

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

“The Times of the Signs”

Matthew 24:1-14

Open your Bibles to Matthew Chapter 24. Welcome to our first Bible prophecy and current events study. I want to open by reading you a very important verse when it comes to Bible prophecy. In Acts 17:11 the Apostle Paul wrote this speaking of the believers in the city of Berea:

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The first thing I want you to remember is to be a Berean. Don't just believe what I or any other one of us tells you. Rather, search the Scriptures to see what is true. The reason I am saying this is because my desire for this study is for it to be very interactive.

We are going to follow some trends or, more literally, signs of the times and see how they apply to our time. And the truth is, there is a lot of speculation and outright fabrication out there in the Bible prophecy arena. We want to be careful and weigh things against Scripture.

The object of studying prophecy is not to scare. It is to prepare.

We want to use what we learn to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus.

We want to stay focused on the main thing and not head out too far into the weeds.

That said, here is an outline of how we are going to approach our studies:

Each time we meet, I will teach a short study on a particular aspect of prophecy, such as the Rapture of the church or the Millennium. This may or may not include some current events that the Lord shows me are appropriate to our subject. That will help keep us grounded in the Word of God.

Then, we will open the floor and see what the Lord has shown you since we last met. In other words, I want all of you to be studying to show yourselves approved. And I also want you to be keenly aware of the times we are living in. Different things will trip my trigger than will trip yours. But overall, the more people we have looking for the Blessed Hope of Jesus' return, the better the information we will receive.

One last thing before we move on. What we are not looking for is endless debate.

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

I am going to come at this study from a decidedly pre-Trib Rapture perspective. That is why I am calling it the Blessed Hope Bible Prophecy Group. So, if you come at it from a different perspective, keep your thoughts to yourself; and we can talk about it later.

Are you with me?

For this evening we are going to start with a study in Matthew 24 of what is known as the Olivet Discourse. You'll see why in a moment. Let's read our text and then we'll look at it verse by verse. Matthew 24:1-14:

¹Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ²And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

³Now 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?”

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶And 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. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

⁹“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴And 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.

At the end of Matthew Chapter 23, Jesus lamented (cried) over Jerusalem. He was headed to the Cross, and so He knew it would be the last time He would come into the city. That is, until His Second Coming. At that time the Jews will say to say to Him, **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”** In other words, they will finally accept Him as their Messiah.

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

But as Jesus and the disciples were walking out of the Temple, look what happens (verse 1):

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

The Temple in Jerusalem was much more than just a building where the Jews met for worship. It was the center of Jewish life. Their whole social structure was set around the Temple and the system of sacrifices that took place there. It was also the center of their cycle of feasts. The people would head to Jerusalem at specific times of the year to celebrate feasts that the Lord had commanded. So you can imagine how the disciples freaked out at what Jesus says next (verse 2):

And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

It is not going too far to speculate that these guys were excited. They thought that Jesus would rule the kingdom on earth from this structure.

Why?

Because they had read Isaiah, Ezekiel and all the other Old Testament prophecy books. They believed what their Bible said about Messiah ruling and reigning in Jerusalem. And they believed that they would rule and reign with Him. In fact, they argued about who would have the best positions. This statement would have put them into a state of shock. For us, it would be like the White House being destroyed. So this would mean their way of life would be dramatically changed. But that is not the only thing that shocked them. This also brought to mind their history.

The last time that the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, what happened to the people?

They were sent into exile, in Babylon.

This meant suffering on a grand scale. And that is exactly what happened. In 70 AD the Roman army led by Titus Vespasian raised the Temple. And they did so exactly as Jesus described here. Not one stone was left on another. Then in 137 AD the Jews were dispersed throughout the world. And they remained in this diaspora until our time, 1948 to be exact.

So the nation of Israel is the first sign of the time that we need to concern ourselves with. Here and in other places in the Bible it is predicted that the Jews would return to Israel. And at some time in the future their Temple will be rebuilt. We will look at the rebuilding of the Temple at length in a further study, but for today this is sign number one

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

for us. And it is also the major sign on God's prophetic timepiece. {If you want to know how close the return of Jesus is, look and see what is happening in Israel and specifically Jerusalem.

