

One of the most thrilling moments in all of my life was the birth of our first child. There is something wonderful...yet terrifying...about the birth of that first child. What do I know... I know nothing... It's you ladies that have to deal with all of this... Like this lady...she's in pain...you can tell...



But, you ladies share about the sheer joy and happy excitement after the baby is born...OH! but, leading up to that...THE LABOR...UGH...that's the brutal part...and it's this apprehension...because of the pain...that Jesus uses as His example to describe to His disciples the events leading up to His second coming.

Matthew 24:6-14

⁶And 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. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹“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. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

This morning we're going to look at the 7 Signs or Birth Pains of Jesus' Return. Here they are:

7 Birth Pains/Signs of Jesus' Return to Earth:

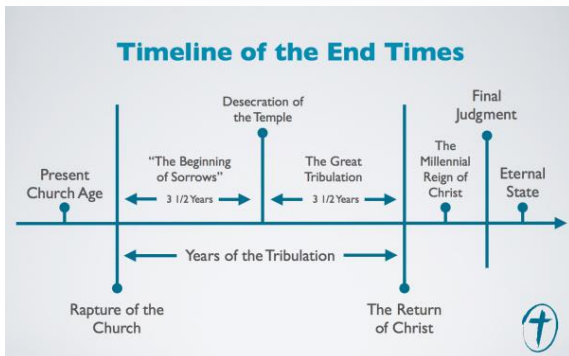
1. Wars and Rumors of War
2. Famines, Pestilences, Earthquakes
3. Hatred of all Nations toward Believers
4. Many “Falling Away” from the Faith
5. False Prophets
6. Love Grows Cold
7. Gospel Proclaimed Throughout the Whole World

Last week we began our study of Matt. 24 and 25 by talking about the term: 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.

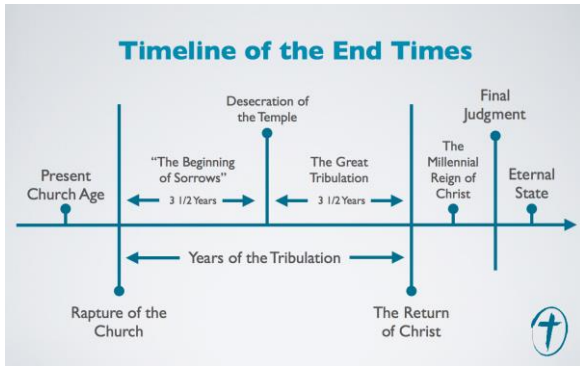
Jesus, here in Matthew 24-25, is describing these end time events to His disciples on the Mount of Olives in what is called the “Olivet Discourse.” These events are the events that will happen after Jesus removes the Church from the earth in what is known as the RAPTURE. See the chart...



At some point...and it could happen at any time...in a moment...in a twinkling of an eye...so says 1 Corinthians 15:52, Jesus is coming back to take His church off of the earth to be with Him in heaven. This is called: “The Rapture.” After that event, 7 years of Tribulation begins on the earth. That’s what Jesus is describing in Matthew 24-25. And it’s the events of Matthew 24 and 25 that’s like this...



It’s the birth pains before the baby comes. And in this case in Matthew 24 and 25...it’s the birth pains BEFORE the return of Jesus to this earth... See the chart again... don’t get confused...



As I said last week...I've written in my Bible that these events happen DURING THE TRIBULATION PERIOD, which happens after the Rapture. Matthew chapters 24 and 25 chronicle the events during the 7 years of Tribulation between (SEE THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN...) between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus.

You see, this is where people get off base in teaching Matthew 24-25. They try to teach it like it's written to the Church...like these events are the events leading up to the Rapture. But, that's not true...yet...for instance...when you pick up the bulletin and read the front of it...you've been programmed to think: "Hmmm...Signs of Jesus Return: Wars, Famines, Earthquakes." Yeah...all of those things are going to happen right before the Rapture. No! That's wrong. What Jesus is describing is going to happen AFTER the Church is gone! What He's describing is the Tribulation period AFTER the Church has been taken to heaven.

Listen...this is so important... We need to grasp this, it's when we (the Church) leave the earth that the contractions start and the birth pains begin... That's when this happens...



It's time to go to the hospital. The contractions...and pain increase to the point that, you ladies tell me...it's beyond comprehension... Let's begin to look at these birth pains...

Matthew 24:6-8

⁶ 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. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

I told you last week that we're going to spend quite a bit of time today, in this message, in the book of the Revelation and here's why... We're going to be talking about things that will be happening during the Tribulation Period, as chronicled in the Book of Revelation. So, let's remember the scene...Jesus is telling His disciples sitting on the Mount of Olives that they're going to hear about wars and rumors of wars, but He said: DO NOT BE ALARMED, this must take place...but it's not the end.

Now, again...let me tell you how I've heard this taught. I've heard this passage and the bulk of Matthew chapters 24 and 25 taught to the Church as if the Church were the ones seated on the hillside with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, but the church hadn't started yet. Remember, Jesus had just left from teaching in the Temple... Remember the beauty of that place...



