

Gospel and Signs of the Times

Outline

1. Questions and Answers on Signs
2. General Signs in Church Age (30 AD to Present)
3. Specific Signs during End Times
4. Three Additional Signs before Jesus' Second Coming
5. Negative Signs during End Times
6. Positive Signs during End Times
7. Generation in which End Times signs occur
8. Prepare Now

1. Questions and Answers on Signs

Matt 24:1-3 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly, I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down". ³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

The disciples asked Jesus two questions in *Matt 24:3*.

Question 1: **When** will the destruction of the Temple happen?

Question 2: **What** will be the sign of His Second Coming and the end of the age?

Matt 24-25 (Mark 13 and Luke 21) is also called the Olivet discourse because Jesus delivered it on the Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem. This happened only two days before the Passover and Crucifixion (*Matt 26:2*).

Question and Answer 1: When will the Temple in Jerusalem be destroyed? Jesus answered briefly in *Matt 24:2* but elaborated in *Luke 21:20-24*.

Luke 21:20-24 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

This was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and did what this passage said. The invading Roman soldiers even toppled every Temple stone to scrape the melted gold between the stones when the Temple was set on fire. Ever since Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 605 BC, Gentile forces occupied the city except for a very brief period. However, since 1967, the Israeli Jews recaptured Jerusalem and occupied it — indicating that the times of the Gentiles are possibly over.

Question and Answer 2: What will be the sign of His Second Coming and the end of the age? Jesus answered it in *Matt 24:4-28*, wherein He gave some **General Signs** and some **Specific Signs**.

2. General Signs during Church Age (*Matt 24:4-13*)

The general signs that occur in the Church Age (30 AD to Second Coming) occur increasingly since the early church days:

Matt 24:4-13 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumours 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. ⁹ "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 the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matt 24:4-5 Many false Christs have claimed unusual powers since the early Church. They were exposed, but new ones have appeared.

24:6-7 Wars and rumours of wars have always occurred in human history. However, their frequency and intensity will increase. There will be another end- time war (*Rev 16:13-16*) before the Second Coming.

24:7 Pestilence is increasing despite medical breakthroughs, e.g. AIDS, Cancer, Covid etc.

Famines and Earthquakes are frequently occurring these days. However, an end- time earthquake will be so massive that it will devastate the nations' cities before the Second Coming (*Rev. 16:18-20*).

24:9-10 Since 1900, Christians have been persecuted more than ever.

24:11 False prophets, false doctrines have arisen, e.g. Jehovah's Witness, Mormons etc.

24:12 Many who claim to be Christians have grown so worldly and have little love for the Lord and each other. However, he that endures to the end by watching his life and doctrine will be saved and not deceived.

3. Specific Signs during End Times (*Matt 24:14-31*)

Matt 24:14-31 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. ¹⁵ "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,'^[a] 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 housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their 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 Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶ "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' 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. ²⁹ "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 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^[c] will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven,

with power and great glory.^[d] 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.

Matt 24:14 The gospel will be preached in the entire world. The end of the age is delayed because of the Lord's mercy as He wants more people to repent and to believe the gospel and thus be saved (2 Pet 3:9). He has entrusted the task of spreading the gospel to us. This is now possible in the 21st Century because of TV and the Internet.

Matt 24:15-22 There will be a period of great trouble in all the earth called "**The Great Tribulation**".

24:15 Our Lord Jesus specifically draws our attention to the vision in *Daniel 11-12*. He mentions that the appearance of the abomination that causes desolation (destruction) will trigger the Great Tribulation. The specific signs mentioned in *Matt 24:14-31* and *Dan 11-12* are increasing in intensity both in the Church and the world. People are increasingly giving up following Christ, and many Christians are significantly compromising their lifestyles. Evil is increasing on the earth very rapidly, and the very foundations of society are being threatened. **Life as we knew it in the last fifty years will not return; instead,** it seems to worsen every month. I am not a prophet of doom but one who seeks to understand the signs of the times and give hope. *Dan 11:32-33* speaks of a people **who know their God** and will firmly resist the abomination, and they will instruct many. Beloved, be prepared now, draw closer to God and help others to do the same. For in the time of great darkness, there will also be the **church's finest hour** when the glory of God will shine through the church resulting in a mighty harvest through the preaching of the gospel (*Isa 60:2-3*).

