

## Matthew 24:1-5 “Signs of Jesus’ Return”

3.11.18

Well, March Madness is in full swing...and the truth is...since we live in ACC Country, we have great basketball throughout the season. So, with that as our backdrop...let’s say your ACC team is down 4 points, 66-62 with only .9 left. Would you say your team had a chance to win? You quickly check your phone and according to the ESPN “Match-up Predictor,” your team has a 0.2% chance to win.

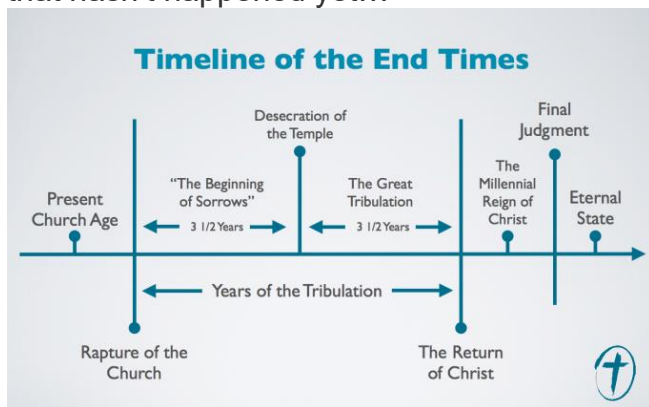
0.2% chance! Virtually impossible! Not so fast! You win and Scott Van Pelt raises his hands (as I did) in disbelief on Sportscenter:



Virginia comes back and beats Louisville after scoring 5 points with .9 seconds left and wins... And the CELEBRATION ensued...



Unbelievable! I couldn’t believe it and I watched it happen! I share this with you as the intro to my message? Why? Well, so I can say this: just because you’ve never seen something happen before, doesn’t mean it can’t happen. Let me show you something else that hasn’t happened yet...



That’s a timeline of the unfolding of the “Events of the End Times” as described in the Scriptures. Yes, the world looks at that timeline and laughs and says, “Yeah right...there’s about a 0.2% chance of that happening!” Well, just remember Virginia!

This morning we pick up in Matthew’s account in chapter 24...as we see the life of Jesus on this earth coming to a close. He is now leaving the Temple where He’s been teaching. It’s Tuesday of the last week of His life prior to His death and resurrection. And He’s saying some things to His

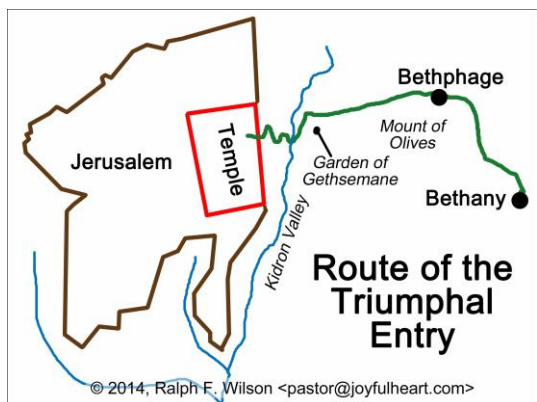
disciples that seem impossible! They couldn't believe what they were hearing. **Follow along in verse 1.**

**Matthew 24:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup>But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." <sup>3</sup>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?" <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."

As we begin this morning, I will tell you that much of this message will be "introductory" in nature as we begin a study called: "The Signs of the Return of Jesus." Matthew chapters 24 and 25 give us those signs. This message today is in essence an introduction to what is often called the "The Olivet Discourse" of Jesus. Why is called that? Because it's happening on the Mt. of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley from the Temple compound.

As we just read, Jesus has left the Temple on Tue evening and He's headed to Bethany, where He and His disciples have been staying... You had to cross the Mount of Olives to get there. See:



This is the same route He took when He entered Jerusalem on Sunday during the Triumphal Entry, on what we call Palm Sunday. Take a look at this picture...



That's a picture I took from the Mount of Olives looking back toward Jerusalem with the Kidron Valley in between. It's a beautiful sight to behold! And if you go about 2 miles (over my shoulder) you would end up in Bethany, where Jesus was staying with Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead and his sisters, Mary and Martha.

