

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MATTHEW 24:1-44

In 1947, shortly after World War II, a group of scientists led by Albert Einstein established, “[The Doomsday Clock.](#)” Its purpose is to tell us how close we are to catastrophic destruction - extinguishing the human race – *a figurative midnight.*

Over the last 40 years the clock has been as close as 2 minutes to midnight – that occurred in 1953 after the US successfully tested the first hydrogen bomb.

The furthest from midnight the clock has been set is 11:43 PM – 17 minutes - that moment of euphoria was reached in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The most recent change occurred last year. We’re now at 11:55 PM. With 26,000 armed nuclear weapons, North Korea and Iran’s quest for nuclear arms, and natural disasters sweeping our planet... we’re now 5 minutes to midnight.

And as I read the Bible I’m drawn to a similar conclusion. Our world is in its final days – what the Bible calls “[the last days.](#)” 11:55 may be a generous appraisal.

But here’s where I disagree... the Earth is headed for annihilation.

Before we destroy ourselves Jesus will intervene. God has plans for Earth and man. Jesus has promised to return to the fallen planet and establish His kingdom.

This is what Jesus talks about with His disciples in Matthew 24...

Verse 1, “Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple...”

It's still Monday in Jesus' final week. It was a *busy day* for Jesus – and an *infamous day* for Israel. It was the *day* that decided the nation's *destiny*.

The day before the people had cheered Jesus and called Him their Messiah.

But the Jewish leaders didn't share that sentiment. This is why Jesus cursed the fig tree - a symbol of the nation. Israel had been cursed.

A lot happened in the Temple that day... Jesus avoided the theological traps thrown at Him. He launched a fiery tirade torching the Jewish hierarchy for their hypocrisy. When He left the Temple the dye had been cast in Israel's future.

Judgment was only a matter of time. The fig tree had begun to wither.

As Jesus leaves Jerusalem and the Temple, He heads east toward Lazarus' house in Bethany. He and His men cross the narrow Kidron Valley. Just beyond, He climbs up the Mount of Olives – the hill overlooking the Temple Mount.

On our Israel tours the best, panoramic views of Jerusalem are always from the top of the Mount of Olives. You're 150' above the city - *every photo is a postcard*.

And it was from the top of Olivet that Jesus wept, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...”

God's people had rejected their Messiah, and Jesus predicts the house of Israel will become desolate. He

elaborates on His prediction in chapter 24...

**“And His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.”**

The disciples were Jews and this had been a rough day for Judaism.

Suddenly, their patriotic pride rises up and says, "Lord, all is not wrong with our nation and religion. Look at the Temple - its majestic, its beautiful!" Indeed it was.

The Temple had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel and renovated by King Herod.

Herod's refurbishing efforts had taken 46 years. He'd invested vast wealth and effort to transform the Temple into one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Josephus wrote of the Temple, "The exterior of the building lacked nothing.

It astounded both mind and eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was purest white."

Josephus also mentioned that some of the stones were enormous - the size of a railroad boxcar. The Temple was an impressive source of pride for Judaism.

**“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."

In other words, "your source of *pride* is about to be *pulled-down and pillaged*."

Forty years later in 70 AD, General Titus Vespasian brought his Roman legions to Jerusalem to put down a Jewish revolt. Even though a few Jewish dissidents were held up inside, the General ordered his troops to preserve the Temple.

Here's a picture from the Arch in Rome commemorating Titus' victory.

But one of Titus' soldiers disobeyed his command and threw a torch into the compound. As the buildings burned the heat became so intense the gold plates melted and the liquid gold ran into the crevasses between the stones.

The greedy Roman soldiers pulled down every single stone to retrieve the gold. Thus fulfilling Jesus' words that "**not one stone shall be left... upon another.**"

On our tours of the Temple Mount you can see these same stones - the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy. Judaism had no reason to boast. She was bankrupt spiritually and God was about to foreclose on her hypocrisy.

Verse 3, "**Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives...**"

It's interesting that the Mount of Olives not only figured prominently into Jesus' first coming to earth, but it will also be at the center of His second coming...

