had blocked the strongest convicting message that God could bring through His messenger!

“They did not know until,” suggests that those antediluvian despisers of grace would not believe danger until it was experienced. Matthew then, in a matter-of-fact portrayal, simply notes: “The flood ... took them all away.”

Failure to heed anticipatory warnings (prophecy) led to temporal and eternal loss.

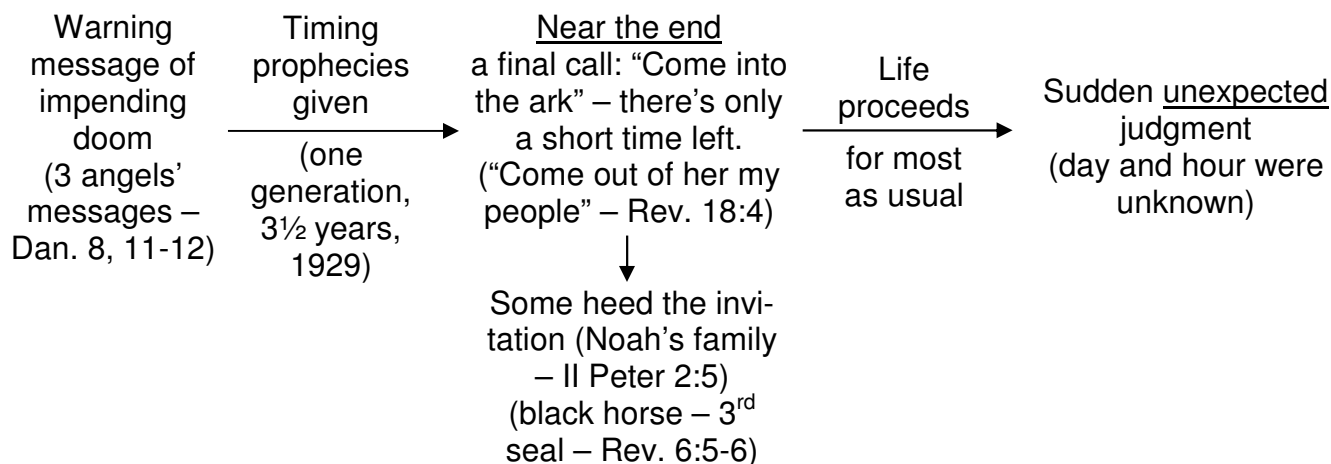
¹⁸ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 991.

There are several profound messages within this illustration:

1. Everyone was unaware of the **exact day and hour**. There was no such prophetic information.
2. The time of probation, however, was given as 120 years (Genesis 6:3).
3. The desolating message was specific – a flood on planet earth (Genesis 6:17).
4. A divinely directed preparation of food was completed for man and beast (Genesis 6:21).
5. God provided a stunning “sign” that impending doom was about to occur. The entrance of male and female animals into the ark was a supernatural event.
6. At the end there were two groups: one saved (small number), the other lost (large number).

Both Matthew and Luke conclusively state that “as the days of Noe were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be (Matthew 24:37, Luke 17:26).

Summation points:



Paul's Informative Appeal

Christians often distort the concept that Jesus will come **as** a thief in the night.

- *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (I Thessalonians 5:1-3).*
- *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (II Peter 3:10a).*

This “belief” suggests again that one is justifying ignorance. But – Paul had some additional pointed counsel for God’s people.

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep

sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (I Thessalonians 5:4-8).

The “children of the light” – those aware of end-time prophecy – will not be surprised at the arrival of end-time drama!

The timing parallels between Noah’s day and the Second Coming (*parousia*) are beautiful:

	<u>General</u>	<u>Specific</u>
Noah’s Day	120 years	Animals enter ark
Second Coming	Approx. 40 years	3½ Years – abomination laws

Luke embellishes these concerns by adding the apocalyptic story of Lot and the city of Sodom (Genesis 19:16-17). The inhabitants of that wicked city despised the divine messengers and were unprepared for the cataclysmic end.

- All these revelations show explicit timing and dramatic events that leave unexcused a lack of understanding.
- Even Noah’s entrance into the ark failed to alter the behavior of the populace.
- That final rejection freed God to bring the intended judgments.¹⁹
- *“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (II Peter 2:5).*
- *“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (II Peter 3:6).*

Despite Noah’s preaching and Lot’s appeal, their denial created a spirit of oblivious disinterest to any threat.

Illustrating Parables

There are three parables that Jesus uses to highlight His eschatological missives, adding a timing focus.²⁰

- Matthew 24:40-41 – The return of Christ is completely **unexpected**.
- Matthew 24:45-51 – The return is **sooner than expected**.
- Matthew 25:1-13 – The return occurs **later than expected**.

These address three distinct unprepared groups. We address the first here.

The First Parable Illustration

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matthew 24:40-41).

¹⁹ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 993.

²⁰ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 718.

- This story is a follow-up to verse 39, where Jesus said that they “knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.”
- They are going about their normal lives when Jesus comes with His angels to gather the elect (24:31).
- Those left behind cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them from the face of Him on the throne (Revelation 6:16-17).

This “unexpected separation” is an anticipatory alarm, a divine warning of what to expect at the Second Coming (I Corinthians 16:13; I Thessalonians 5:6; I Peter 5:8; Revelation 3:2-3, 16:15; cf. Matthew 25:31-46).²¹

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matthew 24:42).

In these illustrations (collectively Matthew 24 and Luke 17):

1. Two men in field: One saved
2. Two at grinding mill: One saved
3. Two in bed: One saved

The one left behind – a wicked person – will die. He is eternally lost.

- Many conclude that this is the “secret rapture,” a pre-tribulation coming. But Jesus nowhere alludes to such an event.
- Matthew 24:29-30 reveals a clean sequence of events, showing the *parousia* to be His coming **after** the tribulation.
- The Bible messages are distinct between the saved and the lost (Matthew 24:38-39, 13:41-42). In 24:31 there is a “gathering of the elect.” The wheat is gathered into the barn” (Matthew 3:12). The chaff is destroyed.

Perhaps most importantly is the referencing of Luke’s rendition of this. He concludes with a very interesting verse:

- *“And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together”* (Luke 17:37).
 - This recalls the vultures circling overhead in Matthew 24:28.
 - This metaphor suggests that as a vulture won’t miss a dead body –
 - Once separation occurs (cf. Matthew 25:32-33), there is no turning back.
 - The wicked will be left and will succumb to the brightness of His coming.
- This verse reflects the finality of that time.

The return of Jesus is longed for. But when He comes, the ultimate executive separation occurs. It is eternal loss for those not expecting Him!²²

The next two parables will be reviewed in the next chapter.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 720.

²² Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke*, vol. 2 (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI – 1996), p. 1440.

“POSTPONEMENT” OR “PROPHETIC WAITING?”

DELAY OR TARRYING?

Introduction

Jesus has just notified His followers of a “forever separation” risk from family and/or friends if not living expectantly for His return.

“Watch therefore” is His repeated counsel (Matthew 24:42).

- The imperative “watch” does not simply mean “looking for” but denotes “constant readiness.”¹
- This suggests an active, urgent response to Christ’s grace.
- As Jesus ends this discourse, the reason for that elevated directive is given (25:14-46; cf. I Corinthians 16:13; I Thessalonians 5:6; I Peter 5:8; Revelation 3:2-3, 16:15).

Though, by now, the eschatological issues might seem complete, Jesus chooses to illustrate further the importance of full readiness.

“But know this, that if the goodman 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.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:43-44; cf. Luke 12:39-40).

It is easy to miss Christ’s “punch line.”

- A homeowner experienced a break-in – but that is not the focus – it was anticipated:
 - If he had known **when** (which three-hour watch) that would have occurred,² he would have been prepared to deal with this “intruder.”
 - But – he didn’t know – he was surprised.
 - The assumption is made that a robbery would occur sometime that night – but which “block of time” was unknown. That theft led to loss (implied).

The imagery simulates concern relative to Christ’s Second Coming.

- You know He is returning – He is to physically break into planet earth’s domain.
- Prophecy permits one to know **when** it is very near.
- Since the actual hour (which segment of time) is unknown – continual “watching” – “being always ready” is vital!

¹ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers), vol. 33B, p. 720.

² Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 995.

- **Or else** – He will come like a thief in the night and one would be lost (cf. I Thessalonians 5:2; II Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3, 16:15).

The heartaches of being forever lost are once again intimated.

In the previous separation illustration the individual left behind will never see his friend/family member again. Here, the homeowner could have watched. He wasn't willing to be constantly "on guard." *It was too time or effort intensive.* He will never see heaven.

The implied message goes deeper: He might not know the exact time – but all "anticipatory evidence" would have helped him know that it was imminent. He could have been ready!

Jesus Presses the Issue Further

Another homeowner/master/householder – obviously wealthy – had slaves/stewards.

He puts one of them in charge of meal preparation (general provision – Psalm 104:27) for his servants. Then He asks a rhetorical question:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" (Matthew 24:45; cf. Luke 12:42-46).

- Who then do you think the master considers faithful/wise/thoughtful enough to be in charge of His place?
- He asks this that we might assume it could even be us.

Intriguingly, what Christ has taught to this point (in the whole apocalyptic narrative) was generally for everyone. Now – He is addressing the leaders, the ministers, the teachers, His witnesses! His concern echoes the failure of the Jewish leaders (Matthew 23).

- Those spiritually "in charge" have greater responsibility than anyone to finish the gospel work at the end (Luke 12:41-42, Hosea 4:6-9, James 3:1, I Peter 5:1-4).
- Perhaps more specifically, He is alluding to the eschatological church (Matthew 25:2, 4, 8; cf. I Corinthians 4:1, Titus 1:7, I Peter 4:10, I Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 3:2, Colossians 1:25).
- *"Who do you think I will choose to help me at the close of history?"*

The steward's faithfulness doesn't relate to his "power" – but his service.³ What service do you think the Master really wants?

- He defined that faithfulness by his care of others.⁴ Luke even defines him as a "ruler," intimating the award of great responsibility.
- The spirit of caring brings honor to the master of the house.

³ Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke*, vol. 2 (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI – 1996), pp. 1178-1179.

⁴ Green, Joel B.; *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 505.

The Faithful Servant

Christ now presents ways that the good steward might respond. This is especially oriented to us at the end.

“Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods” (Matthew 24:46-47).

- The ruler who is faithful to his leadership commission pleases the Master.
- A blessing is given him by granting **greater authority** within his household – His “kingdom” (Matthew 13:43, 16:27, 19:28-29, 25:21, 23, 29, 34).
- When the Master returns unexpectedly, the ruler’s service continued unchanged, still completely reliable.

“The moment of truth is when the master comes.”⁵ Then the loyal service to the master moves from being temporary to permanent (eternal).⁶

- He will even give him a share in his own power and wealth.⁷

The Loyal Servant (Summary):

- Follows the Master’s directives/commission carefully
- Watches for His return
- Is always prepared for that event
- Cares for the needs of others – those he shepherds
- Waited and didn’t label that a time of “delay!”

He is rewarded with “more” authority when the Master returns

The Unfaithful Servant

Lest there be any misunderstanding of Christ’s lessons – he moves from a positive analogy to a negative case in point:

“But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ...”
(Matthew 24:48; cf. Luke 12:45-46, 21:34-36).

- This introduces significant eschatological warning.
- Clearly this evil steward is not concerned about his master’s return. Through this allegory Jesus addresses the “**delay**” issue!

*“My Lord **delayeth** his coming”* (cf. Ezekiel 12:22, Habakkuk 2:2-3, II Peter 3:4).

⁵ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 998 (emphasis supplied).

⁶ Marshall, I. Howard, *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI – 1978), p. 541.

⁷ Schweizer, E.; *The Good News According to Luke*, (translated by D. E. Green, Atlanta: John Knox – 1984:213-214), as quoted by Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1180.

Was Jesus preparing His disciples for a **long interval** until His coming, was He reinforcing constant watchfulness while **awaiting** His anticipated return or was He addressing our spirit of anticipated hope?

- The consistent imagery in Christ's discourse always invites a **sense of imminence**.
- Yet the issue of a perceived "tarrying time" cannot be avoided.
- From the amazing prophecies in Revelation there is a unique narrative that addresses our "waiting" understanding:
 1. "And swore by the one who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, and the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, **"There will be no more delay!"**" (Revelation 10:6 – NET) (immediate future implied).
 2. The revealed eschatological signs have culminated to a point in time when Jesus can emphasize that the last prophetic period is about to begin.
 3. Shortly, **the waiting time for that terminal prophecy would end** (addressed as a "delay" in this translation).
 4. Contextually, He announces the **pending onset** of a final three and a half years (42 months – 1260 days) (Revelation 11:2-3).
 5. At its end (both cover the same period) the saints/witnesses hear "a great voice" – "Come up hither" (11:12).
 6. Shortly thereafter Christ's eternal kingdom has begun and the 24 redeemed elders sing His praise (11:13-18).

The end of time was not "put off" (the most common intimation of a "delay") – but a "tarrying time," a "waiting time" within the prophecy, was almost ended! *"There will [soon] be no more delay [wait]"* (10:6 – last part – NIV).

- A tarrying time is **part of** the "prophetic structural plan" within God's future narratives.
- That **"wait"** is contextually expected.
- It is not to be "promoted" as God putting off His plans. That might lead to careless living.
- It is not a postponement of prophecy.

Contextually, that spirit would foster:

- "My master is taking his time to return."
- "I, therefore, have time to 'let my hair down.'"⁸
- "I will have time later to get ready."

"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming;" (Matthew 24:48).

The setting of this verse surrounds the little Greek word *ean*, which means "if." Jesus has just been describing a good servant with a sudden switch to an evil servant. The latter is still the head of other servants. But through this "putting off" spirit:

⁸ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 999.

- He abuses those under his charge.
- But – he insultingly still calls his master “My Lord.”
- He is also careless in his personal life.

Any neglectful thought or lifestyle that suggests there is still time to change is fatal. When the master returns, judgment comes to this servant. The subliminal warning is to ***never function*** as though the coming of Jesus is ***postponed!***

Does that mean it could be “put off?” No! God works on precise timing schedules. It is important to note that Jesus gave this parable after telling us ***timing prophecies*** and ***events*** that would inform us that “His coming is near.” The “how” and “when” are open information. ***A spirit of postponement is a denial of expectant prophecy.***

Peter, reflecting on truth that had already been “*spoken before by the holy prophets, and ... of us the apostles,*” said: “*Knowing this first [the foundational principle], that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?*” (II Peter 3:3-4).

- These scoffers ***concluded*** that Jesus’ coming was “put off” – “delayed.”
- Scoffers also include those who marginalize end-time issues.

The imagery states that those who declare “the Lord delays His coming” are sinners! Then God makes the profound observation that deity operates within its own timing sphere: “*A day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day*” (vs 8). He can do as He pleases with time.

- ***Yet, through prophecy, He reminds us that He has entered our timing realm – and that can be predictably understood.***

To the godly, Paul provides the context of how God’s timing occurs: “*For yet a little while [a small space of time] and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*” (Hebrews 10:37). The anticipated wait will be over when the tarrying time ends.

Soon, He’ll return. Most conclude that “soon” could be years or it could be one day. But, again, Jesus does not operate in the sphere of the vague. There is specific timing information that He gave, found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. He outlined two distinct ends of time that we are to focus on – one for the Jewish people within the apostles’ day and one for the end of the world at the Second Advent. They are spelled out with great detail.

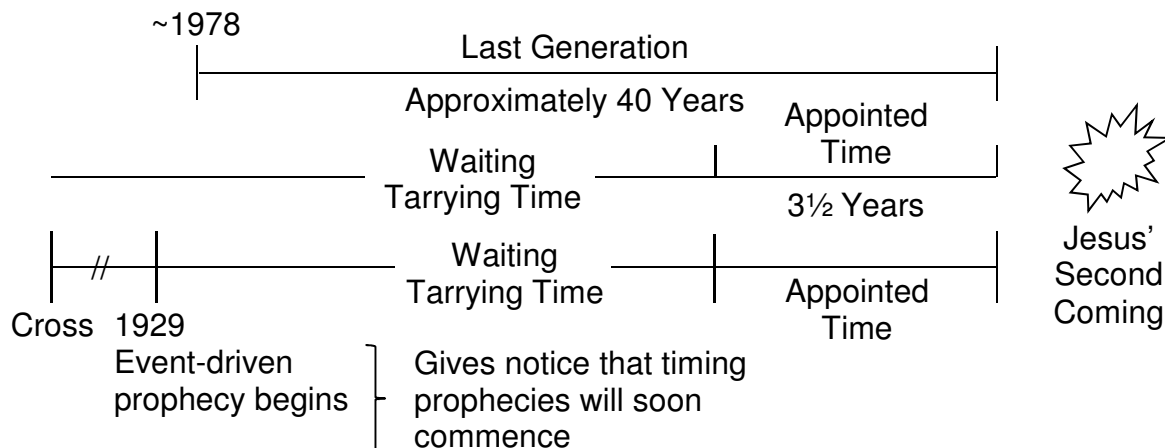
For the *end of time era* the “rest of the story” is found in Daniel (Matthew 24:15). Jesus stipulates that those end-time prophecies would each be fulfilled within one generation – or – around 40 years (which we are now in). In addition, he completes redemptive history 6000 years after Adam and Eve’s fall. That is expectant!

