

Lesson 1

Setting the Context of Revelation

Invite the Holy Spirit to teach and speak to you through the Word of God as you meditate on Matthew 24 every day this week.

“But all these things are the beginning of birth pangs.”

As you read through the verses presented this week, look for a special verse to make your memory verse for the week. We will share our verses at the end of our discussion time.

Matthew 24:8

1. What was a new or interesting thought from last week’s introduction?

Before we launch into our study, it is important that we take the time to understand the context of the events of Revelation as presented in the rest of the Scriptures. Over 150 chapters of the Bible are concerned with this time in history. Jesus Himself gives many signs that point to His return. He warned us not to be caught off guard. It is important for us to identify and look for these signs. In this lesson we will look into many of these specific Scriptures that deal with the end of this age and gain a working knowledge of some of the terms that are used in the book of Revelation.

2. A generation in the Bible ranges from 40-100 years. What does Jesus teach in Matthew 24:36?
3. What does Jesus tell us in Matthew 24:33-34? Discuss how we can apply both of these truths (questions 2 and 3) to our lives. See also Matthew 24:42, 44, Luke 21:25-28, and 31-33.
4. Why do you think Jesus wants us to be aware and alert to His return?

5. What does Paul tell us about understanding the times in I Thessalonians 5:1-6 and II Thessalonians 2:1-3?
6. From Matthew 16:1-4, why were the Pharisees asking for a sign? How did the Lord feel about their attitude? What did he rebuke them for?
7. To what does Jesus liken “all these things” in Matthew 24:8? Discuss what this word picture tells you about these things.
8. Discuss what it will be like on earth during the generation of the Lord’s return according to Matthew 24:4-8 and Luke 21:7-11 at the beginning of the birth pangs.

Israel

Many signs in the Bible that relate to the return of the Lord involve the nation Israel and the city of Jerusalem. It is interesting that 100 years ago Biblical scholars thought that these passages must be interpreted in a spiritual way because they could not possibly be taken at face value since it was inconceivable that Israel could be a literal nation. All of that changed on May 14, 1948 when the nation of Israel was founded and in June 1967 when Jerusalem became a part of Israel as a result of the Six Day War. These two dates may be key in understanding “the generation” that Jesus says in Matthew 24:33 “will not pass away until all these things take place.”

Temple

Because there are prophecies that refer to the Temple and its sacrifices being stopped, it seems that the Temple will be rebuilt and the Temple sacrifices re-instituted before Jesus returns. See Daniel 9:27 and II Thessalonians 2:4.

Great Tribulation

The Scripture teaches that at the end of this age there will be a time called the Great Tribulation. Daniel 9:27 talks about a specific seven year period of time, calling it a week. A week in Hebrew simply means seven, and in this instance seems to refer to seven years, not seven days. This seven year period is sometimes called “the time of Jacob’s sorrow.” It will be a time when the Jewish people are severely persecuted.

Apparently leading up to and the beginning of these seven years there will be a time of economic and political turmoil in the world, the beginning of birth pangs. The Antichrist (who we will discuss later in this lesson) will emerge on the world scene as a powerful leader. He will promise peace and will consolidate power. He will make a pact with the Jewish people that will enforce world peace. See I Thessalonians. 5:2.

Halfway through the seven years the Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and set up an idol of himself in the Temple, forcing all to worship his image. This will be in the three and a half year period called the Great Tribulation. Most of the events of Revelation 6-18 occur during the Great Tribulation.

9. What two signs must occur before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him according to II Thessalonians 2:1-5?

10. Look up the word apostasy in a dictionary and discuss the meaning.

Day of the Lord

The Bible uses the phrase “the day of the Lord” to refer to the specific period of time associated with the Lord’s return. It is mentioned nineteen times in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament. This phrase usually describes a time of judgment. See Isaiah 13:1-13 and Zephaniah 1:15-16, 18.