In Zechariah 14:4 we're told when Jesus returns to punish His enemies and establish His kingdom He'll set His foot on the top of the Mount of Olives.

One of the kicks about going to Israel is the experience of walking where Jesus once walked... But to stand on top of the Mount of Olives is even more thrilling - there you're standing on the spot where Jesus will one day return.

Here Jesus is sitting where one day He'll stand – and He teaches His disciples about the end times. The next two chapters are known as the "**Olivet Discourse.**"

Jesus begins with a question. "**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 sermon that follows has three points...

*Verses 3-14* describe signs of the end times as they relate to **the world.**

*Verses 15-35* discuss the signs that directly relate to **the nation Israel.**

*Verses 36-51* involve the implications of these signs for **the Church.**

Jesus had just mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem – an event the disciples associated with the end of the age and the second coming of the Messiah.

*And they were right...* Both Old Testament prophecy and Revelation tells us when Jesus returns Jerusalem will be under siege. What the disciples didn't understand was that the city would be destroyed many times beforehand.

Over the last 3000 years Jerusalem has been conquered *38 times.*

But Jesus uses the disciples' interest in Jerusalem to

answer their question about the end of the age and the signs that will precede His second coming...

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

Toward the end of the age many false Messiahs, false-Christis will come.

It's interesting that before the life of Jesus, though there was a Messianic fever, an expectation of the Messiah, no one was rising up claiming to be Him.

There were no Messianic counterfeits prior to Jesus for the same reason there is no such thing as a counterfeit \$200 bill. You can't counterfeit what never existed.

The real deal has to come along before you can try and manufacture a copy.

That's why after Jesus, there were a whole succession of counterfeit Messiahs.

In 132 AD there was a man, "*Simon Bar Kochba*," a Jewish rebel who led a revolt against Rome. He promised his followers no one would be harmed.

When he led them to battle, half-a-million Jews were slaughtered.

Here's a list of more modern False-Messiahs...

**Jim Jones**, whose followers drank the poisoned cool-aid in Guyana in 1978,

**Sun Myung Moon**, the Korean founder of the Unification Church, or Moonies.

**David Koresh**, *the Waco Whacko*, died in 1993. He founded Branch Davidians.

**Sergei Torop**, a former Russian traffic cop, has a 4000 member cult in Siberia.

Benjamin Crème is a nut-case who goes around the world suggesting a false-christ named "**Maitreya**" is alive on Earth,

awaiting his Day of Declaration.

**Jose Luis DeJesus Miranda** is a Puerto Rican who's duped 100,000 followers.

In 1997 **Marshall Applewhite**, convinced 39 followers to commit suicide and hitch a ride on a supposed spaceship, trailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

*And if the true Messiah, Jesus, tarries you can be sure more will follow...*

**“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.”**

The Norwegian Academy of Sciences has concluded that over the last 3600 years of world history there've been 14,531 wars -and only 292 years of peace.

That means over the last 3½ millenniums there's been a war in the world 92% of the time. Look at it this way... **there's been one minute of peace for every four hours of war.** Obviously, wars and rumors of wars are a frequent occurrence.

As long as man is in charge of planet Earth, his greed and selfishness will guarantee there'll be continual conflict between nations and their citizens.

Verse 6 **“See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”** Jesus tells us that *false-christs* and *frequent combat* are standard fare on a fallen planet – when you see it, don't panic. It's not the end.

But **“Nation 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.**” The Greek word for “**sorrows**” means “**labor pangs.**”

You’ve heard of Braxton-Hicks contractions? Throughout a woman’s pregnancy she has false labor pains. They occur irregularly. They’re mild contractions. But the childbirth is signaled by an increase in the *frequency* and *force* of her contractions.

*False- Christs* and *military conflicts* will come - but when their frequency and intensity peaks - the end of the age - and birth of God's Kingdom is near...

It took until the last century before the Earth saw its first world war - now we've seen two - and for the last 60 years we've been sitting on the verge of a third.

More people have died in war in the last century than any other time in history.

