

MATTHEW 24 THE SIGN OF THE END

When Jesus was asked “what will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?” (Matthew 24:3), His disciples were asking the question which every Christian wants answered. What will be the sign that tells us Jesus’ coming “is near, at the very gates” (Matthew 24:33). Jesus’ initial answer is the same in all three gospel accounts: Matthew 24:4, 5; Mark 13:5-6; and Luke 21:8. He said “take heed that no one leads you astray” (Matthew 24:4). At first glance, this seems like a strange answer and yet, it is His answer. Jesus is warning that a great deception will occur. Jesus is warning that false Christs will appear. He then goes on to expand this idea warning not to believe these false Christs or believe their signs and wonders. He continues to add other events that will occur prior to His Second Coming such as wars, famines, earthquakes, and persecution. However, His initial answer is consistent in each of the three gospels. It appears that Jesus is warning us of a special delusion that will deceive “if possible even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).

Matthew 24:3: “As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?’”

Jesus’ disciples are asking, “when will this be”? This question refers to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24:2: “there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.” Jesus was referring to the temple in Jerusalem. This temple was the main source of pride to the nation of Israel but Jesus was foretelling its destruction. Historically, this occurred in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was overrun by the Roman army. However, there will be another application of these events in the last days. In the last days, this rebuilt temple will be destroyed again at the resurrection of the two witnesses (discussed in Revelation 11 (first part) - The Two Witnesses). The disciples then ask another question “What will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?” This question is what all Christians down through the ages have asked. What is “the sign” of Jesus coming? What is “the sign” that the time of the end is near? Jesus gives His answer in Matthew 24:4.

Matthew 24:4: “And Jesus answered them, ‘Take heed that no one leads you astray’”.

This is Jesus’ answer! Jesus is warning them of a deception. Jesus is warning that people will be led astray. Jesus is telling His disciples that “the sign” will be deception. He is suggesting that someone will try to deceive and mislead God’s people in the last days. Jesus will expand on this answer several times in the next few verses. He will also give other signs, but His emphasis in Matthew chapter 24 is clearly deception. This deception will be by false Christs and false prophets (Matthew 24:5, 11, 15, 23, 24, 26). Jesus’ answer continues in Matthew 24:5.

Matthew 24:5: “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray”.

Jesus is predicting “many will come” who will claim to be Christ returned. These false Christs will “lead many astray”. This prophecy has been fulfilled many times through the ages and continues to be fulfilled today. However, there will be a special fulfillment in the last days. This special fulfillment in the last days will be discussed under Matthew 24:14.

Matthew 24:6: *“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.”*

Jesus warns that wars will be common in the last days but not to be alarmed. These wars must occur but they are not the sign. He says “this must take place, but the end is not yet.” In other words, the wars are not the sign the disciples are looking for. The disciples wanted “the sign” of the close of the age (Matthew 24:3).

Matthew 24:7-8: *“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places; all this is but the beginning of the sufferings.”*

Jesus is predicting international warfare, which will lead to famine. He is also predicting earthquakes, which will lead to famine and starvation. All these events have occurred many times in earth’s history. However, these events will be increased in the last days. These events are also foretold in Revelation under the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven last plagues (discussed in Revelation 6 - The Seven Seals; Revelation 8 and 9 - The Seven Trumpets; and in Revelation 16 - The Seven Last Plagues). The world is currently experiencing a significant increase in the number of earthquakes. However, Jesus says “all this is but the beginning of the sufferings.” Jesus is saying this is not the sign but only the beginning. The “end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6). This verse suggests that natural disasters such as earthquakes will precede this final sign but are not the sign.

Matthew 24:9: *“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.”*

Historically, this verse has been fulfilled many times through the ages. However, it will have a special application in the last days. In the last days, there will be a “great tribulation” which Jesus describes in Matthew 24:21. This great tribulation is similar to Daniel’s “time of trouble” in Daniel 12:1. However, another tribulation is also described, just prior to the time of trouble. In this tribulation some “shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days” (Daniel 11:33). Clearly, some of God’s people will die during this earlier tribulation. This earlier tribulation has been called the preliminary time of trouble.

