

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

The Days of Noah

Lesson 47 Matthew 24:32 -51

Jesus answered the disciples' questions about the end of the age of Gentile domination of Israel and the signs and timing of His coming to restore the kingdom to Israel. The sign of the end of the age was given as an unprecedented period of global Tribulation, punctuated in the middle of the 7 years by the Abomination of Desolation of the third Temple. (see Daniel 9:24-17). The sign of His coming would be visible, like lightning, in power and great glory (24:27,30,31).

Mass Spiritual Deception

Jesus prefaced the first half of His discourse recorded in chapter 24 with warnings of mass deception (24:4,5,11,23-26). How is it that in the Tribulation, when they can count 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls, they can't figure out the season of Jesus' return? After all, the Abomination of Desolation and the Mark of the Beast are huge clues. But will they know? Will they have even heard? Will the good news have been deleted from all media platforms? People still won't be ready after "all these things" happen simultaneously for seven years due to the distraction of devastating catastrophes. The main reason they will be caught off guard is the wide-scale delusion. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (1 Thess. 2:11). Jesus prefaced His answer with "Take heed that no man deceive you." (24:3). Then He said that many would be deceived. Later He said the deception would be so strong that even the very elect would almost fall for it (Matthew 24:24). "The very elect" refers to the saved Jewish remnant of Israel in the Tribulation.

The Cause of Spiritual Delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12)

This warning of an end time's deception is in the larger context that addresses a wrong conclusion about the status of the Thessalonian church regarding the prophetic timeline. They had been misled to fear that they were in the Tribulation. Paul reminded them that the key indicator of that era would be the revelation of "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," ie: the Antichrist. After this comforting review, Paul warns of that future global deceiver, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders..." will deceive most of the Tribulation era population. The text narrows it to those who "received not the love of the truth," and "who believed not the truth," regarding Jesus. Many have jumped to the unwarranted conclusion that once the Rapture happens, all who are "left behind" will be deceived. However, it is obvious from Revelation 7:9,14 that there will be an innumerable multitude of believing souls from every Jewish tribe and Gentile tongue and nation, as a result of the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. The greatest revival in history will speed alongside the greatest deception in history on parallel rails until the "day of Christ." Just as the Son of God had to "be lifted up" as the object of saving faith, like the brass serpent in the wilderness, this "son of perdition" will be lifted up as the false Christ to draw men to himself "with all power and signs and lying wonders."

Why are they deceived? The rejection of saving truth through Jesus "the way, the truth and the life" will leave them susceptible to faith in the false way, the lie, and death. The grammar of the Greek text shows that the delusion is not a "passive result but an active cause." The Greek phrase, ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, *energian planao* is rendered to cause to wander, lead astray.ⁱ But many have rightly questioned how a righteous God could deceive, for then the deceived could rightly blame Him. According to James 1:13, God cannot entice men to sin. However, there are examples in the Bible where deceptive prophets were allowed by God to confirm Israel's rebellious choices. In 1 Kings 22:20-23, a lying spirit volunteered to persuade wicked King Ahab. When "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh,"ⁱⁱ it was after Pharaoh had hardened his own heart five times. Instead of repeating the same form of the Hebrew word translated hardened, וַיְכַבֵּד, *way-yik-bad*, a sixth time, God used קָיָם, *way-haz-zeq*, which is often translated as "strengthened."ⁱⁱⁱ God strengthened

Pharaoh's heart in his volitional hardness. In his book *The Lie*, author Greg Harris wrote, "He will employ the agents of judgment and destruction against them...they will believe the lie they have chosen even more."^{iv}

In the Tribulation, a spiritual delusion will be welcomed internally "because they received not the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Truth actively rejected creates a spiritual vacuum in which deception is received wholeheartedly. The seventeenth century, Scottish minister, John Eadie said, "They believe the pretensions of this wretched mimic and dethroner of God; his false wonders they take as genuine miracles; they believe the lie. This unparalleled hallucination indicates a mysterious state of mind and society - anti-Christian, anti-theistic, credulous...being imposed upon by hellish mastery and subtlety..."^v

