

The Second Coming, Part 1

Matthew 24:1-14

January 20th, 2019

Big idea: Like birth pangs that increase in intensity, war, persecution, and suffering will be part of this age and increase as Jesus' return approaches.

Intro

People have always been fascinated by the knowledge of the future

Biff the bully in the Back to the Future movies who receives a book from his future self with all the results of sporting events that he uses to make himself rich through gambling

Fascination with Nostrodomus and his fuzzy and malleable "prophecies"

Atheist sci-fi write Isaac Asimov and his Foundation trilogy about a scientist who uses a scientific and mathematical techniques to predict 1,000 years of future events

Biblical prophecy has been a source of similar interest, among Christians and non-Christians alike.

The Left Behind series has sold more than 80 million copies

But predictive prophesies are recorded not to satisfy the curious but to prepare and motivate the faithful.

2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-11 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."⁸ But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

Matthew 24-25 contains the final of five great discourses.

Often referred to as the Olivet Discourse because He was on the Mount of Olives when He gave the teaching to His disciples

It focuses heavily on prophetic material.

Recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; but with the most detail in Matthew.

Mix of near and far fulfillments

Jerusalem would be destroyed in AD 70 but v 15-21 picture something much more significant, a great trib such as has never been seen.

There is always tribulation, but there will be a great tribulation

There is always persecution, but there will be great persecution

There are always "antichrists," but there will be an antichrist figure

1. Jesus predicted the destruction of the **temple** in Jerusalem. (24:1-2)
 - a. Beautiful building nearing completion after a major building project by Herod.
 - i. Stones holding up the temple mount area were as large as school buses

- ii. Parts of the building were covered in gold so they reflected the sun
 - b. In AD 70 this is just what happened.
 - i. The Roman general Titus invaded the city. This beautiful structure was torn destroyed. He build huge wooden scaffolds against the walls and piled them with wood and lit them on fire. The stones didn't burn of course but the high heat caused them to crumble. Later the rubble was tossed into the Kidron valley. Most of the citizens were killed.
 - ii. **Luke 19:41-44** When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."
 - iii. Part of the temple mount remained and is visible today but the temple itself was destroyed.
2. The disciples privately asked Jesus **two** questions. (24:3)
- a. Setting
 - i. They were on the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley, in view of the temple
 - b. Two questions
 - i. **When** will these things happen?
 - ii. What will be the **sign** of your coming and the end of the age?
 1. This is one question as Jesus' coming and the end of the age are a singular event – when He returns it marks the end of this period of history.
 2. They may have viewed the destruction of Jerusalem, His coming to rule, and the end of the age all as one event that they expected soon.
 3. What would they have meant by "coming?"
 - a. They still seemed to expect a Messianic kingdom to be set up on earth soon.
 - b. Even after His death and resurrection they ask:
 - i. Acts 1:6b "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"
 - c. But Jesus uses it throughout as a reference to His second coming
 - d. Used through the NT epistles as a reference to Jesus' return (1 Cor 15:23; 3 times in 1 Thessalonians)
 4. Bible believing Christians are consistent in their belief that Jesus will return.
 - a. Differences come in what will precede his return – will Christians be raptured, will there be 7 year period known as the Great Tribulation (from words used in this chapter)
 - b. And what will happen after his return – will He set up His kingdom then or are we living in the kingdom now?
 - c. Our teaching position here is pre-trib, pre-mil (explain)

5. He's not here addressing an event known as the rapture that will happen about 7 years prior to Jesus return, just before the Great Tribulation.
- c. Answers them in reverse order
- i. First, roughly through v 35 He explains what will precede His coming and the end of the age
 - ii. Then, beginning in v 36 he addresses their question about when this will happen.
3. Don't be **mislead**. Suffering, deception, persecution, and evangelism will always be present and will increase near the end. (24:4-14)
- a. Like labor pains, these signs will be **painful** and **increasing** in severity near the end. (v. 8)
- i. Fall of Jerusalem like the dress-rehearsal for the main show – “that day” – (Doriani)
 1. It was a major event but it prefigured the climactic conclusion to the end.
 - ii. Like labor pains because if you understand what's happening, you know that the labor pains mean a baby will come at some point, but the pain will come in waves over and over again. You don't know if the baby will come on the fifth pain or the 500th, you don't know if the labor will last 2 hours or 2 days, but you know the end result. The timing is unpredictable, but the result is certain, apart from tragic exceptions.
 - iii. An imagery used several times in the Old Testament
 1. **Isaiah 13:8a** They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor
 2. **Isaiah 26:17-19a** As the pregnant woman approaches *the time* to give birth, She writhes *and* cries out in her labor pains,
 3. **Micah 4:9-10** "Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, Or has your counselor perished, That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?"
 - iv. Why is this important to know?
 1. V. 6 – don't be frightened - Avoid the fear, panic, and conspiracy theories that can dominate a person's life if they think every news event is a sign of the end.
 2. Avoid the apathy that acts as if Jesus will never return.
 3. Don't be misled in either extreme.
 - v. Two key ideas then that shape the way we read these other descriptions – don't be misled, don't be frightened - these things characterize this age like labor pains.
- b. Phony **Messiahs** (v. 5)
- i. There were false Messiah's before and after Jesus' time. As His return approaches, this will increase.
 - ii. Just a sampling of those who have claimed to be the Messiah in recent centuries
 1. Kondratiy Selivanov in Russia in the mid 18th century, led a breakaway religious sect
 2. John Nicholas Thom, a tax rebel in England in the early 19th century
 3. William Davies, leader of an LDS splinter group in the late 19th century who claimed his son was Jesus.

4. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in India in the late 19th early 20th century claimed to be the promised Messiah.
 5. Haile Selassie, of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica in the 1930's, his followers claimed he was the second coming of Jesus.
 6. Lou de Palingboer in the mid 20th century, claimed to be the resurrected Jesus Christ and started a new religious movement in the Netherlands
 7. Ahn Sahng-hong, South Korean who founded the World Mission Society Church of God in 1964, believed to be the second coming of Jesus by his followers, also taught that there is a Mother God. I met some of these "missionaries" about a year ago going door to door in my neighborhood.
 8. Sun Myung Moon –
 9. Jim Jones – People's temple that led a mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978, claimed to be reincarnated Jesus.
 10. Marshall Applewhite, lead the Heaven's Gate mass suicide in 1997 claimed to be Jesus.
 11. Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez, a 21 year old from Idaho Falls, Idaho who shot at the White House in 2011, also claimed to be Jesus Christ sent to assassinate the president.
- iii. Each of these, with the exception of the last one, developed a following. Each of these followers should have read this passage and been warned.

1. When Jesus returns He says it will be like lightning flashing from the sky (v. 27) – it will be obvious and clear. Don't be misled.

c. International **conflicts** (vv. 6-7a)

- i. Wars have been near constant throughout the world, but when your country, or town, or family is involved it feels catastrophic and the end of the world.
- ii. Don't be frightened, the end is not yet.
 1. Not that war isn't a frightening thing. Of course it is. My grandmother who immigrated from Austria after WWII, described listening to bombs dropping all over Salzburg during an allied bombing raid.
 2. Doriani – War is a terrible evil but it is a common evil. In recent years, experts have concluded, there have been at least a dozen conflicts simmering in Africa, Asia, Europe, or the Americas at all times. . . All demonstrate the sinfulness of mankind, but none portends an imminent end of this age.
- iii. Some people live with the reality of wars and rumors of wars hanging over their head.
 1. In the Republic of Georgia where I was this fall, one of the pastors I was working with pointed to these beautiful mountains that separated Georgia from Russia and said, "We know the Russians are building roads and building up forces right behind those mountains, but there is nothing we can do about it. They could invade at any time, like they did in 2008." They wake up to news reports regularly that the occupied territory that Russia holds in South Ossetia, Georgia grew a little bit more as the border was moved over night.
 2. But they have been invaded 17 times in their recorded history.

3. It will get worse as Jesus return approaches, but it's a mistake to look at any one event or conflict as a sign that the end is at hand.
- d. **Earthquakes**, famines, and plagues (v. 7b; Luke 21:11)
 - i. Matthew describes the famines and earthquakes, Luke adds a reference to plagues.
 - ii. Close to 20 earth quakes a year that register above 7.0 on the richter scale. 20,000 that register above 4.0, similar to those we felt about a year ago with an epicenter near Soda Springs.
 - iii. Plagues – you can imagine people living during the Bubonic plague or black death that killed 30-60% of Europe in the 14th century. Today Aids, Ebola, and malaria make the news for casualties.
 - iv. It's good that we have seen a great decrease in deaths from disease and an increase in life expectancy. Christians should never have a mindset of, "well, these things are going to happen and there's nothing we can do about it."
 - v. These will increase and get worse,
 1. **Revelation 6:8b** Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.
 2. **Revelation 6:12a** I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake;
 - e. **Persecution** (v. 9)
 - i. Jesus' disciples faced this as we can read about in the book of Acts.
 - ii. But Christians throughout history have as well.
 - iii. Voice of the Martyrs reports that in at least 50 countries in the world today Christians experience persecution.
 1. Sometimes at the hands of the government, like in China.
 2. Sometimes from family members or communities, like in many middle eastern countries.
 3. Sometimes from other dominant religious groups, like some Hindus in India who want to maintain a Hindu identity for Indians.
 - f. **Falling** away (v. 10)
 - i. Many who claim Christ will fall away under pressure. It doesn't mean their salvation was lost but rather they were never truly saved and when it became culturally difficult to maintain a Christian identity, they abandoned the faith.
 - ii. Persecution can have a purifying and clarifying effect.
 - iii. If you knew that you might be arrested for gathering on a Sunday morning for worship, it would reveal who is gathering to hang out with friends, or to receive child care for their kids, or because they like to sing.
 - iv. Those who are His own, God will keep from falling away
 1. **Psalm 37:24** When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.
 2. **1 Peter 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection

of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

g. Spiritual **deception** (v. 11)

