

INTRODUCTION: Matthew 24

- Today I want to take a slight diversion from our sermon series through the Book of Exodus to talk about the End Times
- There has been a lot of speculation about the Coronavirus being a sign of the last days
- Some see it as one of the seven bowls of plagues mentioned in the Book of Revelation
- Some see it as a test run for the establishment of a one world government
- Some see it as a means to bring in the mark of the beast
- All of these speculations point to the emergence of a one world leader that is referred to by Daniel as the abomination of desolation
- Paul refers to him as the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10)
- John refers to this person as the deceiver, he who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 4:2-3 and 1 John 2:18)
- But the term that most people know him by is the antichrist
- The word “antichrist” is a compound word made up of 2 Greek words
- The word “anti” can mean “in place of”, “instead of” or “in opposition to.”
- The word “Christ” or “christos” means “Messiah” or “anointed one”
- Thus the antichrist is someone who attempts to take the place of and is in opposition to Yeshua Ha Mashiach or in the Greek... Jesus Christ
- He is the false Messiah

Let's look at Matthew 24

Matthew 24:15–22 (NKJV)

¹⁵ “Therefore when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶ “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.

First... I want to address who Jesus is speaking to

- He is speaking to the disciples who came to Him privately asking what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age
- Who are the disciples? They are Israeli's, Jewish nationals
- Jesus said He came to His own... thus Jesus is talking to the nation of Israel concerning their future, not the future of the Church
- This is where many people make a mistake
- The assume Matthew 24 is about the Church, when in fact Jesus is telling Jewish believers what the sign of His coming and the end of the age will be
- What coming is He talking about? The Second coming, not the Rapture of the Church
- What end is He talking about? The end of Israel's separation from God

Second... I want to address the timeline

Matthew 24:14 (NKJV)

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

What precedes the end?

- The gospel of the kingdom being preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations
- Who will preach the gospel of the kingdom? The 144,000 Jewish witnesses in Revelation 7... right? Wrong!
- That happens during the Great Tribulation Period... the gospel being preached happened before the Great Tribulation Period
- Notice the timeline... the gospel being preached happens in vs. 14, then in vs. 15 when the abomination of desolation is revealed
- Who is Jesus talking about? The Church... thus, when Jesus says the end will come... what end is He talking about?
- The end of the Church Age

I preached a prophecy update entitled... Are We In The Last Days

- I broke down the meaning of the Spring and the Fall Feasts
- The Feast of Pentecost marked the beginning of the Summer Harvest
- The Feast of Trumpets marked the end of the Summer Harvest
- In Acts 2, on Pentecost, the Summer Harvest began with 3000 people coming to Christ

- It also marked the beginning of the Church Age... also known as the Times of the Gentiles or The Dispensation of Grace
- During this time, the gospel of the kingdom is being preached in all the world to all the nations
- But a time is coming soon when the Shofar will sound and the end of the Harvest, the end of the Church Age will come
- What event in the prophetic calendar is marked by the sound of a Shofar? The Rapture of the Church
- After the Rapture of the Church, the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel will stand in the holy place

Now who is Jesus talking about?

- Who is the Abomination of Desolation?
- Every Jew would have instantly known who Jesus was talking about
- Antiochus Epiphanes, the King of Syria, captured Jerusalem in 167 B.C. and brought a statue of Zeus into the Holy Place and sacrificed a pig on the altar of incense to desecrate the Temple
- This was referred to by the Jews as the abomination of desolation

In Daniel 9, we read concerning the Abomination of Desolation

Daniel 9:27 (NKJV)

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”

- This is referred to as the 70th week of Daniel
- The 70th week of Daniel begins with a covenant, a treaty that this world leader, the antichrist will make with many... but then it says in the middle of the week or after 3 ½ years He will bring an end to sacrifice and offering
- Every Jew would understand that Daniel is seeing the restoration of the sacrificial offering system and in order for that to happen, the temple would need to be rebuilt
- Now, next year we are going to Israel... and one of the places we will visit is the Temple Institute where they have constructed actual pieces to be used in the third temple
- They are training Kohenine, priests to conduct temple sacrifices
- They even have the architectural designs for the third temple

