

Apocalypse Now?

What does the book of Revelation have to say to us today?

WEEK ONE – 15 June 2025

Additional Material: an exegesis of Jesus' teaching on the End Times in Matthew 24 & 25

Linked texts across the New Testament are indicated by red font

At first sight, Jesus seems to say two contradictory things:-

- You can & must read the signs (24:32-35)
- You can't & mustn't predict the time (I will come when you least expect me – 24:36, 44)

Using Matthew 24 & 25 as a base text, we see the following pattern:-

24:1-3 The request for a sign

- the disciples admire the Temple's beauty
- Jesus replies that the Temple will one day be utterly destroyed (AD 70)
- the disciples then ask two questions:-
 1. When will this (i.e. the destruction of the Temple) happen?
 2. What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? (the Destruction of the Temple as a 'type' of the End of the World)
- See the 'concertina' effect of prophecy ...

24:4-8 The 'concurrent' signs - wars, rumours of war, natural disasters

- Jesus replies with a warning – Watch out that no one deceives you
- the possibility of deception – many false 'christs'
- **warning against deception about the Lord's return, 2 Thessalonians 2**
- **many deceivers; these are antichrist, 2 John 7, 8**
- wars & rumours of wars (don't be alarmed)
*[*Luke adds 'revolutions' (21:9)]*
- famines & earthquakes
[Luke adds 'pestilences' (21:11)]*
- Note – these are only the beginning of birth pains (note – childbirth is positive!)
- **the whole Creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth, Romans 8:18-39**
[Luke adds 'the end will not come right away' (21:9)]*

Revelation = 4 horsemen of the apocalypse, 7 seals, 7 trumpets ...

24:9-14 The two preliminary signs – persecution & proclamation

- ‘Then ...’
- ‘Satan’s Little Season’
- the Great Apostasy
- persecution & hatred will become the norm for the Christian community
[Mark / Luke promise the Holy Spirit will aid witness: Mark 13:11; Luke 21:13-15]*
- many will turn away from the faith, betray & hate each other
- **in later times some will abandon the faith, 1 Timothy 4:1-4**
- false prophets will appear, deceiving many
- **persecution, deception, 2 Timothy 3:12-14**
- **many deceivers; these are antichrist, 2 John 7, 8**
- **deceivers within the church in the last times, Jude 18,19**
- increase of wickedness will lead to widespread apostasy
- but he who stands firm to the end will be saved
- **many will turn away but the faithful “who have longed for his appearing” will receive crown of righteousness on That Day, 2 Timothy 4:1-8**
- this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world... (a dividing line)

Revelation = 2 witnesses (11), woman and the dragon (12)

24: 15-26 The first penultimate sign – desecration and deceit

- ...and then the end will come. ‘Satan’s Little Season’ – the Great Tribulation
- the abomination of desolation in the holy place (Daniel 9:27) (multiple fulfilment)
- terrible distress for the inhabitants of Judea – flee to the hills!
[Luke adds ‘Jerusalem trampled until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled’ (21:24)]*
- BUT not just restricted to the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70)
- 24:21 – unparalleled distress (the Great tribulation) /
- **terrible times in the last days, 2 Timothy 3:1-9**
- 24:22 – days cut short (? “time, times & half a time” – Daniel 7:25)
- false ‘christs’ and prophets – counterfeit signs and miracles
- **the man of lawlessness will set himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God (antichrist - ‘anti’ = ‘in place of’); counterfeit miracles, signs & wonders, & every sort of evil, 2 Thessalonians 2**
- **the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth, Revelation 19:15**
- **this is the last hour; antichrist is coming; his type are already abroad – defined by denial of Jesus as Christ, 1 John 2:18-27**
- See I have told you ahead of time

Revelation = The beast out of the sea, The beast out of the earth (13), the Lamb and the martyrs (14), the woman on the beast (17), the fall of Babylon (18)

[24:27-28 The coming of the Son of Man will be universally evident: like lightning (also in Luke 17:24)]

24: 29 The second penultimate or the great sign – convulsions in the heavens

- Immediately after the Great Distress:
- darkness in the skies, turmoil among the stars & heavenly bodies
[Luke adds that the nations will be in perplexity at the roaring & tossing of the sea & that people will faint with terror at the signs in the heavens (21:25-26)]*