Jesus states that His people will be “hated by all nations”. This prophecy will be fulfilled in the last days by Babylon when “all nations drink the wine of her impure passion” (Revelation 14:8). When all the nations accept Babylon’s false teachings, they will be rejecting God’s truth. They will then attempt to force their falsehoods upon God’s people, which will lead to the persecution of God’s true followers. This prophecy has a special application at the time of the third angel’s message (Revelation 14:9-11) when the nations will attempt to enforce the mark of the beast (discussed in Revelation 13 (last part) - The Mark of the Beast).

Jesus then gives the reason why God’s people will be hated. They will be hated “for my name’s sake.” This prophecy has also been fulfilled through the ages but will have special meaning in the last days. Millions have died through the ages for Jesus’ name. They refused to worship any other god. In the last days there will be a special application of this verse. As will be shown later in this discussion, there will be a false Christ in the last days. Jesus is warning His disciples about this false Christ in Matthew chapter 24. Those who reject the false Christ and claim Jesus as the only true Christ in the last days will be hated by all nations. One of the identifying characteristics of God’s people in the last days is that they will “have the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). It is

this belief in Jesus' name and in His salvation, as opposed to accepting the false Christ, which will cause persecution to fall on God's people during the last days.

Matthew 24:10: *“And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another.”*

This prophecy has also been fulfilled many times through the years since Christ's first advent. It was especially fulfilled during the persecution seen in the Dark Ages. This prophecy however, will be fulfilled again during the last days. This prophecy suggests that families will be divided over their relationship with Christ. It also suggests that “many will fall away and betray one another.” This prophecy will be fulfilled again when the false Christ convinces many that he has returned to save them. Those who accept this false Christ will betray those who reject him.

Matthew 24:11: *“And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”*

Historically, this prophecy has also been fulfilled many times through the ages since Christ predicted it. This prophecy will again be fulfilled during the last days and has seen many recent examples. The emphasis is on deception. This is the sign that Jesus is warning about. Do not be deceived.

Matthew 24:12: *“And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold.”*

This text has also been fulfilled many times throughout the ages; however, it will have a special application in the last days. Once the false Christ has begun to reign, he will be able to change God's Law. Once God's Law is changed, wickedness will multiply. This wickedness will lead to love growing “cold.” This will especially be seen in the false Christ's capital city, which will be called “Sodom and Egypt” (Revelation 11:8). It will be called Sodom because of its immorality and Egypt because of its rejection of the true God.

Matthew 24:13: *“But he who endures to the end will be saved.”*

This verse connects these prophecies to “the end”. Jesus is describing last-day events. Jesus is describing the salvation of God's people after this tribulation is over. He will describe this salvation again in Matthew 24:30, 31 where He is seen “coming on the clouds of heaven” to rescue His people. Those who endure are also described in Revelation 14:12 as those who have the “endurance of the saints.” They are those who keep God's Commandments and keep faith in the true Jesus (Revelation 14:12). In other words, they reject the false Christ.

Matthew 24:14: *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.”*

This verse tells us that the good news or gospel will be preached throughout the whole world prior to “the end”. The “end” refers to Jesus' Second Coming. This preaching will go to all the nations. All the nations at the end will reject the truth. All the nations will hate God's people because of Jesus' name (Matthew 24:9). These nations are those who have accepted the false Christ and Babylon's wine (Revelation 14:8 and Revelation 17:2). God's people will give these same nations the truth about Babylon's falsehoods and Satan as the false Christ. This is described

in Daniel 11:32-33 where God's people are called "wise" and the wise will "make many understand." The nations will be warned before the end comes. The good news about the true Christ will be shared by the "wise" with those who have accepted the false Christ (Daniel 11:31-33).

Matthew 24:15: *"So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)"*.

Historically, this verse has been applied to the overthrow of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.¹ The "desolating sacrilege" has been applied to the Roman armies which overran Jerusalem and destroyed the temple not leaving one stone upon another.

