

# Matthew 24:4-8 Commentary

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[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

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Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "**See to it** that no one misleads you: kai apokritheis (APPMSN) o lesous eipen (3SAAI) autois **blepete** (2PPAM) me tis humas planese (3SAAS):

- Jer 29:8 Mk 13:5,6,22 Lu 21:8 2Co 11:13-15 Eph 4:14 5:6 Col 2:8,18 2Th 2:3 2Pe 2:1-3 1Jn 4:1
- **NOTE: SEE THE ENTIRE MATTHEW 24 COMMENTARY ON ONE PAGE**

### JESUS BEGINS TO ANSWER THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS

This passage marks the beginning of Jesus' formal Olivet Discourse, a teaching which is also found in Mark 13 and Luke 21. The Discourse is longest in Matthew (Mt 24:1–25:46), and Luke's account (Mt 21:5–36) contains some independent material.

**John Phillips** writes "Matthew bracketed the Lord's public ministry between two sermons: the sermon on the mount, in which the emphasis was practical; and the Olivet discourse, in which the emphasis was prophetic. In one sermon we read of the rules of the kingdom; in the other we read of the return of the King. Before giving the sermon on the mount, the Lord was baptized; after giving the Olivet discourse, the Lord was buried. Prior to the first sermon He proved that the tempter could not conquer Him; after the last sermon He proved that the tomb could not conquer Him. The Olivet discourse can be divided into two parts: the Lord's end-time prophecy in Matthew 24 and the Lord's end-time parables in Matthew 25. The prophecy deals with the course of this age, and the parable with the climax of this age. The prophecy is concerned with God's judicial dealings with mankind; the parables deal with God's judgmental dealings with mankind. Both prophecy and parables are concerned with the last days as they affect the Jews, the Gentile nations, and the church." (Exploring the Gospel of Matthew)

### INTERPRETATIONS OF Matthew 24:4-14

There is clearly not a consensus on how to interpret Mt 24:4-14 even among those who are conservative and interpret the Scripture literally. Here is a brief survey of the various scenarios, but it is given with a caveat that the "positions" regarding these individual's interpretation is often somewhat difficult to determine from their writings (e.g., John MacArthur is a case in point as described below). The more I study Mt 24:4-14, the more I am convinced one needs to be humble, prayerful and willing to avoid being too dogmatic. The important point is that these are general signs, but when one arrives at Mt 24:15, Jesus gives a very specific sign about which there should be no disagreement or confusion (assuming one does not interpret this sign as having been fulfilled in the past).

**(1) Interpretation of Mt 24:4-14** as a description of the general events of the Church Age from Jesus' day leading up to the last seven year period (aka **Daniel's Seventieth Week**) referred to as "the Tribulation."

**John Walvoord** - Taken as a whole, the opening section, ending with Matthew 24:14, itemizes general signs, events, and situations which mark the progress of the age, and, with growing intensity, indicate that the end of the age is approaching. These signs, however, by their very characteristics and because they have occurred throughout the present age, do not constitute a direct answer to the question of "the sign" of the coming of the Lord....Other premillennial interpreters, however,

prefer to take **Matthew 24:4-14** as a unit, describing the general characteristics of the age leading up to the end... If **Matthew 24:4-14** deals with general signs, then Mt 24:15-26 may be considered as specific signs. The Second Coming of Christ is revealed in Mt 24:27-31, which should be compared with the more detailed prophecy of Revelation 19:11-21. In **Matthew 24:4-14, at least nine major characteristics of this general period are described**....In general, these signs have been at least partially fulfilled in the present age and have characterized the period between the first and Second Coming of Christ. They should be understood as general signs rather than specific signs that the end is near. As stated in Mt 24:8, these are the beginning rather than the end of the sorrows which characterize the close of the age. ([24. The Signs of the End of the Age](#))

**Stuart Weber** - Jesus first warned, in general terms (24:4–14), of several characteristics of the period of time before he would return. There would be counterfeit messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes martyrs, false prophets, increasing evil, and the preaching of the gospel worldwide. (Holman New Testament Commentary)

**William Hendricksen** commenting on Mt 24:4-12 writes "Jesus now proceeds to correct their mistaken inference. He shows them that "not everything that seems to be a sign of the end of the world is in reality such a sign." In other words, there are also signs which only in a very general sense are deserving of that name. Whenever these separate happenings are interpreted as being infallible indications that the end of the age is immediately in sight, they deserve the name "mistaken signs." (Hendricksen, William; Kistemaker, Simon J., Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, Baker, 1953-2001)

**John MacArthur** - The Twelve disciples "supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11), and the events of the past few days had confirmed that idea even more firmly in their minds. They had long believed that Jesus was the Messiah and that John the Baptist was His prophesied forerunner. The acclaim of the crowds at Jesus' triumphal entry, at His cleansing the Temple, at His rebuking the religious leaders, as well as at His predicting the destruction of the Temple all combined to make them think He would soon manifest His messianic glory, subdue the nations that would rise up against Him, and establish His eternal kingdom. They had been unable to accept His numerous predictions that He would first have to suffer, die, and be raised up. The disciples thought that Jesus' preaching, healing, comforting, rendering judgment, and restoring Israel would occur at the same general time in history. Like the Old Testament prophets who spoke of the Messiah, they saw only a single coming, comprised of a sequence of events (See, e.g. Isa. 61:1–11)....In Mt 24:4–14 Jesus foretold six signs of His coming again that would be like birth pains, which come at the very end of a pregnancy and with increasing rapidity and severity until the child is born. Now (**Ed**: Referring to Mt 24:15) He predicts the sign that will trigger those birth pains. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

- **Comment:** It can be difficult to interpret where an expositor stands in regard to the interpretation of Matthew 24:4-15, I need to confess that I previously had Dr MacArthur listed under "**Interpretation #4**" (see below) but I now think that was incorrect based on a study of his sermons on Luke 21. (e.g. see his sermon on [Luke 21:9-11 The World in Conflict and Distress](#) in which he says "*Jesus is saying these are just the birth pains. These are just the very early birth pains and they've been going on for 2,000 years and have been escalating. And if you want to see what they're going to look like at the very end just before the event then you read Revelation 6 through 19.*" This is very similar to Dr Walvoord's comments on Mt 24:4-14 that "*these signs have been at least partially fulfilled in the present age and have characterized the period between the first and Second Coming of Christ. They should be understood as general signs rather than specific signs that the end is near.*"

**Ray Stedman** - **From Mt 24:5-14 he clearly indicates that there would be a rather long, indeterminate period before the end of the age would begin.** These men (Jesus' disciples) knew from the prophet Daniel that the end of the age would not be a single spectacular event but a series of events, covering several years. The Lord begins carefully to trace the age which they could not see, the parenthesis of time in which we now live....He is most emphatically not giving so-called "**signs of the times**" here. To the contrary, he repeatedly indicates that he is tracing the age. For instance, he says in Mt 24:6, "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet." Therefore, despite the commentators who insist that "wars and rumors of wars" are a sign of the near approach of the end, our Lord says quite otherwise. In Mt 24:8 he adds, "...all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs." He is saying, in effect, "These events are but leading up to the end of the age about which are asking." Then, finally, in Mt 24:14, after listing a long series of events, he says, "and then the end will come." It is at this point that he at last begins to answer directly the disciples' question, "**What will be the sign...of the close of the age?**" From Mt 24:15 through Mt 24:31, He gives in detail the events that will occur during the end-of-the-age." ([The Age of Confusion - Matthew 24:4-14](#))

(2) **Interpretation of Mt 24:4-8 as a description of general events of the Church Age and then Mt 24:9-14 as describing the last 7 years of Daniel's Seventieth Week.**

**H A Ironside** - "In Mt 24:4-8 Matthew deals particularly with the characteristics of the entire present age until Christ returns. Then in Mt 24:9-14 he emphasizes the signs of the last days. Mt 24:15 brings in the beginning of the great tribulation, as

predicted also in Daniel 12:11. Mt 24:16-28 give details of that time of trouble. Mt 24:29-31 bring us to the end of the age and the coming of the Son of Man. The rest of the chapter gives illustrations and admonitions, all based on what has gone before." ([Matthew 24 Commentary - Ironside's Notes](#))

**Lewis S Chafer** according to Dwight Pentecost says "Chafer holds that Matthew 24:4-8 describes events of the present church age, which take place prior to the beginning of the seventieth week and are called "the beginning of sorrows," and Mt 24:9-26 describe the tribulation period. He says of Mt 24:4-8: These events...do not constitute a sign of the end of the Jewish age... though they are the characteristics of the unforeseen intervening or intercalary age...This extended Scripture [Matthew 24:9-26] presents Christ's own message to Israel regarding the great tribulation.

**Tony Garland** on Mt 24:4-8 - Jesus also warned against deception: Don't interpret the general characteristics of the interadvent age (wars, rumors of wars, false Messiahs, famines, pestilences, earthquakes) as an indication that the end has come. These are just the "beginning of sorrows" or birth pangs - the much more intense time of "delivery" is yet to come. Don't be "Christian Littles" running around crying "the sky is falling!"

