

Jesus' Teaching on the End-Times – An Overview of Matthew 24-25

I. AN OUTLINE OF MATTHEW 24-25

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 close of the age?" (24:3)

The heart of Matthew 24-25 is Jesus helping confused young adults understand the subject of the end of the age and His return. The chapter has five parts:

- A. The Disciple's Initial Question (1-3)
- B. Jesus' Answer Part 1 – The Beginning of the Great Tribulation: Birth Pains (4-8)
- C. Jesus' Answer Part 2 – The Beginning of the Great Tribulation: Corresponding Social Pressure (9-14)
- D. Jesus' Answer Part 3 – The Commencement and Conclusion of the Great Tribulation (15-31)
- E. Jesus' Answer Part 4 – 7 Parables About Knowing and Preparing (24:32-25:46)
 1. **The Battle for Discernment of the Times**: The Fig Tree (24:33-35)
 2. **The Battle for Messengers**: The Days of Noah (24:36-41)
 3. **The Battle to Stay Awake**: The Thief (24:42-44)
 4. **The Battle for Leadership**: The Faithful & Wise Servant (24:45-51)
 5. **The Battle for Intimacy**: The 10 Virgins and the Coming Bridegroom (25:1-13)
 6. **The Battle for the True Knowledge of God**: The Talents (25:14-30)
 7. **The Battle for the Jews**: The Least of Jesus' Brethren (25:31-46)
- F. In this session we're going to look at the 1st, 2nd and 3rd part of the message.

II. JESUS' ANSWER – BIRTH PAINS (4-8) – WHAT ARE THEY AND WHEN DO THEY BEGIN?

And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. (24:4-8)

Birth pains signal to the mother that labor is next and that the baby will be born shortly after. It is a timing indicator. Jesus was intentional about using this concept when teaching about the end of the age.

The birth pains are social conflicts and ecological disturbances. The beginning of birth pains is intense enough to warrant paralleling it to woman within hours of her hard labor. She is immobilized from usual life. These birth pains will create many-faceted crises unparalleled in all of human history. If they are not distinctly discernable then they are not prophetic signs. The trends mentioned in these verses have dramatically increased in the last century.

- A. The birth pains will be a season of history that precedes the Great Tribulation of intensifying pressures on a global scale.
1. Season of intensification: Matt. 24:4-8
 2. Natural disruptions: Matt. 24:4-8
 3. Nations in conflict: Matt. 24:4-8
 4. Heavenly warfare: Matt. 24:4-8
 5. Famine – food & drought: Matt. 24:4-8
 6. Pestilence – increased trouble: Matt. 24:4-8
 7. Deception: Matt. 24:4-8
 8. Antichrist begins political career incognito: Dan. 7:8; 11:23
 9. Harlot / Antichrist begin relationship: Rev. 17:3; 18:3,7,12-13; Dan. 11:24,38; Ps. 52:7
 10. Antichrist consolidates his power base / removes 3 kings: Dan. 7:8; 11:22-23; Rev. 17:13
 11. Global Houses of Prayer: Is. 56:6-7; Amos 9:11-12; Mark 11:17
 12. Daniel Seals released: Dan. 12:4, 9-10
 13. Jesus' prayer answered: Jn. 17:20-26
- B. The trends mentioned in Matthew 24:4-8 are:
1. ***Deception/False prophets***
 2. ***War***: an unprecedented escalation of war has occurred in the twentieth century making it the bloodiest time in history (over 100 million people killed). Since World War II, over 150 major wars have occurred with a death toll of over 25 million. Since the Berlin Wall fell (Nov. 1989), conflicts have forced 50 million people from their homes worldwide. There were over 70 wars in 1995 (double from 1989).