However, this verse also has a last-day application. The context of Matthew chapter 24 suggests this verse should be applied to last-day events because the preceding and following verses all refer to last-day events. Jesus is now predicting the signal event, which is "the sign" His disciples asked for in Matthew 24:3. This is the answer to His disciples' question. This "desolating sacrilege" is the sign which signals the "close of the age" (Matthew 24:3). This "desolating sacrilege" is the signal to flee for their lives. This "desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel" is the "abomination that makes desolate" (Daniel 11:31 and Daniel 12:11), it is "the transgression that makes desolate" (Daniel 8:13) and it is the "one who makes desolate" (Daniel 9:27). Jesus' initial answer to His disciples was to "take heed that no one leads you astray" (Matthew 24:4). Now He says that when you see this "desolating sacrilege" it is time to flee (Matthew 24:16). What is the connection between the two statements? Who is this "desolating sacrilege"? Why is he "standing in the holy place"? Why is it important for the reader to "understand"? These questions will be answered in the chapters discussing Daniel chapters 8, 9, 11, and 12 - The Abomination That Makes Desolate.

In Matthew chapter 24 Jesus explains that the sign in the last days will focus on false Christs and the false prophets which point to the false Christs. The issue is deception. Then He describes His Second Coming twice (Matthew 24:27, 30, 31) to compare it to the false Christ's coming. In Matthew 24:30 He describes His Second Coming as "the sign of the Son of man". He is describing His sign, as the manner of His coming, as opposed to the sign of the false Christ. Jesus is comparing His coming in the clouds to the fake return of the false Christ. The false Christ will be seen "in the wilderness" and "in the inner rooms" (Matthew 24:26). Jesus coming will be "on the clouds" and that is His "sign" (Matthew 24:30). Jesus will not walk on this earth at His Second Coming. The sign of "the close of the age" that the disciples asked for (Matthew 24:3) will be the false Christ coming to stand "in the holy place." This "desolating sacrilege" is the final false Christ. This "desolating sacrilege" is the "abomination that makes desolate" which was "spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (Daniel 11:31).

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld . . . He heals the diseases of the people . . . This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion" (*The Great Controversy*, page 624).² This almost overpowering delusion is Satan as the false Christ. He is the "desolating sacrilege" who will stand "in the holy place".

Jesus refers us to Daniel in order for us to recognize this final sign of the end. The scriptural cross-references refer you to three texts in Daniel: Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31; and Daniel 12:11. Jesus is referring to these prophecies and connecting them to last-day events. Each of these texts will be discussed in detail in the following chapters: Daniel 8, 9, 11, and 12 - The Abomination That Makes Desolate. It is important to note that Jesus Himself applied Daniel 9:27 to the false Christ in the last days and not to Himself! Daniel 9:27 speaks of one week of prophetic time or seven years. This same seven years will appear again in Revelation 11:3, 9. Jesus applies the seven years spoken of by Daniel to Satan and not to Himself! Satan, as the "one who makes desolate", will cause the sacrifice and offerings to cease (Daniel 9:27). The "desolating sacrilege" is the "desolater" (Daniel 9:27).

This "desolating sacrilege" or the "abomination that makes desolate" (Daniel 11:31) is the final false Christ. This will be Satan impersonating Jesus Christ. This "sacrilege" is what upset Daniel so much and which he could not understand (Daniel 12:8). Only the "wise" in the last days will understand (Daniel 12:10). All of the prophecies in Daniel, which relate to this abomination, have a last day's application, which is why Jesus said "let the reader understand". These dual applications will be discussed further in the remaining chapters in Section I: The Abomination that Makes Desolate.

The phrase "standing in the holy place" is important. When the abomination is finally seen "in the holy place" that is the time to flee (Matthew 24:16). Thus, "the sign" of the "close of the age" (Matthew 24:3) is when Satan occupies the holy place. The holy place is the front compartment of the sanctuary or temple of God. God's temple was in Jerusalem.