God is righteous to "second the motion" of a rejecting heart at any time. Yet not everyone who has neglected to receive the Gospel has received a judicial hardening from God, nor can it be deduced from scripture, that their last chance to believe ends with the Rapture of the Church. Hardening is a matter of rebelling against the convincing of the Holy Spirit regarding sin, while comfortable with one's own righteousness, and scoffing at coming judgment.^{vi} Imagine how convincing the father of lies will be, unopposed by the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit. It is certain from this text that many who have finally rejected the Gospel will fall under this delusion. In a clear choice, they will believe that the Anti-Christ is actually the Christ and willingly receive his "mark of the beast."^{vii} They will have accepted the "mark of his name." They will have "worshipped his image."^{viii} The only ones exempt from strong delusion are those who "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands..."^{ix} There will be a choice between which "Messiah" to worship. The true Son of God – Jesus or the false Messiah, the "son of perdition," who will come as a miracle worker and man of peace. Most will choose the "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

One would be foolish to gamble with the permanent consequences of rejecting the gospel of salvation in light of an impending mass delusion. Jude upholds the righteous justice of God toward them, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."^x All one has to do to heighten the probability of falling under this strong delusion of damnation, is to keep on hardening one's heart until God "says so be it" and seals one's choice. Jesus said "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4,5).

Parables for Perilous Times

Matthew chapter 24 concludes with a postscript of parables to illustrate how most will be unprepared for His return. The Fig Tree parable covered in lesson 46 made the point that the generation who sees the significant, simultaneous fulfillment of "all these things," is likened to the blossoming of all the trees in the springtime preceding summer and that they will soon see His second coming to earth in power and great glory. The next parables illustrate how most will be unprepared for His return and serve as a warning to both Jewish unbelievers and believers not to be caught off guard.

The Fig Tree (Matthew 24:32-5)

Who is the fig tree? Was Israel becoming a nation in 1948 the fig tree blossoming? Who is "this generation"? The fig tree symbolizes Israel only 1 out of 17 mentions in the Old Testament. That example of Israel as a fig tree is found in Hosea 9:10 and is not a reference to the rebirth of the nation of Israel in the end times, but rather to her birth when God first found her in the wilderness at Sinai. The Apostle Paul identifies Israel as the olive tree and gentile believers as wild olive branches grafted in among them (Romans 11:17-24).

The fig tree analogy is recorded in two of the gospels; Matthew 24:32-35 and Luke 21:29-32. The key is in the phrase “Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth” (Luke 21:29). Do all the trees prophetically symbolize Israel or is it just the fig tree? Neither. When we combine both Gospel accounts, a simple point is being made with this analogy. The generation that sees “all these things,” happening simultaneously, is compared to all the trees blossoming and putting forth leaves simultaneously. It is a sign of a seasonal change. Summer follows new leaves like new leaves follow blossoms. With the same predictability of the seasons found in nature, His second coming to earth will immediately follow the signs in the Great Tribulation.

The fig tree cannot be properly interpreted to represent Israel. Furthermore, the return of Jesus in this chapter cannot refer to the Rapture but rather to His second advent. Therefore, only Israel is in view here and not the Church. To inject the Church and rapture is an imposition on this text and on their contextual understanding. A Rapture interpretation prematurely credits them with the knowledge of scriptures yet unrevealed. These signs are not signs of the Rapture but signs of His second coming. The similarities of the signs to current events are shadows of the Tribulation signs yet to come. When we see the shadows then we can rightly anticipate that since the Rapture precedes the Tribulation that His coming is nearer than when we believed. Maranatha, Our Lord cometh!

Lethal Lethargy of Last Days

Days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-44).

How could they not be expecting Jesus’ second coming? 1. Deception, 2. Distraction. Jesus used the precedent of the pre-deluge pagans of Noah’s day. Most “knew not until the flood came and took them all away” even after 120 years of warning. Jesus began the chapter warning against deception, and He ends the chapter by warning against the lethality of the same lethargy in which “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Peter 3:6). They were focused on their physical to the neglect of their spiritual lives, “they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (24:38). Living for today. The obsession to satisfy sensual desires while resisting the spiritual condition of the soul is compared to the days before the Flood.

“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:5,6,12,13).