I can see in my mind's eye, Jesus and the disciples talking privately (understand this was private...no more crowds...just His disciples) and this entire teaching arises because of what Jesus had just said in the Temple courtyard to the Pharisees...these guys...



What did He say? Remember with me from last week. **Look up at**

**Matt 23:37...**

**Matthew 23:37-38**

<sup>37</sup>“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>38</sup>See, your house is left to you desolate.

Jesus proclaimed: Ichabod over the Temple! The **glory of the Lord has left** and that’s exactly what Jesus did...see it again, verse 1...

**Matthew 24:1**

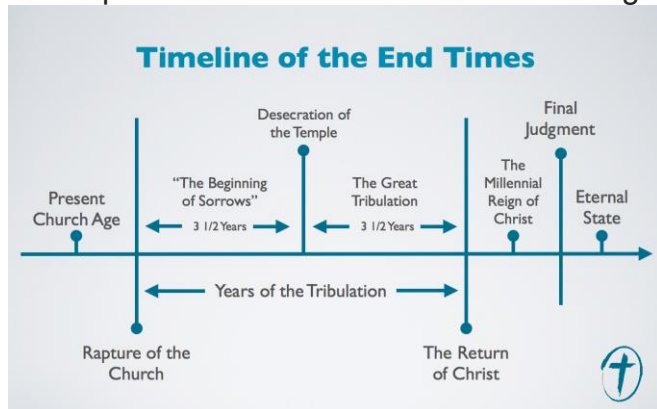
<sup>1</sup>Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.

See this in your mind...Jesus is leaving the Temple. He is wading His way through the crowds...



They have been packed into the Temple courtyard like sardines to hear this miracle-worker, who raises the dead...but, He has just pronounced judgment on the religious leaders of the nation of Israel and He’s finished. He said, “I’m leaving YOUR HOUSE DESOLATE.” He said, “I’m done with you.”

And this is what’s so very important for us to recognize here at the beginning of Matthew 24. This teaching of Jesus is in reference to what’s going to happen when He returns to the Mount of Olives. He’s describing what happens during and after the Tribulation Period, which occurs AFTER the Rapture. See the chart we’ve been using on Wed. nights in our Revelation study...



The disciples couldn’t see us (THE CHURCH), the PRESENT CHURCH AGE. They only saw their nation...Israel. They thought they were already in the Tribulation. They didn’t understand that as a nation...Israel (Jesus’ own people had rejected

Him), therefore, the Gospel was going to be made available to all people...not just the Jews...not just Israel.

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Therefore, what Jesus is going to teach the Disciples on the Mount of Olives, that Tuesday Evening, is called: see the screens...Eschatology...

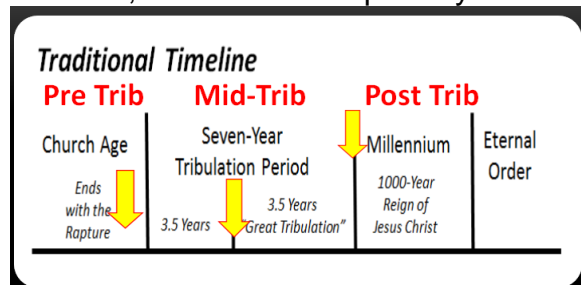
## What Is Eschatology?

Eschatology is the study of "last things" pertaining to the rapture of the church, resurrection of the dead, 2nd coming of Christ, the kingdom coming to Israel, the eternal state of both the lost and the saved, and the eternal reign of God.

And this is what I've been teaching on Wednesday nights! And might I say HOW AMAZING it is that we're now talking about the same thing on Sunday morning. It's uncanny how often the Holy Spirit syncs up what we're doing on Sundays and Wednesdays. And I need you to understand what I've told the folks on Wednesday nights...I'm a Biblicist, in other words, I take the Word of God literally and I believe it means what it says, so my interpretation of the End Time Events and the way I teach Eschatology is based upon what is called a "Pre-Tribulation" viewpoint of the Rapture.