Today, many in the world are focused on Jerusalem as shown by the following facts:

- Millions of dollars have been raised to fund the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.
- The descendants of the tribe of Levi (the priesthood) have been identified genetically through DNA studies in preparation for their service in the temple.³
- The furnishings of the temple are being rebuilt and prepared for the restoration of the temple services.⁴
- The pure red heifer needed for the temple dedication has been identified.⁵

Daniel foresaw this abomination "set up" in Daniel 11:31. This abomination would "profane the temple" (Daniel 11:31). Satan will set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and claim to be Christ returned. This is confirmed in Revelation 11:7, 8 where Satan is described as the "beast that ascends" who is in the city "where their Lord was crucified."

- Jesus foretold the sign of the end and the sign He foretold is the false Christ ministering in the temple in Jerusalem.

The "sign" the disciples were asking for in Matthew 24:3 will occur when Satan assumes his throne as the false Christ in Jerusalem and begins to minister in the rebuilt temple.

Matthew 24:16: *"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains".*

Historically, this verse was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Rome overran Jerusalem. This warning, however, will apply again. During the last days when the abomination is set up in the holy place, God's people are told to flee to the mountains. When God's people see the abomination or false Christ set up in Jerusalem and ministering in the temple then it is time to flee to the mountains. The phrase "those who are in Judea" applies to all of God's people at that time, not just to those in the Middle East. The time of the great tribulation and the mark of the beast are soon to follow.

Matthew 24:17: *"let him who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house."*

This verse stresses the importance of fleeing immediately. Once the false Christ takes over as king of Israel and begins his ministry in the temple, persecution of God's people will increase rapidly. This is the time to flee to the mountains. It should be noted that the deserts are not the place to hide. There are several important reasons why this is true, which will become apparent in discussions later on in this book. The reader is referred to the chapters on Revelation 8, 9 and 13. The issue is not just fleeing to a remote place. The deserts can be very remote and unpopulated. However, the global temperature will be rising and the deserts will become intolerable. Also the water supply will become an issue in the last days. Both of these facts suggest that the mountains are the place to flee to.

Matthew 24:18: *"and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle."*

This verse repeats the concept of the prior verse. Make haste and do not delay. There will be no time for packing. God's people should have been prepared prior to this because if they are not many will suffer unnecessarily. It is critical that God's people recognize this sign and flee before it is too late.

Matthew 24:19: *"and alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days!"*

This verse again repeats the warning. When the abomination is set up (Daniel 11:31) it is time to flee. Those with small children and those who are pregnant will have an especially difficult time. However, they still must flee. Each of these verses reiterates the same concept. The only safety will be found in fleeing to remote and isolated areas in the mountains. Once the abomination that makes desolate is set up, his power will be far reaching.

Matthew 24:20: *"Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath."*

This verse again repeats the importance of flight to safety. Jesus is emphasizing how critical it will be to flee from this abomination before it is too late. Regardless of the weather, it will be imperative to flee to isolated areas in the mountains. Jesus repeats His warning four times (Matthew 24:17, 18, 19, 20). Jesus is strongly emphasizing the importance of this deception.

Matthew 24:21: *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."*

Jesus is now describing a unique event, which will only occur once in the history of the world. This "great tribulation" will occur after the "abomination that makes desolate" is "set up" (Daniel

11:31). This "great tribulation" occurs after the desolating sacrilege is seen standing in the holy place. This is clear because he says, "then there will be great tribulation" (emphasis supplied). This "great tribulation":

1. Occurs after the desolating sacrilege is seen standing in the holy place.
2. Will never be equaled in the history of the world, past, present, or future.
3. Is the same as the time of trouble that Daniel is describing in Daniel 12:1 "such as never has been since there was a nation till that time".

Daniel is describing the exact same events as Jesus is describing! Daniel's time of trouble (Daniel 12:1) also occurs after the abomination is "set up", which occurs in Daniel 11:31 prior to the events of Daniel 12:1. Daniel is describing time of the end events just prior to Jesus' Second Coming. This "great tribulation" will occur after the ascension of the false Christ or Satan to the throne in Jerusalem where he will minister in the temple of God in "the holy place" (Matthew 24:15).

