

The Signs of the Return of Jesus

Matthew 24:32-5 Was Israel becoming a nation in 1948, the fig tree blossoming? Luke records “all the trees,” indicating the next season after spring blossoms is Summer (Luke 21:29).

Who is “this generation”? Generation guesstimating = 1948 + 40 years = 1988. In 1988, a book came out, *88 Reasons Jesus was Coming in 1988*; 1948 + 70 = 2018. Jesus didn’t come.

Now some are refiguring that a generation must mean 4 score = 80 years + 1948 = 2028

Key phrases to interpret Matthew 24

What does “the end of the world” mean? End of the age of “Jerusalem being trampled under foot by Gentile powers prophesied in Daniel 2,7; Luke 21:24. It means the end of the period in which Israel’s dynasty - “house is left desolate.”

What does the phrase “all these things” mean? It means every one of these signs all happening simultaneously.

What does the phrase “days of Noah” mean? Massive depopulation in judgment, totally unaware.

Reasons why this can’t be the Rapture.

1. Context Israel: Kingdom, Messiah, before the Church began
2. People taken in judgment: not escaping judgment.
3. No mention of “catching up/away” or resurrection, which always accompanies Messiah’s final coming in OT texts

The Scriptural Exposition

Overarching questions “When shall these things be?” asked by Jesus’ Jewish disciples.

part2a “What shall be the sign of thy coming,”

part 2b “of the end of the world?”

Answers to Question #2a “What shall be the sign of thy coming,”

Sign - 7 years of Tribulation just before Jesus returns to earth to rule and reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Tribulation is the sign of the Second Coming of Jesus (29) Jesus calls Daniels 70th week = 7 years by these terms:

“The Tribulation” (15-22)(Dan. 9:24) 1st 3 ½ years (4-8) **“latter years” “indignation”** Dan.8:19

“The Great Tribulation” 2nd 3 ½ years (9-14) **Time of Jacob’s Trouble** Jer. 30:7

Jesus punctuates the two halves of the tribulation with the “Abomination of Desolation” in the middle, 3.5 years in. This is consistent with Daniel 9:24-27 which he references here.

There has to be a rebuilt operational Temple in Jerusalem before this can happen.

Answer to Question #2b “sign of ...of the end of the world?”

Catastrophic Cosmic Events (vs. 29) “Immediately after the tribulation...”

Counterfeit Signs (vs. 23-26) Let no man deceive you, (Matt. 24:4,4,23,24,26) “And then shall appear the sign the Son of man in heaven”

The Coming Great Delusion The lie of the Anti-Christ 2 Thess. 2:1-4, 11,12

I. **A wrong conclusion about their status on the prophetic timeline.** The Thessalonian church had received a letter “as from us,” that at least misquoted or distorted what Paul had taught them in I Thess. 4. They were “shaken” and “troubled” that they were actually living in the terrible last days before “the Day of Christ” which concludes the Tribulation. The Apostle Paul established that church and revisited them twice.

Did they not “search the scriptures daily whether those things were so,” as the Berean believers? Actually, there were no Old Testament scriptures to search on the “rapture,” though there were many about the coming of the

Messiah to deliver Israel at the end of time. Paul's epistle to them in about 52 AD was the first to give details of this being "caught up." Now they were led to believe that the timing of this event must be preceded by the Tribulation. Paul had to jog their memory of what he had already taught them about this.

A. "Rapture" of the Church was a Holy Spirit inspired, "mystery," that both living and deceased believers would be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord Jesus.ⁱⁱ

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. "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: ⁷then we which are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

"Caught up" is from the Greek ἀρπαγησόμεθα pronounced *harpe-ge-sometha*. It was translated in the Latin as *rapere* and transliterated as rapture. The rapture or catching up or catching away has become the eschatological phrase describing event of 1 Thessalonian 4:13-18 John 14:1-4.

B. "the Day of Christ," or "Day of the Lord" equates to the Tribulation. The "Day of the Lord" is commonly used throughout apocalyptic prophetic scripture as a day of final judgment on earth by the coming Messiah/Christ. Amos 5:18 "Woe unto you that desire *the day of the LORD!* to what end is it for you? *the day of the LORD* is darkness, and not light." Micah 4:1,5 "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts...the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Jude 1:14,15 "the Lord cometh with ten-thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed..." Joel 3:14,15 "the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."

