

What Jesus Taught About The End Of Time – Part 2

Matthew 24:36-51

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I broke Matthew 24 into eight sections, and we didn't get the whole gamut of them, so I'm going to rehearse them. Trust me, I won't go into any detail, we'll be here for a long time. I'm going to go back to verse 1. The first section was verses 1-2, Jesus' prediction of the temple destruction. I just want to outline the chapter. I want to make clear what Jesus is teaching, beginning in Matthew 24:1. "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple,"—that was known as Herod's Temple. It was the second temple rebuilt from Zerubbabel. "...and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things?—that is, the things of the temple, the stones, the beauty, the majesty of Herod's temple—"verily,"—or truly—"I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Notice that, not one stone in this temple will remain, "...that shall not be thrown down."

Jesus is in Jerusalem. If you back up into Matthew 23:37, He had just wept over Jerusalem and said, "...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens...and ye would not! Behold, your house,"—your nation—"is left unto you desolate...Ye shall not see me,"—referring to Himself as the Messiah—"till ye,"—as the nation of Israel—"shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Remember that prophecy revolves around the nation of Israel. If you don't understand God's purpose, plan, and program for Israel, you can't really understand biblical prophecy; so I had encouraged you to read Romans 9, 10, and 11. In Romans 9, God elected Israel; In Romans 10, God rejected Israel temporarily and partially blinded them; and then Romans 11, God restores Israel. So, we don't want to teach replacement theology—that the Church takes the place of Israel—but we want to see that God's plan and purpose for Israel is the center and heart of biblical prophecy, and we have prophecies that pertain to the nations around Israel, the Gentile nations, and prophecy as it relates to the Church, the believers as the body of Christ.

Basically, the nation of Israel, Matthew 23:37-39, had rejected their Messiah, so they would be dispersed, there would be the diaspora, then there would be the regathering, which we have seen in our day—Israel becoming a nation, June 14, 1948. By the way, that doesn't mean that that's when Israelites started. I've heard just insane stuff on YouTube and videos that Israel has only existed as a nation since 1948. Obviously, they haven't read the Bible or the Old Testament. Amen?

God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. What was Abraham before he was called by God? He was a Gentile. The first Hebrew was Abraham, and it's because of God's grace in reaching down and calling him out of paganism and then revealing Himself and making covenants and promises with him. One of those promises was that through his seed the Messiah would come, and that God would promise him that land called the Promised Land. The land would go from the Euphrates River all the way to the great river of Egypt, the Nile

River, which up to this point in time—this is interesting—Israel has never fully possessed all that area. They have a very little sliver of land now with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, very restrictive from what God Himself promised them and gave to them.

There were no “Palestinians” on the scene at that time, and actually the word “Palestine” was given by a Roman emperor as he dispersed the Jews and wanted to just disrupt Israel so he gave them the name Palaestīnā in Latin, which we get our word Palestine. The word “Palestinian” comes from Palestine or from the idea of the Philistines. They were the first there and the Canaanites and God actually drove them out because of their wickedness and gave the land to the nation of Israel. We don’t want to go into a whole history of that, but you really should do your history of the land and the Israeli-Arab conflict and understanding the origin of Palestinians and realizing that in Israel as well that there are Arab Israelis, there are Gentile Christian Israelis, there are Arabs who live in Israel who are Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ, and there are Israelis that are Arabs that live in Israel and are thriving and doing great, so it’s not an apartheid system. They’re not colonial conquerors, they’re native to the land. They’re the ones that God gave the land, and all of it is actually prophetically laid out, planned, and designed by God. What is going on in the Middle East right now is actually all part of God’s purpose, plan, and program. He lays it out very clearly in His Word.

Jerusalem has rejected their Messiah. Jesus is leaving the temple area, Matthew 24:1, and the disciples were gawking at the buildings of Herod’s Temple, which was kind of the center of their place of worship and reflective of their nation. Jesus says, verse 2, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” That was going to happen in 70 A.D., just a few years from when Jesus predicted this, this would all be destroyed.