Revelation = 7 angels with 7 plagues in 7 bowls

24: 30-35 The sign itself

- The Coming of the Son of Man (In NT ALWAYS a SINGLE EVENT)
- the sign of the Son of Man will appear (Daniel 7:13)
[Mark & Luke – the Son of Man)*
- all the nations of the earth will mourn
- They (ie all the nations) will see Him coming on the clouds
- at the sound of the trumpet (shofar?) angels gather the elect (the Rapture)
- Judgment of the nations / separation of righteous & wicked, Matthew 25:31-33
- binding the strong man, Matthew 12:28-29
- ... and you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, Mark 14:62
- I saw Satan fall like lightning, Luke 10:18
- God has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man, John 5:27
- I go to prepare a place for you in my father's house ... I will come back & take you to be with me, John 14:1-3
- this same Jesus will come in the same way that you saw him go, Acts 1:11
- Jesus in heaven until the 'time of Restoration', Acts 3:20
- God has appointed a Day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed, Acts 17:31
- the resurrection body, the rapture / the end of death / what is mortal will be swallowed up by life 1 Corinthians 15:35-57
- all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
- we eagerly await a Saviour who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body, Philippians 3:20-21
- you also will appear with him, Colossians 3:1-17
- God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11
- Christ Jesus will judge the living & the dead ,2 Timothy 4:1-8
- the glorious appearing of our great God & Saviour, Jesus Christ, Titus 2:13
- man is destined once to die and after that to face judgment, Hebrews 9:27
- Christ will appear a second time ... to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him, Hebrews 9:28
- we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, Hebrews 12:1
- saints receive their inheritance "when Jesus Christ is revealed", 1 Peter 1:3-7
- don't be surprised if you suffer now ... will be overjoyed then, 2 Timothy 4:12
- when the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive crown of glory, 2 Timothy 5:4
- wicked angels he has kept chained, Jude 6 (cf Revelation 20:1-3?)
- the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone and to convict the ungodly, Jude 14,15

Revelation = the Hallelujah Chorus, the Rider on the White Horse, a New heaven and a new Earth

MATTHEW 24:32 – 25:46

Warnings to be ready and to endure ...

24:33-35 The lesson of the fig tree

- Learning to read the signs
- when you see all these things, you know that it / He is near, at the door
- this generation / race will not pass away until all these things have happened
- What does 'near' mean? How soon is 'soon'?
- the Lord's coming is near ... the Judge is at the door, James 5:8-9
- the end of all things is near, 2 Timothy 4:7
- many scoffers ask - "where is this 'coming' he promised"? heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of judgment & the destruction of the ungodly; heavens destroyed, all laid bare / a day is like a thousand years to God (quoting Psalm 90:4) delay due to patience & mercy (i.e. Good News), 2 Peter 3:3-18
- this is the last hour; antichrist is coming; his type already abroad, 1 John 2:18-27
- Heaven & earth will pass away, but not my words
- the whole Creation is groaning ... the redemption of our bodies / in this hope we were saved, Romans 8:18-39
- the earth will be rolled up like a garment, Hebrews 1:10-12 (quoting Psalm 102:25-27)

²⁵ In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ²⁶ They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. ²⁷ But you remain the same, and your years will never end. Psalm 102:25-27

24:36-44 Warnings against attempts to predict / being caught unawares

- Be ready!
- no one knows (not the angels, not the Son) except the Father
- Like the Days of Noah – life as usual (compare Luke 12:16-21: The Rich Fool)
[* Luke adds the image of a trap closing unexpectedly (21:34)]
[* Luke adds that the Day will come upon all the inhabitants of earth (21:35)]
- some taken, some left (the Rapture / a picture of sudden judgment)
- Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know when He will come
- like a thief in the night – therefore be ready
- It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set, Acts 1:7
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11 (4.16 - 'the noisiest verse in the Bible')
 - the day of the Lord like a thief in the night (for unbelievers?)
 - but you are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief
- the day of the Lord like a thief; heavens destroyed, all laid bare, 2 Peter 3:3-18

4 PARABLES TO EMPHASISE THE APPLICATION

Matthew 24:45 – 25:46 : How ready are you to welcome your Lord back to Earth?

- are you a faithful servant or a wicked servant? 24:45-51
 - are you wise (ready) or foolish (unready)? 25:1-13
 - are you a busy servant or a lazy servant? 25:14-30
 - are you a sheep or a goat? 25:31-46
- (Or ... Do you know the Shepherd? John 10:14-15)
- Paul's fear of disqualification, 1 Corinthians 9:27 (also Romans 11:21)
 - if we disown him he will also disown us, 2 Timothy 2:11-13 (also Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26)
 - how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Hebrews 2:3
 - eternal dangers of turning from the faith, Hebrews 6:4-8 (also 12:22-29)