Verse 3 will give us signs number two and three. Matthew writes:

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?"

The disciples probably thought they were asking Jesus one question, but we have three. The first question was...

"When will these things be?"

In other words, when will the Temple be torn down?

We already know the answer to that — 70 AD. But next they ask...

"What will be the signs of your coming?"

And the third question is...

What are the signs of the **"end of the age"**?

There are a lot of signs of the times found in the Bible. Some of them we are going to look at in a moment. But others are found in various other passages such as the Book of Revelation.

In Chapter 13 of Revelation, John tells us about a one-world government, religion and economy that will happen during the Tribulation. So we need to look at the globalism and socialism that is becoming more acceptable in our time.

We also need to focus on how it seems there are people who would allow our economy to falter so that they can gain more power.

We will also talk a lot about the Rapture of the church. Jesus does not speak to this event here. In fact, He never mentions the Rapture until the night before He goes to the Cross.

So, our second sign we want to focus on are general signs of His coming.

The third thing we want to know about is what signs point to the end of the age. I believe this is speaking of the age in which we are living. Jesus tells us in both Matthew and Luke that the days He will come will be like the days of Noah. He also tells us in Luke that it will be like in the days of Lot. And there are places in the Bible that speak to this.

One of them is 2 Timothy Chapter 3 where Paul talks about how, in the last days, perilous times will come. Then he gives us a whole list of things to look for in society

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

that point to the end of the age. Let's just read verses 1 through 5 to get a picture of what Paul said the last days would look like:

¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Does this sound like our time?

If we look at how things are getting worse and not better, we can see that the return of the Lord is near.

Next, we see what I believe is one of the most important signs of the times — deception.

Why do I think that?

Because Jesus tells us not to be deceived four times in chapter 24. The first two are found in verses 4 and 5:

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

We live in the daze of deception, wouldn't you agree?

So we don't need to take too much time to understand why this is a sign of the times. Right is wrong, good is bad, and wickedness has replaced Godliness. We want to look at the general deception of the times we live in. But, more specifically, we want to look at spiritual deception, even religious deception. There is a lot of junk religion out there, just as Jesus warns us about. The world talks about unity, but they are really headed toward a one-world tyrannical religion. You can read all about it in Revelation Chapter 13 and Daniel 7. There are also lots of wars (look at verse 6):

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.

Notice that I underlined the phrase “all these things” in our passage. That is because this is a very important thing to note about prophecy. Jesus says that these “things” (these prophecies) *all* must come to pass — but the end is not yet. Then in verse 33 of chapter 24 He says this:

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors.

What Jesus is telling us is that *all* these things will happen throughout time. But when they converge, when they happen all at once, you will know the end is near. I believe that they are all happening now and they are accelerating, just as the Bible predicts.

There has always been war in our world. But right now there are over 30 military conflicts taking place, the worse of which is in Ukraine. Many believe there is potential for this war to break out into WWII. But for us, we also need to be looking for some very specific wars that will take place in the future.

Psalm 83 potentially lays out one of these wars as does Isaiah 17 and Jeremiah 49. So does Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39. These wars all involve Israel and the problems they have with the Muslim nations that surround her. Listen to what the prophet Zechariah said about the last days (Zechariah 12:1-3):

¹The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: ²“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

Why would a small nation the size of Rhode Island keep the lamps burning in capital cities all over the world?

Because the nation of Israel is God’s timepiece, and Jerusalem is His city.

There will be a battle at the end of the Tribulation that most of us are familiar with. Most call it the **“Battle Of Armageddon.”**

Where is that battle fought?

In Israel.

In fact, one of the Bible teachers I like, Amir Tsarfati, sits out on his patio every morning sipping coffee and looking out over where that war will take place.

And all of these wars have one thing in common. They happen in the Middle East in and around Israel. So we need to know who the players are in these wars and how they are coming together.

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

The next sign is similar to wars and rumors of wars, but different as well. Look at verses 7-8:

⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

The word *nation* here is *ethnos* in Greek. It speaks of ethnic groups (races of people) coming against one another. And that is something the socialists in our country are using to pit us against each other. They want to use race to divide and conquer. That one is simple.