When Jesus told the inquiring disciples that “*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath in his own power*” (Acts 1:7):

- He never said it was going to be delayed.
- Nor did He say it would come with mystical suddenness.
- Nor did He say it would never be known.

Jesus already gave detailed signs related to when it could be declared that “the season” has arrived, “*even at the door.*” The “*beginning of sorrows*” became the signal for the “official onset” of the timed end-time prophecies. The February, 1929, Lateran Treaty began an “event-driven notice” that final timing periods could soon be anticipated (key observation)!

What then did Jesus allude to in Acts 1:7? This is vital to grasp! Looking forward in time, one cannot predict when the consummation of events will begin – that was in the Father’s hand. But – ***when the predicted developments do begin to occur***, it’s going to happen within revealed timing prophecies. When looking at Daniel, God’s timing refinements reveal a terminal three-and-a-half year, *appointed-time* setting!



Within the timing structure of those prophecies there are built-in *waiting periods*. God does not want us to call them delays! He has given us permission to call them ***tarrying times***.

There are ***many*** tarrying times, such as:

1. Between the two end times noted in Matthew 24
2. *Within* the timing of one generation to the three-and-a-half-year appointed time
3. Before all prophetic times that still must be completed

A notable example of this was recorded by Habakkuk: “*And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: **though it tarry**, wait for it; because it will surely come, **it will not tarry***” (Habakkuk 2:2-3).

The vision is tarrying – the prophecy has a built-in wait before its fulfillment. But wait for it, it really will come to pass, and then it won’t appear to tarry any longer. Thus a specific prophecy can tarry *within* the greater framework of God’s fixed time. There simply are times when we must “wait” them out.

We will see this principle unfold in the parable of the ten virgins.

That evil servant’s reaction to his assumed “***postponement:***”

“And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;”
(Matthew 24:49).

- The “delay” notice was from a wicked heart: “saying in his heart.”
- That expression is characteristic of those who oppose the divine purpose.
- That “conviction” led to horrible loss.
- The issue for this evil servant was more an “absence” problem than a “delay” excuse.⁹
- Risk?

“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, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:50-51).

- To the unrepentant, Christ’s coming will be as a thief.
- To the “children of light,” it will be expected (I Thessalonians 5:5-7).

Those leaders who exploit the flock for their own selfish interest will be damned (II Peter 2:3, Micah 3:11-12, I Timothy 6:5).

- The final end is horror – a night that never again sees a dawn.
- The evil servant was depicted as living carelessly and
- Reacting violently to those under his charge

In a great principle called *lex taliones* violence will be his end also.

- *“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (Revelation 13:10).*

Summary of Evil Steward

1. The appointed leader had knowledge of his master’s wishes. That placed an onus on the exercise of his authority.
2. Lack of fidelity to his commission led to eternal loss.
3. God never reveals a postponement or delay in redemptive history. It can be accurately anticipated through precise timing prophecies.
4. With prophecy, there are, however, many “waiting periods.” The Bible calls them “tarrying times.” They are not delays. His arrival will be “on time.”

Postscript

“The Lord has a controversy with all men who by their unbelief and doubt have been saying that He delays His coming, and who have been smiting their fellow servants, and eating and drinking with (working from the very same principle as) the drunken; they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. Satan has controlled their reason, and they know not at what they stumble.”¹⁰

⁹ Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1181.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 78.

“Because Christ’s coming has been long foretold, they conclude that there is a mistake in regard to this doctrine. But the Lord says, ‘If the vision tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come. It will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples.’ Shall we who claim to be students of prophecy forget that God’s forbearance to the wicked is a part of His vast and merciful plan, by which He is seeking to compass the salvation of souls? Shall we be found among the number who cease to cooperate with the Lord, and who are found saying, My Lord delays His coming?—Letter 131, 1900, pp. 2, 3. (To Brother Daniells, October 14, 1900.)”¹¹

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, pp. 182-183.

EFFECTIVE OR DEFECTIVE READINESS

The Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus approached eschatological preparedness and kingdom hope through a myriad of illustrations. The disciples and the Jews, unfortunately, had a wrong understanding of the “kingdom of God.” They anticipate a secularized Messianic rescue mission. Jesus told the worldly Pharisees the earth-shattering teaching: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). That kingdom could even be “within you” (Luke 17:21). The citizens of His realm would have a spiritual orientation.

To a small group of inquiring disciples, Christ used a wedding metaphor with ten virgin attendants to reveal its eternal realities. The inaugurated “kingdom of God” would become a consummated kingdom when the festivities begin.

The sound of the seventh trumpet (“last trump” – I Corinthians 15:52) will announce when that kingdom has consummated.

- *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever”* (Revelation 11:15).
- *“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:14; cf. Matthew 24:31).

That reveals when the wedding between Christ (depicted as a bridegroom) and His church (citizens of His kingdom – the bride) is complete.

“The marriage represents the reception by Christ of his kingdom.”¹ It is when Christ delivers the “everlasting covenant” to His people,² as though each person is given an “original copy” of the “marriage certificate.” We then are given the family name of God, that of His people and of Christ on our foreheads (Revelation 3:12).

Waiting and Not Watching

The ten-virgin parable details additional issues for those expecting the coming of Bridegroom Jesus (Matthew 9:15, John 3:29). “Ten” is a “full complement” – the whole church.

- Those virgins collectively represent a waiting church.
- They started out (“went out”) to meet Groom Jesus.

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 426.

² *Ibid.*, p. 640.

- The church early on appeared prepared for that exciting event. They took their lamps, glowing from the oil of God's Spirit.
- But – a “wait” changed everything.

The marriage contract would have been executed by the time they met the Bridegroom. He would be taking His bride to the wedding banquet.³ The “virgins” (undefiled) “went out” to become part of those marriage festivities.

Christ is orienting us to a time concept regarding earth's eschatological end.

- If the coming of Christ had occurred when everyone was expecting Him, all ten would apparently have been prepared.
- But He tarried.
- That wait disclosed a spiritual division within that group!

The bridegroom did come that night. He came during a “time of darkness” – at midnight. This represents a period in earth's history of great spiritual obscurity.⁴

- Since it was night, they need special illumination to reveal the “path.”
- The oil that burned represents His Spirit.
- It brought light and guidance, and dispelled that darkness.

Jesus **didn't** come during the first watch but during the second or third (Luke 12:37-38).⁵

- The Jews divided the night into three watches (likely alluded to here) (the Romans into four).
- In the “wait,” during the “tarrying time,” they slept.
- The counsel was to “watch” – but they “slept.”⁶

The focus, however, is not on “they all slept.” One half of those virgins brought extra oil in a flask in case the bridegroom tarried. The other half did not. That's the greater issue! They all slept.

- Why didn't the “foolish” virgins bring extra oil?
- Why didn't they assume there might be a wait?
- Personal questions to ponder.

The extra time taken for Christ's arrival wasn't the challenge either – the preparedness was. “Be always prepared” is the warning!

- Complacency was in the foolish virgins' hearts – even before that night.
- They should have known it was common for a bridegroom to tarry.
- But more important, the cry that the “bridegroom is coming” could occur unexpectedly.

³ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 595.

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414.

⁵ Marshall, I. Howard, *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI – 1978, p. 537.

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 635-652.

It is noteworthy to observe that end-time prophecy **has** such a “tarrying time” (Habakkuk 2:2-3).

- Paul even notes: *“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry”* (Hebrews 10:36-37).
- God reveals what will bring that tarrying time to an **end** (Daniel 8, 11 and 12).
- It is the **onset** of the appointed time and its unique events.

“There is a delay. Hour after hour passes; the watchers become weary and fall asleep.”⁷ “Five have neglected to fill their flasks with oil. They did not anticipate so long a delay, and they have not prepared for the emergency.”⁸ “As in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,’ many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit.”⁹

The “wise virgins” were able to trim their lamps and receive the **extra oil** – characterized as the “latter rain.”

This parable points out several important messages:

1. Man has a personal part in spiritual preparedness.
2. Prophecy points very closely to when Jesus will come. Before the arrival cry, the waiting saints will be fully ready to meet and proceed with Him.
3. A period of “delay” is to be planned for.
4. When the confirmation cry goes out, there is a final period of preparedness that focuses on the oil and light!
5. The oil – the Spirit – cannot be transferred. The “light” results from the Spirit burning in the saints’ hearts.
6. When He comes, the wedding will have already occurred – the wedding party is on its way to the marriage supper.

“The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ Said the angel to John: ‘Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ ‘He carried me away in the spirit,’ says the prophet, ‘and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.’ Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, ‘dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;’ He will receive the New Jerusalem, the capital of His kingdom, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people,

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Christ Our Righteousness*, p. 405.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

who are to 'sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' at His table in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb."¹⁰

Those wise virgins are further depicted:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7-8).

Towards that anticipated celebration God observes: *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God"* (Revelation 19:9).

This is explained in the Jewish rite by the eighth day at the Feast of Tabernacles. That was the great celebration of the harvest (alluded to in Leviticus 23:35).

Luke notes that those who are prepared are blessed. No matter if it is the second or third watch, they are ready to meet the Lord at His return (Luke 12:37-38). They will sit down to eat with the Master – a "harvest celebration."

The Expectant Foolish

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps" (Matthew 25:7).

Trimming the lamps suggests that the wick was cut, removing the blackened area to then produce a strong, clean flame. Then additional oil would be added.

- All ten engaged in this final process. ***That means that all respond to the call!***
- The last blackness of one's heart is cut away.
- As the wick is trimmed, it must remain ***soaked*** in the oil.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out" (Matthew 25:8).

The foolish church members suddenly note that their oil is low or gone. They are unable to make their wicks/hearts flame. The bridal procession is about to arrive! It is at night. They need light.

- A state of anxiety and urgency seizes them.
- The oil of their wise friends was the nearest at hand.

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves" (Matthew 25:9).

- Those in the church who are unprepared for earth's final call will see the excitement and expectation of God's "wise" remnant people.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 426-427.

- This suggests that they now long to have a similar experience and “be on fire” for that final procession.
- In desperation they seek to obtain the missing power of God’s grace, His Spirit.

“And while they went to buy” (Matthew 25:10a) (a period of time).

The five foolish virgins going out to buy suggests that they are now trying to *sacrifice themselves* to obtain the oil, urgently willing to exchange anything for it.

- But it is too late.
- The opportunity for a heart change has passed.
- One must conclude that they tried to obtain inspiration and knowledge and perhaps set aside “things of this world” because they did go “to buy” – to give something in exchange.
- But it was too late.

“Those who would overcome must put to the tax every power of their being. They must agonize on their knees before God for divine power.... Men may have a power to resist evil – a power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master; a power that will place them where they may overcome as Christ overcame. Divinity and humanity may be combined in them.”¹¹

- This echoes the ever-present mandate of Jesus in Matthew 24:44: *“be ready”*
- “for in such an hour as ye think not” – He comes

Why was it too late? Are there not eleventh-hour conversions? The foolish certainly were able to obtain “some inspiration!” Why? They did make it to the “door” of the banquet hall.

- But – there’s a problem:
- While they were trying to “finish” preparing for the arriving bridegroom, he came and took His prepared guests into the hall – the marriage supper.
- They ran out of time! That is ***why timing prophecies*** are so important to know – right now!

Note something deeply important:

“... the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10b).

- The door was shut.
- The last opportunity for “joining the bridal party” had passed. Mercy ceased to plead.
- When the call of His coming was made, there was still time – to “trim” their hearts!

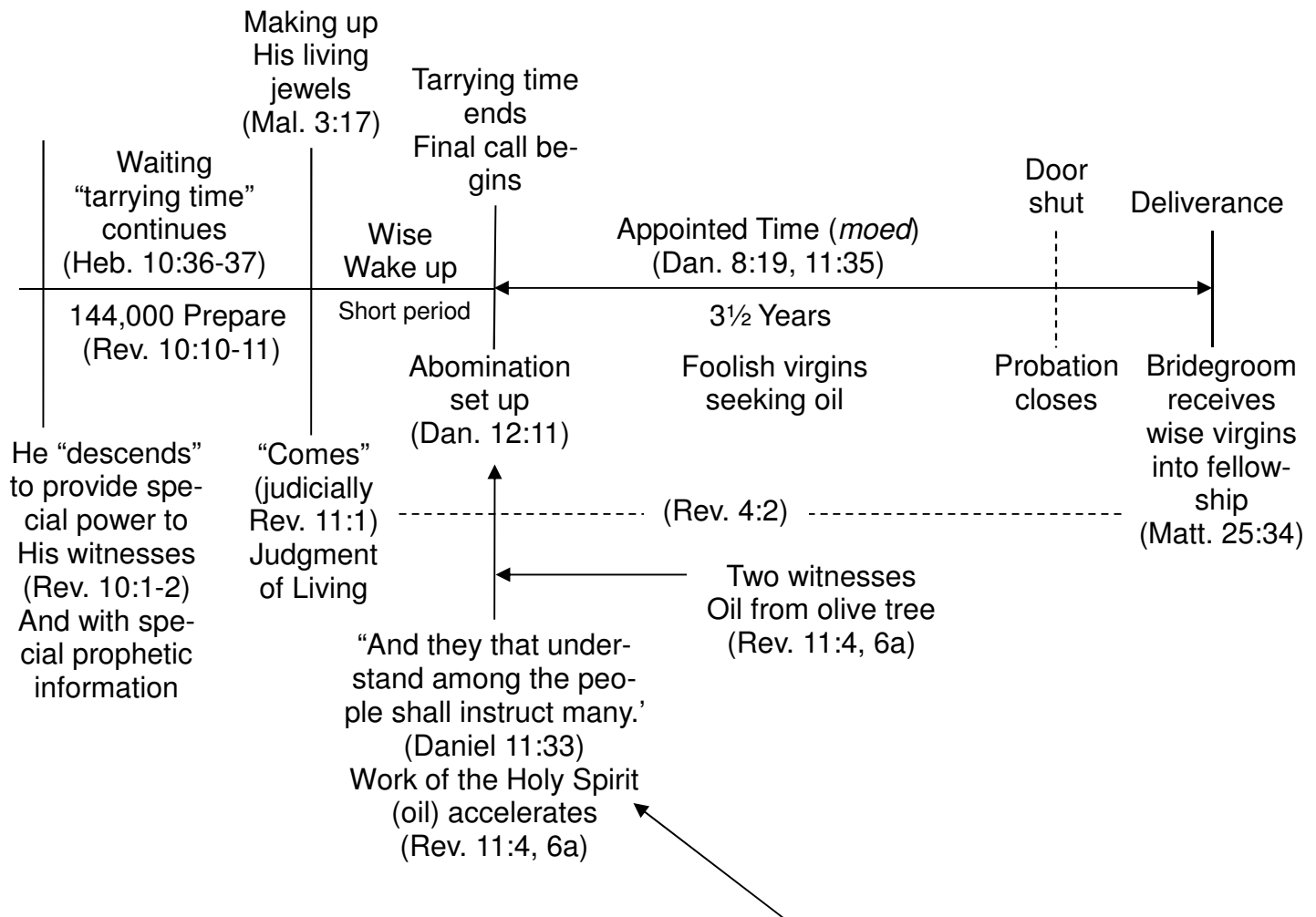
A provocative question: “When does that call go out?”

It comes before the arrival of the bridegroom. It comes at the end of a “wait.” The procession reveals that people will join the remnant church before the door is shut! That call will occur

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *That I May Know Him*, p. 32.

soon. That will be the final chance to prepare to be ready for His coming, using the experiences already gained.