The world today is armed to the teeth. *More powerful weapons* are in the hands of *more radical people*. There’re 42 armed conflicts in the world – as we speak...

*One scientist was asked what weapons will be used in World War III?*

He said, "I don't know, but I know what weapons will be used in World War IV - sticks and stones - because that's all that will be left after World War III."

Notice Jesus also mentions the rise of “**famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.**” Every day in the world 854 million people go to bed hungry.

16,000 kids die every day of hunger related causes – 1 child every 5 seconds.

Every 3.6 seconds somewhere on the planet a person starves to death.

And speaking of pestilence...

Every day there're new reports of drug-resistant strains of new viruses.

This past March the CDC announced a shocking study where 1 in 4 teenage girls in America admitted to having a sexually transmitted disease.

Worldwide 40 million people now live with HIV/AIDS – which results in 3 million deaths annually. There are 400 million cases of malaria - and 1 million fatalities.

The World Summit for Children reported, "[Every day in the world: 1400 kids die from whooping cough, 4000 from measles, 2150 from tetanus, 2750 from malaria, 11,000 from diarrhea, and 6000 from pneumonia.](#)" Pestilence is everywhere.

*And earthquakes* – In the last 30 days the world has experienced 409 quakes with a magnitude of 4.0 or greater – 13 at 6.0. The killer quake this past May 12, responsible for 10,000 deaths in southwest China, was 7.8 on the Richter scale.

An underwater earthquake triggered last year's killer tsunami in Indonesia.

What do Oregon, Indiana, Southern England, Japan, China, Trinidad, Chile, the West Bank, Israel, Jordan, Iowa, Peru, Nevada, the Philippines, and Hawaii have in common? They've all been rocked by earthquakes in the last few years.

According to the US Geological Survey the 1980s saw 47 significant quakes. The 1990s recorded 57 such earthquakes. But from January 1, 2000 until now the USGS has recorded 109 earthquakes measuring 7.0 or better on the Richter scale.

There's been an obvious increase of earthquakes in strange places.

Several years ago Tim Lahaye was invited to speak at a Rotary Club meeting in San Diego. The first 15 minutes of his Gospel message was met with boredom.

That's when an earthquake hit. The building, and tables, and plates started to shake and rattle. For several seconds the room was filled with fear and panic.

Lahaye says after the earthquake it was amazing how much more interested his audience was in his message. Perhaps this is why the last days will see more and more earthquakes. God wants people to wake up and listen to His message.

Wars, and rumors, and false-christs are to be expected over the centuries.

But when wars expand and intensify on a global scale – and when earthquakes, and pestilence, and famine increase - you know this is **“the beginning of sorrows.”**

*What comes next but Great Tribulation?* God begins to judge the Earth.

And as He does the world takes out its anger on God's people, the Jews.

**“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and**

**you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.”** In the Tribulation we’ll see another Holocaust.

Right now the United States stands behind Israel and has remained her only consistent ally - *but how long this support will last remains to be seen...*

The day will come when even the United States will withdraw her support for Israel, and join in the Antichrist's worldwide campaign to exterminate the Jews.

**“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.”** Allegiances and treaties among all nations will break down. Intrigue, and back-stabbing, and deception will be the foreign policy of all nations.

Honor and ethics and honesty will be relics of the past.

**“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”** Spiritual deception will reach unprecedented levels. When the Holy Spirit’s light and love through His Church is removed from the world all hell breaks loose. Darkness rules the roost.

**“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”** Cold-bloodedness, ruthlessness, violence, cruelty will be even more commonplace.

**“But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”**

Real faith is always a persevering faith. Colossians 1:23 says we’re, **“holy and blameless, and above reproach in His sight – if indeed you *continue* in the faith...”**

Hebrews 10 echoes the need for faith to persevere. **“But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”**

Salvation in every age involves perseverance.

“**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.**” After the church is raptured the Gospel is preached. Some folks use this verse to teach that before the rapture occurs the Church will spread the Gospel to the four corners of the globe. *Not necessarily.*

According to Revelation – in the Great Tribulation – God still has means of spreading the love and truth of Jesus to the world... 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and two special witnesses preach the Gospel. In Revelation 14 an angel flies through the sky proclaiming to the world the everlasting Gospel.