Matthew 24:22: "And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

This verse again only applies to the last-day events. It is referring to the time of great tribulation, which will only occur at the time of the end. Jesus says that things will be so severe that no one will survive unless God cuts this time period short. God will do this by bringing His wrath on the wicked in the form of the seven last plagues (Revelation 15:1). This verse suggests that God can shorten the length of Satan's reign and will do so in order to protect His people. This verse will have its fulfillment during the Battle of Armageddon (discussed in Revelation chapter 16 – The Seven Last Plagues).

Matthew 24:23: "Then if any one says to you, 'Lo, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it."

This verse returns to Jesus' initial answer to the disciple's question "what will be the sign" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus is again emphasizing that deception is the issue and the false Christ will be the method. The abomination is the false Christ. The false Christ will first appear working miracles in many places and many people will accept him because of those miracles. This will eventually lead to the false Christ being "set up" (Daniel 11:31) as "the abomination" in Jerusalem. Jesus is warning not to believe anyone who claims to know where Christ is physically located. He continues by explaining why not to believe them when they say He is here. He then describes His true coming in the clouds and compares it to the coming of the false Christ.

Matthew 24:24: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

Again, Jesus reiterates the key to His answer to what the sign is. The answer is: do not be deceived. The method is the false Christ. In the last days Satan will pose as the final false Christ. Satan, as the false Christ or antichrist will employ false prophets to support his claim. These false prophets will work wonders and miracles in his name and point people to Satan as the returned Christ. Satan will work even greater miracles and convince the Christian world that he has returned to establish peace on earth. Satan's miracles will be powerful enough "to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." In Ellen G. Whites' book, *The Great Controversy*, page 624, we read, "As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ... In

gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths, which the Savior uttered; he heals the diseases of the people... This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion.”⁶

Matthew 24:25: *“Lo, I have told you beforehand.”*

Jesus again is trying to warn His disciples that this deception is extremely powerful. He is telling them that He has warned them beforehand so they can withstand this almost overwhelming delusion.

Matthew 24:26: *“So, if they say to you, ‘Lo, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out; if they say, ‘Lo, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.”*

Jesus repeats once more His warning. If someone says that Christ is in the wilderness or in the city or in this church or at this synagogue, do not believe it. Jesus has now repeated His warnings and His answer to what is the sign multiple times in this chapter. The warning is not to be deceived and the sign is the deceiver being “set up” (Daniel 11:31) or “standing in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15). The following verses in Matthew chapter 24 relate to “the sign”: Matthew 24:3, 4, 5, 11, 15, 23, 24, and 26. Jesus’ answer to His disciples’ question is: the sign of My coming will be a false Christ who will come in the last days and stand in God’s holy temple and deceive, if possible, the very elect.

Matthew 24:27: *“For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man.”*

Jesus now gives the sign of His coming. Jesus gives this description of His coming in order for the elect to know the difference between His coming and the appearance of the false Christ. Satan will not be allowed to counterfeit Jesus Christ’s Second Coming in the clouds. Satan will be allowed to walk the earth as the false Christ and reign as the false Christ but he cannot counterfeit Jesus’ coming in the clouds. Jesus gives this description to show the difference between His coming and the coming of the false or anti-Christ. Jesus Christ coming will be worldwide and visible to all men. His coming will be seen “as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west.” Jesus’ coming will not be secret or invisible. His coming will not be in the desert or at a local church or in one of the inner rooms. He will not rapture His people secretly!

Matthew 24:28: *“Wherever the body is, there the eagles (vultures) will be gathered together.”*

The context of this verse is in connection with end time events and particularly with Jesus’ Second Coming, since He has just described His coming in the clouds. This suggests a connection to Revelation 19:17, 18, and 21. In Revelation 19:17 the destruction of the wicked is pictured as “the great supper of God” where the birds will eat the flesh of the wicked. This verse is describing the end result of the wicked at the Second Coming, when they will be destroyed and eaten by the vultures.

Matthew 24:29: *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken”.*

This event clearly occurs at the end of time, since it follows the tribulation and precedes Jesus' Second Coming. This same event is described in Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." Also, this event is described as part of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12,13: "the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale". These events occur immediately after the tribulation and have not yet occurred as some have suggested in the past. Some have applied the events of the sixth seal to the time period of 1750 to 1840.⁷ However, this is inconsistent with the rest of the sixth seal, which describes events at the time of the Second Coming (discussed in Revelation 9-The Seven Trumpets; The First and Second Woes).