- i. Not only people claiming to be the Messiah, but people that claim to be prophets but teach a distorted message and mislead many.
- ii. John of God in Brazil who claimed to be able to provide “spiritual surgeries” for healing and claims millions of miracles. Even interviewed by Oprah in 2010. Recently in the news because more than 600 women have come forward to accuse him of abuse. But people have been flocking to him since the 1970s.
- iii. There has always been a danger of spiritual deception. It characterized the decades leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, it’s present in our day, and it will increase near the end.

h. Increase in **lawlessness** (v. 12-13)

- i. Lawlessness will increase as people throw off moral restraint. We see this at a rapid pace in our own nation as things that were generally considered immoral 5 or 10 years ago are now accepted.
- ii. As a result of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.
 1. We saw in chapter 22 that Jesus taught that love for God was the greatest commandment and the second was love for others.
 2. Loving God is never reduced to merely following rules, but out of love for Him we should want to honor Him with our lives and care about obedience to Him.
 3. Likewise, loving our neighbor involves doing them good and Biblical commandments against injustice, dishonesty, stealing, adultery, and more are tangible ways to love our neighbor.
 4. It’s easy to see why lawlessness is linked to a decrease in love.

i. Spread of the **gospel** (v. 14)

- i. But there is something positive here in the negative.
- ii. The gospel will continue to spread and go forth.
- iii. It reached much of the known world in the first generation after Christ’s death and resurrection, but even today there are many who have never heard of Christ and have minimal gospel witness in their people group. It’s a task unfinished.
- iv. Facing a Task Unfinished, song
 1. First written in 1929 in China, new lyrics and music were added three years ago by Keith and Kristyn Getty, who wrote many of the songs we sing here at UBC regularly.
 2. Facing a task unfinished
That drives us to our knees
A need that, undiminished
Rebukes our slothful ease
We, who rejoice to know Thee
Renew before Thy throne

The solemn pledge we owe Thee
To go and make Thee known

3. We go to all the world
With kingdom hope unfurled
No other name has power to save
But Jesus Christ The Lord
4. We bear the torch that flaming
Fell from the hands of those
Who gave their lives proclaiming
That Jesus died and rose
Ours is the same commission
The same glad message ours
Fired by the same ambition
To Thee we yield our powers
5. O Father who sustained them
O Spirit who inspired
Saviour, whose love constrained them
To toil with zeal untired
From cowardice defend us
From lethargy awake!
Forth on Thine errands send us
To labour for Thy sake

4. So what should we do?

Particular relevance for the first generation of disciples who lived through early persecution and the destruction of Jerusalem. Particular relevance for the last generation that will see the return of Christ. That may be us, or it may not be.

- a. Don't be **mislead** (v. 4)
 - i. Discernment matters – people who get caught up in following false messiah and false prophets usually come out of a background with some knowledge of the Bible – they know about Jesus' coming and so when someone says it's happened and here's the guy and he's a charismatic figure, they want to believe it. A person they want to believe brings a message they want to believe and they get hooked.
- b. Don't be **frightened** (vv. 6, 8)
 - i. By wars and rumors of wars, by conflict in the middle east, by earth quakes and natural disasters
 - ii. They are tragic but tragically common. If they increase and point to Jesus' return, then we don't need to fear in those scenarios because He's coming.
- c. Be on the **alert** and ready (vv. 42, 44)
 - i. Avoid fear but also avoid apathy. Be aware that this life is temporary. Either it will end when the number of your days runs out or it will end when Jesus returns. For some generation, maybe ours, maybe not, the clock will run out and He will come.



1

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A need that, undiminished
Rebukes our slothful ease
We, who rejoice to know Thee
Renew before Thy throne
The solemn pledge we owe Thee
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We go to all the world
With kingdom hope unfurled
No other name has power to save
But Jesus Christ The Lord

12

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We bear the torch that flaming
Fell from the hands of those
Who gave their lives proclaiming
That Jesus died and rose
Ours is the same commission
The same glad message ours
Fired by the same ambition
To Thee we yield our powers

13

4. So what should we do?

- a. Don't be *mislead* (v. 4)
- b. Don't be *frightened* (vv. 6, 8)
- c. Be on the *alert* and ready (vv. 42, 44)

14