**Kay Arthur** - When He describes **the end** (ED: Mt 24:6) Jesus says **THEN** they are going to deliver you up to persecution (Mt 24:9). The **Abomination of Desolation standing in the Holy Place** (Mt 24:15) parallels the end time event when Jews will be delivered up to tribulation. So when the Abomination of Desolation stands in the Holy Place, the Jews are to flee to the mountains (Mt 24:16ff) because they are going to be delivered up (Mt 24:9)....So Jesus is saying to the Jews to run away. The following two verses seem to describe parallel events: Mt 24:9: "**Then they will deliver you to tribulation.**" Mt 24:15 "**When you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION .. standing in the holy place**" So Jesus is showing the Jews what is leading up to HIS COMING and what is leading up to THE END.

**J Vernon McGee** - I believe that our Lord, up there on the Mount of Olives, looked down to the end of the age and to the Great Tribulation Period, but that at the beginning of His discourse, He bridged the gap by giving us a picture of the present age of the church. I recognize that there are many good Bible teachers, much better than I am, who take the position that in Mt 24:5-8 He is speaking of the Tribulation Period, also; so if you want to disagree with me, you will be in very good company. However, it is my view that our Lord is not referring to the Great Tribulation until we reach Mt 24:9. (Thru the Bible commentary)

### (3) Interpretation of Mt 24:4-8 as a description of events in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week

**Louis Barbieri, Jr** - In this section (Mt. 24:4-8) He described the first half of the seven-year period preceding His Second Coming. That period is called the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Da 9:27). (However, some premillenarians hold that Christ in Mt. 24:4-8 spoke of general signs in the present Church Age and that the time of trouble begins at Mt 24:9 [Pentecost, Ironside, et al]. Others [Walvoord] hold that Christ spoke of general signs in Mt 24:4-14, with the Tribulation beginning at Mt 24:15.) The events described in Mt 24:4-8 correspond somewhat to the seven seals in Revelation 6. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Dwight Pentecost** also seems to interpret Mt 24:4-8 as the first half of the Seven Year Tribulation and Mt 24:9 as marking the beginning of the last half of the Tribulation. In his book BORROW [Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology](#), Pentecost writes "There seems to be evidence to support the view that the first half of the week ("Daniel's 70th Week") is described in Mt 24:4-8. The parallelism between Mt 24:4-8 and Revelation 6:1-17 seems to indicate that the first half of the tribulation is here described....The word "**then**" in Mt 24:9 seems to introduce the great persecutions against Israel that were promised them."

### (4) Interpretation of all of the events in Mt 24:4-14 as occurring in the seven year tribulation.

**Michael G Vanlaningham** - Mt 24:4-14 summarize the entirety of the tribulation period including its end (v. 14). The events of vv. 4-8 are part of the seal judgments early in the tribulation. See the comments on Rev 6:9-11....Mt 24:9-14. The events in this paragraph describe conditions that arise later in the tribulation period, with then (Mt 24:9) signaling this transition...Mt 24:15-16. Verse 15 shifts from the end of the tribulation described in Mt 24:14 to consider one of the key signs in the middle of the tribulation period. Moody Bible Commentary)

**Warren Wiersbe** - Matthew 24:1-44 indicates that our Lord was discussing events that will take place on earth during the time of **Tribulation**. (See Mt. 24:8, where "birth-pangs" are a symbol of the **Tribulation**; and see also Mt 24:21, 29). After the church has been suddenly taken out of the world, there will be a period of "peace and safety" (1Th 5:1-4) followed by a time of terrible suffering. Many Bible scholars believe this period will last seven years (Da 9:24-27). It is this period of "**Tribulation**" that Jesus described in the Olivet Discourse. At the end of that period, Jesus will return to the earth, defeat His foes, and establish the promised kingdom.

**Thomas Constable** - The Jews believed that a seven-year period of time will immediately precede Messiah's coming to rule the world.

"Our Rabbis taught: In the seven-year cycle at the end of which the son of David will come . . . at the conclusion of the septennate the son of David will come."

"The idea became entrenched that the coming of the Messiah will be preceded by greatly increased suffering . . . This will last seven years. And then, unexpectedly, the Messiah will come."

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**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** - Daniel's seventieth week has two clearly marked halves (Dan 9:27). There is an amazing correspondence between the order of the seals in Rev 6 and the order of events in Mt 24:4-14. Thus these verses must be placed in the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation, after the Church has been raptured. 5. Saying, I am Christ (cf. Rev 6:1, 2; first seal: Antichrist). Though such tendencies may develop during the church age (I Jn 4:3), the specific reference is to the final Antichrist and his associates. There is no record of any person's claiming to be Christ between A.D. 30 and 70. 6. Wars and rumors of wars (cf. Rev 6:3, 4; second seal: warfare). 7. Famines (cf. Rev 6:5, 6 third seal: famine). Pestilences and earthquakes (Cf. Rev 6:7, 8; fourth seal: death for one-fourth of the earth). 8. Beginning of sorrows. Literally, of birthpains, suggesting the travail shortly to be followed by a happier day. 9. Shall kill you (cf. Rev 6:9-11; fifth seal: martyrs). 11. Many false prophets . . . shall deceive many. Cf. 2Thess 2:8-12. 12. The love of many shall wax cold. The severity of these calamities will cause the majority of Israel to abandon any pretense of piety. 13. But the distinguishing mark of the saved Jewish remnant will be their enduring in faith to the end. 14. Gospel of the kingdom. The good news of salvation in the Messiah, with the emphasis that the Messianic kingdom is about to be established. This message will go into all the world during the Tribulation through the efforts of the two witnesses (Rev 11:3-12) and the sealed remnant of Israel (Rev 7).

**(5) Interpretation** of the events in Mt 24:4-14 as fulfilled in the past. These commentators generally interpret Mt 24:15 as fulfilled in the past. And they also interpret the phrase **"the end"** as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, not a reference to the **end of the age** (see context = Mt 24:3-note).

**R. T. France** (The Gospel of Matthew - NICNT) - "(Comment on Mt 24:6) The period from the 30s to the 60s (**Ed**: Speaking of 30-60 AD) was relatively peaceful in the Roman empire as a whole, but in the east there were wars with Parthia in and after AD 36, and a more local war between Antipas and the Nabatean king Aretas in which the Romans became involved in AD 36–37...the disciples must not get things out of perspective, or be panicked into imagining that **"the end"** is imminent (**Ed**: For France **"the end"** is the destruction of the Temple)...The question which Jesus is here answering was about when the temple would be destroyed, and that is the **"end"** most naturally understood here....(Comment on Mt 24:7) Such historical records as we have for the first century mention **earthquakes** in Asia Minor in AD 61 and in Italy in AD 62, in Jerusalem in AD 67, and another serious earthquake at an unspecified earlier date in Palestine. A widespread **famine** around AD 46 is mentioned in Acts 11:28....(Comment on Mt 24:8) **In later rabbinic literature the phrase "the labor pain (always singular) of the Messiah" comes to be used almost as a technical term for the period of suffering preceding the Messiah's coming**...It gains its sense from the context, and the context here is of the suffering of Jerusalem which will be more fully described in Mt 24:15–22....(Comment on Mt 24:13) whoever stands firm throughout the historical process which will culminate in the destruction of the Temple will be saved. in the destruction of the temple will be saved. But it is not easy to see what sort of **"salvation"** fits that scenario. (**Ed**: Could it be that it is difficult to see because the interpretation is incorrect?)....(Comment on Mt 24:14) This saying ("The gospel...preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations") comes unexpectedly here, not only because it provides a note of hope and triumph in an otherwise threatening context, but also because, like Mt 26:13, it already envisages a world-wide proclamation of the good news. (**Ed**: France is forced to jettison for a moment his historical past fulfillment stance writing)...the implication seems to be that the **"end"** will not come until the proclamation has already reached **"all over the world."**" (Bolding added)

**D A Carson** - all things (vv. 5–7) are signs that Jesus is coming back, and they all will be manifest before the generation Jesus was addressing had died. (Referring to those who lived in the first century). (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**David Platt** (who interprets the abomination of Mt 24:15 as the Roman army in 70AD) - Jesus begins talking about true and false signs pointing to Jerusalem's destruction in Mt 24:4-14. (Christ Centered Exposition)

**Albert Barnes** - It is recorded in the history of Rome that violent agitations prevailed in the Roman empire previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.

**David L Turner** is somewhat of a hybrid - Matthew 24:4–14 should be viewed as a summation of the difficulties the church will face in its early days before AD 70—and indeed throughout its existence until Jesus returns (Blomberg 1992:356–357; Hagner 1995:693–694). (Cornerstone biblical commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark)

As **Hiebert** says "Instead of giving them the **sign** they had requested, Jesus began by alerting them to **false signs**." ([The Gospel of Mark- An Expositional Commentary](#))

As **John MacArthur** says "The answer **Jesus** gave is the longest answer (**Ed**: 97 verses in Mt 24-25) given to any question asked in the New Testament, and its truths are absolutely essential for understanding His return and the amazing events associated with it. It is the revelation of our Lord, directly from His own lips, about His return to earth in glory and power (Mt 24:30)."

Jesus' first words are a warning echo a warning from the first sermon (Mt 7:15-23; cf. Mt 18:12-14).

