

# *Last Days?*

## **Matthew 24; Luke 21**

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### Introduction

- People today are wondering if the end of the world is near! *Are we living in the last days?*
- Review of God's master plan for mankind—Review of dispensationalism
  - Overall description of a dispensational arrangement
  - Innocence
  - Conscience
  - Human Government
  - Promise
  - Law
  - Grace
  - Millennial Kingdom
- What time is it according to God's time clock? Are there signs that we are living in the last days?

## ***Are We Living in the Last Days? The Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24***

### **A. The Historical Setting**

- Matthew 24:1-2 -- *"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you see these things? Assuredly I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'"*
1. The disciples were awestruck by the magnificent temple buildings.
  2. Jesus' dire prediction: *"not one stone left upon another"*

### **B. The Disciples' Inquiry as to When and What signs.**

- Matthew 24:3-- *"Now, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'"*
  - Luke 21:7 -- , *'Teacher, when will these be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?'"*
1. *"When will these things be?"*, that is, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
  2. *"What will be the sign of Your coming?"*, that is, not the rapture of the church, but rather the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom
  3. *"What will be the sign of the end of the age?"* Rabbinic theology spoke of two ages: "this age" of the age in which we are now living, and the "age to come" or the Messianic age.

### **C. Jesus' Response to the First Inquiry: "When will these things be?"**

1. Does not state a definite time frame.
2. But He does give them a sign.
  - Luke 21:20-24 -- *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written might be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*

3. The prophecy by Jesus was fulfilled literally in a marvelous way in AD. 70
4. The literal fulfillment of the first question gives us confidence that the other questions and signs will also be fulfilled literally.

**D. Jesus' Response to the Third Inquiry: "What will be the sign of the end of this age?"**

1. **Two signs that are NOT indicators that we are in the end times but characteristics of the church age.**
  - Matthew 24:4-5-- *"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Take heed that no one deceive you. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*
  - a. Presence of false Messiahs
  - b. **"Wars and rumors of wars"**—local wars and conflicts
    - Luke 21:9 -- *"But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.*
  
2. **Four signs that we ARE indicators that we are in the closing days of this age.** The beginning of sorrow or travail.
  - Matthew 24:7-8 -- *"For nations will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."*
  - a. **"Nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom"**
    - 1) Jewish idiom for world war
      - Isaiah 19:1-2 -- *"The burden against Egypt. Behold the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; Everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom."*
      - 2 Chronicles 15:2-7 -- *"Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands. So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."*
    - 2) Rabbinic theology of Jesus' time
      - Bereshit Rabbah—*"If you shall see kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah."*
      - Zohar Chadash -- *"At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world, Nation shall be against nation and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites."*
    - 3) Fulfilled with World War I (1914-1918) and World War II
    - 4) Impact of the two wars on Jewish history
      - a) World War I—impetus for the Zionist Movement
      - b) World War II—creation of the State of Israel
    - 5) *"Nation against nation"* can also be understood as ethnic wars or genocide.
  
- b. **"Famines"**
- c. **"Pestilence"** or widespread disease
- d. **"Earthquakes in various places"**

3. **The Key to understanding the signs of the time.**

- Matthew 24:32-33 -- *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!”*
- a. When we see all the signs coming together in concert we know that the stage is being set for the end of this age, the beginning of the Messianic age.
- b. Add to these four signs the props for the tribulation period and we know that we are very near to the coming of our Lord.

E. **Our Response in light of Christ’s soon return?**

1. **WATCHING for His return**

- Matthew 24:42 -- *“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your LORD is coming.”*

2. **WORKING until He comes**

- Matthew 24:45-46 -- *“Who then is a faithful servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.”*