II Events that must precede the Day of Christ

A. The removal of the restraining, resident, Holy Spirit within the church "he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way." – at the rapture

B. Apostasy "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first..."

C. The revelation of the Antichrist is the main indicator of the arrival of the Tribulation era.

"and that man of sin be revealed," whom he labels as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition." His self-exaltation in the Temple and demanding worship is the indicator the Tribulation has arrived; therefore, the Thessalonians had not missed the rapture and were not living in the Tribulation.

III A strong delusion "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11). Paul warns of mass deception. Now Paul warns of a coming global deception from the satanically inspired global leader.

- vs 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed
- vs 9 *even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders

- vs 10 and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

- A. How are they deceived?** The rejection of saving truth will leave them susceptible to the Serpent’s venom, much like a physical auto-immunity disease makes the body incapable of resisting disease. The grammar of the Greek text shows that the delusion is clearly not a “passive result but an active cause,” (ἐνέργειαν πλάνης - *energeian planes*) – but is an active working of delusion. God is righteous and cannot deceive them.” However, most will adamantly reject God’s grace and forgiveness extended to them, bringing divine judgment on themselves as a consequence of their action. Rejection of the truth of God leads to the same damnation promised for the man of lawlessness as God will hold his followers culpable for the choice they make...Paul indicates the deluding influence God will send will be for the express purpose...”ⁱⁱⁱ that they would believe a lie. “The unbelieving world at large will accept a specific lie, namely “the lie”...”The lie” contrasts starkly with “the truth” of 2:10, which they previously rejected.”^{iv} “God will lead no one into sin. Instead He will employ the agents of sin, whom the unredeemed have already welcomed, as agents of judgment and destruction against them. After the unregenerate choose the lie over the truth, God will respond by sending the “*energeian planes*.”” the active working of delusion. “God will work actively to ...make it irresistible to rebellious humanity.” The lie which the unbelievers will welcome will become one that they cannot help but believe; they will be unable to resist the Antichrist to whom they have previously committed themselves. Once more, this is not a matter of God deceiving but rather of God using the lie the followers of the Antichrist have already chosen.”^{vi} This is comparable to when “the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh”^{vii} after Pharaoh hardened his own heart five times. Instead of repeating the same form of the Hebrew word hardened (ַׁבַּיִל way-yik-bad) a sixth time, God used (קָטַף way-haz-zeq), which is translated in 2 Chronicles 11:11 as “strengthened.” God strengthened or hardened Pharaoh in his own hardness.
- B. Who is deceived?** It is certain, in this text that many who have repeatedly rejected the gospel (p3) either before or after the rapture of the Church, will be sent strong delusion. They will believe that the Antichrist is the Christ and willingly receive his tattoo called the mark of the Beast.^{viii} They will accepted the “mark of his name.” They have already “worshipped his image.”^{ix} Those who will not be deluded in unbelief are clearly those who “had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands...”^x There is a clear choice between he who is the path of perdition paved with the lie that ends in death and Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Religion offers a path, but only a relationship with God offers eternal peace. Damning spiritual delusion is the result of an internal cause; “because” they received not. Truth actively rejected creates an openness to external deception being received with passive internal willingness. “They believe the pretensions of this wretched mimic and dethroner of God; his false wonders they take as genuine miracles; they believe the lie. This unparalleled hallucination indicates a mysterious state of mind and of society- anti-Christian, anti-theistic, credulous, with a fatal facility of being imposed upon by hellish mastery and subtlety...”^{xi} “The willful and persistent rejection of the truth, God punishes with judicial blindness, so that the power of discernment is blunted, and error comes to be accepted as truth...”^{xii}
- C. Who is not deceived?** Will all the inhabitants of the Tribulation be deceived by him? The text narrows it to those who “received not the love of the truth,” and “who believed not the truth,” regarding salvation. This has led some to the wrong conclusion that once the rapture happens, there will be no chance to believe.

- D. However, it is obvious from Revelation 7:9,14 that there will be an innumerable multitude of believing souls from every tribe including the 144,000 Jewish evangelists as well as believing souls from every gentile tongue and nation. The two witnesses will proclaim the gospel for 1260 days, 3.5 years. The greatest gospel harvest will speed alongside the greatest deception in history on parallel rails towards arrival to the “day of Christ.” Rev. 11:9-13 Just as Jesus said the Son of Man must be lifted up, so the son of Satan must be lifted up as an object of faith. The choice will be so clear, but the deception will be so great.