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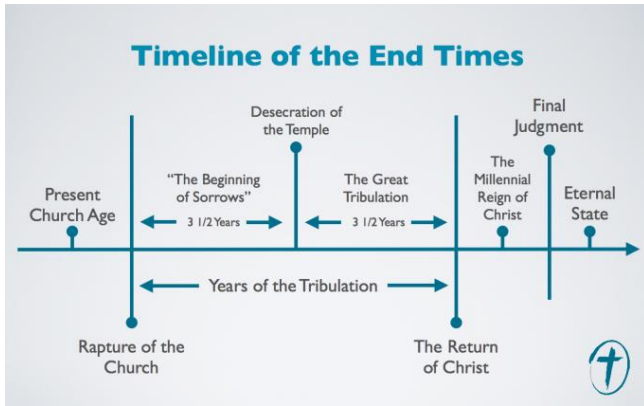
You see, there are three primary views of the Rapture.



There is the Pre-Tribulation view (which is what the majority of seminaries, preachers and scholars teach,) What is a Pre-Trib view? It's that the return of Jesus will happen before the Tribulation starts. In other words, before the 7 years of tumult and judgment is poured out on the earth, by God, the Church is taken out. Yet, there are others who say that Jesus won't take out the church until the MIDDLE of the TRIBULATION (see the chart again) and others who say that won't happen until after the Tribulation: POST TRIBULATION.

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See the chart again that I'll be using a lot...



This is how I'll be teaching Matthew 24 and 25, (following this timeline) and so, if you want another view, you'll have to get that somewhere else. This is the only way I can reconcile the Scriptures together... Therefore I will teach that the Rapture of the church takes place before the Tribulation period.

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Take a look at this picture...get this in your mind's eye...



Jesus is leaving... He and His disciples are leaving the Temple, (that beautiful, majestic Temple) and down through the Kidron Valley they go and up to the Mount of Olives and it's as if they are looking back toward the Temple...much like this view that I've shown you before:



They are looking back AS I DID in 2007...NO...not seeing...not the Dome of the Rock, but the Temple as the evening sun sets. I'm telling you...it's a spectacular sight, one of the most spectacular sights in all the world...watching the sun set on the city of God as the evening sunshine cascades off of those gloriously white limestone buildings...and then, Jesus said these startling words...

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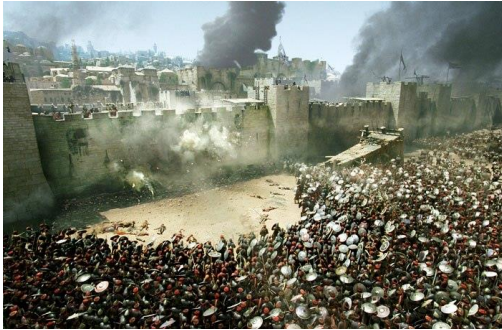
**Matthew 24:2**

<sup>2</sup> But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

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What? It's going to be torn down? Destroyed? Yes, the prophecy Jesus made in verse 2 as He was looking back across the Kidron Valley at Temple Mount was startling: "Truly, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." Did that happen? Yes! About 40

years later in 70 A.D., that's exactly what happened. Yes, it seemed impossible to the disciples. It must have seemed like a .2% chance to them. But, it did happen! And most of them lived to see it.



Titus, the Roman General came in and leveled the city in 70 A.D. He squashed the Jewish rebellion that had begun in 66 AD by the Jewish sect known as the Zealots. They were bent on overthrowing Rome so the Messiah could come and rule and reign, but Titus squashed that rebellion! And in so doing, he had the Temple burned and get this...the gold in the temple melted in the fire and ran down into the cracks between the stones. And when the Romans left, the people came and searched for the gold and they toppled every stone from its place...fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus (not one stone will be left on top of another).

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But, I have a question: If that's true...no stone on top of another...how do you explain this...



The "Wailing Wall," or what is also called: The Western Wall. That's the wall that the Jews continue to go to and pray and WAIL for the Messiah...



It's such a sad place... The Messiah has already come and this is part of the desolation Jesus described...BUT WHAT ABOUT THE STONES... Was Jesus' prophecy wrong?

