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The End of the Age, Christ's Coming, and the Rapture

By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #365 ~

Matthew 24:3 – *"What will be the sign of Your **coming** and of the **end** of the age?"* The disciples knew they were living in an age ruled by Gentiles, and that Jesus, who had been with them for nearly three years, was the Christ, the King who would defeat their enemies and begin ruling over Israel and the entire world. But they wanted to know when, and so they ask Jesus to give them signs that would alert them to the end of this age and His coming.

Their questions for Jesus are extremely relevant, especially in these end-times, and He answers them in Matt. 24:29-31. But before that, He tells them many things that will happen in the years leading up to His coming. Jesus does this because He does not want you to be caught off guard, but to be expecting Him, and looking forward to being with Him. In this post, I focus on the end of this age, Christ's coming, and the rapture of the church as described in Matt. 24 and other related verses.

There are three points I must make before we begin looking at Matthew 24:
* Christ's coming occurs after the end of this age. Jesus answers the disciples' questions by saying the skies go dark (Matt. 24:29), signaling the end of this age – and then after that, the skies light up, signaling His coming (Matt. 24:30-31). So the coming of Christ is just after the end of this age.

* The rapture of the church is the first thing to happen at Christ's coming. 1 Th. 4:15 says, *"We who are alive and remain until the **coming** of the Lord..."* 1 Th. 4:17, the classic rapture verse, says, *"We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds..."* There is the exact same wording in the first part of both vss. 15 and 17, and equating them makes it clear that the rapture takes place at Christ's coming. This is also seen in Matt. 24:29-31 and 2 Thess. 2:1.

* Believers are glorified at Christ's coming. *"... so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His **coming**"* (1 Cor. 15:22-23). The phrase *"made alive"* means to be glorified – and vs. 23 explicitly says this occurs at Christ's coming. 1 John 2:28, 3:2 also explain that we will be glorified at Christ's coming. *"When He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His **coming**... We know that when He appears* (at His coming), *we will be like Him."* And to be like Jesus is to be glorified. Note Phil. 3:20-21.

Let's now look more closely at the end of this age and Christ's coming: **Matthew 24:4-8**. Jesus wants us to know that these birth pains, the deception, wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes, are *"not yet the **end**"* (vs. 6), that the end of the age and Christ's coming is not yet, is not imminent, is not right at the door (vs. 33). Vs. 8 says the occurrence of *"these things are merely the beginning of birth pains"* – that is, much more needs to happen before this age comes to an end.

Matthew 24:9-14 focuses on Christians who are experiencing tribulation, and I believe it's great tribulation, for vs. 9 says they (unbelievers) *"will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations."* During this time of tribulation, Jesus instructs us to preach the *"gospel of the kingdom… to all the nations, and then the **end** will come"* (vs. 14). It's after great tribulation and the preaching of the gospel to the whole world that the end is come, that this age is over, and Christ returns to rapture the church.

Matthew 24:13 tells us, *"The one who endures to the **end**, he will be saved."* Again, we read about the *"end"*, and the one who perseveres, who overcomes to the end of the age will be saved. The word saved is not speaking about spiritual salvation, but about physical deliverance, that Christians who endure to the end of this age will be rescued from an evil world – and then glorified. James 5:7 also talks about endurance – *"Be patient, brethren, until the **coming** of the Lord."* The word patient is similar to endure, and God encourages us to not quit, to be patient, to keep going until the Lord's coming.

Matthew 24:15-21 focuses on the Jews. Vs. 15 speaks of the *"abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel."* The setting is Jerusalem, and the Antichrist defiles, desecrate the Jewish temple, for he *"takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God"* (2 Th. 2:4). Dan. 9:27 predicts that this takes place in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, at the 3½ year mark.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-10 says that the coming of Christ is after the coming of the Antichrist. Vs. 1 speaks of *"the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him."* From vss. 2-4, we learn that the Antichrist is revealed for who he really is when he desolates the temple, and that this occurs before Christ's coming and the day of the Lord. This is confirmed by vs. 8: *"That lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His **coming**, that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan."*

These verses make it abundantly clear that the Antichrist comes, is revealed, and then Christ comes, and He returns to gather all the believers. Since the Antichrist desolates the temple at the midpoint of Dan. 70th week, then Christ's coming must take place sometime after this. So it happens during the 2nd half of the 70th week, but we don't know when, we don't know the day or hour.

Matthew 24:22-27. Great tribulation begins in Jerusalem and spreads to the elect, to the chosen, to those in the world who aren't worshiping the Antichrist – and it's the worst persecution ever (Matt. 24:9, Rev. 13:14-17). And the devil does all these signs and wonders to deceive, to mislead people (Rev. 13:11-13). One of his goals is to get the elect to believe that Christ is already on earth. But that's a lie. To convince us that He's coming in the skies, Jesus says, *"Just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will be the* ***coming*** *of the Son of Man"* (vs. 27). Like lightning, Christ's coming is seen in the sky above, and it's sudden, dramatic, brilliant, and unmistakable. Matt. 24:30

The evidence is clear that Christ's coming (vs. 27) is after the Antichrist's coming (vs. 15), and that Christians are living on earth during the evil rule of the Antichrist and his persecution of the church. But then Christ comes to save them out of this world, to glorify them, and take them to Himself.

Matthew 24:29-31. The disciples' questions are answered. So what do we learn? 1) Great tribulation is cut short by God. 2) Skies go dark, the sign of the end of the age. 3) Christ's shekinah glory, a brilliant light, the sign of Christ's coming, precedes His coming and shatters the darkness. 4) Those on earth *"see the Son of Man* ***coming*** *on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."* 5) There's a great trumpet sound, and Christ sends His angels to gather the elect from the *"four winds* (believers on earth) *and from one end of the sky to the other* (believers in heaven)." Note Mark 13:27.

