

THE COMING TIME OF TROUBLE

Matthew 24:4-14

In response to the disciples question in **verse 3**, Jesus began what is known as the **Olivet Discourse**...to describe the events leading up to His **return in glory**...and to indicate the **signs** of that return. In the first part of this section (**verses 4-8**) He described the first half of the **seven-year period** preceding His **second coming**...the period known as the **Great Tribulation**. That period is also called the **Seventieth Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27)**.

Some **premillennialist** hold that Christ in **verses 4-8** spoke of general signs in the present **Church Age** and that **the time of trouble** actually begins in **verse 9**. Others hold that Christ was speaking of general signs in **verses 4-14**, with the **Tribulation** beginning in **verse 15**. Either way, the events described in **verses 4-8** correspond closely to the **seven seals** described in **Revelation 6**.

The Seven Seals Unfolded: Matthew 24 compared to Revelation 6, 8

- **1st Seal**...*The Antichrist...Brief false peace* (**vs. 5**) (**Rev. 6:1-2**)
- **2nd Seal**...*Wars and rumors of wars...warfare*...where nations will rise up against each other on a global scale (**vs. 6-7a**) (**Rev. 6:3-4**)
- **3rd Seal**...*Famine*...unusual disturbances in nature including famines (**vs. 7b**) (**Rev. 6:5-6**)
- **4th Seal**...*Death* (**vs. 9**) (**Rev. 6:7-8**) Death by the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beast.
- **5th Seal**...*Martyrs* (**vs. 9-10**) (**Rev. 6:9-11**)
- **6th Seal**...*Physical disturbances...Earthquakes...Sky Goes Black* (**vs. 7c, 29**) (**Rev. 6:12-16**)
- **7th Seal**...*Final Cataclysmic Judgment* (**vs. 36-44**) (**Rev. 8**)

Jesus said that these things will be **the beginning of birth pains**. As a pregnant woman's birth pains indicate that her child will soon be born... so these universal conflicts and catastrophic events will mean the end of this **inter-advent Age**...the present **Church Age**...is near.

Beginning here in **verse 4**, Jesus answers the disciples' question...**when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?** (**vs. 3**). He responds to the **two parts** of the question in **reverse order**. He doesn't deal with the **"when"** until **vs. 36**, when He says...**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the**

angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Here in **verses 4-14**, He begins to answer the **second part** of the question by describing the initial group of **six signs**...**the birth pains**...that will occur just before His coming.

I. THE DECEPTION: (**vs. 4-5**) *False Christ*.

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you" (**vs. 4**)...

The **first birth pain** to signal Christ's return will be widespread deception by a **proliferation** of **false Christs**.

See to it...Gk. **blepo**, means *to keep your eyes open...beware*.

For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many (**vs. 5**)...

False Christs and **false prophets** will arise and will show **great signs** and **wonders** (**vs. 24**). Empowered by demons, the end-time false Christs will manifest **supernatural powers** that previous ones have not possessed.

II. THE DISPUTES: (**vs. 6-7a**) *Warfare among the nations*.

The **second birth pain** will involve intensified and unparalleled disputes and warfare among the nations and kingdoms of the world.

You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end (**vs. 6**)...

You will be hearing...Gk. **mello**, is in the **future tense** and carries the idea of **continual hearing**. There will be **constant talk** of actual wars and of **rumors of wars** to the degree the world has never known before.

Those things must take place...these are **accurate evidence** that God's plan is unfolding according to His will.

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (**vs. 7a**)...

The point is that **no group of people** will be **exempt** from war or the **threat of war**. The books of **Daniel** in the Old Testament and **Revelation** in the New Testament **give many details** regarding the **coming conflicts**.

III. THE DEVASTATION: (vs. 7b-8) *Throughout the world.*

The *next birth pain* of the end time will be *worldwide devastation*. In addition to the *deception of false Christs* and *warring* dissension *among the nations*...there will be *famines* and *earthquakes*... *natural disasters* of staggering proportions that will ensue as the cursed earth begins to disintegrate. **Luke** adds that there will also be *plagues* and *terrors* and *great signs from heaven* (**Luke 21:11**).

And in various places there will be *famines* and *earthquakes* (vs. 7b)...

But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs (vs. 8)...Labor pains don't occur at *conception* or throughout *pregnancy* but *just before birth*...and they occur with *increasing frequency* until the baby is born.

IV. THE DELIEVERANCE: (vs. 9) *Of believers to tribulation.*

The *fourth labor pain* will be *severe persecution* of believers by the world.

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name (vs. 9)...

Will deliver...Gk. *paradidomi*, means *giving over*. It describes *being arrested* by the police or military.

Tribulation...after being taken into custody, believers will undergo *extreme suffering*. Many will be *murdered*...and all will be hated by all nations because of My name.

Mark describes it...

“For they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.”

~Mark 13:9

Because people can't get to Christ...they will abuse the people who represent Him. The persecution won't be directed so much against believers as against God...the One whom they serve and represent.

V. THE DEFECTION: (vs. 10-13) *Of false believers.*

The *fifth birth pain* is a consequence of the *fourth*. As *persecution* intensifies...as believers begin to be *arrested*, *hated*, and *martyred* for Christ's sake...many supposed Christians will *defect*.

At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another (vs. 10)...

Although many will have had an *outward identification with Christ*, they will prove by their desertion that they *never belonged* to Him. *The price will be too high!* When the *persecution* becomes too severe...they will *forsake* Christ and join fellow unbelievers in *attacking* God's people.

“They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

~I John 2:19

Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many (vs. 11)...

Just as some *false believers* will defect because *the cost is too high* ...others will *defect* because they are *deceived about the gospel*.

Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold (vs. 12)...

With the increase of *lawlessness*...people's love for *righteousness*, *truth*, and the *things of God* will grow cold.

While the increase of *lawlessness* during the end times will certainly include a *disregard for human laws* (**Eric Holder**)...it will *ultimately* and most *vehemently* have a *disregard for God's law* (*Court system today*).

Paul described it this way...

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.”

~II Timothy 3:1-5

But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (vs. 13)...

Endurance is always a mark of *salvation*.

“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”

~Matthew 10:22

The *perseverance of the saints* in faith is a very basic element of *salvation teaching* in the New Testament. It states that people who are *genuinely saved* do not depart from the faith (**John 8:31; I Corinthians 15:1-2; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:14; 4:14; 6:11-12; 10:39; 12:14; James 1:2-4**)

VI. **THE DECLARATION:** (**vs. 14**) *Of the gospel to the whole world.*

The *sixth and last birth pain* is the *declaration of the gospel* to the *entire world*...to a degree never seen yet.

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come (vs. 14)...

During this period as a **testimony to all the nations...the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world.** Though this will be a terrible time of *persecution*...the Lord will have servants who will *witness* and spread the *good news* concerning Christ and His soon coming kingdom. This message will be similar that preached by **John the Baptist...Jesus...and the disciples...repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!**

Apparently many will respond to that message (**Revelation 7:9-10**).

After that proclamation...*man's days will be finished...his rebellion will be over*...and *his opportunity for salvation will be over*... because, **then the end will come!**

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Jesus Christ is coming again.** Are you prepared?
- **There will be catastrophic events surrounding the coming of Christ.** They aren't man made...they are the activity of God...and no man can prevent them.