**Ray Stedman** says Jesus "Big Point" is "Don't Be Fooled! - In our understandable haste to come to the great events He predicts for the future, let us not miss the heavy emphasis He makes in this opening word. It is the dominant note of this whole discourse. **The age will be a time of great uncertainty as to the meaning of events.**

**Ed comment**: Case in point - one of the finest expositors of our day Dr John MacArthur fell prey to this temptation to read the **signs of the times** -- He was preaching on [Is the Doom of the World Near?](#) in 1972 when the 7 member European Union was planning on adding 3 more members to give it a total of 10. This rightly reminded him of Daniel's prophecy of a coming 10 nation confederacy (cf Da 7:24-note) and prompted this comment -

From The Los Angeles Examiner, are you ready for this shock? Los Angeles Examiner, October 29th, the last - 1971, listen. *"The British decision to join the common market has brought Western Europe to the threshold of its strongest union since the nations involved were tied together as part of the Roman Empire 15 centuries ago."* God said the Roman Empire would be revived in the end days. You are seeing it happen. ([Ref](#))

Don't take this wrong - I love Dr MacArthur's verse by verse expository teaching. My point is that if someone as competent as Dr MacArthur is vulnerable to potentially misinterpret the **signs of the times**, then **ALL** of us are potentially in danger of misreading the **signs of the times**. I know because I have been guilty of doing so! As someone once wisely cautioned me, don't obtain your eschatology from the newspaper!

**Stedman** continues "It will be frightfully easy to misinterpret and therefore be misled. The phrase "lead astray" forms the structure around which the whole message is built. He used it again in Mt 24:5...again in Mt 24:11...Once again in Mt 24:24...Because of this continuing possibility, the Lord's exhortation throughout the message is, "**Watch!**", i.e., keep your eyes open. Evaluate! Test! Try the spirits! Bring everything to test that you might understand the true character of movements and pressures, for the predominant note of the age will be one of **deceit and confusion**. Then he proceeds to show to these men that they are already confused in their thinking that the end of the age lies immediately ahead. From Mt 24:5 through Mt 24:14 he clearly indicates that there would be a rather long, indeterminate period before the end of the age would begin (**Ed**: Some see the long age in Mt 24:5-8, but then see Mt 24:9-14 as occurring at the end of the age). These men knew from the prophet Daniel that the end of the age would not be a single spectacular event but a series of events, covering several years (**Ed**: I presume Pastor Stedman is referring here to **Daniel's Seventieth Week**). The Lord begins carefully to trace the age which they could not see, the parenthesis of time in which we now live. If we note carefully the time phrases He employs to lead up to the answer to the disciples' question we shall have no difficulty with this section. He is most emphatically not giving so-called "**signs of the times**" here. To the contrary, he repeatedly indicates that He is tracing the age. For instance, he says in Mt 24:6, "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet." ([The Age of Confusion - Matthew 24:4-14](#))

**See to it** (look, beware, take care, take heed) ([991](#))(**blepo**) basically means to have sight, to see, to look at, then to observe, to discern, to perceive with the eye, and frequently implies special contemplation (e.g., often in the sense of "keep your eyes open," or "beware".) Vine adds that **blepo** expresses "a more intentional, earnest contemplation. In Lk 6:41 = of beholding the mote in a brother's eye; Lk 24:12 = of beholding the linen clothes in the empty tomb. Acts 1:9 = of the gaze of the disciples when the Lord ascended."



Notice that Jesus does not give us a *suggestion* but uses the **present imperative** which means we are to make this our habitual practice, something possible only as we yield to the filling and empowering of the Spirit of Jesus. The **Amplified Version** reads "Be careful that no one misleads you [deceiving you and leading you into error]."

All three synoptic Gospels begin with the warning to not be misled (Mt 24:4, Mk 13:5, Luke 21:8) so clearly Jesus' top priority is to avoid deception. But by what would they be misled? Luke's version has Lk 21:8 "See to it that you be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, '**The time is at hand**'; **do not go after them**." So they are not only claiming they are Messiah but also claiming they know the time is at hand. A desire to know or predict the future is an inherent curiosity of most people and presumably it is to this curiosity that these false Messiah's make their appeal.

**James Montgomery Boice** - the followers of Christ are not to be deceived by false teaching on this subject (Ed: End Times Prophecy): "The end is still to come" (The Gospel of Matthew, Baker, 2001)

We all have an inherent desire to know about the future, especially end times prophecy. Jesus is warning that there would be individuals who would seek to take advantage of this propensity for prophecy and would deceive them and in so doing would turn them aside from the simple teaching of the Gospel.

As an aside, there is a tendency in the younger evangelical church to shy away from serious teaching on Bible prophecy ("too divisive," "too confusing," "no one can know who has the correct interpretation," and the list goes on). Beloved, this is a deadly deficiency in the modern church. Why would I say that? Think about it. If conservative, orthodox leaders fail to teach on this subject, the "sheep" are wide open to the plethora of prophetic speculations promulgated on the internet, airways and books. God gave us the Bible to reveal, not to conceal and confuse. God gave us prophecy to stabilize our faith not to satisfy our curiosity. Bible prophecy is not easy to discern, but it is not impossible to know. That said, **see discussion of Bible Prophecy** which includes a section on why it should be studied.

**Misleads** (deceives) (4105)(**planao** from **plane** which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word *planet*) means to cause one to wander (cf first use in NT of "straying" sheep = Mt 18:12-13) or to go astray from a specific way. To cause someone to hold a wrong view and thus be mistaken. To delude or cause one to wander from the Truth of God's Word. In Mt 22:29 Jesus used **planao** to refute the false belief of His detractors declaring "You are **mistaken** (NIV = in error; NET = deceived; ESV = wrong), not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God."

**Planao** is in the subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility (implying that we might be misled)!

So the question arises as to how these individuals will be able to lead others astray. It is their claim that they are the Messiah and this claim gives authority and authenticity to whatever they say. **And what do they say that misleads others?** Matthew and Mark do not directly state what it is these false Messiahs say. Luke however does give us a clue for he records they claim "**The time is at hand**." (Lk 21:8) Does this refer to the time of the Temple destruction or the time of the end? It is hard to say for sure. The point is that they mislead others with their claims of knowledge of future events.

Notice also that in His initial reply, Jesus does not specifically address disciples' three questions, but instead commands them to not be misled, explaining that there will be **many** who will claim to be the Messiah and they will mislead **many** (not a few but many)! And to misinterpret Matthew 24:15ff is tantamount to misleading **many** readers who choose to read a commentary, rather than choosing for themselves to observe the words of Jesus and interpret them as one would normal, plain spoken language, not looking for humanistic hidden meanings, but for Spirit revealed truth. **Indeed, if you are reading these notes, you might pause for a moment and ask the Father that He would allow His Spirit to guide you into all the truth of Jesus' last words to His disciples (including us) and to edify and equip your heart and mind that you might grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.**

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**False Predictions** - Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? — Matthew 24:3 - News that a solar eclipse would take place on July 22, 2009, brought an alarming prediction. It was predicted that the eclipse would sufficiently affect gravitational pull, causing tectonic plates to "pop a seam," resulting in a sizable earthquake and a subsequent devastating tsunami in Japan. The US Geological Survey responded that no scientists "have ever predicted a major earthquake. They do not know how, and they do not expect to know how, anytime in the foreseeable future."

There have also been many false predictions about the date of Christ's second coming—despite our Lord's emphatic words: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Mt. 24:36). Christ told His followers that instead of trying to predict the date of His return, they should "watch" (Mt 24:42) and "be ready" (Mt 24:44).

Peter warned, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." Then he added: "What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives" (2 Peter 3:10-11NIV).

Striving to live for God—that's what Jesus wants us to focus our energy on while we wait for that "blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13-note).

When someone says, "I can discern  
Exactly when Christ will return,"  
Don't be deceived or led astray—  
The Lord said we can't know the day. —Sper

**Look for Christ's return, and you'll live for Christ's glory.**

**Matthew 24:5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many: polloi gar eleusontai (3PFMI) epi to onomati mou legontes (PAPMPN) ego eimi (1SPAI) o Christos kai pollous planesousin (3PFAI):**

**Amplified** For many will come in (on the strength of) My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying, I am the Christ (the Messiah), and they will lead many astray.

**ESV** For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

**NIV** For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

**NLT** for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many.

- Mt 24:11,24 Jer 14:14 23:21,25 John 5:43 Ac 5:36,37 8:9,10 Rev 13:8
- **NOTE: SEE THE ENTIRE MATTHEW 24 COMMENTARY ON ONE PAGE**

### **THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SIGNS TO WATCH FOR**

**Synoptic Parallels:** Both Mark and Luke have only "I Am" (He is added by translators), while Matthew has "I am the Christ (Messiah)."

Luke 21:8-note And He said, "**See to it** (present imperative) that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am [He],' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

Mark 13:5-6 And Jesus began to say to them, "**See to it** (present imperative) that no one misleads you. 6 "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am [He]!' and will mislead many.

**For (gar) - term of explanation** - What is Jesus explaining? As alluded to above, Jesus is explaining how one might be misled into believing claims such as "We are at the end of this age."

As Jesus goes on to explain, false Messiahs, wars and rumors of wars do not signal the end of this age. These things occurred in Jesus' day and are still operative 2000 years later which is a further indication of that they do not herald the end. As Jesus later makes very clear that of "that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." (Mt 24:36) He will give some signs that will signal the end of the age is near, but Mt 24:4-7 are "non-signs."