What we need to understand is what Jesus goes on to say about the destruction of the temple is dealt with not in Matthew 24, it’s dealt with in Luke 21. There are three places this sermon is recorded, only in Luke 21 does He go into depth and detail about, “...There shall not be left here one stone upon another,” and the 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem. This is where prophetic teachers get messed up. They actually interpret Matthew 24 as all taking place, they’re called preterists—it’s all past—in 70 A.D. There are several problems with that. Many things that are described in Matthew 24 did not happen in 70 A.D., and the book of Revelation perfectly coincides with this Olivet Discourse that was written in 90-91 A.D., after 70 A.D., and it was presented as still yet future then, so the preterists’ view I think is not biblical. Then, they have different views—they don’t believe in the rapture, they don’t believe the rapture is any differently distinct from the Second Coming and they confuse and mix them together, or one of the big mistakes is that they find the rapture in Matthew 24.

It’s my conviction that the rapture is nowhere in view in Matthew 24. One of the first and primary points that I would make about Matthew 24 is that the rapture is not in the chapter—it’s not in Matthew 24, not in Matthew 25. If you find the rapture in this discourse, then you’re going to throw your eschatology all off. That’s, at least, my conviction. You can disagree with me if you want, but I hear so many people teaching this chapter, even that are pretribulational, but they find the rapture here and without realizing it they support the doctrine of a midtrib or a

posttribulational rapture rather than a pretribulational rapture, which they hold, they don't realize by interpreting it that way they're causing problems there.

That's not to say that we should just have a belief and impose that on the text. We don't have a belief that we impose on the text, we derive what we believe out of the text. When it talks about prophecy in the Bible, you have to synthesize it. All of Scripture has to be synthesized and put together, that's why it becomes so challenging for us to do that. I believe in a pretribulational rapture. I believe in a premillennial return of Jesus Christ. Let's get back to the text. I solemnly confess I'm rambling right now. I hope it's a coherent, biblical, theologically sound rambling, but I'm rambling. Not because I don't know what to say, it's because I have too much to say, and I want to get through this chapter tonight.

Now, verse 3, is the second division. The whole Olivet Discourse is based on three questions. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,"—this is why it's called the Olivet Discourse, which is a mount east of Jerusalem—"the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?" Now, "these things be" is question 1. I'm going to make this very clear, "...when shall these things,"—what things? When shall the temple be destroyed? When shall Jerusalem be destroyed? When shall not one stone be left upon another? He answers this first question in Luke 21. This is where everyone gets messed up when they interpret this passage. He skips this question and gets to the second two. That's one of the keys in understanding this chapter. Then, they say, "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" which I believe are two questions, what's the sign of your coming and the end of the world?

Here's another very important thing, and I've already kind of spilled the beans, "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming?" What do you suppose they were thinking when they said "coming"? I'll tell you what they were not thinking. They were not thinking about the rapture. Do you want to know why? Because they didn't know anything about that. This is why I emphasized when I taught on the rapture Sunday morning, by the way, this Sunday I'm going to be preaching the second half of that message in 1 Thessalonians 5 giving reasons from the text why the Church will not go through the tribulation but will be raptured before the tribulation. I think it's very clear.

We actually see here that we are finding that the "coming" here is a reference not to the rapture but to the Second Coming. All they knew about was what they understood as Jews about the coming of Messiah, which we know to be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They missed His first coming because they didn't understand He would come as a Lamb to be sacrificed for sin. They were looking for what we know to be the Second Coming, and then they will say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The teaching of the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24, is the teaching that is answering the second question, "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" It's the Greek word *aión*, it means the Jewish age when God wraps up His purpose, plan, and program for the nation of Israel. So, no rapture, it's all about the Second Coming.

Thirdly, here's the third section, He gives us the course of the present age or, "...the beginning of sorrows," which is verses 4-14. This is where I'm going to start skipping through this to get to the text that we have to cover tonight. If you're outlining it, verses 4-14 is very crucial and confuses a lot of people. This is where a lot of Christians today—listen to me very carefully—find signs in this section that they believe indicate that the rapture is near. Technically speaking, there are no signs given to the Church that the end is near other than an apostasy in the last days. That's the sign we're living in the last days, an apostasy or turning away from the faith.

These signs that are given here are general signs leading up to the tribulation period which will give us the signs that His coming, the Second Coming, is near. When we see the world stage set for the tribulation—globalism, one-world religion, and all the things that are set for the tribulation—then we know that His coming is near because the rapture is before the tribulation, and the Second Coming is after the tribulation, but the signs technically are not for us as believers. This is why people are running around looking for blood moon, stars falling from heaven, checking out the earthquakes, and all that stuff, instead of just looking up knowing that at any moment Christ promised He would come again, and we need to live in that expectation. I pointed out in John 14 that Jesus promised to go to the Father's house, heaven, and "...prepare a place for you,"—and do what?—"come again,"—right?—"and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." That's all we need to know is that Jesus Christ is coming soon. We may see things that are indicating the tribulation is coming, that only means the coming of Christ is all the more imminent, that we realize His coming is soon.

