

Signs of the Times: Navigating Prophetic Patterns in Today's World (Matthew 24)

Introduction: *Jesus' teachings in Matthew 24 about discerning the times for the end of the age also relates to the life cycles of civilizations throughout history. By examining biblical and historical examples, we come to understand the importance of readiness and the urgency of sharing the Gospel in our own time. Discerning the times helps us prepare for the end times, but it also helps us navigate the challenges of cultural decline.*

- I. Understanding Matthew 24: The Signs of the Times
 - False Prophets and Messiahs (vv. 4-5)
 - Wars and Rumors of Wars (v. 6)
 - Famines and Earthquakes (v. 7)
 - Persecution and Martyrdom (vv. 9-10)
 - Increase in Wickedness (v. 12)
 - Gospel Preached to All Nations (v. 14)
- II. The Life Cycle of Civilization: The Judges Cycle
 - Apostasy: Sin and idolatry (Judg. 2:11-13)
 - Oppression: Punishment by foreign powers (Judg. 2:14-15)
 - Repentance: Crying out to God (Judg. 2:18)
 - Deliverance: God raises a judge (Judg. 2:16)
 - Peace: Peace under the judge's leadership (Judg. 2:19)
- III. Historical Example:
 1. The Fall of Rome
 - Apostasy: Moral decline and political corruption
 - Oppression: Invasions by Goths, Vandals, etc.
 - Efforts at Reform: Diocletian and Constantine's attempts
 - Peace and Decline: Temporary stability, fall in AD 476
 2. Historical Example: The Fall of Jerusalem
 - Apostasy: Rejection of Jesus as Messiah
 - Oppression: Siege by Roman forces under Titus in AD 70

- Outcome: Destruction, Jewish dispersal, fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy (Matthew 23:37-39; 24)

- IV. Applying Matthew 24 to Modern Civilization
 1. Signs of the Times (Matthew 24:4-14)
 - What is going on today?
 2. Are We in the End Times?
 - Macro vs. Micro Patterns (Ecclesiastes 1:9)
 - Importance of Readiness (Matthew 24:44)
- V. The Call to Be Watchful: Matthew 25 and the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
 - The Virgins' Vigilance: Be prepared with extra oil
 - The Bridegroom's Arrival: Enter the wedding banquet
 - Lesson on Readiness: Always be prepared for Christ's return
- VI. Our Response:
 1. Living in Readiness
 - Personal Vigilance (1 Corinthians 9:27)
 - Community Vigilance (Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - Active Evangelism (Matthew 28:19-20)
 2. Engaging with Our Communities
 - Church Involvement (Acts 2:42-47)
 - Serving Others (Matthew 5:16)
 - Hope and Assurance in Christ
 - Jesus as the Ultimate Judge (Revelation 22:12)
 - Encouragement from Jesus' Promises (John 14:1-3)

Conclusion: *As we reflect on the signs of the times and the patterns of history, let us commit to living in readiness and actively sharing the hope of Christ. By discerning the times, we can better understand both the potential end of days and the fall of our current culture, allowing us to respond with wisdom and faith. Trust in Jesus, be vigilant, shine His light in the world, and be prepared for His return and dedicated to building His kingdom.*