At the end of time, nature will reflect God's wrath as God demonstrates His power over nature. This is power Satan has claimed as his own because he claims to be Christ. The sun will refuse to shine and the moon will be darkened and the stars will fall just prior to Jesus appearing in the clouds of heaven. This is shown in the next text which begins with "then".

Matthew 24:30: "then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory".

This is the second time Jesus describes His coming in His answer to His disciples' question about what will be the sign. He does this to specifically compare His coming to that of the false Christ or the abomination that makes desolate. He wants it to be crystal clear that His coming is worldwide and in the clouds as opposed to the false Christ who will appear on earth "in the wilderness" or "in the inner rooms" (Matthew 24:26).

Jesus also calls His appearance in the clouds His "sign". He does this to show what His "sign" is compared to "the sign" of the "close of the age" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus' "sign" is His coming on the clouds. Jesus "sign" is how He comes: He will come in the clouds of heaven. The sign that the disciples asked about: "the sign" of the "close of the age" (Matthew 24:3) is the false Christ when he becomes "the abomination that makes desolate" (Daniel 11:31). Jesus calls this the "desolating sacrilege" (Matthew 24:14). Jesus is calling attention to the difference between His real coming and the false coming of the anti-Christ.

Jesus describes His coming as "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory". Jesus' description is paralleled by Paul's description in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where Paul describes the saved being "caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air". This is the seventh plague, which is poured "into the air" (Revelation 16:17). Jesus will not touch the earth at His Second Coming. Jesus will bring His people up to Him in the clouds. Satan will not be allowed to counterfeit this.

Matthew 24:31: "and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Jesus will not touch the earth but will send His angels to gather His elect. His "elect" are the righteous saved, both those resurrected and those living at His Second Coming. Jesus' angels will gather the saved from all four corners of the earth represented by the "four winds". They will then be caught up "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Jesus will not walk the earth working miracles nor will He be found in the inner rooms.

Matthew 24:32: *“From the fig tree learn its lesson; as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.”*

Jesus now introduces an object lesson. This object lesson relates to the last-day events He has been describing as the answer to His disciples' question about the sign. This object lesson involves the fig tree. Jesus is saying that you can tell by the fig tree's branches and leaves that summer is near. He is going to apply this object lesson to the last-day events. Jesus is saying that we should be able to recognize when the time is near by the events He has described in the previous verses.

Matthew 24:33: *“So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.”*

Jesus is telling us that when we see the “desolating sacrilege” of Matthew 24:15 or the “abomination that makes desolate” of Daniel 11:31 set up in the holy place that we can know that His coming is near “at the very gates”. Many Christians feel that any information that suggests that Jesus' coming is near or that outlines last-day events cannot be correct because it might give us an idea relating to when Jesus' return would occur. Jesus clearly disagrees with this concept. Even though no one can know “that day and hour” (Matthew 24:36) we can know that it is near “at the very gates” (emphasis supplied).