Verses 4-14, the general course of the present age described in verse 8 as, "...the beginning of sorrows," or birth pains, and we pointed out there would be deception, verses 4-5; wars, verses 6-7; disasters, verses 7-8; and there would be defamation or persecution, verses 9-10. By the way, antisemitism is satanic and demonic. It's a desire to attack God's purpose, plan, and program for the nation of Israel through whom the Messiah would come. Don't forget that when God became a Man, He became a Jewish Man. Your Savior was a Jew, your Bible was written by Jewish people, and your Bible is rooted in that holy land of which there is so much attention given to right now in the news. There would then be a departure, verses 11-13; demonic darkness, verse 12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." In verse 14, there would be declaration, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Again, I can't emphasize enough that verses 4-14 are general birth pains, signs that the world is going to get darker and darker and darker and darker. Remember the birth pains are like a woman in labor, the contractions of labor and childbirth, they start light and get strong. They get long and closer together until just one big pain, right? and then the baby comes. That's what's happening in the world. There will be the birth of the Kingdom of God, the new age, Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom. There's going to be a whole new world coming. A new world will be born, but there's birth pains leading up to that.

The fourth section is in verses 15-25, and Jesus begins to give a sign of the end of time. Before I go over verses 15-25, just surveying it real quick, look at the chart with me on the screen. (We

passed these out. I don't know if we have any in the Connection Booth tonight, but we'll get them for next week.) This is kind of a panoramic prophetic chart of prophecy where many make a big mistake because they don't go back to the book of Daniel 9. Do you see the $70 \times 7 = 490$ years? That is the ABCs of Bible prophecy. If you want to understand Bible prophecy, you must master the 70 weeks of Daniel. There's a lot of great resources to do that. I would recommend that you listen to my teaching on that on the website. Go to Daniel and listen to that section.

Until you understand the 70 weeks of Daniel, you'll not be able to put the chart together properly, which God prophesied when Daniel was in Babylon wondering about the future of the nation of Israel. They had been taken captive and were in Babylon, and God revealed to Daniel His whole prophetic program and that it would involve 490 years. Again, I can't go into depth teaching and explaining everything, but I believe that 490 years would begin when the commandment to go forth and restore and rebuild Jerusalem, Nehemiah 2, which is 445 B.C. So, we know it's 490 years, it starts in 445 B.C., and 490 years God's purpose, God's plan, and God's program for Israel—the nation of Israel, the people of God, His chosen people—would be finished, done, and complete.

Now, it started in 445 B.C., and just take the number below, rather than the two sections—7 “sevens,” 49 years; 62 “sevens,” 434 years; and just take the 483 years takes us right up to the actual triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and one week later His crucifixion. What I believe happened at that moment was that the 490-year calendar, believe it as a stopwatch, stopped. Let's say God's holding a big stopwatch. In 445 B.C. He starts the time, 49 years (click). When Jesus is rejected, crucified, He stopped His stopwatch. Guess how many years were left on that watch? 7 years. How long is the tribulation? 7 years. There's seven years left, and you see it underneath “The Tribulation,” 7 years, 1 “seven.” We have 70 “sevens,” 490 years; 483 years have been finished. In the book of Daniel it comes in two compartments 7 “sevens,” 49 years; and 62 “sevens,” 434 years; and that seven-year period left for Israel, which is primarily the purpose of the tribulation, to prepare them for the Messiah, Second Coming, will take place. Notice what happens before the tribulation (at least it does on my chart, that is) is the rapture of the Church, 1 Thessalonians 4.

Between the cross, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ, burial, ascension, exaltation, and the rapture, you have what's called the “Church Age,” that's another very important, significant period of time that we live in right now. We're in that little “Church Age” period that we live between the cross of Christ, His resurrection, and His rapture of the Church. This is what God is doing in the world right now. God is gathering together Jew and Gentile, having broken down the middle wall of partition making one body, one bride of Christ, the Church, that will, “...be caught up...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” As I said, Sunday morning that's my theme: Will the rapture happen before the tribulation? That's what we're going to look at Sunday morning. And, of course, we'll have the Bema Seat of Christ in heaven, we'll have the rewards, and then we'll come back with Him and all that stuff, but we'll be with Him.