Matthew 24:32-36. All these things (22, in fact) must occur before the end of this age and Christ's coming. The people who see and hear about these things know the general time of His coming. And God has appointed a specific generation of believers who will witness all these things and sense that Christ's coming is drawing near (Heb. 10:25). So we can know the general time. We also know that His coming happens after the midpoint of Dan. 70th week, but we don't know the specific time. Jesus stresses the point that we don't know the day or hour for it's stated 6 different times, Matt. 24:36, 42, 44, 50; Matt. 25:13; Mk. 12:32. But we can know the season, the general time of Christ's coming, and I believe it will be our children's or grandchildren's generation.

Matthew 24:35 – *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."* This emphatically emphasizes the truth, supremacy, power, and eternality of God's word. This kind of verse is rare, is scarcely found in God's word. And it could be in any chapter, highlighting the truth of that chapter. But it's here in Matt. 24, pounding home the reality of these few verses, and of the entire chapter. This eschatological, exclamation point is shouting, *"Listen up, Jesus is coming back and He told you what happens before His return. He told you because He doesn't want you to be surprised by the birth pains and great tribulation, and so you are excited and looking forward to His return – and are telling others about it!"* Christ's 2nd coming is the most exciting, most important thing to happen since His 1st coming, and God wants you to be ready, waiting, and doing His work! Rev. 22:7, 12, 20

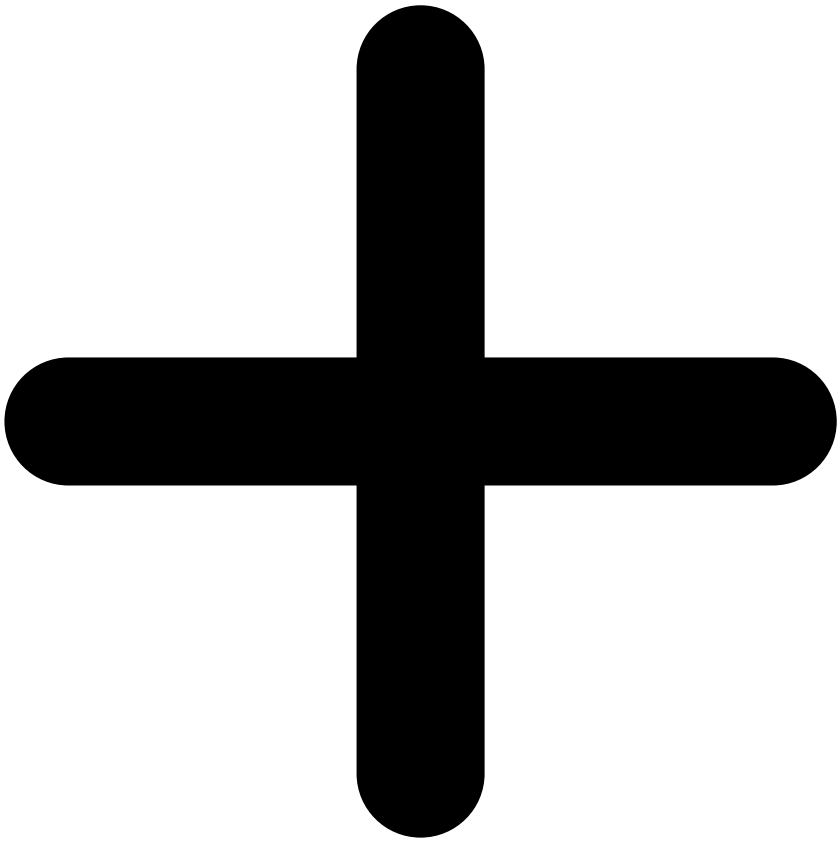
Matthew 24:37-41 – *"The **coming** of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage…"* In the final years before Christ's coming, unbelievers are living like everything is normal. But they are evil, hate Christians, and turn them in to the authorities (vss. 9-12). They mock Christians, saying, *"Where is the promise of His **coming**?"* (2 Pet. 3:4). We live in a sinful world, but it will be much worse in the last days, especially when that lawless man, the Antichrist, is ruling the world and persecuting Christians.

So unbelievers are eating, drinking, buying, and selling, oblivious to what is about to happen (Lk. 17:28). Suddenly, the skies grow dark, but are immediately lit up by Christ's coming. The sinners, in great shock and scared to death, know they cannot escape from Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, the holy Judge, the King of the world. *"Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left."* Christians are saved from a very wicked world, taken off the earth, and glorified!!!

A generation of Christians living on earth will witness all these events leading up to the end of this age and the coming of Christ. There will be the beginning of birth pains; the Antichrist is revealed at the midpoint of Dan. 70th week; and there's great tribulation. Then sometime in the next 37 months, Christ comes back. At that time, He gathers all God's children to Himself, and takes them home to heaven. *"... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* Psalm 23:6

1 Thess. 2:19-20 – *"Who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His* ***coming****. For you are our glory and joy."* **1 Thess. 3:13** – *"... that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the* ***coming*** *of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."* **1 Thess. 4:15** – *"We who are alive and remain until the* ***coming*** *of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep... we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them..."* **1 Thess. 5:23** – *"May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved compete,* without blame at the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ."

P.S. Here is an article that shows you the importance of Christ's second coming: *"Over 100 New Testament Verses on Christ's Second Coming."* I would also encourage you to use the search bar to look for posts on the rapture, and there are many of them.



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