And yet, Jesus prophesied it would all be destroyed...and it was in 70A.D. by the Roman General, Titus. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.



Okay, so put yourself back in 70AD...some of those disciples that Jesus was talking to were still alive in 70 AD...and so they may have thought...the end is here! But, Jesus said, "No...not yet...there are going to wars and rumors of war for all time...but the end isn't yet." There are more signs! See them again...

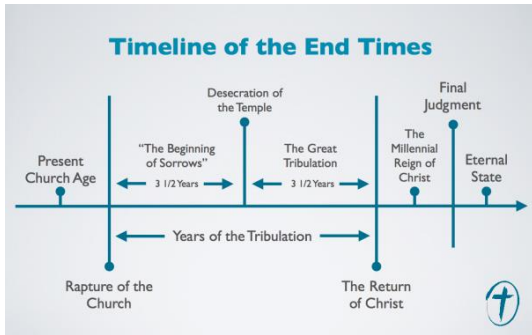
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You see, wars have been happening throughout recorded history and they will continue to occur. In fact, according to the NY Times, over the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for just 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history. There's been a lot of death in the past 3,400 years. We're told at least **108 million** people were killed in wars in just the 20th century alone...with WWI and WWII being two of the largest. Estimates for the total number killed in wars throughout all of human history range up to 1 billion. (NY Times: Jul 6, 2003)

So, wars and rumors of wars are certainly birth pains...but, the birth could still be a long way off. But, understand this...the principles that we find taught here in Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 and 25 (EVEN THOUGH IT APPLIES TO THOSE LIVING THROUGH THE TRIBULATION PERIOD) these principles...still point us to understand that there will be increasing severity and frequency of these LABOR PAINS...just like with a woman as the contractions get closer and closer.

Church Family, I want to try to go in your mind to the Tribulation Period



We won't be here...but, I want you to see what's going to happen to those who are left behind here. I want you to **Turn to Revelation Chapter 16.** And I'll tell you now...you've never seen anything like what you're getting ready to see unleashed on this earth.

The Apostle John is revealing in the BOOK OF THE REVELATION, the return of Christ...the "REVEALING" that He is indeed the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. At this point we're in the back half of the 7-years of Tribulation, which is known as "The Great Tribulation." The Antichrist has come on the scene and he has broken his FALSE PEACE agreement with the nation of Israel and God's wrath is getting ready to be poured out on this earth for those who have rejected Jesus. **You are going to see war, pestilences, famines and earthquakes.**

Now, let me say this again: What you're going to see and hear in this chapter is going to blow your mind. This is going to be like drinking from a FIRE HYDRANT. It's a lot to take in...but, remember...last week...just because you haven't seen something happen before, doesn't



mean it can't happen. Remember Virginia!

Revelation 16:1-21

¹ Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." ² So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ³ The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea. ⁴ The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!" ⁷ And I heard the altar saying, true and just are your judgments!" ⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹ They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. ¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. ¹³ And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. ¹⁴ For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") ¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

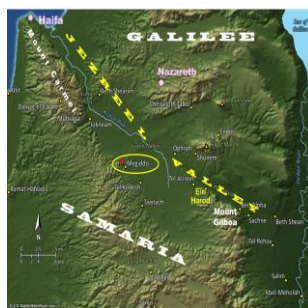
¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. ¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. ²¹ And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

Church, these are **cataclysmic events** the like of which the world has never seen. By the time we get to Revelation 16



the lady giving birth is having contractions about 3-4 minutes apart! It's almost time for the return of Jesus.

By, the way...I want to show you this place called Armageddon mentioned in verse 16. I want you to see it's a real place! It's found in what's known as the Jezreel Valley, or the Valley of Megiddo:



So, we've seen the first two birth pains... Here they are again...

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#3 Hatred of all Nations toward Believers

Matthew 24:8-9

⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ “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.”

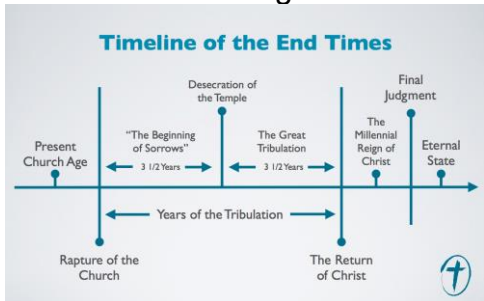
Now, let me ask you again...WHO will be hated by all the nations? Who is Jesus talking to? His disciples, right? They were on the hillside of the Mount of Olives, looking back at the Temple, right... Remember my picture...



That was me looking back across the Kidron Valley at Jerusalem. And now, imagine Jesus standing there...pointing back to the Temple with His disciples...