Once the rapture takes place—here's a precious thought—we will be as Paul said, forever with the Lord. We will never, ever, ever, ever, ever be separated from Jesus Christ. Isn't that awesome? When He's in heaven, we're in heaven; when He comes back to earth, we come back to the earth. When He creates a new heaven and a new earth, we're there with Him. It'll be the eternal state. It'll be amazing!

You have the 70 Weeks prophecy, you have the coming of Messiah, He's rejected, cut off, the stopwatch stops, there's seven years left. During that period, this is what's called the Church Age, the dispensation of grace, God saving us, not to say God's grace wasn't manifested in the Old Testament or even in the time of the tribulation, but this is what the age is that we live in right now on that chart, so I believe that the rapture happens before the Antichrist can be revealed, makes a covenant with Israel for 1 "seven," which is, by the way, a seven-year period. The Hebrew word is heptá, which means seven or when we use the word dozen, means twelve, they would use the word heptá, which meant seven. If you study the chronology, it makes more sense that it's seven years.

If you get Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy right, and you understand the Church Age and God's plan for the Church, then you have no problem with seeing how it all pieces together. Yes, this is what's called dispensationalism, which is under attack today, but I believe it's clearly taught in the Bible. There's hyperdispensationalism, which is an imbalance, but truly there are dispensations how God deals with different people at different times in His purpose and His plan and in His program.

Let me just cut to the chase, verses 15-25, here's the first sign. It's called, "...the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains," we talked about that last week. This happens on your chart in the middle of the tribulation. I didn't really show it on the chart, but notice under the 7 years, 1 "seven," that you have 3-1/2 years and 3-1/2 years. The book of Revelation makes mention of, "...a time, and times, and half a time." That's 3-1/2 years.

There is a significant event that happens in the middle of the seven-year tribulation (which, again, is Jewish period of time) and that's when the Antichrist has made a covenant with Israel for seven years, breaks the covenant by erecting an image of himself (read Revelation 13) in the temple in Jerusalem, and commands everyone to worship him. The Jews then realize that he's not our messiah, and Jesus instructs them here to flee. The instruction here is for the nation of Israel during the tribulation period. It's not really directly and primarily for the Church, or for us right now.

A couple thoughts on this. First, the Jews have to be back in Israel, they are. What they haven't done is build the temple, they will; and the Antichrist will be revealed. By the way, I don't think that Christians should spend any time trying to look at current events and current trends and what's going on in the world to try to determine who the Antichrist is or whether he's alive today because we're not to be looking for the Antichrist, we're looking for Jesus Christ. Amen?

So, he's described in 2 Thessalonians 2 and he's also described in Revelation 13, but this is a reference to Daniel 9:27, tied in with the 70 weeks of Daniel, "...the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet."

The second sign, jump down to verse 21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." So, the first sign, abomination of desolation, takes place in the middle of the seven-year tribulation; the second sign is the great tribulation, which is the second half of the tribulation. Let me be very specific: tribulation, 7 years; great tribulation, 3-1/2 years. This is why a lot of people want to have a midtribulational rapture, but again, I think that dispensationally the whole seven years tied in with Daniel's 70th week is one period, and it's for the nation of Israel, the people of God, and for His purpose and plan with them. Again, if you kind of get them mixed up with the Church and so forth, you'll confuse that. I believe in a pretribulational rapture because it is a seven-year period, even though it's divided into the two, this is where it leads us. As I said, many people want to have a midtribulational rapture, and again, I think the whole period is to punish the world and for the Jewish nation, to prepare them for the coming again of Messiah. The sign is the abomination, verse 15, and this "great tribulation," verse 21.

In verses 26-31, the third sign is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The first sign, abomination of desolation; the second sign, great tribulation; the third sign, the Second Coming. Let me say something else that's kind of been bothering me (I just gotta get it off my chest). If you try to put the Second Coming as the same event as the rapture, then you're going to confuse prophecy. The problem and reason so many people do that is because they don't pay attention to details. The description of the rapture is different than the description of the Second Coming. The program for the Church is different than the program for the world and for Israel, so you have to keep everything in its proper place and look at details. In the rapture, the Church is caught up to meet Christ in the air. It's not really a "coming," we meet Him in the air and go to heaven. In the Second Coming, we come back with Christ.