But the word Matthew used for *kingdoms* is important as well. It is not the same as a nation coming against another nation. It speaks of groups vying for power — building their kingdoms. I would include oligarchs (big money players like George Soros and Bill Gates) and politicians in this camp.

In Daniel Chapters 2, 7 and other places, the Bible tells us there will be ten world leaders that will be in power during the Tribulation. Most prophecy experts believed that to be a revived Roman Empire — and that may be true. Others, such as a group of globalists called the Club of Rome, believe that the world will be carved up into ten regions. But lately some have speculated that it will be ten extremely wealthy men or corporations that will have this power. So we need to look at who the kingdom builders are and what they are doing.

As far as pestilence, earthquakes, famines and the like, they are all over the news in our day. We have spent the last two years suffering through a *plandemic* called COVID-19. And the powers-that-be are preparing for the next one as we speak. There was recently a horrible earthquake in Turkey and Syria that took thousands of lives. As for famine, a record 340 million people across 79 countries face food insecurity. And that number may rise significantly in the next few years for various reasons. But as Jesus says, these are only the **“beginnings of sorrows.”** In other words, they are like birth pangs as we head toward the seven-year Tribulation. Revelation Chapter 6 gives us the culmination of these signs as God pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world.

The next sign we need to look for is religious persecution. Look at verse 9:

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.

Did you know that in the 20th century, more Christians were murdered for their faith than all of the centuries before it, combined?

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

And the 21st century has not gotten off to a good start. I think of the Christians in Afghanistan, as an example. But we need to not just look at the world when we follow this sign. We need to be watching and ready for what could happen to us. There is already widespread persecution of believers in places we never would have thought, such as Canada and Australia. In England two people have been arrested for PRAYING — silently — outside an abortion clinic. In other words, they were arrested for their thoughts. And right here a man got into a short scuffle outside of a clinic, because this other guy was screaming obscenities in his nine-year-old son's face. Not too long after this, the FBI raided his (the father's) home. So it not only can come here — *it is and will*.

In fact, Jesus promised that we would have Tribulation, right?

The only question we need to ask is, Who is the “**they**” who will “**deliver us up**” Jesus is speaking of?

I personally think it will be the youth of our country who have been brainwashed in our schools.

The next sign is a little more obscure, but I think very important. Look at verse 10:

And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

What would we call this in our time?

How about *Cancel Culture*?

People are trying to silence other people — especially Christians. So this sign ties in with religious persecution. And so does the next sign. Look at verse 11:

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Not only will there be general deception, but as I mentioned Jesus also warned about religious deception. And I see this in conjunction with the cancel culture sign.

I believe as we move along, the people that are most likely to persecute true believers will claim to be Christians. In fact, the Bible speaks of a falling away from the faith in the last days. There is a difference between believing in God and having a personal relationship with Jesus. We want to be looking not just at what is going on in the world, but also in the professing church. They may be just as strong an enemy for us as the heathen. And this is why (verse 12):

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Does lawlessness abound in our time?

BLESSED HOPE BIBLE PROPHECY STUDY

That is almost a rhetorical question! For the most part we are a lawless society. And the professing church does not help in this. Their teaching of the love of God, without the wrath of God, has led to many in our time falling away from the church. That is if they have ever even been in one. When lawlessness is the rule, the love of many, the care for one another, becomes cold. And if you read the newspaper or watch the news, the fact that this will be a sign of the times won't shock you. It is the world we live in. But be of good cheer.

Jesus has overcome the world. And that is our last sign (verses 13-14):

¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴And 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.

This is a sign that we will need to put some boot leather to. Not only do we need to know what the signs of the times are. We need to take our knowledge of them to the streets. If we just stay here in this room and learn all of this yet do nothing about it, that would be sad. I want everyone to be praying about ways we can use what we learn to reach people with the Gospel. That has to be our end game. Our goal needs to, once again, be to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus. There is still time left and we have to use it wisely.

There is one last thing we need to understand before we move on. These signs of the times have been likened to the birth pangs of a pregnant woman. As the return of the Lord draws near, they will happen closer together and with more intensity. Bible prophecy experts call this a convergence. And almost all of these people would say the signs are converging like they never have before.

1. So look up.
2. Your redemption draws near!