- They believe the Messiah will rebuild their temple
- The Bible teaches that the antichrist will make a peace treaty and I believe he will broker a deal where Israel will agree to a 2 state solution in exchange for the right to rebuild the temple
- 3 ½ years into the agreement, the antichrist will stop temple sacrifices
- I believe he will say to Israel, the temple is to be a house of prayer for all nations, not just Israel and he will order Israel to bring idols, statues of other gods
- Not only will he order Israel to allow other religions to use the Temple, but he will erect a statue to himself as the great architect of world peace

2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 (NKJV)

2 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

- This is what Jesus is referring to when He says... when you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, get out of Judea and flee to the mountains
- AND Jesus says... for THEN there will be a great tribulation
- Then the final persecution of the Jewish people will take place
- Israel will refuse to let the temple be desecrated and the antichrist will declare a world war against Israel
- This will set in motion a series of events that will result in the nations of the world gathering in the Jezreel Valley and marching against Jerusalem
- When they arrive in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, that is when Matthew 24:7 will take place

Matthew 24:27–31 (NKJV)

²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. ²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the

stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Let's recap the timeline....

- We are in the Church Age, the gospel is being preached and this will continue until the Rapture of the Church
- Afterwards, the 70th week of Daniel begins with the signing of a Peace Treaty in the Middle East
- 3 ½ years into the Peace Treaty, the Antichrist will break the Peace Treaty and declare war on Israel
- This will begin the last holocaust in the history of the world and it will last for 3 ½ years
- It will be so intense that the Bible says unless the days are shortened, no one would survive
- At the end of 3 ½ years of Great Tribulation, Jesus will return
- The question is... when is this going to happen?

Jesus gives this answer...

Matthew 24:32–35 (NKJV)

³² “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. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

- I want to present to you a couple of ways to interpret this passage
- Jesus says learn this parable from the fig tree
- In scripture, the fig tree always represents Israel
- It says... when it's branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know summer is near and the generation that sees this happen will not pass away until all these things take place
- The prevalent view is this refers to Israel becoming a nation once again which took place in 1948

- Using this model, people will put together timelines to give an idea of when the rapture of the church will occur
- But another way to interpret this verse has to do with the analogy the branch becoming tender and putting forth leaves
- What is this a picture of? It's a picture of a tree coming to life after a long winter...
- The Rabbi's teach this has to do with the prosperity of Israel today and point to the vegetation, the prosperity, the restoration of Israel

But I want to suggest a third way to interpret this verse

- The picture of the fig tree has to do with Israel coming to life spiritually
- In 2006, Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri died...
- He was the most famous Rabbi in the world

Before his death, Kaduri said

I have seen the Messiah! And I know who He is – I know His name. I know where He is. I know when He is coming. Furthermore, you will know these things as well – one year after my death

- In a hand-written note he wrote... he will raise the people and confirm that his word and law are standing...
- What was interesting about this note is it also contained an acrostic and the acrostic spelled the name of Messiah... Yehoshua or Jesus
- As a result of this famous Rabbi's confession that Jesus is Messiah, tens of thousands of Orthodox Jews have come to faith in Messiah
- The Rabbi's are saying Messiah is closer than ever and they are declaring that God and Magog is going to happen very soon
- Another Rabbi prophesied when Messiah arrives the Sea of Galilee will be full... as of April 2020... the Sea of Galilee is full for the first time in 20 years!
- Several Rabbi's prophesied that Netanyahu would be the last Prime Minister of Israel before Messiah returns
- What does this mean? We are seeing life come to the fig tree
- You might say... what is the correct way to interpret this... and I would say they are all true... that's what God does, he stacks the meanings to emphasize the point... I believe this generation will see Messiah return
- You might ask... who is the antichrist? He is alive right now... but he won't be revealed until after the rapture of the church.