What they sometimes do is say, "We get raptured. We meet Christ," (Whoop!) spin a u-turn and come right back. "He takes us up, (Whoop!) and now we're going back down." "We go (Whoop!) up and meet Him in the air (Whoop!), we're going right back." I'm saying that a little sarcastically, but one of the big problems is when Christ comes back, He's going to separate the sheep from the goats. If He just raptured the Church, where do you get your sheep? At the end of Matthew 25 you have the sheep and the goat judgments. There'll be no sheep left if they all just got raptured. There's no time for that, so I believe that it's a seven-year period of gap, which is that tribulation, to punish the world and prepare Israel for their Messiah.

Again, what's significant about what's going on in the Middle East right now? Just the fact that Israel is God's time clock. The prophecy, God's plan, evolves around the nation of Israel; and Israel will not be destroyed, they will not be driven in the sea, they will be in the land, and they will be there for the tribulation period. Read Revelation 7, a hundred forty-four thousand Jews

will be sealed during this time preaching the gospel. There'll be the greatest time of Jewish evangelism in the history during the tribulation period. More Jews will come to faith in Yeshua, the Messiah Jesus Christ, than any other time. As I said, read Romans 9, 10, and 11 and it'll all fit together.

Let me rip these points off real quick. The Second Coming will not be secret, verse 26. The Second Coming will be personal and visible, verse 27. The Second Coming will be at the end of the tribulation, verses 28-29. The Second Coming will be preceded by signs, verse 29 at the end of the verse. The Second Coming will cause nations to mourn, verse 30. The Second Coming will be glorious in its appearing—every eye shall see Him. When the rapture takes place, people won't see that. Seventhly, the Second Coming will be Israel's restoration, verse 31. I added an eighth, it will fulfill God's promise to David that on his throne Messiah shall sit.

We're almost to where we stopped last week. Verses 32-35 is now called "the parable of the fig tree," and He actually closes with a set of parables. This is one of the second main things that I think people get wrong, they see the rapture in the Olivet Discourse, and then they see the nation of Israel born in 1948 with the budding of the fig tree and start setting dates, making a big mistake. This is not an allegory, it is a parable, which absolutely is synonymous with an analogy, which is different than an allegory.

Verse 32, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. 34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." I spent quite a bit of time on this last week, so I won't tonight, although I'm tempted to. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word parabol in the Greek literally means to lay alongside, so He takes a story, lays it alongside spiritual truth. What I think people do to make a mistake is say that the fig tree budding was May 14, 1948, and that this generation is the generation that sees the budding of the nation of Israel becoming a nation—the fig tree budding, Israel being a nation—and that generation is 40 years.

The big excitement was 1988. How many of you remember a book called, 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Happen in 1988? Remember that book? Nobody? Well, good. I'm glad you didn't hear about it. There was a book written, 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Happen in 1988. Obviously, it didn't happen, right? but the author made millions of dollars and went and built a house somewhere in Europe and retired. Someone should go knock on his door and say, "What happened to the coming of the Lord?"

Any interpretation of the parable of the budding of the fig tree that allows you to try to set a date for the rapture is a wrong interpretation. Remember it's all Second Coming, it's not the rapture. That could happen at any moment, no way to set a date. We don't know when the Second Coming is going to happen because there's a lot of things that have to take place before that Second Coming.

I guess the easiest thing for me to do is just cut to the chase that I did last week. I believe that the fig tree here is not Israel, that it's an actual fig tree. Isn't that profound? In Luke 21, the parallel passage, Jesus said, "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees," so He didn't just say "fig tree," He said, "...and all the trees; When they now shoot forth,"—begin to bud, what does it tell you?—"...that summer is now nigh at hand." It means that summer is almost here. Fig trees are known to bud late in the spring, an indication that summer is almost here. When you see things starting to bud, you say, "Wow! It's springtime. Summer's almost here."

Notice Jesus used a phrase, verse 33, "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Here's how I think you should understand it. "These things" are taking us back to verse 15, the abomination of desolation; verse 21, the great tribulation; and verses 29-30, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." "These things" are a reference to the great tribulation. When you see the abomination of desolation, when you see the tribulation period, then know that My coming, again the "coming" here is the Second Coming at the end of the tribulation, "...know that it is near, even at the doors." All the fig tree is trying to say is just like a fig tree budding tells us summer's almost here, so the things of the tribulation tells us the Second Coming is almost here.