You see, when Jesus says, “They will deliver YOU up to tribulation and put YOU to death and YOU will be hated by all nation’s for my name’s sake,” He’s talking to His disciples...and they are Jews...they still represent the nation of Israel...but, they’re now also His followers, right...so vs. 9 has a double meaning...Vs 9 is speaking about those whom Jesus is talking to that Tuesday evening on the Mt. of Olives...His Disciples of the first century AND ALSO those who will be His followers living through the Tribulation. Remember, the period of time He’s describing is the Tribulation Period... See our chart...



Jesus is saying, “When you get into the Tribulation period...every nation is going to hate you and again...the primary meaning is that the Nation of Israel will have no friends and no support from any other nation.” And I must tell you I really thought we were headed there very quickly until...



President Trump said he was going to move the US Embassy from Tel-Aviv back to Jerusalem and that we (the United States) are a friend of Israel. But, there will come a day when no one supports Israel until a man steps in and signs a peace agreement with Israel. Do you know who that man is?

The Antichrist. A man who will sign a **peace agreement** with Israel and I believe with the Muslim nations...



...bringing 3 ½ years of peace to the world. And he will commission the rebuilding of the Temple on the Temple Mount as a peace offering to the Nation of Israel. So, all seems well...and for the first 3 ½ years of the 7-year Tribulation it is a time of relative peace, because the world will be following this charming and charismatic Antichrist.

But, **after 3 ½ years, he will break that covenant** with Israel and He will go into that Temple and demand to be worshiped by the world: it's called the **Abomination of Desolation** and the Antichrist will say **WORSHIP ME** and take my mark: 666 if you want to buy or sell anything. (We'll look at all of this in great detail next week.) And that's when all the chaos breaks out on the world and everyone follows the Antichrist's lead and turns on the nation of Israel and on all the followers of Jesus Christ. And it's at that point that the follower's of Christ will be **delivered up** to death. That word "delivered" is **PARA-DID-O-MI** in the Greek and it means to be arrested, thrown into jail!

You say, "Wait a minute! How are there going to be Christians in the Tribulation Period when all the Christians were Raptured off the earth." Well, according to Revelation chapter 7, there are going to be 144,000 Jews, commissioned and sealed by Jesus to go throughout the world and share the Gospel. And not only that...there will also be 2 men...who are known as "The Two Witnesses" as recorded in Revelation, chapter 11.



Many scholars believe these two men are Moses and Elijah, brought back to earth to preach to the nations from Jerusalem for the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, which **BY THE WAY**, I believe will be carried by every news organization in the world, every single day. And the Gospel will be spread throughout the world with many being saved and giving their lives to Jesus. And that is sign #7...

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Church...the contractions are getting closer and closer...



...and as the pressure increases...many of the "Christians" will fall away because of the immense persecution... See verse 10...

Matthew 24:10

¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

In fact, many "so-called Christians" will hand over and betray their friends and family to the authorities, who don't take the mark of the Antichrist, 666. It will be a time of "FALLING AWAY," or apostasy...because of the persecution. See #4...

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And remember this CHURCH FAMILY, we are seeing evidences of this even today. Today, as the persecution of Christians grows in our culture...from university campuses to the Government...we'll see weeding out of the fake versus the real. The "falling away" has already begun in my mind. **And this FALLING AWAY will be fueled by false teaching from false prophets. See it...**

Matthew 24:11-12

¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

That cold love...that's part of the falling away and that's what the Apostle John described in 1 John 2:19...

1 John 2:18-19

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

Oh yes...the contractions are so close together now...

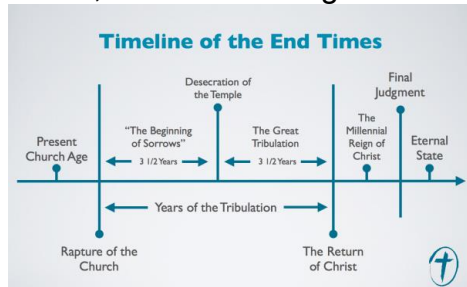


it's almost time for the baby...call in the doctor... Jesus is almost ready to return... So, where are we now? We've seen these 7 Labor Pains...

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Listen, Jesus is coming back to this earth...see the bottom right of the chart...



That's at the end of the Tribulation period and then He'll set up His kingdom. It will be finished! The Antichrist will be destroyed and Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire...and there will finally be true, world-wide peace because the Prince of Peace will be here!

So, what about you? Are you a Christian? Are you saved? What if Jesus raptured the church this afternoon? You'd be left behind to go through all that we just described. Do you really want to live through all of that?

You say, "I'll be okay...I'll just wait and get saved when I see all of that happen." Maybe, maybe not...most likely you'll be deceived by the charisma and the charm of the Antichrist. You say, "Nah...I won't fall for that!" Hey...you've shown that you've already fallen for that...because you are listening to the whispers of Satan even now...telling you to wait...

Don't wait...just like with a momma having a baby...you never really know for sure how much time you have left before it's too late and the baby comes... You better get to the hospital...you better

trust Jesus while you can... The birth pains...the signs of His return are imminent! Trust Jesus!
He's mighty to save! Be saved today!