Graphically, from many prophecies:



Between the *judgment of the living* and the refreshing "*flame*" from the oil is a brief period. The *bridal procession* represents the time when the "jewels" (saints) are being added to the church. Though this occurs through *individuals*, they will collectively be the *corporate bride* invited into the kingdom.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

The foolish virgins did some preparation and finally sought to join the bridal party. But the party was locked in the banquet hall. As they bang on that shut door, **they** now cry!

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us" (Matthew 25:11).

- Not ready for the initial work of the 144,000, they tried to become ready at the last minute.

- Their efforts were vapid. They may have gained knowledge – but certainly no understanding (cf. Proverbs 4:7, Colossians 1:9).
- Their final cry suggests that they think they are ready – “*Lord, Lord, open to us.*”

“Look – our lamps are burning. The Word of God is on fire in our hands/hearts. We have been studying and making ourselves ready.” But they could not enter!

We are reminded:

“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed.... The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live.”¹²

Then they receive the horrifying news:

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matthew 25:12).

Though the door is shut, there is an encounter with the bridegroom – the Lord.

- The term “*know you not*” was an idiomatic expression in Christ’s day meaning to ***treat someone as a stranger***.¹³
- A similar woe is stated by Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23. There a group again tries to justify kingdom citizenship through all the Christian works they did.
- Because they were active sinners (lawless), he said:

“I never knew you: depart from me.” A convicting thought will suddenly thrill them with horror – “I’m lost!”

Why didn’t Jesus know them when they were such ardent workers? They didn’t do the Father’s will – they didn’t obey.

- “*For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother*” [part of my family] (Matthew 12:50).
- When the Father’s purpose is abandoned, Jesus assumes authority to:¹⁴
 1. Have righteous enmity (Psalm 6:8, 119:115, 139:19)
 2. Banish them from His presence (Matthew 7:23, 25:41)
 3. Repudiate the individual (Matthew 25:12; 10:33; 26:70, 72, 74)

Such words of Christ seal one’s eternal destiny! They are an ominous notice that mercy has ceased! “I don’t know who you are – depart from me.”

¹² White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 408-409.

¹³ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 598.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

- This is amazing language.
- Throughout their lives, Jesus has served as their legal advocate (I John 2:1), intercessor (Hebrews 7:25) and mediator (I Timothy 2:5).
- Then comes: “I can no longer defend you.” “I don’t even know you.” “Get out of here.”

Matthew is provoking reader shock to urgently take Jesus’ teachings seriously! If taken lightly, you will be vulnerable to the same eternal curse.¹⁵

The maidens who came late still considered themselves eligible to join the wedding party. But:

- Their failure to be ready **on time** severed that connection.
- Jesus is the Bridegroom and has already joined with His guests (Matthew 9:15).
- The eschatological kingdom is illustrated as a banquet (Matthew 8:11). The wise have become part of that honor.
- Though the foolish received an official welcome and had opportunity to prepare – they procrastinated.
- There is no appeal after a **specified time** has passed.
- In fact, preparation is impossible. There is not enough time to properly complete it.

This exclusionary deed is similar to what occurred with the man without wedding clothes (Matthew 22:11-14).¹⁶ The “shut door” imagery announces a point in time when redemptive mercy and grace have ceased.

- “*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved*” (Jeremiah 8:20).
- They may even have actively served in His work, but Jesus cannot identify them as one of His family.
- In fact, they are now seen as enemies of righteousness.¹⁷

This parable reveals Jesus’ ultimate authority to judge. That will be part of the discussion shortly. Luke’s narrative states that He stands up and shuts the door (Luke 13:25). That echoes Daniel 12:1 when Michael “stands up.” A great transition in redemptive history has come.

The “prepared” are corporately sealed in the banquet hall. The church (the “bride”) for God’s kingdom is complete (Revelation 19:7).

The Purpose of the Parable

“*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh*” (Matthew 25:13).

We refer you again back to Part 9 of this Matthew study. The exact day and hour are unknown. But:

- The ten virgins were in their “white attire.”

¹⁵ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 341.

¹⁶ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 596.

¹⁷ Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke*, vol. 2 (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI – 1996), p. 1237.

- They had gone out to meet the bridegroom, whom they knew would come “that night.”
- They were waiting somewhere where the procession would pass.
- The “wise” knew enough to not only be ready for that arrival but had spiritual reserve to permit them to experience trials and a timing delay.

The foolish virgins expected Jesus to come early in their schedule.¹⁸ The “evil servant” over-estimated when Jesus would return. These virgins underestimated when he would come. Thus, the imperative to “watch” – be always ready for that anticipated event.

“The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight – the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth’s history. The days of Noah and Lot pictured the condition of the world just before the coming of the Son of man. The Scriptures pointing forward to this time declare that Satan will work with all power and ‘with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10. His working is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous errors, heresies, and delusions of these last days. Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

“It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people. The sun appears, shining in its strength. Signs and wonders follow in quick succession. The wicked look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance. Everything in nature seems turned out of its course. The streams cease to flow. Dark, heavy clouds come up and clash against each other. In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying: ‘It is done.’ Revelation 16:17.”²⁰

“A marvelous change has come over those who have held fast their integrity in the very face of death. They have been suddenly delivered from the dark and terrible tyranny of men transformed to demons. Their faces, so lately pale, anxious, and haggard, are now aglow with wonder, faith, and love. Their voices rise in triumphant song: ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.’ Psalm 46:1-3.”²¹

¹⁸ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 414.

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 636.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 639.

WHEN JUSTICE AND MERCY BECOME ONE

The final part of Christ's eschatological Olivet discourse depicts a judicial scene. When the Son of Man returns, immediate blessings are conveyed on the righteous; horror and punishment come to the wicked. This is alluded to elsewhere in many places, e.g.:

1. Righteous: *"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation"* (Isaiah 25:9).
2. Wicked: *"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb"* (Revelation 6:15-16).

This is a time of final accounts. Eternal destinies are fixed and personally recognized. Jesus now reviews how that "end" comes about.

Christ's Glorious Coming

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31).

Some time ago the disciples asked Jesus what the "sign" of His coming would be. In a running description of that event, "clouds" (His vast retinue of angels) would be man's first observation (Matthew 24:27, 30-31).

- That narrative is filled with drama, full of stunning events for planet earth and the righteous.
- It is the culmination of man's most elevated hopes.

That eschatological narrative is here again revisited. But – the imagery and emotion change. Eternal "separation" occurs **that day** for the wicked!

1. This was alluded to in the narrative of Noah's day: *"The flood **took them all away.**" "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be"* (Matthew 24:37-30).
2. Then: *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman 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.** Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:42-44).

Christ obviously feels that it is necessary to talk about this again. The "separation" that occurs is a "forever." Perhaps husband and wife, mother and child, friends, relatives will be eternally pulled apart. No appeal is left – all decisions are irrevocable.

- The judicial implications of the Second Coming are now emphasized. This recalls:
- *“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall **reward every man according** to his works”* (Matthew 16:27; cf. Matthew 19:28).

“Seated” on the “throne” is a prophetic judicial expression¹ (cf. II Thessalonians 1:7-10, John 5:27).

- Christ comes to bring apocalyptic blessings to the righteous and judgment to the wicked.²

The Savior is not coming as the Son of God, He is coming as the “Son of man.” This is profound – His supreme purpose is to “harvest” His brothers and sisters, His friends, those **chosen**, depicted first in Daniel 7:9 (described as His jewels in Malachi 3:17).

- The angels have no clearly described function except:
- They add grandeur to Christ’s glory and likely will aid in greeting the saints.
- Heaven comes down to *get us* and then we rise to become part of that *glorious family* – forever.

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:32).

- This universal imagery suggests the response to the gospel message will be worldwide.

At Christ’s Second Coming the attention of mankind is universal.

- Christ executes each sentence from God’s bar of justice.
- *“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Romans 14:10-12; cf. II Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 20:11-13).
- Only two classes remain – the righteous and the wicked.

“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matthew 25:33).

- “Sheep” is a common metaphor for the righteous (Matthew 10:16, 26:31; Zechariah 13:7).
- The right side is a place of honor and protection (Matthew 20:21, 22:44; Psalm 110:1, 26:64; 6:13; Acts 2:33-34, 5:31, 7:55-56; Romans 8:34).³
- The left side leads downward to the godless abyss.⁴ It is the place of “shame”⁵ (Matthew 6:3, 27:38; I Kings 22:19).

¹ Aune, David E.; *52B World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 742.

² *Ibid.*

³ Hagner, Donald A.; *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson Reference & Electronic, Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers), vol. 33B, p. 743.

⁴ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), citing Plato, Rep. 10:614c.

⁵ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 608.

- The “**goat**” (*eriphos* – G) suggests a hairy animal. In Hebrew *sapir* equals he-goat, *sair* equals hairy. When together, rough, hairy he-goat (Daniel 8:21) suggests something demonic, deceptive or of the devil. This originated with Jacob deceiving Isaac for the birthright (Genesis 27:11), covering his arms with “hair.”
- The **ram** and **rough he-goat** of Daniel 8 are part of God’s key “introductory apocalyptic prophecies” in the final battle between **Christ and Satan**.

The imagery invites a final portrayal of Christ and His people on the right (in eternal right) and Satan’s people on the left (in eternal wrong).

- It depicts “the great judgment scene.”⁶
- “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Corinthians 5:10).
- It is alluded to in Romans 14:10-12.
- This is also known as the “final judgment” (described in Matthew 13:49).

It is instructive to note that Christ’s labeling of the animals – the sheep versus the goats – is referred to “as it were” in verse 32 but definitive in verse 33.

- Scholars suggest this shows that they were already judged beforehand.
- At Christ’s coming the “great separation” occurs.⁷

The Delight of the Saved

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

This “king,” identified as the “Son of man” on his throne in verse 31, was earlier labeled by Matthew as the Judge who hands out eschatological blessings or punishments (16:27, 13:41-43).⁸

- Here again He is also Judge
- Figuratively sitting on the judgment seat of God (Romans 14:10-12) or Christ (II Corinthians 5:10).

Christ’s first word, “come,” vividly contrasts with His later command to the wicked to “depart.”

Addressing those on the right are amazing nurturing words:

- “ye blessed of my Father”
 - God has already reviewed each name!
 - That is described in Daniel 7, Revelation 1, 4 and 11.

⁶ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 742.

⁷ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 605.

⁸ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 743.

- “My” Father uniquely shows that this Son of man also exercises the function of a deity, not independently but on behalf of the Father!⁹
- “inherit the kingdom”
 - God’s review of the “books” not only led to a judicial decision regarding each person, but it gave Christ permission to call us heirs of His kingdom!
 - That’s incredible (Matthew 19:29, Romans 8:17, Galatians 2:29, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 6:17)!
 - Understanding that, we can now claim the great promise that divinity might infuse our hearts and minds:

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).

Inheriting the kingdom means “everlasting life” (Matthew 19:29) and finally inheriting the earth made new (Matthew 5:5)!

- “prepared from the foundation of the world”
 - From the beginning of time (Matthew 13:35; cf. Luke 11:50; Hebrews 4:3, 9:26; Revelation 13:8, 17:8)
 - Through these “sheep,” the “blessed ones,” God’s eternal kingdom purposes are accomplished (John 17:24, Ephesians 1:4)!

With the sheep on the right we see Jesus as their **Shepherd** and Priest. With Him sitting on the throne, He is portrayed as Judge. With the declaration to “Come” into His kingdom, He is **King**.

To those saints He presents heaven’s citizenship qualifiers:

“For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:35-36).

- Salvation is awarded to those who were compassionate, with food, water and clothing (survival necessities).
- They are caring for strangers, aiding the sick, visiting the prisoner.¹⁰ (They were no respecter of persons.)

Intriguingly, Christ presents these “services” as though personally done to Himself! All these have been identified as “test service areas” in the past (Genesis 18:1-8; Job 31:32; Matthew 14:16, 15:32, 10:42; Romans 8:35; I Corinthians 4:11; II Corinthians 11:27; I Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:2).¹¹

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or na-

⁹ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 1028.

¹⁰ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 1030.

¹¹ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

ked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:37-40).

To the query of “When did we do these things to you?” The answer simply reveals the focused love and mercy towards mankind that heaven enjoys seeing.

- King Jesus responds, “Verily I say unto you” or “truly I tell you.”
- This expression is the introduction mark that what follows is a weighty principle.¹²
- “Verily” is *amen* in Greek. What I’m going to say or have said is established, an unyielding principle.¹³

We are reminded that bearing one another’s burdens fulfills the law (Galatians 6:2).

- Contextually, this issue is the basis for a favorable, righteous judgment (cf. Proverbs 19:17).
- Instructive is the ancient bias of the Jewish people: merits of service related to the importance of the one served. Jesus simply said, “Unto one of the least.”¹⁴

Who might be the least? Two illustrations enlighten:

1. *“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me” (Matthew 18:5) (maturity).*
2. *“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed ... Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:33a, 36-37) (ethnic prejudice).*

The Horrors of the Lost

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

The terrifying words “depart from me” are similar to those in 7:23, 4:10 and 16:23 (citing Psalm 6:8) and are as fearful as “I know you not,” spoken to the unwise virgins.

- Jesus spells out the same litany of service issues honored by the righteous but ignored by this group.
- Just before that list is presented, the emotion-packed horror is amplified.

“Ye are cursed into everlasting fire” – there is no hope. The damnation leads to death – by burning.

- Christ labels this “crime” as an ultimate evil.
- That fire is the same as what destroys Satan and his angels.

¹² Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 744.

¹³ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, p. 332.

¹⁴ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 1031.

- **“Everlasting fire”** is for the duration that accomplishes its purpose (Jude 7).

The wicked are eternally identified with Satan. Their “reward” is death (John 3:16, Romans 6:23, II Thessalonians 1:9).

<u>God’s People</u>	<u>Satan’s People</u>
Come	Depart
Blessed	Cursed
Eternal life	Eternal punishment
Companionship	Separation

“For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 25:43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not” (Matthew 25:22-43).

Their judgment is also based on **service**. The wicked are indicted for not caring – all ascertained from their lack of charitable deeds. Christ summarizes:

“You did not”
 “You did not”
 “You did not”
 “You did not”
 “You did not”

Sins of idolatry, murder, adultery, theft, etc., are not mentioned.
 These are sins of omission and neglect!

Serving self took precedence over caring for the needy.

“Those who are indifferent to the wants of the needy will be counted unfaithful stewards, and will be registered as enemies of God and man. Those who misappropriate the means that God has intrusted to them to help the very ones who need their help, prove that they have no connection with Christ, because they fail to manifest the tenderness of Christ toward those who are less fortunate than themselves. As Christians, we are to manifest to the world the character of Christ in all the affairs of life. To be a Christian means to act in Christ's stead, to represent Christ. We are not to seek to get rid of the responsibilities that connect us with our fellowmen. God has not placed us in the world simply to please and honor and glorify ourselves. The character of our Christianity is tested by the dependent ones who are around us, who are ignorant and helpless.... Those to whom God has intrusted much, who command the largest resources in doing a good work in behalf of the needy, and who yet have failed to do it, have withdrawn themselves from their own flesh, and have neglected their ministry to God's purchased possession, in order to gratify their own inclination. How does God look upon those who have left the poor to their poverty, the ignorant to their darkness and ignorance? How does he regard those who are willing to let the lost remain the slaves of circumstances which could have been changed in such a way as to bring relief to the distressed? God calls upon men to become Bible Christians, to represent the example given them by Christ. Who can tell what will be the result of a self-denying, cross-bearing life? Eternity will reveal the result of following Jesus, and all will be amazed at the fruit that will be made manifest.”¹⁵

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, December 10, 1895.

“Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?” (Matthew 25:44).

Jesus is still addressed as “Lord” (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). But their words are born out of a spirit of protest and confrontation and justification.¹⁶

- Of amazing spiritual importance is their single question.
- *“Lord, when did we see you?” (NIV)*

That is the rudimentary issue! They hadn’t known Jesus. They had not perceived Him as their Savior to copy. He was “vertically” a Lord – but “horizontally” not their pattern.

“Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him.”¹⁷

“He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions, and we are commanded to follow in His steps.”¹⁸

“He did not stand aloof and apart from those who needed His help. He entered the homes of men, comforted the mourner, healed the sick, aroused the careless, and went about doing good. And if we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we must do as He did. We must give men the same kind of help that He did.”¹⁹

“Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me” (Matthew 25:45).

When Jesus responded to a similar question from the righteous, He said that they had served His “brethren” – many expositors say “My brothers and sisters.”²⁰ Here He deals with the cold facts: “You did not” and the list is given.

