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God Tells Us The Future - Matthew 24-25



By Steven J. Hogan

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We live in a sinful crazy world, and we often wonder where things are going! But as Christians, we are not to worry or be afraid. God wants us to know that He's in charge, and everything that's been happening on this planet is part of His sovereign plan, and it's all leading to Christ's return to earth. What's amazing and so encouraging is that God has told us all you need to know about His Son's coming and the end-times. He has not given us all the details of a future leading up to the rapture of the church, but a very good outline. *"Behold, I have told you everything in advance."* Mark 13:23

The most important prophecy passage in the Bible is Matthew

24:3 – 25:31. It starts in vs. 3 with the disciples asking Jesus, *"What is the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?",* and He answers them by giving the big picture of the end-times, and how then we should live. He tells them, and us *(*Matt. 24:15b), God's plans for the Christians, Jews, and unbelievers. Here is a short summary:

The birth pains – Matt. 24:4-8. There will be *"birth pains"*, different events and conditions signaling that Christ's coming is getting closer. God is telling the world to wake up! These *"birth pains"* are false Christs, wars, earthquakes, famines, and plagues, and for some people, financial problems. All these things are now taking place and will continue, evidence that we are living in the end-times. Now they won't be happening all over the world but only in various places – some people will experience them, and others will just hear about them. Matt. 24:4-8, Rev. 6:1-8

God's work with the Christians – Matt. 24:9-14. Whereas the *"birth pains"* affect both Christians and non-Christians, vss. 9-14 is particularly relevant to Christians. These verses describe a most difficult and dangerous time for believers living on this earth in the coming years. What do we learn? First, Christians all over the world will undergo great tribulation – they will be hated for their faith, for loving Jesus, and many will be martyred. Second, there will be a great apostasy. Many so-called Christians will fall away, will defect, and will turn against Christians and turn them in to the authorities. Third, there will be false prophets, deceivers trying to trick true believers. Fourth, the world will be an exceedingly sinful place – lawlessness will cover the earth. Fifth, many Christians will persevere to the end, and be saved, that is, be raptured. Sixth, Christians are to keep preaching the gospel to all the nations, and then this age will come to an end. Jesus promised us, *"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Matt. 28:19-20

God's work with the Jews – Matt. 24:15-27. These verses are about the Jews, and what happens to them directly impacts the Christians. Luke 21:20-24 gives a historical overview of the Jews, from being scattered (70 AD), persecuted, and then regathered (1880's – present). That the Jews have been returning to Israel is the #1 reason we know we live in the end-times. From Matt. 24:15-26, we learn four major things that will affect the Jews. First, there will be the *"abomination of desolation"*, which is the Antichrist desecrating the temple in Jerusalem (Dan. 9:27). Second, the Antichrist will chase after the Jews but many will miraculously escape (Rev. 12:13-16). Third, there will be great tribulation, a great persecution of Jews starting in Israel and spreading to the world, with that evil Antichrist also making war with the Christians (Rev. 12:17, Matt. 24:9). Fourth, false Christs and prophets will try to deceive the Jews, saying the true Christ is on earth – but we learn that He will come from heaven. *"Just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be."* Matt. 24:27

Death – Matt. 24:28. *"Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."* Because of the birth pains and great tribulation, both Christians and non-Christians will be dying in the years leading up to Christ's coming. *"Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the beasts of the earth… I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of God's word."* Rev. 6:8-9

The end of the age – Matt. 24:29. This age is coming to an end. In the near future, during Daniel's 70th week, and after the coming of the Antichrist, the skies will grow dark – *"the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light."* This, along with a great earthquake, are God's signs that this age has come to an end, and that the day of the Lord is at hand. Rev. 6:12-17

Christ's coming and the rapture of the church – Matt. 24:30-31. Immediately after the end of this age, Jesus Christ will return to earth. His coming will be visible and obvious to all who are still alive, for the whole world will be lit up by His glory. *"They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."* The skies will suddenly go from dark to light, and Christ will be seen coming in the clouds. A split second later, Christians on earth will be raptured and together with believers who previously had died and gone to heaven, be glorified and gathered to Christ. 1 Thess. 4:15-17, 2 Thess. 2:1

The timing of end-time's events – Matt. 24:32-34, 36. Two timing truths are given in these verses. First, we are to know the general time of Christ's coming. The events prophesied in Matt. 24:4-29 will occur in the years leading up to the end of the age, making it clear that we are getting closer to Christ's return to rapture the church. Heb. 10:25 says we will *"see the day drawing near."* Second, we do not know the specific time of Christ's return, for *"of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, not the Son, but the Father alone."*