Missing the rapture while ignoring the Gospel risks permanent delusion and eternal destruction.

The greatest judgment of the Tribulation period on mankind will be the inescapable “strong delusion” of faith in the Antichrist, because of their own unbelief in the Christ, “The way, the truth and the life.” For no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. But the end of that imposter is; “the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” “And the devil that deceived them shall be cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 19:20 Sadly “Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.” Rev. 10:15

Matthew 24

The sign of the fig tree - Matthew 24:32/ Luke 21:29

“all the trees” when THEY shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand”

“ALL THESE THINGS” HAPPENING SIMULTANEOUSLY SIGNIFIES “THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NIGH AT HAND”

Answer to Question #1 “When shall these things be?” Nobody knows when (vs. 36)

Context - Jewish disciples of the Jewish Messiah in Israel who were taught in the Jewish law and prophets of the Old Testament had been asking Jesus ‘when will you reveal yourself and set up the promised Kingdom of God on Earth’. They had no clue of a Jewish/Gentile “church” based on repentance and faith in the shed blood and resurrection of the Jesus they were looking at. Matthew 24 nowhere speaks of the “rapture” of believers to meet the Lord in the air and therefore is not a list of the signs of the “rapture” which is later clearly taught and explained in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The warning to be ready for the coming of the Lord applies to both those of us in the age of “the church” and to those who will be alive in the Tribulation. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

The End of the world/age – of the “Times of the Gentiles” trampling Jerusalem under foot (Luke 21:24). It began with the four prophesied world powers (Daniel 2:31-45, 7:1-28). Christ “the stone cut out without hands” is the coming Son of Man (Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:27-31) whose kingdom will defeat the Gentiles, rescue and redeem Israel. Revelation gives the details of Daniels 70th week and of the Revelation of the Son of Man.

ⁱ Acts 17:11

ⁱⁱ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

ⁱⁱⁱ The Lie, Greg Harris, Glory Books Ministry, 2021, Fuquay-Varina, NC p57

^{iv} Ibid. p58

^v Ibid. p59

^{vi} Ibid. p62

^{vii} Exodus 9:12

^{viii} Revelation 14:11

^{ix} Revelation 19:20

^x Revelation 20:4

^{xi} The John Eadie Commentaries, Thessalonians, Baker Book House, 1979 Grand Rapids, MI, p288

^{xii} Ibid. p289

Preview of the Series on Revelation

Next Week : **Introduction to The Apocalypse**

Week 2 & 3 Topical Overview: The Wrath of The Alpha Lamb

The Book of Revelation includes over twenty-nine references to a lion-like lamb ("slain but standing") which delivers victory by the resurrected Christ.

(Rev. 5:6,8,12; 6:1,16; 7:9,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14;19:7,9; 21:9,14,27; 22:1,3)

“The Lamb is central in Revelation because it embodies the heart of God’s redemptive plan—sacrifice, victory, and eternal justice. As the slain yet victorious Lamb, Jesus Christ fulfills the hopes of the Old Testament, triumphs over evil, and establishes God’s eternal kingdom. For believers, the Lamb offers a profound source of hope, a model of humility, and an assurance of ultimate victory.”^{xii} For the surviving remnant of Israel, the sight of wounds in the hands and feet of their deliverer will be a real spiritual eye-opener. When they recognize the long awaited Lion like Messiah already came as their sacrificial Passover Lamb, God will give them the spirit of grace and supplication and a new covenant written in their new heart by His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Actions of the Alpha Lamb

Chapter 5	A LAMB AS IT HAD BEEN SLAIN	Opens the Book
Chapter 6	THE LAMB OPENING THE BOOK	Judging
Chapter 7	THE LAMB OF THE THRONE	Feeding
Chapter 13	THE LAMB SLAIN	Life-giving
Chapter 14	THE LAMB ON MOUNT SION	Leading
Chapter 15	THE LAMB OF THE SONG	Ruling in Justice and Truth
Chapter 17	THE LAMB IN BATTLE	Overcoming
Chapter 19	THE LAMB OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER	Loving
Chapter 21	THE LAMB OF NEW JERUSALEM	Giving Light
Chapter 22	THE LAMB ON THE THRONE	Reigning Forever