The great principles of thoughtfulness, tenderheartedness and kindness are a golden thread that weaves through divine judicial thinking in this illustration. The amazing sensitivity of what this means is noted in these thoughts:

“Let the tenderness and mercy that Jesus has revealed in His own precious life be an example to us of the manner in which we should treat our fellow beings, especially those who are our brethren in Christ. Many have fainted and become discouraged in the great struggle of life, whom one word of kindly cheer and courage would have strengthened to overcome. Never, never become heartless, cold, unsympathetic, and censorious. Never lose an opportunity to say a word to encourage and inspire hope. We cannot tell how far-reaching may be our tender words of kindness, our Christlike efforts to lighten some burden. The err-

¹⁶ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 746.

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 182.

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Our Father Cares*, 128.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *My Life Today*, p. 227.

²⁰ Nolland, *op. cit.*, p. 1033.

ing can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love.”²¹

The “Golden Rule” is epitomized (Matthew 7:12, 19:19, 22:39; Leviticus 19:18).

- The outcome rests in man’s choice – death that has no end, life that will be endless.
- Moral choices towards man and God are highlighted in Matthew 24 and 25.

Conclusion:

Christ has referenced His Second Coming over ten times in Matthew 24 and 25. This is His prophetic eschatological template which all other prophecies should be measured against. Elevating the significance of this discourse is his imperative to visit Daniel’s apocalyptic prophecies (Matthew 24:15). Together – they serve as a vital end-time unit.

Appealing to urgent decisions are the significant timing prophecies and issues both here in Matthew and in Daniel.

- From signs that tell when the eschaton is near to
- The concept of “one generation” when all will be finished to
- Daniel’s 1290, 1335 and time times and half periods to
- A deep meaning for “day” and “hour”

One is personally left with a heightened kingdom awareness and the stipulations related to its entrance. Christ has been generous with warnings of areas that might bar one’s citizenship in His eternal realm.

With this wonderful narrative, God’s disciples should be equipped to delve more deeply into prophecy, sense the urgent need to be ready (filled with the Spirit) and preparing to finish the gospel commission. A solidarity between Christ and His disciples is anticipated – a bond that will soon be carried into eternity.

Here we have also seen that our eschatological hope is linked with a divine judicial process when He returns. Redemptive hope has concluded. All choices/chances have been “fixed.” The Satan/rough he-goat depicted in Daniel 8 has charge of his flock. The Ram/Jesus (in the same chapter) has oversight of His flock. Through Matthew 24 and 25 is portrayed God’s overview of the end of the “conflict of the ages.” At His Advent justice and mercy will have blended into God’s everlasting covenant of love.

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 612-613.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

“ONE GENERATION” – APPROXIMATELY FORTY YEARS

Following Christ’s dissertation of “signs,” tribulation, celestial events AND the coming of the “Son of man,” Luke records: “This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled” (Luke 21:32; cf. Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30). Some scholars interpret this as having no timing significance and claim it is only pastoral. Furthermore, many state that it only refers to a specific “group of people that were rebellious against God” (7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32; 50-51; 16:8; 17:25)¹ – the Jewish nation. But since it relates to a “fulfillment issue” associated with the Second Coming, a higher purpose is in evidence.

Looking Deeper

The LEH (Lust–Eynikel–Hauspie) Lexicon reviews ancient meaning of words as they were used/understood in the Septuagint era (period before Christ’s day). Referencing Exodus 12:14 as a generation (“throughout your generations”), they concluded it related to “offspring.” Thayer’s Lexicon refers to a generation as the time of “begetting” or “births.” The Liddell–Scott Lexicon associates it with “time of birth” – the moment of origin.

The Biblical use of “generation,” therefore, alludes to “from child to child.” It is a sequential story of “natural descent.” In Robertson’s New Testament Word Pictures, commenting on Matthew 24:34, it states: “In the Old Testament a generation was reckoned as forty years. This is the natural way to take this verse.” That would then be the approximate period between generational births.

Building on these gospel records:

- Christ’s end-time message appears to have been given in early A.D. 31. It was in A.D. 70 that “all” these things occurred with the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman armies as they marched forward with their standard of a detestable eagle – the same insignia as the tribe of Dan (another story/discussion). This symbol was to the Jewish mind an abomination if it entered their city precincts. From that historical account, close to 40 years appears to be within the framework of that “one” generation when Jerusalem fell at that final siege.² That was a contemporary application.
- “Christ gave His disciples a sign of the ruin to come on Jerusalem, and He told them how to escape: ‘When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter there into. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled [experiencing a predicted event].’ This warning was given to be

¹ Green, Joel B.; *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (InterVarsity Press, February 1992).

² Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary of the Gospel of Matthew* (Eerdmans Publishing Company – 1999) (emphasis added).

heeded forty years after, at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Christians obeyed the warning, and not a Christian perished in the fall of the city.”³ This was understood as within a generation.

Jesus had declared His generation was one of vipers (Matthew 3:7, 23:23). Then He noted:

- “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36).
- Even more striking was Christ’s judgment that the blood of all past prophets would be required of this generation (Luke 11:50).

Since He also associated this prophecy with time-of-the-end events – it is apropos as a final application to tie it to another (last) generation period preceding the Second Advent.

The Greek text strongly implies that the generation Jesus was mainly speaking to is the one that surrounds the second coming. That “generational period,” that unique group of people, would not “pass away” until all of Christ’s prophecies would be fulfilled.⁴

One cannot escape the generational warning as a timing message. It is a unique inference to a probational period, a time of “the last chance.” Jeremiah was commissioned approximately 627 B.C. to warn God’s people of Jerusalem’s fall. It became desolate 587 B.C. – 40 years later.

As the 40 years drew to a close (~593 B.C.) Ezekiel was called. To rivet home that generational period to Jerusalem – Judah – he was to lie on his right side 40 days – each day for a year to the siege of that city (Ezekiel 4:6). In this he apprised them of a waning probation.

As in Noah’s day, when timing prophecies announced mercy’s diminishing hope to the antediluvian world, so He frames subsequent messages to God’s people. In divine grace, you are warned that there is only one generation to repent and cease your rebellion!

Broadening these Concepts

Jeremiah was called to preach one generation before Babylon fell:

- “Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath” (Jeremiah 7:29; cf. 2:31).

“For forty years Jeremiah was to stand before the nation as a witness for truth and righteousness. In a time of unparalleled apostasy he was to exemplify in life and character the worship of the only true God. During the terrible sieges of Jerusalem he was to be the mouthpiece of Jehovah.”⁵

Israel was “sentenced” to be in the wilderness for forty years – one generation.

³ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 630; *The Great Controversy*, p. 28 (emphasis added).

⁴ Douglas, J. D. and Tenney, Merrill C.; *Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary*.

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Conflict and Courage*, p. 237 (emphasis added).

“And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise” (Numbers 14:33-34).

“And the LORD’S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed” (Numbers 32:13).

Expositor White comments regarding the “generation” of rebellious Israel: “For nearly forty years the children of Israel are lost to view in the obscurity of the desert. ‘The space,’ says Moses, ‘in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord swore unto them. For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.’ Deuteronomy 2:14, 15.”⁶

“God declares through His prophet, ‘My Sabbaths they greatly polluted.’ Ezekiel 20:13-24. And this is enumerated among the reasons for the exclusion of the first generation from the Promised Land. Yet their children did not learn the lesson. Such was their neglect of the Sabbath during the forty years’ wandering, that though God did not prevent them from entering Canaan, He declared that they should be scattered among the heathen after the settlement in the Land of Promise.”⁷

- “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways” (Psalm 95:10).
- “And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness” (Acts 13:18).

Paul focused on this also:

- “While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?” (Hebrews 3:15-17).

“The book of Deuteronomy should be carefully studied by those living on the earth today. It contains a record of the instruction given to Moses to give to the children of Israel. In it the law is repeated. At the time when the instruction which it contains was given, the people of Israel were encamped beside the Jordan. All but two of the adults who had left Egypt had died in the wilderness. Now the generation that had arisen during the forty years of journeying were about to pass over the Jordan to receive their inheritance in the promised land. But they must first hear from the lips of Moses the instruction given him by the Lord for them. The words of the law must be repeated to them, and they must hear again the conditions upon which they were to enter into and take possession of the promised land. The Review and Herald, December 31, 1903.

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 406 (emphasis added).

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Ibid.*, p. 409 (emphasis added).

The context of the generational statements in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 follow the timing story of the Fig Tree. The message is clearly “be prepared” for the “eschatological end” because it will occur in the framework of one generation. When that “tree” shows that that generation is almost gone, “Summer is nigh” – a timing.

Why is a prophetic generation approximately 40 years? Jesus is alluding to the early history of Israel when they “failed” to prepare and a whole generation of 40 years was lost (Hebrews 3:15-17).

The implication: “Don’t be like your forefathers who died in the wilderness.”

By the Fig Tree parable, Jesus noted that when the branch is tender and filled with leaves, you know summer is near. Just like that – when the signs I gave you occur, my coming is near. Then a definitive message came (best seen in Luke 21:28). When the signs begin to come to pass your redemption draweth nigh. This generation won’t pass till all be fulfilled. The assumption is made that when the signs have collectively started, the generation period has begun.

Scholar Craig S. Keener noted: “‘The temple’s desolation in the first generation constitutes the final visible prerequisite for the kingdom before the cosmic signs of Jesus’ return’ [p. 588] [in other words: it has time-of-the-end application]. He ties this even to Jeremiah’s time before the Babylonian exile where God waited till a ‘final generation’ before He permitted captivity. ‘Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath’ (Jer. 7:29). Interesting: Jeremiah’s period of warning covered forty years. ‘No Doubt that Jesus uses the term [generation] as ... elsewhere in Matthew “as the climactic generation” ... the Son of man’s coming would arrive as sudden and unexpected judgment.... Jesus’ followers might recognize the completion of requisite signs (of I Thessalonians 5:4-6)’”⁸

Summary Conclusion

Using the metaphors of Israel’s “pre-Babylonian” probationary period of 40 years, their probationary 40-year wandering in the wilderness and Christ’s declaration of Jerusalem’s attack that occurred 40 years later, all in the Biblical context of “one climatic generation,” the evidence suggests that this gospel warning of “one generation” is close to the same 40 years.

There is a distinct contextual issue that Jesus alludes to in His apocalyptic discourse that invites us now to see the approximately 40-year generation related to eschatological prophecy. Jesus paralleled the generation of the Jewish people in His day with that of the final group who will live just before His Second Coming. In that context, this block of time is of immense importance to our generation. It began when the collective unfolding of events commenced.

There are unique end-time periods (not unlike those preceding the apocalyptic deluge of Noah’s time) which have now started. 1929 marked the first signal that history’s culminating events had begun. That was heralded by the woman and beast metaphor of Revelation 17 (discussed in the book called *When “The” Church Rides the Beast*⁹). Another forward-moving point statistically accelerated within an exponential curve (like a lady in labor) in 1978, launch-

⁸ Keener, *op. cit.*, pp. 589, 591 (Hood Theological Seminary; Salisbury, NC) (emphasis added).

⁹ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *When “The” Church Rides the Beast* (Christian Heritage Foundation; Lucerne Valley, CA; 2005).

ing a “within one generation” prediction that Christ said would introduce the last era when “your redemption draweth nigh.” That fulfilled Christ’s Matthew 24 and Luke 21 predictive apocalyptic messages. We are currently nearing the end of those two time prophecies. The “fig” harvest is pending.

Two other clocks are wound up with the pendulum ready to be released: (1) earth’s final three and a half year period (reviewed in Daniel and Revelation several times and (2) the announcement of the eschatological “day and hour.” Prophecy eliminates guessing, speculating and suppressive sensationalism. It is precise, objective and, now, of urgent interest.

Prophecy Research Initiative

APPENDIX II

“THE DAILY” – *HA TAMID*

Background

As conveyed through the prophet John, “eating” the unsealed portion of Daniel would create “bitterness” (Revelation 10:9-10). That portion of Daniel relates to the *ha hazon* (vision) prophecy oriented to the “time of the end” (8:17, 19; 12:4, 9) (ram, he-goat and little horn – Daniel 11:29-12:13).

- The “daily” issue is within that now unsealed area.
- In turn, it would be impossible to understand those prophecies until the “time of the end” alluded to in Daniel.

Intriguingly, after it (Revelation 10 – open little book) could be understood, it would relate to a segment of prophecy that would be contentious. As predicted, this has been the case among many Christians. The *ha hazon* area of Daniel remains an emotional area of debate, along with its “daily” references.

Many hold the meaning of the daily to its “pagan” association, based upon one quotation from E. G. White¹⁰ and supported by S. N. Haskell, a pioneer of the Adventist Church. Others, such as W. W. Prescott, A. G. Daniells, L. R. Conradi and W. A. Spicer, held to a different concept, seeing Christ’s ministration in the heavenly sanctuary as explaining the “daily.” It is not the intent of this article to review this tumultuous history that that *Early Writings* quotation brought. But – it eventually became necessary for Mrs. White to “neutralize” all speculation regarding what the “daily” meant. That became an important milestone since the Biblical context clearly revealed that it could not be understood for many more decades; it was sealed!

As early as 1908 she had destroyed the pioneer assumption that the *Early Writings* statement was an exegetical pronouncement. She wrote to both Prescott and Haskell that she had no special light “on the point presented for discussion”¹¹ (i.e., the “daily”).

Again, in 1920 she requested that her writings “not be used as the leading argument to settle questions over which there is now so much controversy.” In noting that she had no specific light or instruction on the “point under discussion,” she urged that her writings not be used in the debate.¹²

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 74-75.

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Letter to W. W. Prescott*, July, 1908; DF 202, Daily; to S. N. Haskell, August 28, 1908.

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Testimony*, “Our Attitude Toward Doctrinal Controversy,” July 31, 1910.

The Hebrew Word for “Daily”

The word “daily” (*tamid* or *tamiyd* – H) as used in Daniel is preceded by “*ha*,” meaning “the.” *Ha tamid* – *the daily* – thus it is a noun. Daniel is the only place in the Bible where it is substantive. Everywhere else *tamid* is either an adjective or an adverb. In spite of this, most translators have incorrectly added the word “sacrifice” after “*tamid*,” assuming it related to the cultic morning and evening sacrifices (Exodus 29:42; Numbers 28:6, 10, 15, 23; Ezra 3:5; Nehemiah 10:34). “Sacrifice” is even in the Septuagint. Over 150 years ago Expositor White correctly shared with her readers that it was a mistake, that the word “sacrifice” was added.¹³

In the Old Testament, *tamid* is translated as *continually* (53 times), *continual* (26 times), *daily* (7 times), *always* (6 times), *ever* (3 times), *perpetual* (2 times), *continual employment* (once), *evermore* (once), and *never* (once). The context governs the best expressions, which the varied translators certainly tried to capture. *Tamid* conveys the concept of “never stopping,” “ceaseless” or “perpetual.” *Ha tamid* in Daniel, then, is unique since it says that “**the** ceaseless” or “**the** perpetual” or “**the** never stopping” is an **object** that can be defined or described.

Example: “*From the time that the daily [tamid] [sacrifice] is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days*” (Daniel 12:11 – NIV).

Daniel’s use of the word “daily” is tied to end-time prophecy – in fact, to the *very end* (*es qes*), during **the appointed time** (*moed* – 8:19) when God begins His strange act [Daniel 8:17 (*zaam*); cf. Isaiah 28:21]. A wicked power (the “little horn” or “king of the north”) “harms” “**the** perpetual?” Every place *ha tamid* is used, an antichrist or rebellious “Babylonian” type of power is contextually inflicting harm against “the daily.” Logically, only God can set up something that is “endless” or a “forever.” Thus, it is against a divine object. Concomitantly, that “power” sets up its own substructure.

Our first “daily” clue comes from an interesting observation that wherever it is used, it is associated with either the word “transgression” (*be pasha*) or “abomination” (*shiqquwts*). That “transgression” is related to rebellion against *God’s authority, law and covenant*. The use of “abomination” is God’s word, revealing His **feelings** towards that sin!

When the Roman armies went into battle they carried an *emblem*, flag or standard on a pole, which announced who they were. They also displayed symbols of their gods right under their flag who allegedly would help them conquer their enemies. Every tribe of Israel had an emblem or insignia (Numbers 2:2). That identified who they were, what their position in the camp was and revealed the symbolic *character* or *nature* of their family group.