The Good News will still be preached even after the church is gone.

And if the Gospel is preached, the implication is people will be saved.

There are three types of believers in the Bible: First, **Old Testament believers** who trusted in a coming Messiah... Second, those of us who are **the Church**...

And third, **Tribulation saints**... These are people who decide to follow Jesus during the Tribulation - who'll have to endure to the end to be saved.

The Great Tribulation will be a difficult time to be a believer. Persecution will be intense. Opportunities to stumble will be great. Only those with a persevering faith will be saved. For the tribulation saints martyrdom will become the norm.

Hey, if you can't live for Jesus now, what makes you think you'll live for Him then? Better to give your life to Jesus now and be raptured with the Church!

Verse 15 continues to describe events that occur in the Great Tribulation – this final seven year period. **"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."**

Daniel 9 predicts that 70 weeks, or 70 periods of seven years, are determined to accomplish God's purposes for Israel. The Bible calls this last week of Daniel's prophecy the **"Great Tribulation."** For seven years the world will be **punished** - the Jews will be **purified** - and the Church will be **partying** in heaven.

Daniel 9 says that during the midpoint of this last week a terrible event will occur. He calls it **"the abomination of desolation."** Jesus mentions it here...

And history provides us a parallel...

Two-hundred years before Jesus, a Syrian ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes tried to indoctrinate the Jews with Greek culture and religion. He hated the God of the Hebrews and tried to force the Jews to accept the ways of the Greeks.

When they refused he reacted with a vengeance...

On a single day in 170 AD Antiochus' army slaughtered 100,000 Jewish males, raped the women, and looted the city

of Jerusalem. Antiochus himself entered the Temple and butchered a pig on the altar. He forced the priests to drink its blood and eat raw pork. He smeared the remainder of the blood on the walls of the Temple and set up a statue of the Greek idol, Zeus, in the place of God.

This was more than the Jews could stomach. They fled Jerusalem and vacated the Temple - leaving it desolate. It was *the abomination that caused desolation*.

Yet apparently Antiochus' actions didn't completely fulfill the prophecy of Daniel. For 200 years later, Jesus says the abomination of desolation is still future.

Antiochus' abomination was a foreshadowing of another ruler who will arise in the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist. He'll also wage war with the Jews.

It'll climax with his takeover of Jerusalem. This blasphemous ruler will set up an idol - an image of himself in the Temple's Holy of Holies. It's another abomination.

And when it occurs, once again it causes desolation. Jews will vacate the city of Jerusalem, and escape to the wilderness. **“Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”** Jews will head for the hills – get out of Dodge – run for their lives.

According to Isaiah 16 they'll hide in the rock city of Petra – SE of Dead Sea.

I've read that an evangelist named W.E. Blackstone stockpiled Gospel tracts and Hebrew New Testaments at Petra, hoping they'll be found and read by the Jews who flee there in the Great Tribulation. Jesus will be their only



salvation.

Verse 17, in that day, “Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.” In the Middle East people lounge on the rooftops.

A rooftop patio is more like a den. The breeze makes it cooler.

“And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.”

“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!” All this is in reference to the exodus the Antichrist will cause.

“And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.”

In Israel everything shuts down on Saturday. Transportation and travel become difficult because 99% of the operators are at home observing the Sabbath. When we're in Israel we try to avoid the cities on the Sabbath – city life comes to a halt.

Verse 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.”

The “abomination of desolation” marks the middle of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 12 tells us at this point Satan gets booted out of heaven and he's so furious at God, he turns the full focus of his anger on His kids, Israel. This last 3½ years are indeed a time of *Great Tribulation... such as the world has never seen.*

Satan's wrath will make the Holocaust look like a picnic.



But remember who Jesus is speaking to here... residents of Judea – people who observe the Sabbath – Jews. He's not speaking to the Church, but Israel.

