

MATHEW CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR
THE KING REVEALS THE FUTURE (THE OLIVET DISCOURSE)
Take - a - ways

Matthew 24 - 25 can easily be misunderstood
They are written to 3 different groups and not in chronological order

To the Jews (Mt 24:1-44)
To the Church (Mt 24:45 - 25:30)
To the Gentiles (Mt 25:31-46)

Jesus has alluded to the destruction of the Temple
Prompting the disciples to ask 3 questions:
When and What and What ?
When will this destruction happen
What will be the signs of Your return to earth
What will be the signs of the end of time

In His first answer he speaks of the first 3 ½ years of Tribulation (Vss 4-14)
False Christs - Wars - Famines - Death
In the second part of His answer He deals with the Great Tribulation (Vss 15-31)
Martyrs - World wide preaching - World wide chaos
The final part of His answer deals with how the Tribulation ends (Vss 29-31)
Plagues and miraculous signs in the heavens
All the saints of all the ages gathered
Returning to earth with Jesus at His Second Advent

He concludes with three parables
The fig tree (Israel) - coming back to life
The days of Noah - people laughed at his preaching
The two servants - some will be faithful til the end - some will not

As believers we know how the story ends
We should have no fear of the future
Jesus is our Great Hope
We are just pilgrims passing thru on our way to our Heavenly Home

04-13 Lesson: Matthew 24 (Olivet Discourse), Tribulation Timeline, and Pastoral Watchfulness

Date Time: 2026-04-13 09:44:15

Location: First Baptist Church Tallassee Alabama

Instructor: Sid Edwards

Summary

Delivered on 2026-04-13, the lesson provides a comprehensive exposition of Matthew 24 (the Olivet Discourse) with cross-references to Luke 21, Daniel, Revelation, and related passages, emphasizing that Jesus' prophetic teaching here primarily concerns Israel and the tribulation period rather than the church or the rapture. The speaker underscores the discourse's complexity, frequent misinterpretations, and non-chronological structure, urging discernment. Beginning with Jesus' final departure from the temple and His prediction of its destruction—fulfilled in 70 AD under Roman general Titus—the session traces the disciples' private questions about the timing of the temple's fall, the sign of Jesus' coming, and the end of the age. Drawing from Luke 21, it situates current history within the ongoing "times of the Gentiles" that began with the Babylonian captivity and will continue until Jesus' visible second coming.

The lecture outlines a progression of end-times signs: escalating spiritual deception (false christs, miracle-working deceivers), national and global disruption (wars intensifying from regional conflicts to world wars), and physical destruction and natural upheavals (earthquakes, famines, pestilence)—all described as "birth pains" that increase before the end. It distinguishes the seven-year Tribulation with a decisive midpoint: Antichrist's rapid rise, a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27), and the mid-tribulation "abomination of desolation," when he ends temple sacrifices and demands worship, triggering severe persecution focused on Judea. Jesus' instructions are urgent and Jewish-contextual—those in Judea must flee immediately (many associate refuge with Petra), praying their flight is not in winter or on the Sabbath.

The Great Tribulation's final 3.5 years are presented as unparalleled in severity; if not curtailed for the sake of the elect, no life would survive. Lawlessness (abandonment of God's moral law) and betrayal proliferate, with persecution of Jews intensifying under Antichrist, the ultimate deceiver. Amid this, God preserves a remnant and continues a global witness through 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists who cannot be killed for a time and proclaim the gospel worldwide; nevertheless, exposure does not equal conversion—salvation remains by faith. The statement "the one who endures to the end will be saved" is clarified as perseverance flowing from faith, not works-based salvation.

Immediately after the tribulation, cosmic signs announce the public, unmistakable Second Coming: the Son of Man appears like lightning from east to west, refuting claims of hidden messiahs. Angels gather the elect from the four winds—understood to include tribulation saints and likely Old Testament believers—forming an honor guard at His return, distinct from the church's resurrection at the rapture. Armies gathered for Armageddon are destroyed by the word of Christ rather than through a conventional battle.

The fig tree parable is interpreted as a symbol of Israel: as the tree buds, signaling summer, Israel's resurgence signals the nearness of fulfillment. "This generation" refers to those alive when these

specific end-time signs commence; they will see the culmination unfold swiftly. Jesus affirms the certainty of His words over against heaven and earth.

A significant pastoral emphasis urges continual watchfulness and readiness: no one knows the exact day or hour—only the Father—so believers must live alertly, as in the days of Noah when normal life masked impending judgment. The familiar “one taken, one left” sayings are here applied to the separation at the Second Coming, not the rapture, underscoring the sudden, irrevocable nature of the final division. The “thief in the night” imagery reinforces that Christ’s return will surprise those unprepared; therefore, watch, wait, and be ready.

Application focuses especially on church leadership through the parable of the faithful and evil servants. Faithful pastors feed and care for God’s people consistently and will be rewarded. The evil servant, presuming a delay, abuses others and indulges sin; he faces judgment with the hypocrites. The warning extends to religious hypocrisy—external forms without true conversion—and exhorts believers to live as if Jesus could return today while working diligently as if given a thousand years.