The antichrist sets up a sinful (transgression) **emblem** which defies God. That’s the “abomination” that “the daily” is associated with. He’s a leader against something God has “forever” established. These two words, *transgression* and *abomination*, distinctly portray setting up a standard or insignia that is reprehensible to God.

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 74.

How Daniel Uses *ha tamid*

Notice the verbs that are associated with “the daily.” Something happens to it!

“Daily” Texts

Verbs Associated with the “Daily”

1. **Daniel 8:11-13:** *“Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily [ha tamid] sacrifice [added] was **taken away**, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily [ha tamid] sacrifice [added] by reason of transgression [related to the abomination], and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily [ha tamid] sacrifice [added], and the transgression [related to the abomination] of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?”*

rum - ruwm

2. **Daniel 11:31:** *“And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and **shall take away** the daily [ha tamid] sacrifice [added], and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.”*

sur - cuwr

3. **Daniel 12:11:** *“And from the time that the daily [ha tamid] sacrifice [added] **shall be taken away**, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”*

sur - cuwr

From this we can see that the words *transgression* and *abomination* are in opposition to the *daily*. A sin, transgression, which God calls an abomination is associated adversely with the “daily.”

Looking deeper into those noted verbs, it is helpful to look outside of Daniel.

Rum (Daniel 8:11-12) is used elsewhere in a non-cultic way.

Examples: *“took off [rum] their chariot wheels, ...”* (Exodus 14:25); *“Moses went in before the Lord ... took off [rum] the veil until he came out”* (Exodus 34:34); *“take ye up [rum] every man of you a stone”* (Joshua 4:6; remove from Jordan river); *“take [rum] it [the ax head] up to you”* (II Kings 6:7); *“take up [rum] the stumbling block out of the way”* (Isaiah 57:14); *“take away [rum] your exactions from my people”* (Ezekiel 45:9); *“as they that take off [rum] the yoke off their jaws”* (Hosea 11:4); *“Remove the diadem, take off [rum] the crown”* Ezekiel 21:26)

Rum in these verses means “take away” or “lifted up and removed.”

In the *hophal* verb form, as originally used here in Daniel, it expresses a passive action,¹⁴ and in *that* setting, one would see the “daily” being lifted up from its place by someone or something, which *results* in the place of the sanctuary, or the spiritual meaning of God’s true church, being “cast down.” Something that is supposed to be everlasting is lifted “up,” “removed” and “taken away.”¹⁵

In Daniel, whether in the Aramaic section (5:19-20, 23) or Hebrew area (11:12, 36; 12:7), the use of *rum* has a similar meaning. Some translations say “heave.” In cultic imagery noted in Leviticus 1-7, *rum* is used as a sacrificial technique, related to “lifting up” the fat out of an animal (lifted up from the animal and placing it on the altar) or “lifting up” the ashes from the altar and placing them where they can be removed.

Contextually, then, in Daniel 8, the Little Horn lifts up, takes out of its place or removes “the perpetual” or “the forever.”

***Sur* (Daniel 11:31, 12:11) is a different verb.**

The primary meaning of *sur* is to “turn aside from” as a verb of motion. The imagery reflects “departing from” (Judges 16:20; Samuel 16:14; 28:16; II Kings 10:31; 13:2, 6, 11). In the *hiphil* stem here in Daniel, it suggests “turning away from” or “putting away” the daily (II Chronicles 15:16, 30:14; II Kings 18:4; Amos 5:21-23). It, again, is “taken away.”

Daniel 8–12 is a Hebrew unit that unfolds repeated apocalyptic themes and issues. As the “transgression” or “abomination” associated with “desolation” refers to the same event in those chapters, so does “the daily.” Thematically, the Little Horn and its later descriptive symbols, the vile person and the King of the North, lifts out of its usual place “the perpetual,” then takes it away or removes it. If it represented paganism, there would be contextual and interpretive problems. Those antichrist symbols act as if they were God. They are anti-God and anti-covenant by Daniel’s description of their behavior. What is this anti-God power trying to lift out of its place and remove? Is it paganism? Is it the sanctuary ministry in heaven? What does the Bible reveal?

Looking Deeper:

There are helpful clues. Daniel 8:12 notes a host (different from the “host of heaven” in verse 10) was given to the Little Horn, which waxed great. The word “host” (*saba*) usually relates to fighting. It is an army that is fighting on behalf of the Little Horn, which is already in a battle against the Messiah (Prince of the host or Prince of princes – vs 11, 25) and His host (host of heaven – vs 10) or God’s people.

Daniel says that the Little Horn was able to get or obtain his host “by reason of transgression” or “by transgression” (*be’pasa*). This is a strong Hebrew word for rebellion against God. Contextually, once again, it is against His authority, law and covenant (Exodus 34:7, Numbers 14:18, Joshua 24:19, I Kings 8:50, Proverbs 19:11, Micah 7:18), which brings estrangement (Psalm 89:32, Amos 3:14).¹⁶

¹⁴ Harris, R. Laird; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody Press, Chicago), vol. 2, pp. 837-838.

¹⁵ *Blue Letter Bible* on *rum* (internet).

¹⁶ Harris, *Op cit.*, pp. 742-743.

This host meritoriously earned its service to be in the Little Horn's army by rebelling against God's authority, law and covenant. Interesting – when Gabriel came to Daniel to outline what corrective action “his people” needed to bring in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24), the first thing mentioned was to make an end to *be pasa!* Why?

Daniel's people were in captivity because they had defied the *Shemita* or Sabbath rest of each seventh year (Leviticus 25). In Daniel the *pasa* or *pesha* is related to this *Shemita* sacred year and, by definition, the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Hebrew people had missed 70 *Shemita* Sabbaths. They were in captivity 70 years. They had rebelled against God's authority, His law and covenant. Not only was the seventh-day Sabbath a perpetual requirement (Exodus 31:16), but that “week of years” and its sacred seventh year was an imperative. So important was this that God warned them that their land would become *desolate* if they defied His Sabbatical request (Leviticus 26:14-34).

II Chronicles 36:20-21: *“And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.”*

The True Sabbath is Being Addressed

The daily or “the perpetual” is again contextually associated with that “transgression” that, later, God called an *abomination* that leads to *desolation* – nothing left, the land, everything would then be at rest. It is most interesting that within the Sabbath commandment there is reference to:

- God's authority – Creator (Exodus 20:11)
- Embodied in His law – the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-23, Deuteronomy 5:7-21)
- God's covenant – promises of deliverance and restoration (Deuteronomy 5:15, Exodus 31:16, Leviticus 24:8)

The evidence mounts that the rebellion (*be'pasa*), which brought *supporters* to the Little Horn, represents active defiance against God's Sabbath. God's church, His sanctuary, is polluted by lifting out of its place the Sabbath and putting in its place a false Sabbath, an abomination. *“And arms shall stand [host – army] on his part [King of the North], and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength [God's church], and shall take away [remove] the daily [true Sabbath] {sacrifice}, and they shall place the abomination [false Sabbath] that maketh desolate [curse that God said would come to those defying His authority, law and covenant!]”* (Daniel 11:31). It is noted that this end-time force that is against God, has “indignation against the holy covenant” and works and plans with those who “forsake the holy covenant” (Daniel 11:30).

By this action of the Little Horn's supporters, *“truth is cast to the ground”* (Daniel 8:12). Who are the players in this act on the world's stage? Though a different study, this Little Horn represents the second rise of the papacy. Its followers (called “host”) are apostate Protestantism, supporting the papacy by its rejection of the Sabbath, casting “truth to the ground.” This is precisely what unfolds in Revelation 6, 13–18. There, repeatedly the issue of defiance against the Sabbath is presented and relates to two apostate powers – the papacy and apostate Protestantism (the false prophet)!

Daniel 8 through 12 reveals that all this cannot happen until the 2300 atonement evenings and mornings (Daniel 8:14, 17, 19) are **past**. Is there a “perpetual” or “forever” message related to the Sabbath?

*“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you **throughout your generations**; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, **for a perpetual covenant**. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel **for ever**: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed”* (Exodus 31:13-17).

Since Daniel is the only place [*tamid*] it is a noun and the context draws on the covenant principles and the Sabbath, we see powerful ties to Exodus 31’s verses. The sin or *be’pasa* that casts truth to the ground challenges God’s authority, law and covenant. That is exactly what defying the Sabbath does!

There, God said that the Sabbath was a “sign” (*owth*):

1. **That** He was the Lord (His authority) – and Creator
2. **That** He was the Lord that sanctifies or makes us holy (cf. Ezekiel 20:12 – observing the law was the basis for God to exercise this right).
3. It is **the** *ensign* or *standard* God’s people are to use to show that they are the covenant people (the agreement between God and man, which He legally uses to restore them).

Twice within the context of these verses God conveys two most interesting thoughts:

1. Observing the Sabbath is one of man’s obligations in that covenant agreement.
2. It is a sign “forever” that identifies the God of deliverance and restoration.

The Forever “*Tamid*”

The words “forever” and “perpetual” used in Exodus 31 relating to the Sabbath come from the Hebrew word *olam*. It, too, represents “indefinite continuance.” Not even the future can confine it. The Septuagint uses the word *aion* with basically the same meaning. *Tamid* or *ha tamid*, used in Daniel, also suggests that the future cannot confine it. It has been suggested (*Bible Works* software) that its origins were Arabic, meaning *fixed* or *established*.

The word “established” means that it won’t change. It is something that God has indefinitely put in place. The Little Horn or King of the North (8:12, 11:31) lifts out of place “the established.” Its followers fight “the established” because they rebel against God’s authority, law and covenant found in the fourth commandment. His followers even take the Sabbath away and put in its place an abominable false Sabbath (11:31). This action is wicked and against the covenant (11:32; cf. Exodus 31:15). From the time “the established” or true Sabbath is taken away (something formal is decreed to cause that to happen – it involves a corporate act –

“host”) and the abomination is “set up” (12:11) (that means some law or decree creates it – a false standard), it will last or be in effect 1290 days (12:11). [The Hebraic “day” (*yom*) **with** a number is literal.]

The context, the linguistics, the tie to the abomination all point to the “daily” as representing the true Sabbath, which is a resisted issue at the end of time.

Summary

It is being increasingly recognized in the prophetic messages that a pivotal end-time matter will be the Sabbath. Daniel’s *tamid* **begins** to unfold this amazing fact. The last-day antichrist will make the Sabbath and God’s everlasting covenant a legal issue. Its “host” will be pitted against the Prince or Commander of heaven’s “host.” New insights are now unfolding that show the seventh day is prophetically unveiled as an end-time crisis issue! “The daily” represents God’s true Sabbath. Daniel is the first prophecy to present that apocalyptic truth.

Prophecy Research Initiative

APPENDIX III

ABOMINATION ASSOCIATED WITH DESOLATION

Only at the *es qes* – time of the end!

Introduction

It may be one of the Bible's most frightening words! It describes how God **feels** about a behavior or a worship practice that He despises. When He calls something an "abomination," you know He has raised His voice. He uses such language against cross-dressers (Deuteronomy 22:5). Solomon lists seven things that the Lord hates: "Yea, seven are abomination[s] to him" (Proverbs 6:16-19). "Lying lips" are an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 12:22). He also hates heathen idols – they are an abomination (Deuteronomy 12:29-32). That is an especially sensitive issue with our sovereign God!

There are many deep religious issues that God addresses with this word. Even "new moons," Sabbaths and church gatherings are abominations if the worship experience is filled with vain oblations or liturgical mysteries (Isaiah 1:13). Jeremiah noted that building edifices to worship Baal in "high places" and causing children to walk through fire to the god Molech (Jeremiah 32:35) was an abomination. Molech was a heathen deity of the Ammonites. Babies were placed into the red hot hands of Molech's statute and sacrificed. Baal had been adopted from the Phoenicians. It morphed into many forms in different cultures. But everywhere its place of honor was on a hill or an elevated eminence so the *heavens* could be seen and worshiped, *especially the sun*. Many ancient records even equate Baal worship with sun worship.

An abomination always represents something God **detests**. Frequently the issue relates to a *substitute* of Himself or something that tarnishes His character. The matters He abhors also include *changing what He has irrevocably instituted*. That is why homosexuality is an abomination to Him (Leviticus 20:13). It is a *substitute* for God's plan of sexuality. It changes the nature and meaning of procreation instituted in Eden.

Jesus Points Out "the" Abomination

The pivotal time Jesus addressed a detestable matter was in His expose regarding the "end of time." The disciples had inquired what signs would tell them that the end of the world was about to arrive and what clue would reveal that His Second Advent was imminent. They also asked the "when" question. He unfolded crucial information in Matthew 24:15 (cf. Mark 13:14) that should rivet every Christian's attention. Those verses come right in the middle of other timing clues that tell "when" the end of time will occur. "*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:)*" Matthew 24:15.

Jesus revealed in literal and typological language that there would be two ends of time.

1. When **physical** Jerusalem would fall
2. When **spiritual** Babylon would fall

Each of those, He said, would be preceded by an “abomination” (*bdelugma*); the latter *had already been detailed* by Daniel. That tie is found in chapters 8–12 of his book. Then Jesus personified this abomination by saying, “It stands where it shouldn’t be” (Mark 13:14 – paraphrased). Matthew also said that the abomination is a sign of the end when it “stands in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15). Something God hates comes into the very precincts of the church. It will be specific and definable, and becomes a warning to God’s true people – the remnant.

An additional clue to its meaning is: “Ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies” (Luke 21:20). That was a literal event in 68-70 A.D. A literal event often becomes a great spiritual metaphor for the very end of time! Often words or phrases illustrate deep truths which act like mini-prophecies. They become God’s coded way of conveying, to a serious Bible student, wonderful messages about the future. The word “Jerusalem” is also in that category. It was literal. But Jesus personified it in Matthew 23:37: “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*” There, Jerusalem is a symbol of *God’s people*. When enemies surround Jerusalem (God’s people), they will soon stand where they shouldn’t be and finally come right into the church.

The key introductory statement that begins Jesus’ “abomination” message is that timing word “when.” “When you see” – it will be apparent. It will be so obvious, it shouldn’t be missed. “When” you are aware that something detestable to God:

1. Takes its place among God’s people where it shouldn’t
2. Armies ready to impose their will or presence on them
 - You will know that a time of supreme danger has arrived.
 - It is time for you to act.

We can historically see that when Jerusalem, now seen as an apostate city, was surrounded by armies (beginning in 68 A.D.), it was about to fall (three-and-a-half-year period). To His faithful, that was the “when” sign that gave them a chance to escape, to “come out.” In Revelation there is a message to another apostate “city:” “Babylon is fallen, *come out* of her my people” – escape.

The “Holy Place” (Matthew 24:15), when apostasy comes in, refers to the sanctuary, temple or church – at the very center of religious activity. That “abomination” is what His people are to urgently distance themselves from – “come out of her.” What detestable *element* comes into God’s church that destroys its purity? In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus doesn’t say. He only urges, “Go to Daniel.”

Originally, the Jewish phrase “abomination of desolation” was an expression of contempt towards the heathen deity Zeus or Baal. The pagans referred to Zeus as “Lord of Heaven.” The Jews referred to him as *siqqus somem* – the “abomination which desolates.” The sky, celestial bodies, especially the sun were part of that worship.¹

We will find that worship in a way God didn’t command, tied to sun worship, is the abomination He is referencing.



Zeus

Daniel Picks Up the Story

The word “desolation” (*somen* or *shamen*) is found in seven places in Daniel. It simply means **nothing is left**. Except for one (9:27), all the references *relate to* the consequences of an *abomination* or *sin*. This word is a helpful key in our quest to understand this “abomination.” It all begins when Gabriel asks Jesus about the little horn vision that Daniel just saw (8:13) (that relates to the end-time antichrist). His key question relates to the little horn and its behavior. Daniel was told *in this vision setting*:

The Little Horn of Daniel 8:

1. Came from the north (vs 9)
2. Had power against the host of heaven (vs 10) – mighty power not of himself (vs 24) (it came from Satan) – “Host” is God’s people
3. Persecuted them (vs 10) – even destroyed the holy people (vs 24)
4. Magnified himself to the prince of that host (vs 11) – Shall magnify (arrogant over another) himself (vs 25)
5. Then he stood up against the Prince of princes (Jesus) (vs 25)
6. This all caused the “place” of the sanctuary to be cast down (vs 11) – The place God’s church held in the world was tarnished. Gabriel now describes how!
7. Because of a “transgression,” truth was cast to the ground (vs 12). Now comes the **clue**: That “transgression” is what led to “desolation” (vs 13)!
8. All this occurs by a fierce-looking king (vs 23; cf. 11:40) (vicious in heart – another way to describe that “little horn”) at a time when “transgressors” (those promoting **this** abomination) are come in full (vs 23).