“Pray your flight may not be on the Sabbath” would mean nothing to the Church. At this point the Church will have been raptured. We'll be partying with Jesus.

Verse 22 “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.” Remember the Church is not the only group in the Bible referred to as “the elect.” In Isaiah 24:4, Isaiah 65:9, and in Romans 11:28, the Jews are also referred to by this term - *the elect*.

Also don't forget the two purposes for this Great Tribulation...

God uses its judgments to *punish the wicked* and to *purify the Jews*. This time of punishment would have no bounds if it were not for its goal of purification.

The cataclysmic, global judgments spoken of in Revelation will be shortened – or tempered - not for the sake of the wicked, but in order to spare the Jews.

“Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.”

During the Great Tribulation a sinister figure will surface who'll rule the world. He's called the "Antichrist" because he claims to be the world's Messiah.

Revelation 13 tells us Satan will give him great power to do signs and wonders. He'll miraculously recover from a mortal head wound. He'll be very convincing.

And despite Jesus' warning, even many of the Jews will believe in him.

**“Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out...”**

Muhammed, founder of Islam, was *the desert warrior*. Perhaps, as Jesus looks into the future He warns us of Muhammed. Tragically, the descendants of Ishmael, the Arabs, have by and large embraced the *false religion* of this *false Messiah...*

**“Or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.”**

In the early 1900s the Jehovah Witnesses predicted Jesus would return to earth in 1917. The date came and no return - so they reset the date to 1925. Again no return, so they said Jesus came spiritually in 1917 - but since He's reigning from an inner room... Here, Jesus tells us specifically, **"Don't believe it!"**

**“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”** The *Second Coming* is no *secret coming*.

When Jesus returns the world will know.

He won't hide in the desert or in some inner room. He's coming like a bolt of lightning. He'll split the eastern skies and wage war on the armies of the earth.

That's why He says in verse 28, "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together." Where Jesus returns there'll be carnage and carcass.

At the rapture Jesus prepares *a feast for His Church*. At the Second Coming He prepares *a feast for the vultures*. During the Tribulation heaven is *holy ground* for the Church - but for the wicked, this world will be turned into a *battleground*.

"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." Revelation describes in vivid detail the catastrophic judgments that'll rock the planet and the physical universe off its foundation.

The Doomsday Clock will finally strike midnight.

Isaiah 24:20 "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again..."

"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." While the earth is recoiling from its upheaval some kind of sign will appear in the heavens – "the sign of the Son of Man."

What this sign will be, no one knows. Perhaps a sign of the cross - or maybe the Shekinnah glory of God will fill and radiate throughout the heavens...

But when the nations see this sign – it sets in motion the

final showdown.

The armies of Antichrist rally at Armageddon and try to thwart the coming of God's kingdom. The final chapter in the war for Jerusalem will end with Jesus crushing His enemies and taking possession of a world that belongs to Him.

When the Jews see the sign of the Son of Man they react differently.

They repent. Zechariah 12:10 tells us, "They will look on (Jesus) whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn." Israel will finally trust Jesus as Messiah.

"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." During the Tribulation the Jews will be driven from their land.

Even today, there're more Jews in NY City than in all Israel. When Jesus returns He'll send His angels to gather them again to their ancient homeland.

Verse 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. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors!"

There are two ways to interpret this parable...

The fig tree blossomed and bore fruit in early spring. Thus, see the buds and you know winter is almost over. All Jesus may be saying in this parable is that as the fig tree is an

indicator of spring - these signs are an indicator of His return.

But there's a more provocative interpretation of this parable...

Throughout the Old Testament the fig tree is a symbol for the nation Israel.

The day before, Jesus cursed a fig tree as a sign of the nation's barrenness. Thus, some see the re-budding of the fig tree as a symbol of Israel's rebirth.

What Jesus may be saying here is that when we see the rebirth of the nation Israel know that His Coming is near and Tribulation is just around the corner.

Of course, this would be nothing new. It's taught elsewhere in Scripture.

The rebirth of the Jewish nation after 2000 years in dispersion is nothing less than a miracle and the greatest of the Bible's prophecies relating the end times.