“This know also, that **in the last days** perilous times shall come. For men shall be **lovers of their own selves**, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God**” (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

Two workers (24:40,41)

The phrase “one shall be taken and the other left” has also been misinterpreted as the Rapture of Church saints which is found nowhere in the Olivet Discourse. It is easy to see that without an understanding of Israel and the Jewish kingdom context and with only a church paradigm, the similarity to one being “caught up” has been associated with the one being “taken.” The term “rapture” though not a biblical term describes an eschatological event described in the New Testament (1 Thessalonians 4:17). “Rapture” is transliterated from the Latin term “*Rapiemur*”^{xi}, meaning caught up, or caught away used to describe the (Greek - ἀρπάζω harpazō) for “caught up”. A careful contextual examination of the Noah analogy easily discredits this “Rapture” interpretation. The ones being taken in Noah’s flood were being taken away in the flood waters of judgment and drowned. They were not being rescued and safely placed in the ark. In the Rapture, the one’s taken away are caught up and delivered from God’s coming wrath on the earth. Furthermore, the coming of Jesus described in Matthew 24 is literally a fulfillment of (Zechariah 14:4) of the Messiah returning physically

to the Mount of Olives not just in the clouds. Comparing scripture with scripture instead of proof-texting one verse to fit a preconceived notion saves a lot of confusion. The generation of Noah “knew not until.” They had gone to sleep during the 120-year span of Noah’s preaching that global judgment was coming. In the same way, the anticipation of Christ’s return will be drowned out in a time of unprecedented global mega trouble. In this parable 1 out of 2 won’t survive.

Watchful Householder (24:42-44)

“Know this.” The point for the tribulation era believing Jews is to be on alert. The homeowner cannot know what hour the thief will break in. He is to be vigilant and not be surprised. In the same way, the believers in the Tribulation are to be vigilant. Thieves do not make appointments. Our Lord said only the Father knows the specific “hour” of His return. “But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” Jesus will come “in such an hour as ye think not (Mark 13:32). This is consistent with an often-overlooked point that “those days should be shortened” (24:22). We know from Daniel 9:24-27 and from Revelation 11:2,3; 13:5 that the length of the Tribulation is seven years. In mercy the Lord shortens this time period else would “no flesh be saved” (24:22). God the Father will “blow the whistle” as to when. “Therefore be ye also ready.”

The Wise Steward (24:45-51)

The individual who is entrusted with the oversight and management of the property of a ruler is accountable to that ruler. In this case, the household contains the master’s “goods” and employs many “fellow servants.” The head servant is responsible for their work and their welfare (24:45). Jesus would tell Peter within days of His resurrection, to take care of His disciples, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16,17). In this analogy, we see the contrast between a *faithful and wise servant* and an *evil servant*. The latter wrongly assumes “my Lord delayeth his coming.” He mistreats his fellow servants. He becomes obsessed with gluttony and drunkenness just like the worldly society around him. In both cases, the early return of the master exposed what they were “so doing.” The faithful and wise steward was rewarded and the evil steward was fired because he was a “hypocrite” or play actor instead of a manager. The unwise steward will cut off and relegated to punishment and sorrow with the hypocrites (24:51). This seems to indicate, that some who are in positions of authority within the formal body of end time disciples, are not true believers.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23).

Tribulation-era believing Jews are to be faithful to the responsibilities committed to them by their Master/Messiah. How much more must Pre-Tribulation believers in Jesus be alert? He has promised to come and take us away to His Father’s House before that Tribulation comes. (John 14:1-6; 1Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

ⁱ George Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Lexicon of The New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1952) p363

ⁱⁱ Exodus 9:12

ⁱⁱⁱ 2 Chronicles 11:11

^{iv} Gregory H. Harris, *The Lie, and other Biblical Truths About the Coming Tribulation*, Glory Books, NC, 2021, p59

^v John Eadie, *The John Eadie Commentaries, Volume 5, Thessalonians*, Baker Book House Grand Rapids, MI 1979, p288

^{vi} John 16:8

^{vii} Revelation 16:2

^{viii} Revelation 19:20

^{ix} Revelation 20:4

^x Jude 13,14

^{xi} <https://bible.org/question/where-did-term-8216rapture%E2%80%99-come#>