Notice the certainty of it, the authority, verse 35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." God's Word is more certain and more enduring than even heaven and earth. Did you know that there's going to be a whole new heaven and new earth, that the elements are going to melt with fervent heat? God's going to recreate the world. It's going to be the eternal state. You see it on the chart, "New Heaven, New Earth" after the Millennial reign of Christ, the "Kingdom Age," the thousand years. These are what's going to be the sign the Second Coming is near.

This is where we stopped last week, verse 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Two people will be having coffee at Starbucks, maybe. I don't know if there'll be a Starbucks during the tribulation, "...one shall be taken, and the other left."

This is another issue that I have with interpreting the Olivet Discourse, that is, again Jesus is giving us an analogy from the days of Noah to the time before His Second Coming. What I see is, a lot of times Bible interpreters will say, "As it was in the days of Noah," and then turn back in their Bible to Genesis 6-9 and read about the days of Noah and say, "When we see this

happening, the rapture is almost here.”

There are two problems with that. It's not about the rapture, and it's not about what's going on in days of Noah. What was going on in the days of Noah that will be significant just before the Second Coming at the end of the tribulation? It says it in the text. Let's look at it. It says, "... they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." What's wrong with that? The answer, nothing. You say, "Nothing?" Nothing. The "wrong" is they weren't looking and expecting and anticipating the Lord's return. They were acting as though the world would never end, "Eat. Let's drink. Let's be merry. Let's have fun. Let's go to parties." It wasn't evil and sinful in and of itself, they were just living as though the Lord would not return. This is why the whole Olivet Discourse ends with warnings to be watching, looking, ready, and faithfully serving for the Lord to come again.

By the way, in the context of the Olivet Discourse, it's for those Jews and Gentiles on the earth during the tribulation, not for the Church. There are similar exhortations to the Church for the rapture, but that's not the context of Matthew 24.

A little footnote here, verse 37, Jesus evidently believed that the Old Testament story about Noah was true. Isn't that cool? Jesus believed the Old Testament story about a guy who built a big honkin' boat, filled it full of animals, God rained down his wrath and judgment on the world, flooded and destroyed the world, He did it once before, and that Noah was an actual historical event in the Bible. He also referenced Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He also mentioned Jonah being swallowed by a whale, three days and three nights in the whale, "... so shall the Son of man be...in the heart of the earth." Jesus believed in the historicity of the Old Testament.

But when it says, "...in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Jesus is saying just what's going to happen at the end of the tribulation, people aren't going to be looking for and expecting the coming again the Lord. He's not talking about population explosion or sexual immorality, which is true, but He tells us what they were doing. They were living as though Christ would not come back.

Verse 39, "...and took them all away," is referring to the wicked who were drowned and swept away in the wrath of God's judgment in the flood. Keep that in mind. Then, in verses 40-41, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." This is where I differ with a lot of even my pretribulation rapture Bible teachers. I don't believe this is the rapture. I believe in the rapture. I believe in a pretribulation rapture, but I don't believe that this is a reference to the rapture. I believe John 14 is, and Paul revealed it in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, so when it says, "Two women shall be...at the mill; the one shall be taken," if you back up in the text, then it says, verse 39, "...and took them all away," it's a reference to God taking away the wicked in judgment, so I believe that when He says, "...the one shall be taken, and the other

left," that those who are taken are taken in judgment, those that are left are left to go into the Millennium. There are the sheep in the teaching of the sheep and goat nations at the end of Matthew 25. People will live through the tribulation, they'll believe in Jesus, they'll get to go in the Millennium, they'll be in mortal bodies, but they'll be saved. So I believe the taken away.

Now, here's what happens. If you put the rapture in verses 40-41, and years ago when rapture theology became real popular in the late 60s early 70s and you have the movie, *Thief in the Night*, Jesus coming as a thief, catch everybody away and everybody's scared, are they going to miss the rapture? They were using this verse. Then people came to study the context of Matthew 24 and abandoned a pretribulational rapture because they said, "Well, we have tribulation before the rapture at the end of this chapter," so it's not sequentially in order and they put the Church here and it messes everything up. I believe that they're taken away in judgment, and those that are left are left to enter into the Millennial reign of Christ. Read Matthew 25:31-46. If we were doing a whole series on the Olivet Discourse, we would cover all of that and you could see that in one setting. I believe that it's taken away in judgment, not taken away in the rapture.