*But what comes next is what makes this interpretation so provocative...*

**“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”**

The generation that sees the fig tree blossom is *the last generation*.

If the budding of the fig tree is the rebirth of the nation Israel – which occurred on May 14, 1948 - this means that we, the generation living today, is the final generation before the end of the age. Jesus will return in our lifetime.

This is exciting, but this is also what gets us in trouble. We start setting dates.

Here are a couple of problems... First, we don't know what constitutes a biblical generation. Some think it is 40 years. Others assume 70 years. Genesis 15:13-16 implies a generation is 100 years, but nowhere in Scripture does God define a generation. That's why we can't be dogmatic and we should never set dates.

We can know the times and seasons, but not the day or the hour...

Verse 36 **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."** I remember a guy named Edgar Whisenaut. He published a book entitled, **"88 Reasons Why Jesus will return in 1988."**

He pinpointed September 11-13. He created quite a stir, but no rapture.

Whistenaut wasn't the first - or will he be the last to indulge in date setting.

Notice here, Jesus said no one outside the Godhead knows when He will return to this earth. I'd say that includes us... Only a foolish man will start setting dates.

**"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**

**For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came**

and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” God sets no date because He wants us to live every day as if it were *the day*.

Jesus says *the days before the fire* will be similar to *the days before the flood*. No one believed Noah. They thought he was a nut. It'd never rained before.

In the days of Noah it was business as usual.

People were marrying, planning their lives, pursuing careers, buying houses, signing 30 year mortgages (with no flood insurance). *And this is what's going on today*. We're on the brink of God's judgment, yet people are oblivious.

When Jesus comes for His Church the world will be shocked. They'll be groping for an explanation. Folks to whom we've witnessed will recall the truth and believe.

Jesus speaks of the rapture in the next few verses... verses 40-44...

“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

Notice the contrasting picture that develops in this chapter...

On the one hand, the return of Jesus occurs after all the earth sees a sign in the heavens. On the other hand, Jesus comes suddenly and unexpectedly.

On the one hand, a battle ensues His coming. On the other hand, it's as in the days of Noah – business as usual. *Which*



is it? The answer is “*both.*”

There are actually two Second Comings of Jesus...

Before Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, the last seven years of Tribulation, Jesus comes unexpectedly for His Church. He'll return *in the clouds* to gather us up.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 says we'll be "**caught up**" or "**snatched away.**" It's the Latin word "*raptus*" – from which we get our word "*rapture.*" Don't let anyone tell you that "**rapture**" isn't in the Bible. It is if you're reading a Latin Bible.

Yet at the end of the 7 years of Tribulation, Jesus returns *not in the clouds - but to the earth* to establish His Kingdom. Revelation 19 describes Jesus on a white horse - armed to battle hostile armies that are trying to prevent His takeover.

Note the format Jesus uses in the Olivet Discourse is that of a typical sermon.

People point out Jesus mentions the rapture after He talks about Tribulation – thus the rapture must follow the Tribulation, and occur at the Second Coming.

But Jesus isn't giving a chronological timeline in Matthew 24. This is a sermon.

He discusses the events leading up to the Second Coming - then He gives an invitation. You don't have to endure Tribulation if you're ready for the rapture!

**“One will be taken and the other left...”** This is what happens at the rapture.

Jesus will come for those who are His – who are watching for His return. Those who are not - are left behind to endure



the world's most horrible period of history.

“But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Brandon Brooks was a reporter for a TV station in Pennsylvania. He was doing a special on how to protect your house against burglars... In fact, he walked through his own home to show the security tips he had implemented.

What Brooks didn't realize is that burglars watch his show. They cased the joint by watching him on TV. While Brooks was on the air – burglars cleaned him out.

Jesus is coming like a thief in the night. He knows where you live! In an instant you'll leave, or be left behind. Are you ready? Let's live on the edge of our seat.

There's but one departure time. Make sure our faith is in Jesus! Be ready.

And next week Jesus tells us how to be ready. In chapter 24 he's given us *information* about the end times. In the next four parables we get *inspiration*.