### **FALSE MESSIAHS**

**Many...many** - Not just one or two but '**many**!' As described in more detail below false Messiahs have been always been on the scene. The sobering truth of this prophecy is that many would come and sadly many would be deceived.

Jesus warns that deceivers, deception, false Christianity will flourish. Josephus recorded that after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there were so many people claiming to be the Messiah, that Pilate was executing almost one per day!

Jesus' warning brings to mind the false prophecies of Joseph Smith [reference](#) and the multitudes ensnared in Mormonism (~4.5 million) having been deceived by a false Gospel and another Jesus (Gal 1:7-8-note) with the result that many will be lost forever unless they hear and receive the true Gospel of Jesus Christ (Ro 1:16-17, Eph 2:8-9, Ro 10:9-10, Acts 16:31, et al).

Some like **Louis Barbieri** who believes Mt 24:4-8 is a description of the first half of the tribulation (A VIEW I DO NOT AGREE WITH BECAUSE ALL OF THESE THINGS JESUS WARNS ABOUT HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR 2000 YEARS!) interprets Mt 24:4-5 as parallel to Rev 6:1-2 (1st seal) where the Antichrist is the ultimate "false Christ." **Barbieri** then sees Rev 6:3-4 (2nd seal) as parallel to Mt 24:6, "(b) wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6; cf. Rev. 6:3-4; the second seal is warfare) in which nations will rise up against



each other on a global scale (Matt. 24:7a), and (c) unusual disturbances in nature including famines (v. 7b; cf. Rev. 6:5–6; the third seal is famine; the fourth and fifth seals are death and martyrdom [Rev. 6:7–11]) and earthquakes (Matt. 24:7b; cf. Rev. 6:12–14; the sixth seal is an earthquake). These things, Jesus said, will be the beginning of birth pains. As a pregnant woman's birth pains indicate that her child will soon be born, so these universal conflicts and catastrophes will mean the end of this interadvent Age is near." (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**In my Name** - This is more literally *upon or on My Name*, "that is, on the strength of; resting their claims on the Name Messiah." (Vincent) They are personally claiming to be the Messiah.

**Blomberg** - "In my name" means they aim to usurp Jesus' place." (New American Commentary)

**Warren Wiersbe** on I am the Christ (Messiah) - The Jews have often been led astray by false prophets and false Christs. The rider on the white horse in Revelation 6:1–2 [note](#) is the Antichrist, that final world dictator who will lead the nations astray. He will begin his career as a peacemaker, signing a (7 year) covenant with Israel to protect her from her enemies (Daniel 9:27-note) (but he breaks the covenant at 3.5 years unleashing his fury against the Jews and Christians during the 3.5 year Great Tribulation in Mt 24:21-note = the Time of Jacob's Distress in Jer 30:7-note = a Time of Distress in Da 12:1-note). Israel will welcome this man as their great benefactor (John 5:43). (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**I am (ego eimi)** - This Greek phrase is the well known "ego eimi" which is the Name Jehovah uses of Himself in the Septuagint of Ex 3:14

"And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" The English version of the Septuagint is "And God said to Moses, "I am The One Who Is." And he said, "Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, 'The One Who Is has sent me to you.'" (Comment: It follows that these false Messiahs are in essence saying they are "Yahweh!")

As noted above both Luke and Mark omit "the Christ," but the Name "I Am" still reflects their claim to be divine.

**Hiebert** - The first person after the time of Jesus Christ definitely known to have claimed to be the Messiah was Bar Kokhba, the leader of the last great Jewish revolt in A.D. 132. ([Ibid](#))

**Simon bar Kokhba** ([Hebrew](#): שמעון בר כוכבא; died 135 CE), born **Simon ben Kosevah**, was the leader of what is known as the [Bar Kokhba revolt](#) against the [Roman Empire](#) in 132 [CE](#), establishing an independent Jewish state which he ruled for three years as [Nasi](#) ("Prince"). His state was conquered by the Romans in 135 following a two and half-year war.<sup>[a]</sup> The Jewish sage [Rabbi Akiva](#) indulged the possibility that Simon could be the [Jewish messiah](#), and gave him the surname "Bar Kokhba" meaning "Son of the Star" in [Aramaic](#), from the [Star Prophecy](#) verse from Numbers 24:17: "There shall come a star out of [Jacob](#)". The name [Bar Kokhba](#) does not appear in the [Talmud](#) but in ecclesiastical sources. [Rabbinical writers](#) subsequent to Rabbi Akiva did not share Rabbi Akiva's estimation of ben Kosiba. Akiva's disciple, Yose ben Halaphta, in the [Seder 'Olam](#) (chapter 30) called him "bar Koziba" (בר כוזיבא), meaning, "son of the lie".

Some are names we recognize from the news include (1) [Sun Myung Moon](#): considered within the Unification Church as the Messiah and the second coming of Christ. (2) [Jim Jones](#): claimed to be the reincarnation of Jesus, Buddha, Vladimir Lenin, and Father Divine prior to leading a mass suicide of his followers. (3) [Marshall Applewhite](#): claimed to be Jesus and the Son of God prior to leading his Heaven's Gate cult mass suicide to rendezvous with a space ship hiding behind the comet Hale-Bopp. (4) [David Koresh](#): leader of the Branch Davidian religious sect in Waco, Texas. Claimed to be "the Son of God, the Lamb."

Below are links to a list of people who have been said to be [a messiah](#), either by themselves or by their followers. The list is divided into categories, which are sorted according to date of birth (where known).

1. [Jewish messiah claimants](#) (See [another more in depth article](#))
2. [Christian messiah claimants](#)
3. [Muslim messiah claimants](#)
4. [Other or combination messiah claimants](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that there will be false christs in the end times?](#)
- [Who is Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda? Is Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda the antichrist? \(See Video\)](#)
- [The Christ of the New Age Movement by Ron Rhodes](#)

**I am** (1510)(**eimi**) is a verb which basically expresses being and so means "to be," "to exist," "to happen" or "to be present." and is one of the most common verbs in the NT (2462x in all its conjugations in 2098 verses; the exact form **eimi** is found 287 verses - see below). Strictly speaking **eimi** is the first person singular present tense, indicative mood; a prolonged form of a primary and defective verb. Because **eimi** is used so frequently in such a variety of contexts, the following discussion is at best **asimple summary** of the manifold uses of **eimi**. Click **here** and scroll down to read **Thayer's** full discussion of **eimi**.

**Eimí** is the usual verb of existence, meaning to be or to have existence. For example, in Jn 1:1**eimi** is used 3 times all in the imperfect tense (Gk = "en") to describe the Word's (Jesus') continual existence, continual presence with His Father and continual existence as God.

**Ego eimi** - Jesus Himself used **ego eimi** to express His eternal self-existence (without beginning, without end) in Jn 8:58 = ""Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I am**." He was saying He was Yahweh (I Am the One Who Is). Jesus is clearly claiming that He is God! The Jehovah's Witness New World Translation (2013) translates Jn 8:58 incorrectly as "I have been" which Greek scholars say is absolutely incorrect! Compare other "**I Am**" statements by Jesus = Jn 4:26, 8:24, 28, 13:19, 18:5, 6 ["they drew back and fell to the ground!" = His Name "I Am" literally knocked an entire band of from 300-600 soldiers backward abruptly and hard onto the ground! His Name is indeed powerful!], Jn 18:8. see similar use in Ex 3:14 above). In Ge 17:1 God addresses Abram declaring "I am (**ego eimi**) God" (cp similar uses in Ge 26:24, 31:13, 46:3, Ex 3:6, 7:5, 8:18, 14:4, 18, 20:2, 29:46, etc). Note that there are about 174 uses of "**ego eimi**" in the Septuagint and 48 uses in the NT, but not all uses refer to God (e.g., Mt 14:27). There are 24 uses of **ego eimi** in John's Gospel and most do refer to the Messiah. E.g., in the first occurrence, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman "**I Am**" (**ego eimi**) (Jn 4:26) when she made a reference to the Messiah (Jn 4:25). In fact **ego eimi** introduces His great "I am" statements in John = "I am"..."the bread of life" (Jn 6:35, 41, 48, 51), "the Light of the world," (Jn 8:12), "the door" (Jn 10:7, 9), "the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11, 14), "the resurrection and the life," (Jn 11:25), "the Way and the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6); "the true Vine" (Jn 15:1, 5). At Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road Jesus told him "I am (**ego eimi**) Jesus Whom you are persecuting." (Acts 9:5). In the final use of **ego eimi** in Scripture Jesus affirms "**I am** the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." (Rev 22:16)

**Friberg** summarizes **eimi**:

#### **I. as a predicate "be," relating to what exists;**

- (1) to denote God's existence (Heb 11.6); the one who is, exists (Rev 1.4)
- (2) to denote Christ's self-designation of Himself = I am (Jn 8.58)
- (3) to denote temporal existence live (Mt 23.30, "before the world **was**" = Jn 17:5)
- (4) to denote a sojourn in a place stay, reside (Mt 2.13)
- (5) to denote what happens, such as phenomena and events be, take place, occur, happen (Jn 9.16)
- (6) with indications of time (Jn 4.6b)
- (7) of what is on the scene (Mk 8.1) or available (Acts 7.12)
- (8) impersonally *estin* followed by an infinitive = it is possible (Heb 9.5)

#### **II. as a copulative verb;**

- (1) linking subject to predicate (Mk 3.11);
- (2) introducing an explanation or equivalence in another language *tou/tv estin* and *o [estin* that is, which means (Mt 27.46; Mk 3.17);
- (3) constructed with a variety of adverbs, prepositions, nouns, etc., translated according to the context

**Louw-Nida** lists 8 nuances of **eimi**:

1. be, exist (Mt 11:29);
2. be identical, exact correspondence (Mk 3:11; 1Jn 2:22, 25);
3. exist, without contingency (Heb 11:6);
4. happen, occur (Mk 14:2);
5. be in a place (Lk 2:49);
6. be possible (Heb 9:5);

7. belong to a particular class (Lk 19:2; Jn 1:1);

8. represent, stand for (Gal 4:25),

Note there is a multitude of forms for this verb as is common for copulative verbs in many languages. A little study in a grammar for the time, aspect, and action markers will bear much fruit your Greek reading.