Now, let's wrap this up. Verses 42-51 is practical. He ends the practical teaching on prophecy by saying, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." He gives us another parable or analogy, "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched,"—that's the point—"and would not have suffered his house to be broken up,"—or broken into, which means robbed—"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." We have the parable of the thief, be watchful and be ready, and in verses 45-51 we have the parable of the servant. He's basically just telling a story, "...that if the goodman of the house," is the one who oversees, the steward of the house, takes care of the household, "he would have watched,"—he would —"...had known in what watch the thief would come...and would not have suffered his house to be broken up,"—or to be broken into and robbed.

How many of you have ever been robbed? Have you had anyone break into your house and stolen something? Or broken into your car and stolen something or stole your car? Several months ago I came out of the store, went to get in my car, and it was missing. For about three or four minutes I thought, My car's gone! It got raptured. I'm walking around the parking lot, where's my car? I'm freaking out, where's my car? Where did it go? Of course, obviously, you know the story, right? I looked over there, I parked it somewhere else. There's my car. Pray for me. If you see me walking around Costco parking lot, I'm looking for my car. If you've ever been robbed, it's a horrible feeling if you've ever been violated by someone robbing or stealing from you. But if you know the robber's going to come, which we don't. You know, the robbers don't call you, "Hey, can you leave the key under the front doormat? I'm going to be hitting your house at 3 am tomorrow morning." "Sure. No problem." You'd be waiting up with a Doberman pinscher, a shotgun, the FBI, the Navy SEALs, the police department. You'd be watching and waiting, so there's only one lesson in this parable, that is, be watching, be ready.

Now, in context, it's talking about those who are in the tribulation looking for the Second

Coming. Should we be watching and ready for the rapture? Yes! But that's not the context of Matthew 24, "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming?" the question in verse 3 is about the Second Coming. So, be ready, verse 44; be watching, verse 42.

Now, the second story of two servants, one is faithful and one unfaithful, be faithful. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat,"—food—"in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart,"—so there's the faithful servant, then there's the evil servant, verse 48—"My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder,"—it's a pretty gruesome picture there, by the way, literally means to saw in two—"and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is talking about hell. They're going to be judged by God and spend eternity in hell.

So, you have the, "...goodman of the house," who watches, is awake, and ready so that the house will not be broken into. Then, you have the servant who is faithful and isn't slothful and is ready and serving until his Master returns, so he will be rewarded by the Master. You're either a faithful servant, verse 45, faithful and wise, or you're an evil servant, you forget the Lord's coming. You think He's delayed His coming and begin to slough off in the light of the soon coming again of Jesus Christ. Amen?

I want you to understand that the primary interpretation and application is, again, look at the chart, referring to those who are alive on the earth during the tribulation just before the Second Coming, which is recorded in Revelation 19. After Christ comes back, He'll establish His thousand-year Millennial reign on earth known as the "Kingdom Age," which is a different dispensation (that's the promise of God to David that the Messiah will sit on your throne), and then there'll be the "New Heaven, New Earth" after the "Great White Throne" judgment, Revelation 20, and then there will be the "New Heaven, New Earth." All of that is laid out for us in the book of Revelation as well as confirmed by Paul's epistles and Matthew 24. The book of Revelation was written either 90-91 A.D., well after 70 A.D., and things that have not yet taken place that are yet future.

So, how long is this "Church Age?" We don't know. It started on the day of Pentecost, and it will end at the rapture of the Church. The first 3-1/2 years of the tribulation, there'll be peace and safety, pseudo peace that will not last. That sign that Jesus gave us here, the abomination of desolation, will be, "...the beginning of sorrows," 3-1/2 years of great tribulation indicating the Second Coming is nigh. So, there's the rapture, there's the Antichrist, there's the tribulation, there's the Second Coming, there's the Millennium, there's the new heaven and the new earth, and what a glorious hope that is for the believer. Amen?

Let me close with three bullet-point applications. First, don't live in fear. In 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." When

you're watching the news, I hear people, "I can't even watch the news. I can't watch the news anymore!" You don't have to live in fear. Secondly, remember God is completely sovereign. I don't know that I need to say "completely sovereign," I think sovereign would be enough. I do that for emphasis, "completely sovereign." God is in control. Amen? No matter what is going on in the world around us, God is on the throne. Thirdly, rest in God's promises. Jesus said, John 14, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." That's the blessed hope of the believer. Let's pray.