An illustrative anecdote regarding John’s account of the empty tomb notes a folded face cloth beside the shroud and references a cultural legend that a folded cloth signals return; the speaker stresses this is an interesting but unsupported tradition offered only as a thought-provoking illustration, not doctrine.

Knowledge Points

1. Context and Scope of Matthew 24
 - Delivered on the Mount of Olives with a view of the temple; linked to Zechariah’s prophecy of the Messiah’s return to the Mount of Olives.
 - One of the most misunderstood chapters due to non-chronology and mixed audiences; the focus is Israel and the tribulation (Daniel’s seventieth week, time of Jacob’s trouble), not the church or the rapture.
 - The disciples’ questions concern the temple’s destruction, Jesus’ coming, and the end of the age; they expected near-term fulfillment.
2. Temple Destruction and Historical Fulfillment (70 AD)
 - Jesus predicts not one stone would be left upon another; Titus’s siege leads to conflagration that crumbles the temple’s stonework, with soldiers sifting ashes for gold.
3. Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21)
 - Jerusalem’s desolation, flight from Judea, and dispersion among nations fulfill written judgments.
 - Jerusalem is trampled by Gentiles until their times are fulfilled; this period spans from the Babylonian captivity to the Second Coming.
4. Escalating Signs and Deception
 - False christs and false prophets multiply; satanically empowered signs deceive many.
 - Wars intensify in scope and technology; natural disasters and pestilence increase as “birth pains,” not the immediate end.
5. Tribulation Structure and Antichrist
 - Seven-year framework: initial rise of Antichrist and deceptive peace; midweek abomination ends sacrifices and mandates image-worship.
 - Jesus commands immediate flight from Judea; persecution of Jews escalates; lawlessness abounds; familial betrayal increases.
6. Salvation, Endurance, and the Elect

- Salvation remains by grace through faith; endurance reflects persevering faith and is associated with final deliverance and reward, not merit.
 - For the elect's sake, the tribulation is limited in duration; God preserves a remnant among Israel and the nations.
7. Global Witness During Tribulation
 - 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists proclaim the gospel worldwide; testimony is universal though not universally received.
 8. Great Tribulation and Armageddon
 - The final 3.5 years are the most severe in history.
 - At Armageddon, gathered armies are destroyed by Christ's word; Revelation portrays the aftermath as birds summoned to feast.
 9. The Second Coming and Gathering of the Elect
 - Christ's return is visible and unmistakable; reject rumors of hidden appearances.
 - Angels gather the elect from the four winds; this gathering is distinct from the church's resurrection at the rapture and likely includes tribulation and Old Testament saints.
 10. Fig Tree Parable and "This Generation"
 - Fig tree symbolizes Israel's resurgence; as signs commence, the culmination follows swiftly.
 - "This generation" refers to those alive when the end-time signs begin; Jesus guarantees the certainty of His words.
 11. Watchfulness and Readiness
 - No one knows the day or hour; the days of Noah illustrate normalcy before sudden judgment.
 - "One taken, one left" is applied to separation at the Second Coming in this context; the "thief in the night" motif urges constant vigilance.
 - Faithful service contrasted with hypocrisy: pastors must feed and guard the flock; hypocrites who presume delay face severe judgment.
 - Live ready today while working faithfully for the long term.
 12. Illustrative Anecdote on the Empty Tomb
 - John notes a folded face cloth; a cultural legend suggests a folded cloth signals a return, but Scripture does not affirm this symbolism; offered only as an illustration.

Assignments

- Review Matthew 24 and Luke 21 side-by-side, noting differences in detail, audience focus, and instructions for those in Judea.
- Study Daniel's seventieth week and the "time of Jacob's trouble" to contextualize tribulation references; compile cross-references on the abomination of desolation (Daniel 9; 11; 12; Matthew 24:15).
- Map a concise timeline of the seven-year Tribulation, marking the midpoint crisis and key events (Matthew 24; Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13, 19).
- Prepare a study note distinguishing endurance from works-based salvation (Matthew 24:13; Ephesians 2:8–9; Revelation 13–14) and a doctrinal brief on the "elect" across Israel and the church.
- Develop an overview of the 144,000 witnesses (Revelation 7, 14) and how their ministry supports global testimony.
- Create a teaching outline contrasting the visibility of the Second Coming with claims of hidden messiahs (Matthew 24:26–31; Acts 1:11) and pastoral applications for watchfulness.
- Research the 70 AD destruction of the temple and Roman methods under Titus; study Petra's historical and geographical suitability as a potential refuge (correlate with Revelation 12).

- Conduct a thematic study on the fig tree as a metaphor for Israel (survey OT references and modern Israel's condition relative to prophetic expectations).
- Practice ongoing spiritual vigilance: daily watchfulness, prayer, self-examination; live as if Christ could return today while planning faithfully for the future; serve consistently and resist hypocrisy; continue witness to the last hour.