**Eimi** - 287 verses (Note these are the uses of the actual verb **eimi**, not the manifold related conjugations of the basic verb) -

- Mt 1:19, 23; 2:13, 15; 3:11; 7:11, 13f; 8:8f; 9:13; 11:29; 12:7, 34; 16:15, 22; 18:20; 19:5, 14; 20:15; 22:32; 23:30; 24:3, 5; 26:24; 27:24, 43; 28:20;
- Mk 1:7, 45; 3:17; 5:18, 21, 25, 41; 8:3, 27, 29; 9:10, 21; 10:8, 14; 11:32; 12:42; 13:6, 33; 14:62; 15:7, 46;
- Lk 1:7, 18f, 80; 2:26; 3:5, 16, 23; 4:16; 5:8; 7:6, 8, 41; 8:2, 9, 38, 40, 42; 9:18, 20, 32; 10:39; 12:15; 13:28; 14:8; 15:19, 21, 31; 18:2, 11, 16; 19:22; 20:36; 21:7f; 22:3, 27, 33, 49, 58, 70; 23:7f, 12, 15;
- John 1:15, 20f, 24, 27, 30, 41, 46f; 2:9; 3:21, 24, 27f; 4:9, 26; 6:35, 41, 48, 51, 65; 7:28f, 33f, 36, 50; 8:12, 16, 18, 23f, 28, 58; 9:5, 9, 18, 24; 10:7, 9, 11, 14, 33f, 36; 11:21, 25, 32, 39, 51; 12:26; 13:13, 19, 33; 14:3, 6, 9; 15:1, 5, 27; 16:32; 17:11, 14, 16, 24; 18:5f, 8, 17, 25f, 35, 37; 19:11, 21, 38, 41; 20:7;
- Acts 2:12; 3:10; 4:13, 36; 7:44; 9:2, 5; 10:21, 26; 13:25, 47f; 14:4, 26; 15:32; 16:21; 17:20, 28; 18:10, 25; 19:25; 20:26; 21:9, 11, 39; 22:3, 8; 23:6; 24:10; 25:10; 26:15, 26, 29; 27:2, 23, 25;
- Ro 1:14; 2:1f; 4:17; 7:14; 8:9; 9:9; 11:1, 13, 17; 13:1; 15:12;
- 1 Cor 1:12; 2:5; 3:4, 21; 6:16; 7:5, 26, 29; 8:7; 9:1f, 19f; 10:6; 11:8; 12:15f; 13:2; 15:9f;
- 2 Cor 8:22; 11:19; 12:10f; 13:6f;
- Gal 3:21; Eph 2:4f, 20; 4:9, 18; 5:31; Phil 4:11; Col 2:5, 10; 3:5; 1Th 2:6; 2Th 2:4; 1Ti 1:15; 2:12; 2Ti 4:3; Titus 1:16; 3:11; Philemon 1:9;
- Heb 7:23; 8:7; 10:10; 12:21; 1 Pet 4:11; 2 Pet 1:13; 3:5; 1 John 2:19; 5:7;
- Rev 1:8, 17f; 2:23; 3:17; 4:11; 14:4; 18:7; 19:10; 22:9, 12, 16

**I am the Christ** - Matthew alone has the phrase "**I am the Christ**" (tantamount to saying "I am the Messiah" - cf Mt 24:5NLT), whereas Mark and Luke have the phrase "**I Am**" ("ego eimi") which is clearly used in a Messianic sense.

Note that Luke 21:8-note adds that in addition to claiming "I am," they will also make predictions about the end of this age, saying "The time is near.' Do not go after them." Here is what the Bible says about those who try to set the date of the end of the age and/or Christ's return...

Luke 12:40-note "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

Matthew 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Acts 1:7-note He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

**Tony Garland** - [Non-Jewish claimants](#) (in complete contradiction to Scripture) Wikipedia lists those who have claimed to stand in the role of Jesus within the 19th and 20th centuries alone.<sup>6</sup> Some are names we recognize from the news headlines: (1) [Sun Myung Moon](#): considered within the Unification Church as the Messiah and the second coming of Christ. (2) [Jim Jones](#): claimed to be the reincarnation of Jesus, Buddha, Vladimir Lenin, and Father Divine prior to leading a mass suicide of his followers. (3) [Marshall Applewhite](#): claimed to be Jesus and the Son of God prior to leading his [Heaven's Gate](#) cult mass suicide to rendezvous with a space ship hiding behind the comet Hale-Bopp. (4) [David Koresh](#): leader of the [Branch Davidian](#) religious sect in Waco, Texas. Claimed to be "the Son of God, the Lamb."

**Tony Garland** on [Jewish claimants](#). (some repetition of above)...

(1) Simon Bar Kokhba was acclaimed Messiah by Rabbi Akiva following the Jewish revolt against Rome of A.D. 115-117. (Bar Kokhba's name, son of a star, is a reference to the Messianic prophecy of Num. 24:17.)

(2) In the 5th century, a pseudo-messiah called Moses appeared in Crete.

(3) In the 8th century, three pseudo-messiah's appeared

(a) Abu Issa Al-Isfahani in Persia

(b) Severus or Serene in Syria

(c) [Yudghan in Hamadan](#) (you will need to translate this page) [search this book and you can read about](#)

[Yudghan - click page 26](#)) in Persia - "In 1096, it was believed in Salonica that the deliverance had already begun; and in 1121, a Karaite claimant was reported in Palestine. In 1147, the spectacular David Alroy appeared in Mesopotamia and similar figures are recorded in Yemen, Fez, Persia, Spain, and France in the 11th and 12th centuries. Abraham Abulafia was active in Sicily in the 13th century and was followed in Spain by his disciples, Samuel and Abraham. . . . The Spanish persecution of 1391 produced Moses Botarel; the expulsion (1492) was followed by a number of such figures -- Asher Lamlein (1503), Solomon Molcho (c. 1500 - 1532), and others."

(4) [Shabbetai Tzevi](#) (1621 - 1676) of Smyrna - "The masses were won over by his emotional sermons and fresh doctrines. . . . In [1662 after marrying a young Jewess in Egypt] he returned to Palestine and in 1665, was hailed as king-messiah by Nathan of Gaza but excommunicated by the rabbis of Jerusalem. Returning to Turkey, Shabbetai was joyfully received by the masses and heaped with honors. The fervor spread throughout the Jewish world and rumors were current of a Jewish army which would advance from the Arabian desert to conquer Palestine. In 1666, he went to Constantinople to 'depose the Sultan' but was arrested and confined in the fortress of Gallipoli. Here he held court and received thousands of followers. . . . Messianic expectations ran high throughout Europe and the rabbinate was sharply divided on the issue. However, Shabbetai's behavior evoked the wrath of the Turkish authorities and to save himself from death, he accepted the Islamic faith. Jewry was shaken by his conversion. . . . Nevertheless, he kept in touch with his admirers until his death, which they held would precede his return as Messiah and Redeemer."

(5) [Jacob Frank](#) (1726 - 1791) - "Declared himself the Messiah and the successor of Shabbetai Tzevi. . . . His mystical activities were alleged to be accompanied by sexual orgies, the function of which was to bring redemption through impurity."

(6) [Menachem Mendel Schneerson](#) (1902 - 1994) - A prominent Hasidic rabbi who was the seventh and last Hasidic leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. Although he himself did not explicitly proclaim to be the Messiah--but only working to bring the Messiah through good works--some of his later statements implied that he thought that he was.<sup>15</sup> During his lifetime many of his followers had considered him to be the Jewish Messiah, and even after his death, some continue to await his return as the Messiah." Garland notes that the "antidote" to the false Messiahs is a visible, global sign (Mt 24:30). ([Reference](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [Book - 50 Jewish Messiahs](#) ([search this book and you can read about Yudghan - click page 26](#))

**Will mislead** (4105)(**planao** from **plane** which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word "planet") means literally made to wander and so to go or be led (as of sheep in Mt 18:12-13) astray. The idea is that outside influence causes the deception that leads one down the wrong path.

Because eschatology is like a jigsaw puzzle with pieces scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments, it is particularly easy for deceivers to deceive with their contrived, perverted eschatological programs (cp 2 Ti 3:13-note). Thus it behooves every pastor who seeks to preach the "whole purpose" of God's Word (Acts 20:27-note) to not shy away from prophecy either because of its difficulty or its controversial nature, for otherwise the body is left to the mercy of those who Jesus warns **will mislead many**.