3. **Ethnic conflict:** civil disorder and racism. The Greek word for nation in Mt. 24:7 is *ethnos* which translates ethnic or tribe. Nation against nation is "ethnic group against ethnic group". The ethnic wars in Cambodia, Albania, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and Sudan along with Stalin's purges, and China's Cultural Revolution have caused the number murdered by their own people to exceed the deaths caused by wars outside their borders (totaling over 150 million deaths). The militant Islamic leaders have especially targeted Israel, the USA and the European Union.
 4. **Famine:** nearly a billion people worldwide world suffer from malnutrition. Over 25,000 people die every day worldwide from hunger related causes. Nearly 5 million die of starvation every year. Water shortages have reduced the global food supply by 10 percent. The population is growing yet its agricultural capabilities are diminishing. Over 500 million people do not have enough drinking water. The numbers will increase to 2 billion by 2025 (greatest famine in history).
 5. **Pestilences (disease):** the rise of diseases such as tuberculosis, the Avian bird flu, pneumonia, meningitis, are becoming unstoppable as some are becoming more resistant to inoculations. The nations of the former Soviet Union are developing genetically engineered viruses and bacteria that cannot be stopped by antibiotics. Terrorists threaten to use smallpox because many today (even in the USA) do not have a vaccination against it. Epidemics of typhoid and diphtheria have afflicted areas of India and Russia. Deadly new strains of malaria, tuberculosis and cholera are becoming resistant to all known antibiotics and are killing millions. Diseases are growing in an unprecedented way globally especially viral killers like AIDS and Ebola. There are nearly 35 million people living with AIDS (2007). More than 25 million have died from AIDS since 1981. Africa has over 11 millions AIDS orphans. Six million people a year are getting infected.
- C. The birth pains are global events and trends that prepare the earth for the "heavy labor pains" of the final 3 ½ years of this age.
1. Scripture refers to this 3½ years in 8 different ways: **42 months** (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), **1260 days** (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), **time, times and half a time** (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7), **the Great Tribulation** (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14), **Jacob's Trouble** (Jer. 30:7), **a time of trouble** (Dan. 12:1), **the middle of the Week** (Dan. 9:27), **perilous times** (2 Tim. 3:1).
- D. The birth pains are clearly observable trends and events. And it would seem logical that they would have a clear point of beginning. It's my conviction that the birth pains began in 1967 when the Jews took possession of the city of Jerusalem for the first time since the generation of the apostles.
- E. I don't think we can overestimate the significance of the establishment of the nation-state in 1948 and the Jewish presence in the city of Jerusalem in 1967. In the mind of God this is a very monumental event.
- F. The reason it's such a powerful event is because all end-time prophecy hinges on the presence of Jewish people in a Jewish nation. No other generation since the apostle Paul's generation has seen Jewish presence on Jewish soil. We cannot overstate the importance of this.

- G. While there is no Bible verse that states that the birth pains begin when the Diaspora ends, it seems clear to me that the re-possessing of Jerusalem signalled a significant change on the global landscape.
- H. There is no other probable event that could be comparable to the establishment of the nation state. No one has ever presented a proportional trigger event.
- I. My conviction is that the establishment of the state of Israel made the fulfilment of eschatological promises possible for the first time in 2,000 years. And this therefore demands that I consider the possibility that it may also trigger this final stage natural history before the time of Tribulation that immediately precedes the second coming.

III. JESUS' ANSWER – CORRESPONDING SOCIAL PRESSURES (9-14)

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (24:9-14)

- A. Jesus explains that the impact of the birth pains on the redeemed will be 10-fold:
 - 1. Martyrdom
 - 2. Global reproach
 - 3. Apostasy from within the professing community
 - 4. Betrayal/Hatred from within the professing community
 - 5. False prophets emerging
 - 6. Mass delusion
 - 7. Increase of sin
 - 8. Love diminishing
 - 9. The need for endurance
 - 10. The preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations
- B. The saints will be oppressed and despised during this hour because they will be walking in such confidence. The signs will be so clear and significant that their hearts will be emboldened and fearless.