This description relates to the antichrist, who sets himself against God and sits “in the temple of God (the Christian church), showing himself that he is God” (II Thessalonians 2:4). There it is again. He “stands” or occupies a place where he shouldn’t be. He lords over the church in some remarkable way.

An antichrist, the “little horn,” not only tries to displace God, but Daniel alludes to how this is done! There is a “transgression” that casts truth to the ground. The church is filled with transgressors. More than that, in Gabriel’s follow-up timing question (8:13), he asked Jesus “when” this (the “transgression of **desolation**”) would happen. Gabriel uses a very specific word to

¹ Brown, Colin; *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI) vol. 1, pp. 74-75.

render its meaning more precise: transgression or *pesha* (H) results in desolation. As we will see, *pesha* **is** the abomination.

Pesha is one of several Hebrew words for sin. It has a special connotation, describing man committing a willful deed to spite God. It symbolizes rebellion, defiance by resisting God's authority. It represents an act that goes "beyond the limits" of God's law.² It also describes sin against His covenant. All this was acknowledged as one of Israel's great failures in Daniel's prayer. In Daniel 9:24a it is the first "sin" that God's people must address.

We have the misdeeds of the little horn of Daniel 8 defying Jesus, His people and truth, taking over and destroying what the sanctuary or church really represents. Now Gabriel tells us how, in arrogance, that is done *through* his questions (8:13). The "sin" or "transgression" (*pesha*) challenges:

1. God's authority
2. God's covenant
3. God's law

Where is the center of those three things? Right in the center of the Decalogue. Study especially Deuteronomy 5:12-15. This foundational apocalyptic prophecy shows that the Sabbath will be a pivotal issue at the end. Gabriel notes that that is the transgression that leads to "desolation."

The next important use of "desolation" is in Daniel's prayer: "O my God, incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our *desolations*." Isn't that interesting? Daniel, in great humility, acknowledges their sin and now appeals to God to rescue his people from its desolating consequences. "Look God, how **desolate** our people and land are. Respond to this plea!"

How does God respond? Through Gabriel – while Daniel was yet praying. He outlined several steps that would bring *restoration*. Amazing, amazing, the very first issue that God's people must address is *pesha* or transgression against the Sabbath! We must discover even more what that refers to!

This is so vital! It ties directly to Jesus' counsel regarding the end of time! Let's look at more verses in this chapter where "**desolation**" is used.

Daniel 9:26:

Gabriel states that the end of resistance against Jesus and the "church" or "holiness" is *desolation*.

Daniel 9:27:

The covenant will be confirmed by the Prince and God's people. The last week of the seventy weeks is split into two. One half is set aside for God to complete His part of that covenant. The other is set aside for His people to finish the covenant obligation (a separate timing study). Then a distinct thought is introduced (really like a separate paragraph).

² http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Meditations/Chata_ah/chata_ah.html

Paraphrased: “Because abominations have spread everywhere, God is going to make everything desolate (*shamen*) at the time Jesus comes again.” (The Second Coming is distinctly alluded to.)

That information is astounding. The Hebrew word there for “abomination” (*shiqquwts*) is the Greek equivalent of *bdelugma*, which Jesus talked about in the gospels when He said, “Go to Daniel!” It represents something detestable or abhorrent in God’s sight. Now that we have brought together many clues from the gospels to the words “transgression” and “desolation,” we know that some abominable sin will become universal, associated with the antichrist and against God’s authority, law and covenant. In Gabriel’s question of 8:13, he noted that it “cast truth to the ground.” We will discover that it relates to a worship issue that *substitutes* a false Sabbath, something in place of God’s directive to keep the seventh day.

“Desolation” will be a focus later in 11:31 related again to the antichrist and in a stunning timing prophecy that describes the very end of all things (12:11).

Background to the “Abomination”

The word *shiqquwts* is a very strong Hebrew word. It is meant to illustrate the *extreme* seriousness and wickedness of a particular sin. God is appealing to all to see it from His perspective and not man’s (Deuteronomy 7:26).³

There’s more in Daniel that we will visit, but we have come to a point where we must discover what God specifically means by transgression/abomination. What exactly makes it so detestable? The story begins with the Creation week. Those seven days represent a divine clock. It was set into man’s flow of life by decree. Unrelated to any celestial body, God said right from the beginning that “days” would ***be grouped into “sevens.”*** That may seem simplistic, and perhaps it is. But God associated that week with three important issues:

1. The sixth day was related to man.
2. The seventh day was related to God.
3. The days were declared to be an *evening and morning*. That signals not only its sequence but, in sacred *redemptive thought*, they were *set apart*.

The week motif became a metaphor for many sequential prophecies of “seven.” There was a week of days (Creation week), week of months (Feast “year”), week of years (the key to understand end-time prophecy), seven weeks of years (related to man’s final probation) and a week of seven millenniums (a timeframe in which to finish the great controversy issues).

Our focus here will be on the “week of years.” God used language and phrases in that special seven-year cycle, which are like keys to unlock similar language concepts elsewhere, including the *abomination* and *desolation*. Jesus already told us that we must know those issues as it relates to the end of time.

The Sabbath was made as a grand finale to the Creation week. It was a day called “holy.” Uniquely set as a block of time within a group of seven, God designed it for the Creator and

³ Harris, R. Laird; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody Press: Chicago, IL), 1980, p. 955.

the created to communicate and enjoy each other's company. When sin arrived, its meaning grew:

1. The Sabbath remained holy; therefore, it became a "sign" that man could become holy once again (Exodus 31:13).
2. It also became a *forever* promise of the covenant agreement God made *with* man that he could become holy (Exodus 31: 16-17).
3. It embodied a promise that within the Sabbath rest there would eventually come "deliverance" from sin into an eternal rest (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

In that context we visit the "week of years."

"And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat" (Leviticus 25:1-7).

Every seventh year, called a *shemita*, the land was to rest. It was far more than an agricultural order. That year was a Sabbath. It brought also *deliverance* to all Hebrews who had been bought as slaves (Exodus 21:2). The "week of years" established several principles:

1. The seventh represented deliverance.
2. The seventh symbolized restoration.
3. The seventh characterized man becoming holy, like God is holy.
4. The seventh became a great symbol of finishing the everlasting covenant.

What did God do to assure that there was adequate food for the year the land was at rest and for the following year when new crops were started? God said He would give double crop production on the *sixth*. The land would produce enough food that it would last through the seventh, into the eighth, when the new crop would be planted to harvest the ninth! God made *supernaturally clear* on the sixth that the Sabbath rest *could* be observed. He provided evidence that preparations on the sixth could be so complete that the Sabbath *could* be kept holy (Leviticus 25:20): "And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store."

In this great illustration God revealed how all timing sequences of seven are to be viewed and applied. The *week of years* became typological and serves as a beautiful metaphor of redemption's story over seven millenniums – the "week of millenniums."

There is another amazing part to this story. Not only does the typology of the week of seven years define a success story related to the redeemed, it also includes elements which reveal the outcome of those who rebel and resist the “Sabbath” year provisions.

In Leviticus 26:14-39 God outlines what will happen to those who reject His decrees, abhor His commandments and, thus, violate the covenant. The:

1. Highways will become **desolate** (*shamen*) (vs 22)
2. Cities will lie in waste and churches will become **desolate** (vs 31)
3. The land will become **desolate** (vs 32)

Interesting! Resistance to God’s “seventh” would result in “nothing left” – desolation.

God then said: As long as it (the land) lieth desolate, it will *rest* and *keep the Sabbath* because *they* did not keep the Sabbath! The desolation curse is tied directly to the Sabbath – *the sacred seventh!* Over and over the Jewish dispersion and desolation warnings relate to the great Sabbath theme.

“The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes” (Leviticus 26:43).

When desolation (*shamen* – *Hebrew*; or *eremosis* – *Greek*) is used, it is the outcome of some sin or iniquity related to despising God’s laws and statutes, especially the Sabbath!

Break my sabbaths, statutes and laws (abomination)

Mock my messengers – despise their words

Scattered – bondage

Desolation

Land enjoys her Sabbaths

The *shemita* was so sacred it was the leading reason for the Babylonian captivity and desolation of Jerusalem! (II Chronicles 35:21). (When Jesus introduced us to the two ends of time, the Jews already had a lesson book from history regarding the pivotal abomination. But they weren’t very attentive students.)

*“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.... And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay **desolate** she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years”* (II Chronicles 36:16-17, 20-21).

Desolation is the final outcome of rebellion against the Sabbath! The above sequence not only applied to the Jews, it became a symbol for how God will deal with apostasy against His Sabbath at the very end of time! This is a key prophetic concept.

Defining Look at Abomination

God's throne relates to the "north" in direction: "*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the **north**, the city of the great King*" (Psalm 48:2). Satan, once Lucifer, said in his heart (when he began to act on his passions) that he would ascend into heaven, exalt his throne above the stars, to be like the Most High and sit on the "mount of the congregation" (representing Zion), which is on the sides of the "**north**" (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Apostasy leads to displacement of God from His rightful place. It *stands where it ought not be*. A false leader or standard is set up symbolically in the "north," trying to either represent God or be God. This is referred to as an abomination [*towebah* (Ezekiel) – or *shiqquwts* (Daniel)].

Ezekiel was given additional insight into the meaning of abomination. It began by his going into vision, associated with a dramatic encounter with God (Ezekiel 8:1-4). He was about to **see** and **hear** examples of things that God despises. Actions of individuals that violated the fundamental principles of a covenant relationship: "You shall have no other gods before me" and "You shall not make any idolatrous images for yourselves to worship and serve" (Exodus 20:3-6; Deuteronomy 4:1-20, 5:7-12).

Ezekiel is brought in vision to Jerusalem, symbolic of the center of God's people. He was initially brought to the north gate of the inner temple court. The glory of God was supposed to be in that area. But in that gate was a seated statue, "an image of jealousy." That begins the story of things God detests. God's glory is contrasted with this pathetic statue. Yet, the statue guarded the gate that led to the inner court and temple! The Hebrew message seems to describe the statue from God's viewpoint: "The outrageous statue of jealousy." Its appearance provoked His jealousy, thus, the "statue of jealousy." Amazing! In the northern gate – trying to be like God is a detestable idol!

God takes Ezekiel on a temple tour, introducing him to what "drives Him out of the sanctuary." These are things that *stand where they ought not be*. Verse 6 begins by God asking him to "look up." This is an eschatological phrase. Whatever historic application it might provide, there is a greater end-time typological meaning. He was to look up to the north at the statue and *then contemplate the abomination* of the people in the temple he was about to see. God then said, "You're going to see even greater abominations."

The flow of thought at the onset of this vision creates an anticipation of reprehensible activity. It envisions a remarkable picture of what God is extremely emotional about! Maybe we should say, "things He hates!" Ezekiel is then shown seventy elders or leaders of God's people, each with an incense censer, worshiping crawling creatures, beasts and idols. Scene one was an idol at the north entrance to the inner court and temple. Scene two is where church leaders are worshiping idols and creatures in the temple. They were doing it in the "dark" and claimed that "God won't see us." But He does. He calls this another abomination (*towebah*).

The number seventy recalls the number of leaders who assisted Moses in guiding the affairs of His people (Exodus 24:1, 4; Numbers 11; 16, 24-25). Symbolically, it represents all of the key

leaders of God's church here in apostasy. In the center of this group was another individual whose name was Jaazaniah, meaning "Yahweh listens." He apparently was a civic leader, suggesting a bond in apostasy between church and state. That is fascinating and has thematic ties to Revelation 13 and 17. God said, once again, that worse abominations were to come.

In the next scene, number three, Ezekiel comes toward the entrance of the north gate. He apparently had been inside the temple and now moves outside. The inner court is in full view. There are women sitting facing the temple (God's house), crying over the heathen god Tammuz. This god was raised to life annually. Their cry is for her virility and life to return once again.

The nature of the Hebrew expression, "*the Tammuz*," suggests that it is a chant for Tammuz, who is now dead. This means that these women are lamenting or even praying for or to the dead.

God again told Ezekiel that he would see even greater abominations. Though all are hideous and detestable to God, the last is worse than the previous!

He now is ushered into the east temple court and observes a ritual, a religious drama between the porch and altar of sacrifice. There are twenty-five men (not characterized) with their backs towards the temple. These individuals were prostrating themselves towards the sun. This represented physical homage to a celestial object. The imagery is specific – rejecting Yahweh, they gave obeisance to the sun (god). Solar or astral cults were strictly forbidden in Deuteronomy 4:19 and 17:2-5. Yet, these are God's people worshipping the sun.

Suddenly God says, "Does this all seem trivial to my people? This, along with violence occurring in the land, has now provoked me to anger. Mercy is ended, probation closed" (Ezekiel 8:17-18 – paraphrased).

What does this collectively state regarding God's hatred of all this specific behavior – abominations?

1. Man-made forms of worship are detestable – though it may be a tradition or even cultural.
2. Worship of nature, relics, and idols causes God to flee.
3. Prayer for and to the dead is abhorrent.
4. Worshipping the sun or any sun symbol disconnects man from God.

Worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, is a tradition that is idolatrous. It is a rebellious break from the sacred seventh. It is like turning one's back to God's Sabbath commands. Instead of honoring the resurrection of Jesus – something Christ never commanded – it's like honoring the resurrection of Tammuz, which mythologically occurred annually. Sunday was also the day when the sun was honored by worship. Even in Christ's day the Romans honored Mythrianism, where the first day was seen as sacred.

Abomination in the Cup

The harlot named “Mystery,” “Babylon the Great” of Revelation 17 had a golden cup in her hand. Gold suggests purity, perfection or flawlessness. That was its veneer. It was in her hand so that it could be offered to others. The Word says that it was “full” (*geno* – unable to fit in anymore) of abominations. What abomination (*bdelygmation*)? Jesus used the same word to relate, once again, to significant end-time issues. He referred us to Daniel (which we will once more visit). But, it has led us now to the end-time harlot, the apostate church, with abominations she spreads around the earth.

This time another clue is added to the meaning of “abominations.” It is described as the **“filthiness of her fornication.”** The Greek word for “filthiness” or “unclean thing” is *akatharta*. This is cultic and implies an illicit relationship and/or religious blasphemy. In Revelation 16:13 John saw three **unclean** spirits going out to deceive the nations. Some deceptive or illicit religious teaching enamors the world. The saints clearly reject it because the harlot is there depicted as drunk with the blood of the saints.

The abomination refers to a religious “rite” she idolizes. *Akatharta*, with fornication (*porneras*), reveals that she is intimately relating with others over this “rite,” belief or action.

What deceptive religious teaching or philosophy does the harlot bring to the world? The clues we have reviewed regarding the abomination, desolation and uncleanness all point to a false worship related to the “sun!” God’s sacred seventh is rebelled against. As ancient Israel broke that “sacred seven,” the *shemita*, and brought desolation, so at the end, apostate Christianity breaks a Sabbath, which will lead to desolation.

The beast is a political power. The woman/harlot represents a blasphemous religious system. Slandering the name of God permeates Revelation 17. The Sabbath commandment was designed for people to “remember” God as Creator; it was designed to be a sign of His sovereign power, to be a reminder of the covenant promises and, finally, to be a symbol of deliverance from this world and restoration to God’s original purpose. We are reminded that the harlot is the mother of the *abominations* on the earth resisting this truth. It is the *pesha* found in Daniel 8.

The collective evidence suggests that the harlot, epitomizing the antichrist, is a church that leads all other churches (her daughters) into rebellion against the Sabbath. This is end-time imagery. It becomes a mark of her power and authority since the world submits to her seductive influence. The world eventually seeks to kill the saints who resist this mark. This, then, fulfills a subsequent description of what is also in the cup – the blood of God’s people.

The King of the North Connection

We were introduced to the antichrist – the papal little horn power (its second rise), back in Daniel 8. There is a sequel to that story. God uses varied symbols to describe prophetic powers and events. In chapter 11 the little horn is first referred to as a “vile person.” Then in another section, it is “king of the north.” The latter represents the *rest of the story* in Jesus’ command to look at Daniel.

This king hates God's covenant (11:30). His practices pollute God's sanctuary (because he *stands where it ought not be*). **Then it says that he places** or decrees the abomination that leads to desolation (11:31). This is amazing! The King of the North not only seductively pollutes the church, but is associated with a decree or law that enforces it!