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No... Jesus said not one stone of the Temple buildings would be left one on top of the other. That's what the disciples were talking about in VERSE 1. And indeed, the Temple compound was destroyed...not one stone was on top of another, because the people did come and scrape for that gold. You see, "Western Wall" is not part of the buildings...but only a retaining wall. See:



That is a model of what the Temple compound looked like in the first century and notice Wilson's Arch and the Wailing Wall. See this picture again...



The Western Wall is nothing more than part of the retaining wall that held Temple Mount in place. It was not part of the Temple compound itself. OH THE POWER OF PROPHECY!! You can trust the Words of Jesus and the Bible! It all came true! Remember, church family, God's Word can be trusted. And remember, His timetable is not our timetable. His ways aren't our ways. He's got a plan! A better plan than you have for yourself. No, you may not understand it...it may not make sense right now, but you keep trusting Him. He knows what He's doing and He will sustain you...He will bring to pass all that He has planned for you life and nothing or no one can thwart His plan for you!

Jesus POINTED BACK TO THE TEMPLE, and said: "It's all gonna come crashing down!" But, you see Church family, that's NOT what they wanted to hear! And sometimes God's plan is not what we want to hear...but, if we want to know peace and the power that comes through faith and trust in Him, we must accept His will. We must have ears to hear! And when we do...the peace that passes all understanding will come!

Can you feel the pain and the disillusionment of the disciples! This is Disaster! They had to be staring at each other in utter disbelief on the Mount of Olives that Tuesday evening! They had to be thinking: NO!! NO!!! This is not how it's supposed to be! This is awful! **My goodness**...Everything looked so good on Sunday when He rode into Jerusalem on the donkey...everyone was shouting, "Hosanna to the King...blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." But, Monday...OH...OH...Monday was SO bad... He was flipping tables in the Temple...



...and then on Tuesday it got worse...it was like a war with the Pharisees all day...



...group after group has come back and forth trying to discredit Jesus and then in grief and gut-wrenching agony...Jesus pronounced those 7 woes on them and then He left! Folks, this is not what they expected! The disciples must have felt like they've been told, "We're down 4 with .9 seconds to go with a 0.2% chance of winning!" This can't work out well!

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Will you do something with me for a moment? Will you try to put yourself into the mindset of those disciples listening to Jesus in that olive grove... You see, they've heard and read the Old Testament prophecies all of their lives about the Messiah and they saw in those prophecies the coming of the Messiah as something bright and beautiful...something that promised a hopeful future.

They've been anticipating the coming of the Anointed One, the King, the Christ for centuries! They've longed for Him to come, and when He finally did come ...they believed that Jerusalem would dwell in peace, and prosperity and safety. But, this is NOT what Jesus was saying. He's saying it's all going come tumbling down! So we would join the disciples in saying: "Wait a minute: HOW IN THE WORLD IS the Messiah GOING TO RULE AND REIGN IF THE TEMPLE IS GONE! It didn't make sense at all!

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Church family, everything changed on that Tuesday in the Temple! The nation of Israel had rejected their Messiah, so Jesus rejected them and turned TO ALL who would receive Him and said, "Salvation is available to anyone who calls on my name." Truly, for WHOSOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED...not just the Jews.

And you see, that's what the disciples couldn't see. The WHOSOEVER! Listen, their eschatological viewpoint was this: They actually thought they were living in the Tribulation right then because of the oppression of Rome! They thought the time of difficulty and oppression...their time of trouble was coming to an end with Jesus there! In fact, that HAD believed this to be true ever since they had heard the words of John the Baptist three years earlier: When John said: "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD...the Messiah is here!!!" They were ready for this...

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**The celebration!** Hallelujah! We win! Jesus is here to set up His kingdom!

But, He wasn't doing that...now He's talking about destruction and dying! DYING!! For weeks He's been saying He's going to die! And that doesn't make sense either! **You've got to rule and reign Jesus!!!** And you see, they can't handle all of this! They couldn't comprehend death...resurrection! NO! It's time for the kingdom, not death!