**Hiebert** adds that "catching people in the snare of their enthusiasm, such pretenders always gain a following, of sorts. Their success makes them dangerous." ([Ibid](#))

**Many** - Why? Because they are good imposters (Read Paul's vivid description - 2 Cor 11:13-15) and will convince many that they are the Messiah. As already noted the phrase **many will come** signifies that deception will not be a rare event but should be expected!

Notice also that clearly the danger of being misled is a key thought in Jesus' answer as the verb **planao** is used 4 times in the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:4, 5, 11, 24). The imposters in Mt 24:24 (THESE ARE FALSE CHRISTS IN THE VERY LAST OF THE LAST DAYS) are allowed to carry out "**great signs and wonders**" which adds to their ability to deceive **many**. Whether the imposters in Mt 24:4-5 have the same "miracle" producing powers is not clear from the context. But if men like [Jim Jones](#) and [David Koresh](#) are any indication, these deceivers clearly have the "power" to "brain wash" their disciples, exerting a psychological power over them. These false Christs strictly speaking have the spirit of **Antichrist**, a word which means *instead of* Christ and/or *against* Christ.

**J Vernon McGee** - Near the end of the age many people will claim to be Christ (ED: BUT AGAIN KEEP IN MIND THAT JESUS SAID THE PROLIFERATION OF THESE MEN WOULD NOT SIGNAL THE END OF THIS AGE). We have such people present with us now. One man established a "holy city" in Northern California and expected any minute to be called to Washington, D.C., to solve

the problems of the world. There are no "holy cities" on the face of the earth, but someday the Lord will come from the Holy of Holies in heaven to earth and solve the problems. It should be remembered that even now there are many antichrists, but at the end of the age there will come one Antichrist who will oppose Christ and set himself up as the only authority. (Thru the Bible commentary)

**Matthew 24:6** "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. **See** that you are not **frightened**, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end: mellesete (2PFAI) de akouein (PAN) polemous kai akoas polemon horate (2PPAM) me throeisthe (2PPPM) dei (3SPAI) gar genesthai (AAN) all oupo estin (3SPAI) to telos:

**KJV** And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: **see** that ye be not **troubled**: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

**NET** You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. **Make sure** that you are not **alarmed**, for this must happen, but the end is still to come.

**ESV** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. **See** that you are not **alarmed**, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

**NIV** You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but **see** to it that you are not **alarmed**. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

**NLT** And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but **don't panic**. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately.

**YLT** and ye shall begin to hear of wars, and reports of wars; **see, be** not **troubled**, for it behoveth all these to come to pass, but the end is not yet.

**ASV** And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; **see** that ye **be** not **troubled**: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet.

- **hearing:** Jer 4:19-22 6:22-24 8:15,16 47:6 Eze 7:24-26 14:17-21 Eze 21:9-15,28 Da 11:1-45 Mk 13:7,8 Lu 21:9
- **see:** Ps 27:1-3 46:1-3 112:7 Isa 8:12-14 12:2 26:3,4,20,21 Hab 3:16-18 Lu 21:19 Jn 14:1,27 2Th 2:2 1Pe 3:14,15
- **must:** Mt 26:54 Lu 22:37 Ac 27:24-26
- **but:** Mt 24:14 Da 9:24-27
- **NOTE: SEE THE ENTIRE MATTHEW 24 COMMENTARY ON ONE PAGE**

#### Parallel Passages:

Luke 21:9+ "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."

Mark 13:7+ "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.

### WARS AND RUMORS NOT SIGNS OF THE END

**You will be hearing (akouo) - Hearing** is present tense indicating that the news about the wars and rumors of wars would keep on occurring that thus they would be continually hearing of these events, regardless of "the season of earth's history." (Weber) As Jesus spoke these words the world was experiencing the [Pax Romana](#), a lengthy period of peace. But even the Romans carried on wars to assure the Pax Romana.

**Wars and rumors of wars** - This is the second "non sign" (first is false Messiahs) for believing the end is at hand. **Wars and rumors of wars** have been going on throughout the centuries, so they are not markers of **the end**. Jesus Himself makes it clear that these things "**must** (speaks of absolute necessity) take place, but this is not yet the end." Wars will happen, but we are not to let this deter us from proclamation of "of the Gospel of peace!" (Eph 6:15-note)

**Rumors of wars** - More literally "reports of wars" (unconfirmed reports which may or may not be true). While Luke 21:9 has "wars" it has another word "disturbances" ( ) in place of **rumors of wars**.

**Hendriksen** writes that "One author counted three hundred wars in Europe during the last three hundred years. And these wars are increasing in intensity. It is perfectly clear that when any particular war is singled out as a help for "date-fixers" another "mistaken sign" has been produced." (Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, Baker)

MacArthur comments that "**Wars and rumors of wars** between nations and kingdoms have been a reality through every generation, including the present. But, in keeping with Christ's analogy of increased pains, these catastrophes will increase in magnitude and intensity near the end of this age. As bad as those painful realities are, believers **do not** need to **be frightened**, because **those things must take place** according to God's sovereign plan for the world, and **eventhat is not the end**. There is more yet to come. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary).

**See that you are not frightened** - Wars and rumors of wars are frightening to be sure, but Jesus issues two commands in succession (verbs in **bold red**) to counter the natural human reaction of fear. Both commands (**See** and **frightened**) are in the **present imperative** which calls for this to be one's lifestyle, one's habitual practice, which in turn necessitates dependence on the Holy Spirit's enabling power (see below)!

**Not frightened** is preceded by a negative (Gk = "me") which can be translated one of two ways ([present imperative with a negative](#)) - **(1)** Stop being frightened, implying this emotion has set in and **(2)** Don't let this (fright) begin.

Remember that whatever God (Jesus) **commands**, He **enables** us to obey. How? By daily, moment by moment yielding to and depending on the indwelling Holy Spirit Who is continually at work in us, continually energizing our wills to obey and giving us the power to obey. Paul says it this way in the letter to the Philippians...

**Work out (present imperative)** your salvation with fear and trembling **for** (term of explanation = explains how we can even obey the command of Phil 2:12!) it is God Who (Who? The Spirit of Christ forever indwells us) is at **work (energeo in present tense = continually "energizing")** in you, both to (**present tense = continually**) **will** and to (**present tense = continually**) **work** for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12b-note, Phil 2:13-note)

The **New Living Translation** is a helpful paraphrase - "For God is working in you, giving you the **desire** to obey him and the **power** to do what pleases him." (Phil 2:13NLT)

**See (3708)(horao)** is not merely the act of seeing, but also the actual perception of the object. The idea is to take special notice of something and discerning clearly.

**Frightened** (2360) (**threo** from **threomai** = the cry or wail; **Thayer** says threo is derived from **thros** = clamor, tumult) means to cry aloud or scream and in the passive sense means to be inwardly aroused, to be disturbed, to be frightened, to be startled. **Threo** speaks of the alarm occasioned by a sudden cry or of mental uneasiness in general. The **present tense** points to a continued state of agitation following reception of a definite shock and thus describes a state of jumpiness. Jesus does not want this to be the emotional state of His disciples when they hear of **wars**, etc. **Threo** is used only 3x (Mt 24:6; Mk 13:7; 2Th 2:2) all three uses in the context of eschatological events. Threo is used once in Septuagint in Song 5:4 to described the woman's "feelings **aroused** (stirred, thrilled within) for him."

Mark 13:7 "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, **do not be frightened** ([present imperative with a negative](#)); those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.

2 Thessalonians 2:2-note that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or **be disturbed** either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. (Paul goes on to explain when you can know the Day of the Lord has begun - 2 Th 2:3-4-note)

**Threo** in **Liddell-Scott-Jones** (primarily refers to secular Greek uses) - (1a). cry aloud, (1b). c. acc., tell out, utter aloud, (2) causal, scare, terrify — Pass., to be stirred. moved, of joy.

**Thayer** on **threo** - in Greek writings to cry aloud, make a noise by outcry; in the NT to trouble, frighten; passive present = to be troubled in mind, to be frightened, alarmed.

**Hiebert** on **those things must take place** - These national convulsions have not been preordained by divine decree but arise as the inevitable consequences of human depravity. They are the natural results of human nature separated from God and ruled by self-interest. They are divinely permitted as part of God's eschatological program for this world, which includes judgment as well as salvation. ([Ibid](#))

**Lowery** on **those things must take place** - The world is a chaotic place. It is the (necessary) consequence of living in a fallen world. Disciples should not think that human or natural disasters, however tragic, signal **the end**. These are but the prelude (Mt 24:8) to a truly catastrophic finale (Mt 24:21). Disciples must keep their balance and stay faithful.



**Must** (1163)(**dei** from **deo** = to bind or tie objects together, put in prison and also root of **doulos**, bond-servant) refers to what is not optional but needful (binding) out of intrinsic necessity or inevitability. Why are these things a "**must**?" One interpretation is that they **must** occur because that is what the sovereign God has decreed and all of "history" is in His hands. Yes, He allows personal choices, but mysteriously and powerfully He will bring all of the events of History to His desired end. As someone has said "**History**" is **His Story**!

