

Four Signs of the Second Coming

A. In Matthew 24, called the Olivet Discourse, Jesus reveals four signs that indicate his return is near. The disciples ask Jesus **two** questions as the chapter begins.

Matthew 24:1-3 *Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ² And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."*

³ *As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

- a. **Question one:** "Tell us, when will these things happen?" They are asking Jesus' about his comments that the temple will be destroyed.
- b. **Question two:** "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?"

B. In addressing these two questions, Jesus gives us a basic framework for future events that will reveal his immanent return. He describes four signs that will accompany the time of his return. He speaks of dangers and duties that help to ground his followers in these times. He also gives special emphasis to the risk that believers must not be deceived.

1. SIGN ONE: **Disasters in the world**

Matthew 24:4-8 *Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. NIV*

- a. Wars / famines / earthquakes
- b. Danger: this opens the door to false "Christs" or "saviors"
- c. Duty: don't be deceived and don't let your heart panic

2. SIGN TWO: **Deserters in the church**

Matthew 24:9-14 *Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. NIV*

- a. Opposition / reduction / expansion
- b. Danger: false prophets
- c. Duty: "stand firm to the end" (v.13)

3. SIGN THREE: **Distress in the middle east**

Matthew 24:15-28 *So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel- let the reader understand- 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now-and never to be equaled again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. 23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-if that were possible. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time. 26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.*

- a. Great Tribulation lasts for 42 months (3^{1/2} years) (Matt. 24:21; Is. 13:6ff; Is. 60:1-3; Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:1-2; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 12:14).
- b. "Abomination of desolation" (v.15) used three times by Daniel (9:27, 11:31, 12:11)

- i. Prophecies can have multiple fulfillments
 - 1. Historical = Israel
 - 2. Prophetic = Jesus
 - 3. Eschatological = Church (body of Christ)
- ii. Jesus is obviously speaking about a *future* event
- c. Danger: deception of false messiahs and prophets
- d. Duty: Don't be deceived; trust the teachings of Christ Jesus

4. SIGN FOUR: **Darkness in the sky**

Matthew 24:29-31 *Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." 30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. NIV*

- a. Even the Hebrew prophets foretold these days.

Isaiah 13:9-13 *See, the day of the LORD is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger--to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. 10 The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. 11 I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. 12 I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.*

- b. Believers are transformed and transported. Unbelievers will be left behind

Matthew 24:39-41 *That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words. NIV*