Matthew 24:34, 35: *“Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”*

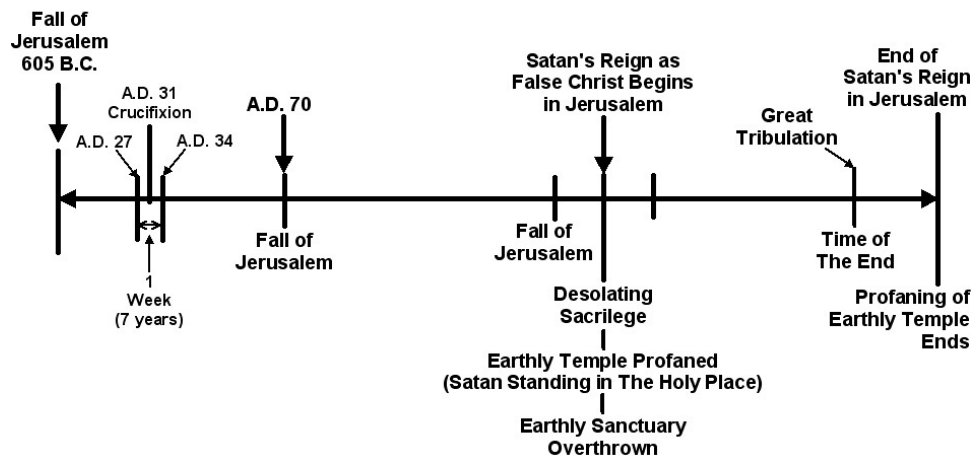
Jesus' statement in this verse has often been misunderstood. Some have thought He was referring to His current generation. However, in the context of these verses it appears that He is actually referring to the generation that exists when the abomination appears. This generation will not pass away before Christ returns. The generation that exists when the abomination is set up will exist when Jesus returns. This generation will not pass away before Jesus returns but will be destroyed when Jesus returns, except for those who are part of the elect. This living elect is described in Revelation 7:3, 4 as the 144,000 who are sealed (discussed under Revelation 6:17 and Revelation 9:4 in the chapters on the Seven Seals and the Seven Trumpets). Jesus' statement “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” is reiterating the significance of His prophecy. Jesus is saying that even though the world “will pass away” His prophecy is accurate and will not fail. Jesus is implying that heaven and earth will come to an end with this generation but His words will never pass away.

SUMMARY

Matthew chapter 24 gives Jesus' answer to His disciples' question “What will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus answer involves a false Christ. Jesus' initial answer was “take heed that no one leads you astray” (Matthew 24:4). Jesus continues to give His answer in the next several verses by describing false Christs more than any other sign. He then links “the desolating sacrilege” described in Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31 & Daniel 12:11 to the sign of the close of the age. Jesus refers the reader to Daniel. Jesus applies Daniel 9:27 to the last days. He does not apply Daniel 9:27 to Himself. He states that the “desolating sacrilege” will be followed by the great tribulation and then followed by His Second Coming. Jesus then again

warns against being misled by false Christs. He finally describes His Second Coming on the clouds as His “sign” (Matthew 24:30) in order to compare His sign to “the sign” of the false Christ, who will come walking on the earth to mislead mankind. Jesus also points to those living at the time of the abomination as the last generation prior to His coming. Jesus’ answer to what is the sign of the close of the age is that the "desolating sacrilege" or the abomination that makes desolate is the sign. This abomination is the final false Christ, who is Satan, who will deceive the world in the last days. This abomination is referred to in Daniel chapters eight, nine, eleven and twelve. In Daniel 8:13 this "desolating sacrilege" is called "the transgression that makes desolate". In Daniel 9:27 this "desolating sacrilege" is called "the one who makes desolate". In Daniel 11:31 and in Daniel 12:11 this "desolating sacrilege" is called "the abomination that makes desolate". In order to understand the events which surround the establishment of this "desolating sacrilege", we must study each of these prophecies. These prophecies are all related to this abomination and therefore to the last-day events. It is important that the "reader understand" that Jesus made this connection and that Jesus himself applies Daniel 9:27 as well as Daniel 11:31 and Daniel 12:11 to last-day events. The following graph outlines the events described in Matthew chapter 24.

Matthew 24



¹ Nichol, Francis D. (Ed.). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C.) 1957, Vol. 5, p. 499.

² White, Ellen G., *The Great Controversy* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho) 1950, p. 624.

³ Price, J. Randall.(2004), *The Jewish Voice Today* (electronic version). Copyright 2004. Retrieved November 3, 2004, from http://dunamai.com/articles/Israel/third_temple_built.htm

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Hubbard, R. Dean, (1998). *U. S. Ministers and Israeli Rabbis are Joining Hands in a Restoration Ministry* (Electronic version). Retrieved November 3, 2004, from <http://www.templemount.org/heifer.html>

⁶ White, Ellen G., *The Great Controversy* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho) 1950, p. 624.

⁷ Nichol, Francis D. (Ed.). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C.) 1957, Vol. 7, p. 779.