Antichrist

The Antichrist is a man who will rise to power over a worldwide empire during the end of this age. He is called “the son of perdition” in II Thessalonians 2:3 and “the lawless one” in II Thessalonians 2:8-9. Revelation 17:8 teaches that he “comes out of the abyss.” Initially he will bring peace to the world and will make a treaty of peace with Israel. Later, he will oppose everything that has to do with the true God, including the nation of Israel and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes with all power, signs and lying wonders. Satan will give him authority and his throne, Revelation 13:2. The Antichrist is called “the Beast” 36 times in the Bible. He will be given authority to rule for 3 ½ years (42 months), Revelation 13:5. The Pharaoh in the book of Exodus is a person who prefigures the Antichrist. Exodus 7-14 shows his unrelenting hatred for God and His people.

11. Ultimately, from whom does all governmental authority originate, according to Romans 13:1?

12. Read the following verses that refer to the Antichrist and discuss what you learn about him. Daniel 7:21,23-26; 8:23-25; 11:31-32; 11:36-39, 43.

Ten Nation Federation

By the time the Antichrist arrives on the scene, there will be a coalition of ten nations coming forth from the area of the former Roman Empire. This is based upon Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2: 41-42. See also Daniel 7:7; 24, and Revelation 12:16 for further references.

13. What will be a prevailing attitude as the return of the Lord approaches according to II Peter 3:3 and Jude 18?

Harlot Babylon

Revelation 17-18 describes a worldwide religious and economic network that will be in place by the end of the age. If we interpret Revelation 17 at face value, then the ancient city of Babylon, fifty miles south of Bagdad, will be the center of this worldwide system. This religious/economic system will not acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, but it will be very "spiritual" and oriented toward good works. It will be marked by moral relativism and religious pluralism, tolerating any sexual behavior and embracing all beliefs.

14. Who will the Harlot Babylon hate according to Revelation 17:5?
15. What do the following passages say about the persecution of the saints? Daniel 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10 and Matthew 24:9-10.
16. What effect do you think this will have upon believers? See Daniel 11:33 and 12:3 for one result.
17. What will be another sign of His return according to Matthew 24:14?
18. What sign is mentioned in Matthew 24:11? Discuss why this may occur.

19. What does Jesus encourage believers to do in the midst of these signs according to Matthew 24:13?

20. From Joel 2:28-32, what else will occur?

21. Jesus said that His return will be like the days of Noah. What were those days like according to Genesis 6:12-13.

22. In Luke 17:28-30 Jesus says that His return will be like the days of Lot. From Genesis 19, what were those days like?

Globalization and Technology

Globalization and technology will advance as we come to the end of this age. For instance, all the world will watch as “the two witnesses” in Revelation 11 are martyred and resurrected. This will require advanced technology. Additionally, by the time of Revelation 13 “the mark of the beast,” which we will look at in a future lesson, will require advanced technology to collect and monitor information.

23. Discuss the sign that Daniel 12:4 presents.

Abomination of Desolation

The Abomination of Desolation is an event that will happen half way through the seven years leading up to the Lord’s return. The Antichrist will break the covenant that he made with Israel and demand that all worship his image. He will set up an image of himself in the Temple of Jerusalem that will breathe and speak, Revelation 13:14-15. This will begin the Great Tribulation which will last for 3 ½ years. This time frame fits with most of the events of Revelation 6-19. The Abomination of Desolation is a clear sign, not to be missed, as it is set forth in the Bible 19 times.

Mark of the Beast

The Antichrist and his colleagues will completely destroy the Harlot Babylon religions system, Revelation 17, replacing it with Antichrist worship and an economic system based on this worship, the mark of the beast. Everyone will be required to take the mark of the beast in order to buy or sell goods. Anyone who refuses to take this mark may be punished by death. The Lord clearly warns believers not to take this mark.

24. What is the agenda of Satan according to Matthew 4:8-9?

Jesus gives us parables about His return that instruct us about what our “position” should be when He returns.

25. From the parable of the wise servant in Matthew 24:45-51, what will the wise servant do while He is away?

26. From the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, what is our warning?

27. From the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, what should we do while we await our master’s return?

28. From the parable of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-35 do you think the believers in the generation of the Lord’s return will be surprised by what occurs?

29. Share the memory verse that you found through this week’s study and why you chose it.

30. From your meditation this week on Matthew 24, what do you want to remember?