**But that is not yet the end** - Some (especially the "false Messiahs") may interpret the events in Mt 24:4-6 as signaling **the end**, but it is not. Stated another way, Jesus is saying that these events are not "signs of the times" that signal the end is near. They simply reflect the course one would expect a sinful world to pursue.

Notice also that (contrary to what a number of writers suggest) Jesus is not speaking of the **end** of the Temple nor of the **end of the world**, but of **the end of the age**. **Hiebert** adds that "**The end** is the eschatological goal of history, the final establishment of God's kingdom on earth." (**Ibid**)

**The end** - Jesus will give a clear, unmistakable visual event in Mt 24:15 that will mark the beginning of **the end** of the age. He does not want His disciples to be misled or frightened by these tumultuous events. It reminds me of folks who during WWII said that Hitler was the Antichrist. While he certainly manifested the spirit of antichrist in slaughtering millions of Jews, he was not the Antichrist because the **abomination of desolation** in Mt 24:15-note (and 2Th 2:2-4-note) had not yet occurred. In fact there was no Temple (holy place) in Jerusalem in which one could have even stood during World War II. Had these individuals known what Jesus had taught, they would have realized Hitler could not possibly have been the Antichrist. One of the greatest dangers in interpreting eschatology is to use the newspaper to guide one's interpretation!

**End** (5056)(**telos**) means a completion, consummation, goal achieved or result attained. It does not speak of annihilation.

**J Vernon McGee** - Wars and rumors of wars are not the sign that we are at the end of the age, by any means. The Lord is bridging the gap from where the disciples are to the end of the age. It is easy to think of major wars as indicative of the fact that we are at the end of the age. They are not! There have been many major wars in the past few thousand years and only about two hundred years of peace. When I was a little boy at the end of World War I, I remember hearing my dad and others talking about the books being printed declaring it was the end of the world. World War I caused this type of thinking. But after the war, we had a worldwide depression, World War II, and the atom bomb. By this time, I was a pastor in Pasadena, and I told my congregation that a wheelbarrow load of books would come out saying that we were at the end of the world because of World War II. You know something? I was wrong! Two wheelbarrow loads of books were printed, and they were sensational. We have come a long way from World War II, and the end of the age still has not come. We should listen to the Lord and stop listening to false teachers. We will hear about wars and rumors of wars, but we should not be troubled because all these things will come to pass, and still it will not be the end of the age. Friend, we should also keep in mind that man will never solve the problem of war. The League of Nations could not solve this problem, and the United Nations will not be able to solve it either. There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes. (**Ibid**)

**Matthew 24:7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes: egerthesetai (3SFPI) gar ethnos epi ethnos kai basileia epi basileian kai esontai (3PFMI) limoi kai seismoi kata topous:**

- **nation:** 2Chr 15:6 Isa 9:19-21 Isa 19:2 Eze 21:27 Hag 2:21,22 Zec 14:2,3,13 Heb 12:27
- **famines:** Isa 24:19-23 Eze 14:21 Joe 2:30,31 Zec 14:4 Lu 21:11,25,26 Ac 2:19 11:28)

**KJV** For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

**NET** For nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

Great Earthquakes (1900-2017)  
Click to Enlarge

**A WHOLE LOTTA SHAKING  
GOING ON**

## Synoptic Parallels:

Luke 21:10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and **there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.** (Words in bold only in Luke 21).

Mark 13:8 "For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. **These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs**

**For - term of explanation** - What is Jesus explaining? He is explaining those things which must (will) take place before the end of this present age, before He returns to put an end to lawlessness and bring in His reign of righteousness, that "divine idyllic utopia" the world has been desperately, futilely seeking since the Garden of Eden!

**Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom** - This is confirmation of the preceding statement about **wars and rumors of wars**.

We see a similar prophecy in **Isaiah** - Isaiah 19:2 "So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; And they will each fight against his brother, and each against his neighbor, City against city, and **kingdom against kingdom.**"

**Nation** (Gentile) (1484)(**ethnos** gives us our word "ethnic") in general refers to a multitude (especially persons) associated with one another, living together, united in kinship, culture or traditions and summed up by the words nation, Gentiles (especially when **ethnos** is plural), people (much like "people groups" in our modern missionary vernacular). In somewhat of a negative sense **ethnos** conveys the meaning of godless (generally idol worshiping) pagans (heathens, cp Eph 4:17, Mt 6:32), foreign nations not worshipping the true God (Mt 4:15). Often **ethnos** stands in clear contradistinction to Jew (**Ioudaios**) (Gal 2:14).

**Famines and earthquakes** - See more detailed discussion regarding these events in comments on Luke 21:10-note.

**Weber** - Famine was foretold in the Pentateuch as a sign of God's judgment for covenant disobedience (Lev. 26:18, 20:26–27; Deut. 28:23–24, 38–42, 47–48, 53–57). (Holman New Testament Commentary)

Neither Matthew 24:7 nor Mark 13:8 mentions **plagues** as in Luke 21:10 (see commentary) nor that **there will be terrors and great signs from heaven** again as in Lk 21:10 (see commentary).

**Earthquakes** (4578)(**seismos** from = to shake) means an agitation or shaking as a series of violent movements, usually of the earth, but once of a storm or tempest at sea (Mt 8:24). One can picture the height of the huge waves in this supernatural **seismos**! No wonder the disciples thought they were perishing (Mt 8:25)!

**Mounce** - Earthquakes are known throughout the Mediterranean region and particularly in eastern Palestine. Geologically, this is because of the movements of the African and Arabian tectonic plates against the Eurasian plates. Earthquakes in the Bible are often seen as divine acts with theological significance. A violent **seismos** shakes the foundation of the prison holding Paul and Silas; the doors fly open, enabling all the prisoners to escape (though no one does; Acts 16:26). A **seismos** also occurs in connection with significant events such as the death of Jesus (Mt 27:54) and his resurrection (Mt 28:2). In Revelation, an earthquake announces the opening of sixth seal by Jesus (Rev 6:12) and the opening of God's heavenly sanctuary (Rev 11:19). Earthquakes are among the cataclysmic events that will occur in the days of judgment accompanying the last days (Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Lk 21:11; Rev 8:5; 11:13; 16:18).

## Related Resources:

- [Up to date information on latest earthquakes](#) - As I wrote this note 4/6/18 at 4:23 AM read report of 5.9 quake off coast of El Salvador (Apr 2, 6:23 PM)!
- [Earthquake map](#) - latest worldwide (hold pointer over map and rotate mouse scroll wheel)
- [Earthquakes, great - Wikipedia](#)

**J Vernon McGee** - Right now the population explosion has the world frightened and rightly so. People are starving to death by the thousands and the millions. And this situation is going to increase. The old black horse of famine (see Rev. 6:5–6) hasn't appeared yet, but at the end of the age the black horse and its rider will come forth. What we see today is just the beginning of sorrows. (Ibid)

**Hendriksen** - throughout the centuries there have been violent earthquakes. For example: On Nov. 1, 1755, 60,000 people perished at Lisbon, Portugal; in 1783 the great Calabrian earthquake occurred with the death of an estimated 30,000; in 1857 the Neapolitan earthquake took more than 12,000 lives. There was also the Charleston earthquake in 1886; the Assam in 1897; the one in California in 1906, which destroyed a considerable section of San Francisco; the one in Messina in 1908; in Avezzano, Italy in 1915; several in Turkey, from 1939 until very recently; the one that shook Kansu Province, China, in 1920; the one that hit Japan, in 1923,

wrecking parts of Tokyo and Yokohama; those in Chile, in 1939, 1960, and even more recently; the devastating earthquake in Peru, 1970; etc. Ancient historians and philosophers—such as Thucydides, Aristotle, Strabo, Seneca, Livy, and Pliny—describe similar seismic phenomena in their days. And as early as the year 1668 Robert Hooke wrote his work bearing the title, Discourse on Earthquakes. A certain author counted no less than seven hundred disturbances of this nature, great and small, which had occurred in the nineteenth century! (Ibid)

#### Matthew 24:8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.:panta de tauta arche odinon:

- Lev 26:18-29 Dt 28:59 Isa 9:12,17,21 10:4 1Th 5:3 1Pe 4:17,18

**Amplified** All this is but the beginning [the early pains] of the birth pangs [of the intolerable anguish].

**KJV** All these are the beginning of sorrows.

**ESV** All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

**NLT** But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

**YLT** and all these are the beginning of sorrows;

**ASV** But all these things are the beginning of travail.

### NOT SIGNS OF THE END BUT BEGINNING OF SORROWS

#### Synoptic Parallels:

Luke 21:10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and **there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.** (**Words in bold** only in Luke's version - See comments).

Mark 13:8b "For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

**But** - This is a **term of contrast**. What is Jesus contrasting? It would seem to be all of the tumultuous events described in Mt 24:6 (and possibly Mt 24:5). **Birth pangs** is a vivid, easily understood figure of speech that indicates a birth is coming soon. In context the "birth" of greatest note is the return of the Righteous One, our Redeemer and King Who will crush the Gentile powers (Da 2:34-35, Da 2:44-45) and bring in (*birth* if you will) His glorious earthly kingdom.