- C. The boldness of the redeemed will mature dramatically when they witness a key element of the birth pains: a season of peace will be inaugurated by a world leader known as “the little horn,” “the man of sin,” “the son of perdition,” “Gog,” “the beast” and “the antichrist.”
- D. This man will emerge onto the world scene after a period of unparalleled turmoil and bloodshed in the Middle East. He will enter peaceably and instate a treaty with many nations in the Middle East; specifically with Israel.
- E. This treaty will endure for exactly 42 months before being broken. As we’ll see in the next session, the breaking of the treaty triggers the final 42 months of this age known as “the Great Tribulation.”
- F. This season of peace is an integral part of the birth pains. Though the earth will appear to be at ease during these years, it’s only the calm before the storm. And the calm will be a geopolitical calm as Israel will dwell safely for a time. But it will not be calm for the church. This will be the hour of proclamation unlike the earth as ever seen.
- G. Many significant events will occur during this season of global calm before the storm:
1. Rise of the Antichrist: Ez. 38:8-9; Dan. 7:19-25; Hos. 11:5; 1 Thess. 5:3; Rev. 13
 2. Transgression Reaches Fullness: Dan. 8:23 / Gen. 15:16
 3. False Prophet emerges: Rev. 13:11-14
 4. Israel makes a “Covenant of Death” by siding with Antichrist: Dan. 9:27; Is. 28:15, 18; 57:7-10; Hos. 10:3-6; 5:13; 12:1
 5. The International Community Will Divide up the Land of Israel: Joel 3:1-3; Ez. 36:1-3; Ps. 83:1-12
 6. Third Temple will be Built: Dan. 8:11-13; 9:26-27; 11:31; Mt. 24:15
 7. Antichrist will be Given Great Influence in Israel: Ez. 21:25-27; Jn. 5:43; Is. 57:7-10; Hos. 5:13; 10:6; 11:5
 8. Antichrist will gather his massive army – starts 2,300 days till sanctuary cleansed: Dan. 8:12, 14
 9. The nations will declare the season of “False Peace”: I Thess. 5:1-3; Rev. 17:6
 10. The emergence and maturing of the Religious System Harlot Babylon: Rev. 17-18; Zech. 5:5-11
 11. The Great Falling Away of Unregenerate People who profess to be Christians: 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1
 12. Israel’s Apostasy Matures: Dan. 9:27; Isa. 49:7; Rev. 11:8; Ps. 81:8-13
 13. Anointed Messianic Proclamation: Rev. 7; 14:1-5
 14. Believers Persecuted: Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7b; Matt. 24:9; Is. 66:5

15. Antichrist's head-wound / Resurrected: Rev. 13:3
16. Great Harvest: Matt. 24:14; Lk. 21:12-15; Jn. 14:12; Acts 2:17; Rev. 7:9, 14; 14:15; Hab. 1:5, 2:2, 14; Hag. 2:6-7; Zech. 10:1; Mal. 4:5-6
17. The church maturing: Dan. 12:4; Eph. 4:13-15; 5:26-27; Rev. 19:7
18. Jewish Revival: Rev. 7; Acts 2:17
19. Gospel of the Kingdom Preached w/signs & wonders: Matt. 24:14; Acts 2:17-21; Dan. 11:32; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7-8; Matt. 24:14; Jn. 14:12
20. The formation of a 10 nation coalition of nations in the Middle East: Ez. 38-39; Ps. 83; Zech. 12

IV. JESUS' ANSWER PART 3 – THE COMMENCEMENT AND CONCLUSION OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION (15-31)

A. The Beginning of the Tribulation (15-28)

There are three things to note in these verses about the beginning of the Tribulation:

1. The "Abomination of Desolation" from the book of Daniel begins the Great Tribulation
2. The Great Tribulation is Jerusalem Centric
3. The Great Tribulation is Unprecedented in Nature

B. The Conclusion of the Tribulation (29-31)

In these verses we read of four key chronological events that bring the Great Tribulation to its end.

1. The Great Tribulation (29a)
2. Cosmic Disturbances (29b)
3. Second Coming (30)
4. Rapture/"Gathering of the Elect" (31)