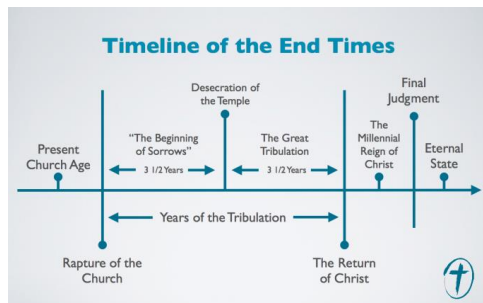
**Church family, they didn't understand the mystery.** You say, "WHAT MYSTERY?" The mystery of the Gospel. **Turn to Ephesians 3.** Let me show this to you.

The Bible describes a mystery...a mystery to the Old Testament prophets and saints, that is now being revealed to these disciples...a "Mystery" that has been hidden, that's now being revealed.

**Ephesians 3:1-6**

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup> assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. <sup>4</sup> When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

You see, Gentiles get into the Kingdom too! The mystery is that WE (GENTILES...non-Jews...) GET A SHOT AT THE KINGDOM TOO! See the screens...they couldn't see us...THE CHURCH!



And because of this...**I believe this was the last straw for Judas.** In his mind...he's sitting there on the Mt. of Olives, looking back at the Temple and hearing Jesus say it's going to be destroyed and he's thinking: this isn't right. All his hopes and dreams are being crushed right before his eyes! And now he's done...he's getting off the roller coaster! He

can't take it anymore. And the next day (Wed.) he goes to the Pharisees and says, "You want Him...I'll give Him to you for 30 pieces of silver!" And so the betrayal is set in motion! You see, I'm convinced the Olivet Discourse sealed the deal for Judas!

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And then, Jesus warns the disciples in verse 4...don't listen to anybody else who comes and tells you something different... **See it in verses 4 and 5...**

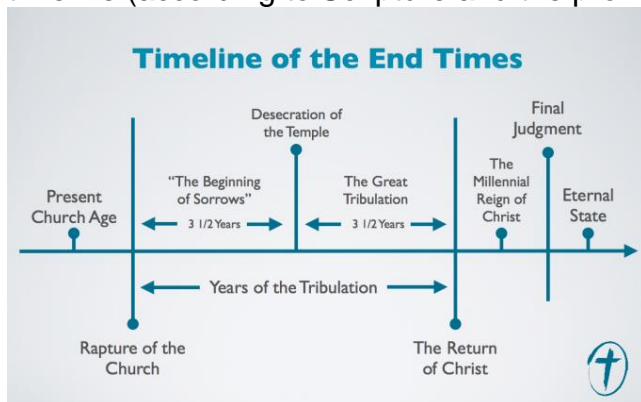
### **Matthew 24:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.**

Jesus knew that what He was saying wasn't what they wanted to hear and so, He warns them to not listen to anyone who comes with a more enticing message! Just because it isn't what you want to hear, doesn't mean it's not truth. Jesus is saying: "Don't be deceived, because there are going to be people who come and tell you that there's a better way...but, there isn't! because I'm the way! Trust me! Trust my plan for you!"

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So here we are today...and now I'm telling you that Jesus is coming back. I'm telling you that this timeline (according to Scripture and the promise of Jesus)...is going to happen...



And you might look at me and say, "No way!" That's

Sci-Fi stuff...that's impossible... But, might I remind you...



of things that seem impossible. Oh, I know it seems like there may only be .9 seconds left and we're down 4 and there's only a 0.2% chance that we'll win! But, hang on Christian! Hang on to the promises of our Savior! Everything He ever said came true!

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You know...3 days later Jesus would die! But, He didn't stay dead, did He? He prophesied about that too. He said, I'm getting up! And three days after His crucifixion...He got up! And then in that upper room in Jerusalem that Sunday afternoon...the celebration broke out...



Oh the celebration! And one day the celebration for us will begin!  
Believe it! Count on it! An eternity with Christ where we'll celebrate together as brothers and sisters  
in heaven! AND IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN! YOU COUNT ON IT! BECAUSE JESUS SAID IT  
WOULD!

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