- See related discussion of Birth Pangs in Luke 21

**All these things** - To what does **all these things** refer? Many coming in the Name of Jesus and misleading many (Mt 24:5), wars, rumors of wars (Mt 24:6), nations and kingdoms rising against one another, famines and earthquakes (Mt 24:7). All of these things are really "non-signs" because they are very general and have occurred throughout the centuries since Jesus uttered these words. Some suggest that as we see these things increase in number and intensity (e.g., earthquakes), this increased frequency suggests we are getting closer to the "end" of the end times. However, it seems that this is one of the things Jesus actually warns us about so that we are not misled.

**Weber** - War, famine, and earthquakes fall into a category of events that, while not necessarily unrelated to the end, are only tiny ripples in the pool of history. They are far removed from the central event of God's final judgment. (Holman New Testament Commentary)

**The beginning of birth pangs** - From a comparison of the three synoptic Gospels, while the similarities are undeniable (Mt 24:4-7, Mark 13:5-8, Luke 21:8-11), there is a difference in that both Matthew 24:8 and Mark 13:8c picture the catastrophic events described by Jesus as **merely the beginning of birth pangs**, a phrase not found in Luke 21. What Jesus is saying is that **these things** (described in Mt 24:4-7, Mark 13:5-8 and by extension Lk 21:8-11) will intensify as the world gets closer to the "delivery date," **the end** of the age, the coming of Messiah, the "birth" of His Messianic Kingdom. When **birth pangs** begin, birth generally soon follows. Having delivered a number of babies, it has been my experience that as one gets closer to the actual delivery of the baby, the **birth pangs** increase in quality and quantity. It would appear that Jesus' figure of speech strongly implies that **birth pangs** (false messiahs, wars, earthquakes, famines, plagues, etc) will increase in number and intensity as **the end** draws near. Indeed, the book

of the Revelation of Jesus Christ (specifically Revelation 6:1-19:21) describes an intensification of all of **these things** which Jesus had alluded to and which have been occurring for the past 2000 years.

**ESV Study Bible - Birth pains** indicates that there will be a time of suffering prior to the **messianic age** (cf. Ro. 8:22–23). OT prophets use the metaphor to depict terrible suffering in general (cf. Isa. 13:8-note; Isa 21:3; 42:14; Jer. 30:5–7-note; Hos. 13:13) as well as suffering that Israel will endure prior to her deliverance (cf. Isa. 26:17–19; 66:7–11; Jer. 22:23; Mic. 4:9–10-note). (**Comment:** Note allusion to the "Messianic Age" -- this is the age which will follow the church age and which is commonly referred to as the Millennium).

**Birth pangs** speak of hope for the pain will pass and give way to a "new birth" and in this case it will be a "new age," the Messianic Age which will follow the end of the age. The figure of **birth pains** was commonly used by ancient Jewish writers, especially in regard to the end times. The great modern Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim wrote, "Jewish writings speak very frequently of the labor pains of Messiah."

**David Turner on birth pangs** - The use of the pains of a woman in labor as a metaphor for eschatological troubles and/or the woe of God's judgment is found elsewhere in Jewish literature and the NT (Isa 13:8-note; Isa 26:17; 66:7–8; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 22:23; Jer 30:5–7-note; Jer 48:41; Hos 13:13; Mic 4:9-13-note; Mark 13:8; 1 Thes 5:3-note; Rev 12:2-note; cf. John 16:20–22; Gal 4:19; (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark)

**John MacArthur** explains that **birth pangs** is "a very vivid analogy used often in the Scriptures, often by the Jewish writers and so was familiar to Jewish people. Birth pangs are an increasing sequence of contractions that finally become fiercely intense and result in the big event, birth. It is an apt analogy for understanding human history. The contractions or the pains, start out light and they increase and they increase and they increase till they reach a point of [excruciation](#) before the big event. So, Jesus is saying these are just the birth pangs. These are just the very early birth pains and they've been going on for 2,000 years and have been escalating. And if you want to see what they're going to look like at the very end just before the event then you read Revelation 6-19." ([The World in Conflict and Distress](#))

And so it should not surprise that in the time just before Christ returns in Revelation 19:11-16, the "birth pangs" of each of these things will have intensified to such a degree that will be almost unimaginable. Below are just a few of the examples of the "birth pangs" that will occur at the end of this age...

- **False Christs** - The final greatest human deceiver, the Antichrist - Rev 13:5-note = given authority over the earth for 42 months
- **Wars**- Armies gathering for war at Armageddon - Rev 16:12-14, 16-note
- **Famine** - Rider on the ashen horse given to kill 1/4 of the earth with sword and famine - Rev 6:8-note
- **Plagues** - 1/3 of mankind was killed by three plagues - Rev 9:18-note (cf Rev 15:1-note, Rev 16:21-note = 100 lb hailstones)
- **Earthquakes** - A great earthquake unlike any in the history of the world - Rev 16:18-note

**Weber** on 3 implications of **birth pangs** - **First**, "beginning" implies that patterns of war, famine, and earthquakes do have some connection with the end. But they do not necessarily indicate that the end is near. Adding to this concept is the idea of "birth pains," which begin some time before an actual birth. **Second**, birth is one of the most painful experiences in a woman's life. Jesus, choice of word picture indicates that, when the end does come, it will be very painful for all of humanity. These sorrows are continually experienced in history. But as is true with the birth process, the pains will increase in frequency and intensity until Jesus returns in his power and glory. **Third**, birth is one of the most joyously fulfilling experiences of a woman's life, bringing about the emergence of something precious, beautiful, and highly valued. Jesus' word picture looked beyond the tribulation of God's judgment to the emergence of the fully realized kingdom with Christ in his glory. (Holman New Testament Commentary)

**R T France** - In later rabbinic literature the phrase "the labor pain (always singular) of the Messiah" comes to be used almost as a technical term for the period of suffering preceding the Messiah's coming. (NICNT - Matthew)

**Craig Blomberg** on **birth pangs** - just as a woman may experience false labor and just as genuine contractions still leave her uncertain about the exact time of delivery, so too the events of Mt 24:4–8 do not enable us to predict the time of Christ's coming. Birth pangs were in fact a common Jewish metaphor to refer to an indeterminate period of distress leading up to the end of this age (e.g., 1 Enoch 62:4; 2 Esdr 4:42; Tg. Ps 18:14). (Matthew, Broadman & Holman Publishers, The New American Commentary)

## Brief Excursus on Jewish Eschatology

The Jews of the first century had a fairly well developed eschatology as it related to their expectations regarding the Messiah. However as alluded to above, their timing of when the events would take place was very mistaken. They did not see the intervening Church Age which makes perfect sense because there was no Church in existence before Acts 2. They also did not see the two comings of the Messiah, but expected one arrival in which he would be triumphant over their enemies (this of course was why the Jews were so jubilant at Jesus' "**Triumphal Entry**" cf Lk 19:36-38-note). And recall also that while they did attribute incredible powers to the Messiah, the Jews were not expecting the Messiah to be God. Son of David yes, but not God. So the following list of events is what the Jews expected when Messiah arrived. What is fascinating is that these events while not a Biblically perfect chronology, they are not that far removed from what will transpire at the Second Coming of Messiah.

**John Phillips** comments on the Olivet Discourse that "This important prophetic statement gathers together the main threads of Old Testament end-time prophecy (**ED: WHICH WAS THE BASIS FOR MOST OF THE JEWISH VIEWS LISTED BELOW REGARDING THEIR MESSIANIC HOPE** ) and the threads of New Testament prophecy, weaves them into an imposing fabric of eschatology, and embroiders the fabric with flashes of insight from the Lord's omniscient foreknowledge."

The following summary is taken from John MacArthur's sermon ([see this sermon for expansion of each of the following points](#)) and much of his information is derived from the work of [Emil Schurer](#) (See Schurer's discussion of The Messianic Hope - Caveat - Note that I do not agree with all of Schurer's conclusions - e.g., he dates the writing of Daniel circa 164 BC four centuries later than it was actually penned by the prophet Daniel!).

- (i) Before the Messiah came there would be a time of terrible tribulation.
- (ii) Into this chaos there would come Elijah as the forerunner and herald of the Messiah.
- (iii) Then there would enter the Messiah.
- (iv) The nations would ally themselves and gather themselves together against the champion of God.
- (v) The result would be the total destruction of these hostile powers.
- (vi) There would follow the renovation of Jerusalem.
- (vii) The Jews who were dispersed all over the world would be gathered into the city of the new Jerusalem.
- (viii) Palestine would be the centre of the world and the rest of the world subject to it. All the nations would be subdued.

## PARALLELS BETWEEN MATTHEW 24 AND REVELATION 6

There are parallels between the events Jesus describes in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6:1-14-[note](#). If one accepts that the phrase **birth pangs** refers to an increase in intensity and number of the general signs Jesus described in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, it is reasonable to see these things escalating in the time of the Revelation which covers the last of the last days (which many equate with the "Tribulation," specifically the events in Revelation 6:1-19:21-[note](#))

- 1. False Messiahs** (Mt. 24:5, 11; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; Rev. 6:2).
- 2. Wars** (Mt. 24:6-7; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9; Rev. 6:4).
- 3. Famines** (Mt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10; Rev. 6:5-6,8).
- 4. Pestilences** (Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:8).
- 5. Persecution** (Mt. 24:9; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-17; Rev. 6:9-11).
- 6. Earthquakes** (Mt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:12).
- 7. Cosmic Phenomena** (Mt. 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:12-14).