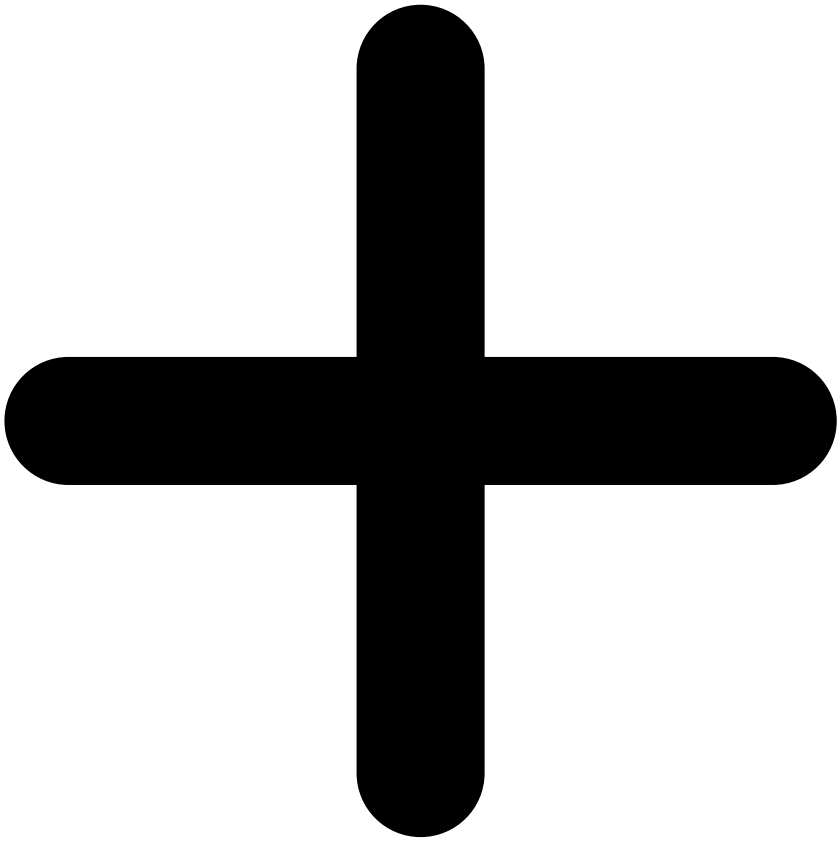
Daniel's 70th week relates to Matt. 24-25, helping us understand the timing of end-time events – Daniel 9:24-27. These verses talk about 70 weeks, each week consisting of 7 years. The 1st week began with the issuing of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem (444 BC), and the 69th week ended with Jesus being cut off, that is, crucified (30 AD). The 70th week, a most important prophetic period, has not yet started. At the beginning of the 70th week, a covenant (treaty) will be confirmed, allowing the Jews to build their temple in Jerusalem. At the midpoint of this week, this temple is desolated by the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27), at which time He is revealed as the *"man of lawlessness"* (2 Thess. 2:3-4). At the end of this 7-year period, a large remnant of Jews will be saved. It's during the 2nd half of Daniel's 70th week, at a time unknown to us, that Christ returns to rapture the church. Matt. 24:30-31

Unbelievers do not believe that Christ is coming back – Matt. 24:37-41. The unbelievers, the unsaved living in the end-times, are unaware of what will soon take place. The days of Noah and Lot illustrate how they are living in the years leading up to Christ's return – *"They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage"* (Matt. 24:38); *"They were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building"* (Luke 17:28). In fact, many unbelievers will mock Christians with regards to Christ's return – *"Where is the promise of His coming?"* (2 Pet. 3:4). But when the earth begins to shake and the skies grow dark, these evil unrepentant unbelievers will be scared to death, for they know that God's wrath has come (Rev. 6:12-17). And suddenly the Christians will disappear, flying up into the skies. *"One will be taken, and one will be left."*

How Christians should live during the end-times – Matt. 24:42 – 25:1-13. Christians must be ready, be expecting, be looking for Christ's return (Matt. 24:44). We must be sensible and faithful (Matt. 24:45), doing God's work by serving the saints and witnessing to the lost. We must be prudent and wise (Matt. 25:2). We must be alert, spiritually sensitive to the Spirit, and physically aware of what is happening around them. *"The men of Issachar understood the times and knew what they should do."* (1 Chron. 12:32). We must be living lives filled with faith, hope, and love. *"Let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."* 1 Thess. 5:8-9

The certainty of Christ's coming – Matt. 24:35. *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."* This verse, conspicuously placed in the middle of this prophecy passage, is an exclamation point to all that Jesus said. What He told us is the absolute truth, truth you need to know inside and out, for what He said will dramatically affect all those living on this earth, both saved and lost. And you will literally see Christ's words come to pass. What an exciting time to be alive! *"Behold, I am coming soon!"* Revelation 22:20

P.S. I cannot stress enough the importance of understanding Matthew 24-25. Please read it, study it, and learn what it says, for your sake, your family, and your church. I strongly encourage you to read *“Matthew 24 – the Most Important Prophecy Chapter in the Bible*“, and *“What is the Main Message of Matthew 24?”*



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