The "mother church" is the Roman Catholic Church. She admits it, and the Bible supports it. But – in the latter, only in a setting of apostasy! The question is raised: Is the Roman Catholic Church interested in civil decrees to enforce Sunday keeping? If it is, the issues of that church related to the abomination would raise an alarm of fearful magnitude. It would be a fulfillment of end-time prophecy that threads its way from the very words of Jesus back to Daniel and forward to Revelation!

On July 5, 1998, the late Pope John Paul II wrote an *apostolic letter, Dies Domini*, of 50 plus pages. These are a few quotations:

66. *"In this matter, my predecessor Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical Rerum Novarum spoke of Sunday rest as a worker's right which the State must guarantee."* (110)
67. *"Therefore, also in the particular circumstances of our own time, **Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy**."*
47. *"Even if in the earliest times it was not judged necessary to be prescriptive, the Church has not ceased to confirm this obligation of conscience, which rises from the inner need felt so strongly by the Christians of the first centuries. It was only later, faced with the half-heartedness or negligence of some, that **the Church had to make explicit the duty to attend Sunday Mass: more often than not, this was done in the form of exhortation, but at times the Church had to resort to specific canonical precepts**."*

*"The present Code reiterates this, saying that 'on Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to attend Mass.' (82) **This legislation has normally been understood as entailing a grave obligation: this is the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, (83) and it is easy to understand why if we keep in mind how vital Sunday is for the Christian life**."*
48. Bishops must ensure that Christians appreciate Sunday. [Hmmm, how does that happen? By using the power of civil law – decrees!]

This document was a communiqué to Catholic Church leaders around the world and directly reflects the ties that Daniel predicted would come at the end of time! Rebellion against the Sabbath is a detestable issue with God. He ties it to the words *pesha* and *shiqquwts*, which prophetically leads to utter *desolation*.

This all happens when the "daily" or true Sabbath is taken away. Daniel's message is nearly finished. There is one more factoid that is vital to the understanding of the abomination. God tells us how long that decree to observe a false sabbath will last.

From the onset of the decree or command to take away the "daily" and set up the abomination which makes the desolation of the earth will be 1290 days (12:11). That represents the last segment of time before Jesus returns (another study).

What an amazing amount of information tucked into the crevasses of so many prophecies. They all have a *consistent* message. They all define how God addresses the Sabbath. It is clear – its holiness never changes. Equally important, it is the pivotal issue at the end of time.

Coming now full circle, we return to Matthew 24. In verse 20 Jesus invited His people to “pray that your flight (escape) be not ... on the Sabbath day.” Why? It would make observing that sacred day difficult. Jesus is consistent. This end-time issue is not Sabbaths (plural). The grand finale of history relates to a single holy day that began at Creation week a little over 6000 years ago.

Prophecy Research Initiative

APPENDIX IV

STUNNING MESSAGES IN CHRIST'S COMMAND TO "FLEE"

Christ's prophecy regarding Jerusalem's fall and associated temple destruction is filled with amazing end-time missives. Most expositors are convinced that there is a dual application between Jerusalem's fall in 70 A.D. and the events surrounding the Second Coming (*parousia*), the latter emphasized more. The linguistic variation between those messages in the gospels conveys additive information which embellishes those events.

Expositor White saw several apocalyptic applications also and amplified those temple/Jerusalem destruction prophecies into those end-time themes. Deciphering these unfolds stunning insight into truth that has been previously elusive. Here are several initial examples from those writings:

"In these words His meaning was **twofold**. He referred not only [1] to the destruction of the Jewish temple and worship, but [2] to His own death,—the destruction of the temple of His body. This the Jews were already plotting. As the priests and rulers returned to the temple, they had proposed to kill Jesus, and thus rid themselves of the troubler. Yet when He set before them their purpose, they did not understand Him. They took His words as applying only to the temple at Jerusalem, and with indignation exclaimed, 'Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?' Now they felt that Jesus had justified their unbelief, and they were confirmed in their rejection of Him."¹

"Christ's words had been spoken in the hearing of a large number of people; but when He was alone, Peter, John, James, and Andrew came to Him as He sat upon the Mount of Olives. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?' Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and [3] the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the **two great crises**, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. **This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history.**"²

Three of the four gospel writers convey those end-time teachings in explicit detail. Intriguingly, they were **not** the disciples who were present when he shared those prophecies (Peter, John, James and Andrew – Mark 13:3).

- Equally captivating is the variation in how those messages are portrayed.

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 164 (emphasis added).

² *Ibid*, p. 628 (emphasis added).

- Since all three were inspired, they each have special instructive values.

One key area that varies in those gospel records is the subject of this study. All are couched in a “timing” theme: “**When ye shall see.**” The issue: “See what?” That begins prophetic counsel.

	<u>See What?</u>	<u>Do What?</u>
Luke 21:20	Armies surrounding Jerusalem (threatening – not penetrating City)	Flee to mountains Depart out
Mark 13:14	Abomination stands where it ought not to (entered City)	Flee into the mountains
Matthew 24:15	Abomination stands in holy place (entered Temple)	Flee into the mountains

This dramatically unfolds a progressive study of the historical military attacks against Jerusalem, as we will see. Since there is also an end-time symbolism – Jerusalem (God’s people), the temple (His church) and the very conscience of the remnant will be subject to progressive coercive attacks at the end.

Roman Threat in its Final Symbolism

All expositors see these “armies” as from the Roman Empire. It is important to note that the ensign of those armies was an **eagle**. The Roman soldiers offered sacrifices to these standards in preparation for battle.



The Jewish historian Josephus made these observations regarding the siege of Jerusalem that Jesus predicted:

“1. Now, as Titus was upon his march into the enemy’s country, the auxiliaries [non-Roman citizens] that were sent by the kings marched first, having all the other auxiliaries with them; after whom followed those that were to prepare the roads and measure out the camp; then came the commander’s baggage, and after that the other soldiers, who were completely armed to support them; then came Titus himself, having with him another select body; and then came the pike men; after whom came the horses belonging to that legion. All these came before the engines; and after these engines came the tribunes and the leaders of the cohorts, with their select bodies; after these came the **ensigns**, with the **eagle**; and before those ensigns came the trumpeters belonging to them.”³

³ Josephus, Flavius; *The Wars of the Jews*, b v, 2, 1 (emphasis added).

“Then came the ensigns encompassing the **eagle**, which is at the **head of every Roman legion**, the king, and the strongest of all birds, which seems to them a signal of dominion, and an omen that they shall conquer all against whom they march.”⁴

The “eagle,” which was their omen for victory, was at the head of their moving legion.

Why is this significant? The eagle was also used as an emblem by the ancient kings of Babylon.⁵ Babylon also is a metaphor for apostasy of Christianity at the end. That too is associated with an eagle!

Long ago Israel’s God inspired Moses to warn Israel of a king from the north (Babylon) who would come if they were disobedient “as swift as the **eagle flieth**.”

“The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, [as swift] *as the eagle flieth*; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; *A nation of fierce countenance*, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which [also] shall not leave thee [either] corn, wine, or oil, [or] the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, *until he have destroyed thee*. And he shall *besiege thee in all thy gates*, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee” (Deuteronomy 28:49-52).

That was fulfilled in 605 B.C. The symbol of the eagle became detestable to the Jews. The Essenes, a Jewish “branch” would commit suicide before they would permit that ensign of Rome to enter the precincts. The non-Christian Jews that escaped the Roman advances, called the Sicarii, sought refuge in the great plateau of Masada in 70 A.D. All committed suicide before the advancing Roman armies with their eagle standard as they were about to invade those cliff havens.

An actual eagle example from this era is on a Roman coin:



Roman denarius coin showing on its back two types of ensigns, the center being an eagle.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book 3, Chapter 6, Section 2 (emphasis added).

⁵ http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/a-primer-to-catholic-symbolism.htm#The_Eagle_

⁶ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b2/Denarius_Mark_Anthony-32BC-legIII.jpg

Those ensigns were called “abominations.” Luke is the first to address the military operations. He referred to them as armies. Mark and Matthew refer to them as “abomination,” which they personified as something detestable that was attacking. That is exactly what Christ wanted to convey because He said: “**When** you **see** the ‘abomination.’”

C. H. Spurgeon wrote (1888): “This portion of our Saviour’s words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ’s disciples saw ‘the abomination of desolation,’ that is, the Roman **ensigns**, with their idolatries, ‘stand in the holy place,’ they knew that the time for their escape had arrived; and they did flee to the mountains.”⁷

Albert Barnes wrote (1949): “The abomination of desolation means the Roman army, and is so explained by Lu, xxi. 20. The Roman army is further called the **abomination** on account of the **images of the emperor**, and the **eagles**, carried in front of the legions, and regarded by the Romans with divine honours.”⁸

Sir Isaac Newton, a detailed apocalyptic expositor, saw these ensigns also as the “abomination.”

At this **time of the end** we note that these great symbols of the past apply with uncanny precision:

- Babylon will be a “great city” that God’s people are to escape from (Revelation 14:8, 18:2) – many of its inhabitants drink the wine of apostasy (fornication) (cf. Hosea 4:10-19, Jeremiah 3:2-3).
- In place of the symbol of an ancient pagan religion, the end-time imagery is of an apostate church called Babylon (Revelation 17:5). She is making the world drink of her wine which God now calls – here it is – abomination, filthiness of her fornication (again, cf. Hosea 4:10-19, Jeremiah 3:2-3). Revelation 17’s prophecy notes that she is centered in Rome (city of seven hills).
- A “king of the north” will rule all apostate powers (Daniel 11:40-45). This ties to Lucifer (Isaiah 14:13; cf. Psalm 48:3) and to his earthly leaders.
- A **bird** represents a fourth living creature (Revelation 4:7) that is like an eagle. That symbolizes the leading tribe of Dan to the **north**.
- A group of people supporting Satan, wanting to be like God (whose throne is to the north – Psalm 45:2) will represent an eagle-like power just like Dan. (The “pale horse” of the fourth seal (Revelation 6).

What does “mountains” mean?

Historically, some Jews did flee to the mountains. Eusebius (H.E. iii,5,3) says that the Christians actually fled to Pella at the foot of the mountains about seventeen miles south of the Sea of Galilee. They remembered the warning of Jesus and fled for safety.⁹ Is this the response to each threat from that apostate Roman church?

⁷ Spurgeon, Charles H. *Commentary on Matthew – The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Banner of Truth, July 1, 2010), p. 215 (emphasis added).

⁸ Barnes, Albert; *Power BibleCD* 5.9, Matthew 24:15 (emphasis added).

⁹ *Robertson’s Word Picture* on Matthew 24.

- Symbolically, mountains represent God's power (Psalm 121:1-2), where God dwells (Mt. Zion) (Psalm 2:6, 135:21; Isaiah 8:18; Joel 3:21), where God's people will go for security and worship (Revelation 14:1).
- *"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Isaiah 2:2-4).
- Symbolically, the setting for these prophecies – the escape to the mountain – means to **flee from Babylon** (apostasy) to a place where **spiritual safety lies** (Lord's house on top of the mountains).
- We will see shortly that expositor White ties the message to "flee" **initially** to getting out of the big cities. Spiritually, that becomes a time when we must flee to the "mount of God," the "stronghold of the Lord."

Looking at Luke's Attacking Armies

The end-time narrative given to us by Luke creates a foundation for us to build upon:

- Some plants require a **trellis** to grow on.
- Luke's narrative is a **trellis** to our understanding for the "living" prophecies of Mark and Matthew to develop and expand.

Jesus had been asked what the "sign" of the temple's destruction would be (Luke 21:6-7). To understand the end-time significance of His answer:

- **Jerusalem** was not only a city important to the Jews but –
 - It was personified by Jesus (Matthew 23:37-39, Luke 13:34-35) as His people.
 - Jerusalem was seen also as a mother (Isaiah 54, 62:1, 4).
 - Here and in the two other gospels, it is portrayed as **God's people**.
- The Temple was where God dwelt (among His people and within us) (pre- and post-Cross).

"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Corinthians 6:16).

Jesus said in Luke's narrative that the sign of the attacking armies would be a siege on Jerusalem.

- Christ talked about that contemporary (within one generation) fulfillment in Luke 19:43-44.
- At the end He noted that Satan's host would lay siege on God's people.
- The only ones to escape were those who follow the instruction Jesus gave to "flee."

The setting in Luke 21 is far different from that in Matthew or Mark. Luke's review of one attack is in 17:22-37. The admonition of not going back for a coat if in the field or into the house if on the rooftop is **missing** in the Luke 21's Jerusalem discourse.

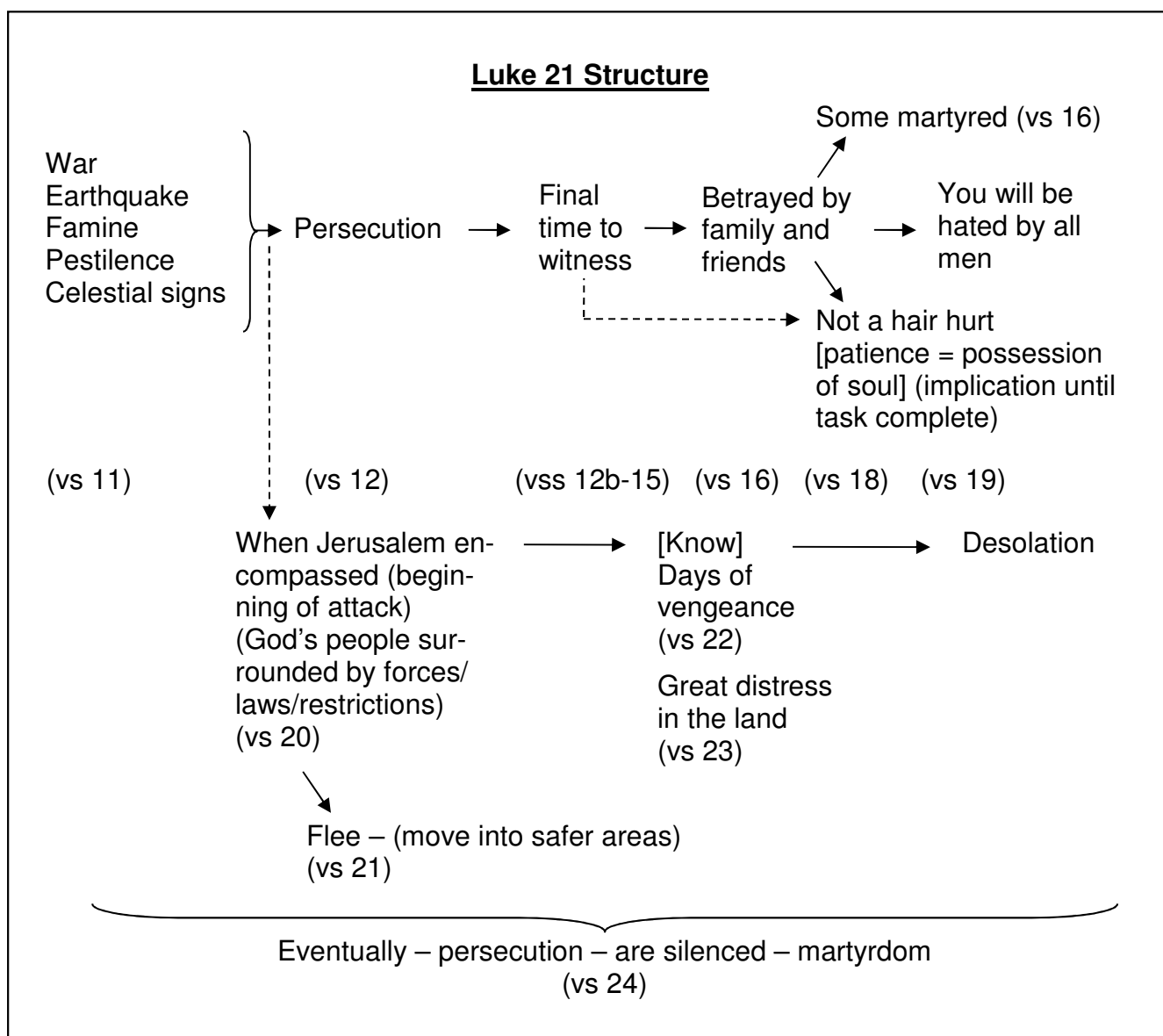
- Those illustrations were metaphors for urgency. Thus, the setting here is more "casual."
- The word "flee" (*pheugetosan*) is used in each place but implied differently. It is a different imperative flow of thought:

*"Then **let them** which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and **let them** which are in the midst of it depart out; and **let not them** that are in the countries enter thereinto"* (Luke 21:21).