Matt 24:22 The days will be shortened to help humanity survive the trouble. **24:23-25** Our Lord Jesus warns us that many false Christs and prophets will perform miraculous signs to deceive people, even trying to deceive true believers if possible.

24:23 There will be premature reports of the Lord's Second Coming.

24:29 There will be remarkable signs in the heavens just before the second coming.

24:30 The sign of the Lord Jesus will appear in the sky, and the nations will mourn when they see our Lord Jesus come on the clouds in the sky (*Matt 24:30*)

24:31 The angels will blow a loud trumpet. They will gather the true believers from one end of the heavens to the other.

4. Three additional signs before Jesus' Second Coming

i. The rebellion (a great falling away) occurs (2 Thess 2:3, Rev 22:11)

This rebellion or great falling away (Greek: *apostasia* meaning something separated or divorced) is the spirit of the end times where there is a great separation between the children of light and the children of darkness, as mentioned in *Isa 60:2* above. "**Continue**" in *Rev 22:11* means "to a greater degree". Therefore, the separation of the wicked from the holy will be to a greater degree.

2 Thess 2:3-4 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

*Rev 22:11 Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let him the holy person **continue** to be holy.*

ii. Anti-Christ in person appears who wants to be called God (*2Thess 2:3-4*).

iii. **Great end-time worldwide revival and awakening** accompanied by a harvest of souls from all nations and many of their rulers (*Isa 60:2-3*).

Isa 60:2-3 See, darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you, and his glory appears over you. ³ Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Other scriptures:

Tim 4:1-3 The Spirit clearly says that in later times, some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. ² Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. ³ They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods,

Tim 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

5. Negative Signs during End Times

Negative Sign 1: *Nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. (Luke 21:25, Matt 24:7). The era of peace and prosperity of 1960-2010 is over and will not recur again.* This occurs in the war between Russia and Ukraine, the rise of China and increased polarisation worldwide. Pope Francis said this was the beginning of WW III. Also, financial markets are increasingly becoming uncontrollable. Global warming would increase the occurrence of floods.

Negative Sign 2: Many will turn away from the faith...increase of wickedness...love of most will grow cold (*Matt 24:10-12, 1 Tim 4:1, 2 Tim 3:1-5*).

Increase of wickedness: Porn, homosexuality, living without marriage commitment, divorces. Today we are talking of a post-Christian era. Just 100 years ago, there were great revivals in Wales, England, US. Today they have forgotten their heritage.

Negative Sign 3: The trigger to begin the Great Tribulation will be the appearance of the Anti-Christ in person who will declare himself to be God (*Mat 24:15, 2 Thes 2:3-4*).

6. Positive Signs during End Times

Positive Sign 1: End-time world revival will occur. *Isa 60:1-3 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. ² See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you, and his glory appears over you. ³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

Positive Sign 2: Those who know their God will do great exploits and instruct many. *Dan 11:31-33 And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. ³² Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits. ³³ And those of the people who understand shall instruct many (NKJV).*

7. Generation in which End Times signs occur (Luke 21:32)

The generation (in which the signs occur) will only pass away once these signs are fulfilled. We see that the End Times signs arise all around us today. A biblical generation is 100 years (*Gen 15:13-16*). So, I “think”—we might see the end-times unfolding **within** 100 years.

Luke 21:32-36 I tell you the truth, **this generation** will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened...³⁴ "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you **unexpectedly like a trap**.³⁵ For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

8. Prepare Now

Continue increasingly in the right direction: During this generation — Rev 22:11 *Let him who does wrong **continue** to do wrong; let him who is vile **continue** to be vile; let him who does right **continue** to do right; and let him who is holy **continue** to be holy.*" [**continue** (Greek eti) means, to a greater degree]. Therefore, the separation between those perishing and those saved will increase.

Fear will drive many to make wrong choices — *hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life* (Luke 31:24).

Faith will drive many to make the right decision "**Watch and Pray**" (Luke 21:36).

Watch — is a mind activity to understand the signs of the times.

Pray — is a heart activity to engage with God. They will *be able to stand up before the Son of Man*, meaning they will be strengthened in love for God and His people.