- It is **invitational**, almost pastoral, to entreat action when God's people will be morally attacked – seek spiritual safety when that occurs.
- Escape from the danger.

We get insight for this eschatological prophecy from its first historical application (not in Luke's parameters).

- "Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had given his disciples warning, and all who believed his words watched for the promised sign. 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies,' said Jesus, 'then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out.' [Luke 21:20, 21.] After the Romans under Cestius [Gaius Cestius Gallus – Roman general who had been assigned to Syria A.D. 63-65 and came to squelch the Jewish revolt by Nero's orders] had surrounded the city, they unexpectedly abandoned the siege when everything seemed favorable for an immediate attack. The besieged, despairing of successful resistance, were on the point of surrender, when the Roman general withdrew his forces, without the least apparent reason. But God's merciful providence was directing events for the good of his own people. The promised sign had been given to the waiting Christians, and now an opportunity was afforded for all who would to obey the Saviour's warning. Events were so overruled that neither Jews nor Romans should hinder the flight of the Christians. Upon the retreat of Cestius, the Jews, sallying from Jerusalem, pursued after his retiring army, and while both forces were thus fully engaged, the Christians had an opportunity to leave the city. At this time the country also had been cleared of enemies who might have endeavored to intercept them. At the time of the siege [66 A.D. – **beginning** of the three and a half year period], the Jews were assembled at Jerusalem to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**, and thus the Christians throughout the land were able to make their escape unmo-



lest. Without delay they fled to a place of safety,—the city of Pella, in the land of Perea, beyond Jordan.”¹⁰

This was the **onset** of a three and a half year war against God’s people. It would have to end at Passover.

- It was the symbolic *end-time* **beginning** of the 42 months of persecution noted elsewhere (Revelation 11:2, 13:4).
- “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months” (Revelation 11:2).

This was in turn echoing Daniel.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 30-31.

- “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 an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:7).

Notice that the end-time persecution is related to the world of non-Jews (Gentiles), just like Cestius (11:2) – civil powers.

- Here, Luke notes the same with similar language:
“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). The “time of the Gentiles” followed the gospel to the Jews, which ended in A.D. 33-34.
- Christ called these “*days of vengeance*” (Luke 21:22) – persecution.

For the remnant – in the end-time application – God does not promise a total escape from this persecution or even martyrdom. **But** – He does give counsel on how to **minimize its impact** (by fleeing):

- “*Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto*” (Luke 21:21).
- At the onset of the three and a half years the Sunday laws will be a signal for God’s people to act to minimize hostilities! We know that from cross-reference to Daniel.
- “The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places **[that will apply to Matthew’s discourse]**. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians **[leaning now on Luke’s account]**, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation [the United States] in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be **time to leave the large cities**, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.”¹¹ (This latter will not occur until close to the end of the three and a half years.)

Here, expositor White notes that “fleeing” at the **onset** of the siege on God’s people was to get out of the cities. Her message there becomes progressive! But there is more.

Jesus said here that when armies would encompass Jerusalem, desolation would not be far away.

- In Matthew 24:15 Jesus said that an abomination would lead to desolation.
- He said that that was explained in Daniel.
- There:
 Chp. 8: **Place** of God’s sanctuary is cast down (representing law, justice, righteousness) (12)

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 180 (emphasis added).

A specific sin related to this hostility leads to **desolation** and the sanctuary and God's "host" is trodden down (13) (persecution).

After 2300 years, the sanctuary where God resides is totally cleansed (14) (9:24).

Chp. 9: Satan makes **desolate** God's sanctuary (27) (apostate church) right up until the consummation because of his abomination.

Chp. 11: A "king" "person" pollutes the sanctuary – military might on his part (31), by an abomination that leads to **desolation**.

Chp. 12: An abomination makes **desolation** (12:11).

All these refer to the same sin/desolation!

There, the sin (transgression) that led to desolation is rebellion against the Sabbath (chapter 8). Later, in the rest of Daniel, Jesus called that transgression an "abomination."

- Combining Luke and Daniel, the armies surrounding Jerusalem **represent**:
- **Preparation** to use force against God's people to honor a false Sabbath. Everything is now in place.
- There are Sunday laws, but they aren't enforced.

That becomes a **sign** to God's people to relocate – seek a place of spiritual security (symbolically, this is called a "wilderness") (i.e., where God can protect).

- Cestius Gallus attacked in the fall of 66 A.D.
- He retreated – and it appears that by 68 A.D. all of God's remnant had escaped. The window of time was long.

Sunday laws will be like the armies surrounding Jerusalem with the intent to penetrate its boundaries. But the laws are not initially enforced.

- Though there are possibilities for adverse encounters to occur – time to escape/relocate is clearly given.
- As it was in the "Jerusalem surrounded" imagery, time to leave the cities will then be given. God will provide the opportunity to liquidate assets and relocate to a more secure place.
- Finishing the work still lies ahead – thus it won't be a time for isolation.
- This is a key to understand this prophecy.



We know Luke's narrative relates to the end of time because:

- Those "*days*" relate to when "*all things which are written may be fulfilled*" (Luke 21:22) – Written where? Daniel.

And

- “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).
- When the collective events that Christ presented begin to trend upward – the end is upon us.

What does Luke mean by:

- If in Judea – flee to the “mountains”?
- If in Jerusalem – depart to a safe place?
- If in the country – don’t go into the city?
(We’ll look at these more when we move into Matthew’s account.)
- For now, the context is – “move to a **more secure place spiritually.**” Don’t expose yourself unnecessarily to danger.

Again, we know these things because they represent the **beginning** of the final three and a half years that E. G. White applied this to also!

Mark Records His End-Time Impressions (Mark 13)

*“But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **standing where it ought not**, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.”* (Mark 13:14).

The imagery of “standing where it ought not” is couched in language of great urgency (like Matthew). This is **very** different from Luke! The city has been penetrated. The force of apostasy is in the body of Christ.

- If on housetop (roofs were flat and a place to relax/socialize). Don’t go into the house – flee (vs 15).
- If in the field, don’t return to where your coat is (vs 16) – flee.

The picture is one where the abominable laws against the Sabbath have now begun to be a threat – “standing where it ought not” – suggesting:

- They might be forced on God’s people. They could prohibit Sabbath worship.
- The churches could be coerced.
- “Standing” means “control over” wherever it is positioned.
- Legal measures have been taken to force Sunday worship – **the** abomination of Daniel – and restrict conscience.
- Religious liberty is now in peril.

Daniel **wasn’t** appealed to in Luke!! Here he is. The issue is now specific.

- God’s people are being asked to honor something detestable to God.

- A sacrilege is being forced on the world.

Again, this represents a time of persecution noted in Daniel and Revelation.

- *“And it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them”* (Daniel 8:10b) (referring to the saints).
- *“And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall **fall by the sword**, and **by flame**, **by captivity**, and **by spoil**, many days”* (Daniel 11:33) (referring to the remnant).
- *“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 an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished”* (Daniel 12:7b). God, here, promises a time limit on Satan/Antichrist’s persecution!
- *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10) (ten days – “short period of time”).
- *“And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”* (Revelation 11:2b). This “city” is symbolic of God’s people.

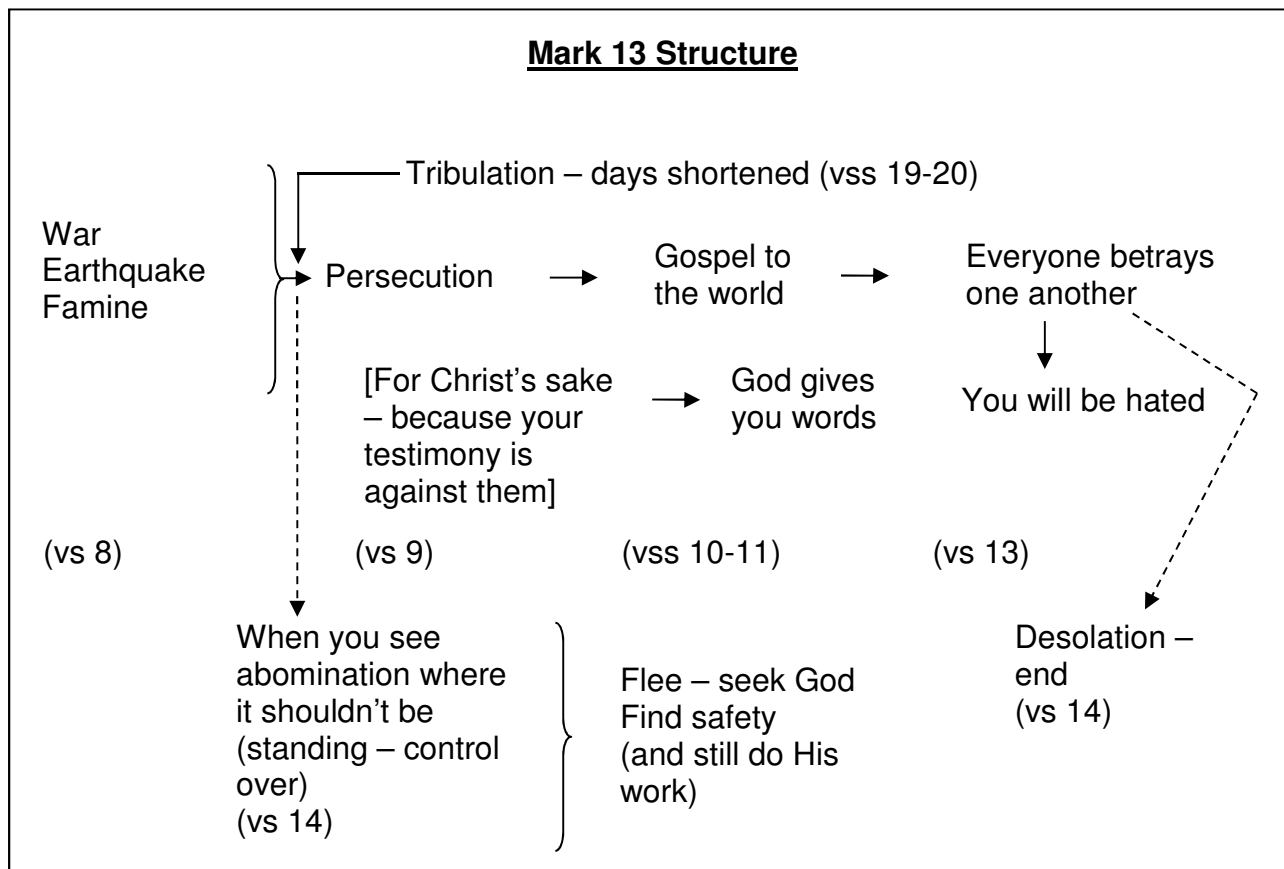
This is tied to Revelation 12:17 (cf. 13:7): *“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”*

- God’s people have gone to the mountain of God.
- *“And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11).

It is now assumed that the three and a half year period is far along. In the end-time metaphor, God’s people are out of the cities, in smaller hamlets. Now everything needs to be done to minimize a direct confrontation. If a threat comes, urgent action to alleviate it and prevent its reoccurring is advised. This coincides with General Vespasian’s attack. He had full control of Judah. The lives of God’s people were suppressed, like the time when they must work on the Sabbath.

At the time of Cestius Gallus only a part of Palestine was under siege; and when he and his forces were routed, the Jewish Christians were given time to escape. When Vespasian came in it became suppressive, but a small reprieve came right near the end.

Mark's sequence/imagery:



That was opportunity **two** to “flee” like Luke directed. That was in 66-68 A.D.

Nero, upset at Gallus’ ineptness, ordered General Vespasian to subjugate completely the Jews. He assembled 60,000 troops and captured all the cities of Judea. In these attacks he slaughtered thousands. Then he laid siege on Jerusalem, totally blocking all movement in or out of the city. But he retreated because of Nero’s death (suicide) and the amazing conflict as to who would lead the empire. This gave another window of two years grace to the Jewish people, especially the Christians. **That was opportunity number two** – just like Mark notes.

When Vespasian ascended the throne, he ordered his son, Titus, to attack and subdue Jerusalem. At the end, new laws will be passed to enforce existing religious laws.

“Support will be withdrawn from those who proclaim God's law as the only standard of righteousness, the only sure test of character. And all who will not bow to the decree of the national councils, and obey the national laws to exalt the Sabbath instituted by the man of sin, to the disregard of God's holy day, will feel not only the oppressive power of the Papacy, but the oppression of the Protestant world, who will seek to enforce the worship of the image of the beast.”¹²

¹² *The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1911.

The Mathian Record

"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:" (Matthew 24:15)!

After giving a dramatic sequence of end-time events, Jesus suddenly became directive: "Flee"! When the abomination is **in** the "holy place"! Note how this is structured (Matthew 24).

Josephus¹³ says that when the Roman soldiers entered the temple they placed their standards [eagle with Emperor's head underneath (Barnes)] in the temple and in the eastern gate – direction of the rising sun.

- **Now** it is utterly urgent to escape – destruction had not begun.

A small window of time comes once again.

Josephus tells us that Titus' Roman Legions marched with standards (or ensigns) that bore the image of the Roman eagle on them.

- Titus suffered many defeats and made many strategic mistakes.¹⁴
- Once he sent spies into the city and **into the temple**, then suddenly began slaughtering priests and worshipers.
- In the confusion that followed, including a very successful counterattack by the Jewish military against his forces, another window for the Christians to escape came.
- Opportunity number **three**: This was the *last chance* for the Christians.
- It was only a brief time till Jerusalem was surrounded again.

Another siege was planned and Titus decided to personally inspect the city walls. He and a force of 600 men were ambushed. Titus barely escaped with his life.

- He retreated – but still had total control of movement around the city.
- All other Judean cities were secured by the Roman military.
- During this time Titus blocked all food access and permitted no one to leave the city. Travelers could enter Jerusalem but became imprisoned there.
- At the end, God's people won't be able to buy or sell.

Then, in the few months leading up to Passover, he planned a major attack while starving the city.

- It was then, in the spring of 70 A.D. that the city was secured



Catapulta

¹³ Josephus, Flavius; *The Wars of the Jews*, b. vi., 6.

¹⁴ Josephus, Flavius; *The Wars of the Jews*, b. vi., 9.3. "The Siege of Jerusalem."

- Then the temple was entered and destroyed.

Thus, the final escape opportunities under Titus came only under extreme urgency – after his spies were routed – just as Matthew reflected!

Three and a half years – Tabernacles to Passover. At the end of time, prophecy declares it would be Passover to Tabernacles! (That's another beautiful study.)

End-Time Imagery

This brings to the fore a future time (soon) when the forces of law/military will come to control/destroy God's people.

- The knowledge that Titus killed more than one million Jewish people
- Show that it will be a time when a death penalty has been made

Daniel's three and a half year prophecy reveals that an abomination (false sabbath day enforcement) would begin the process and eventually become a life and death matter.

The story of the beasts in Revelation 13 notes several times that a decree will go forth to kill all who don't have the mark of the beast.

- *"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed"* (Revelation 13:15).
- That is a **death decree** that means not only "escape" or fleeing must come but "hiding/seclusion" is now required.

"As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities [some are still there] and villages [that means that they have been living in areas from which they can reach out to help finish the work] and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. Like the Christians of the Piedmont valleys, they will make the high places of the earth their sanctuaries and will thank God for "the munitions of rocks." Isaiah 33:16. But many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons. No human ear is open to hear their moans; no human hand is ready to lend them help."¹⁵

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 626.

	<u>Historic</u>	<u>End-Time</u>	<u>Final Meaning</u>
Luke 21:20	Armies surrounded city	Abomination – Sunday laws surround Christian world	Saints are threatened Escape to places of greater spiritual safety out of large cities
Mark 13:14	Abomination – Standing where it shouldn't	Sunday laws enforced God's church subjugated	Penetration of God's people – restriction of their activity Escape anything that threatens spiritual experience
Matthew 24:15	Abomination – enters temple	Death decree Forced to violate conscience	Coerce conscience upon death penalty Escape to solitary places



Robert's Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem

Summary of These Progressive Narratives

This is a graphic progression of what lies ahead. We are not told to escape into solitary places. The key to these prophecies is to flee to places or environments that are spiritually safe. Yet, not until the very end; we must maintain a witnessing/proselytizing contact with the world.

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