

# Matthew 24:16-20 Commentary

[PREVIOUS](#)

[NEXT](#)

**CLICK VERSE**

**To go directly to that verse**

**See Matthew 24 Commentary all on one page**

[Matthew 24:1 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:2 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:3 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:4 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:5 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:6 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:7 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:8 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:9 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:10 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:11 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:12 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:13 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:14 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:15 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:16 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:17 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:18 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:19 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:20 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:21 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:22 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:23 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:24 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:25 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:26 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:27 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:28 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:29 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:30 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:31 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:32 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:33 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:34 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:35 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:36 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:37 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:38 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:39 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:40 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:41 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:42 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:43 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:44 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:45 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:46 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:47 Commentary](#)  
[Matthew 24:48 Commentary](#)

Apostle Matthew

Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

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

Click chart to enlarge

Matthew 24:16 then those who are in Judea **must flee** to the mountains tote oi en te loudaia pheugetsan (3PPAM) eis ta ore:

- Ge 19:15-17 Ex 9:20,21 Pr 22:3 Jer 6:1 37:11,12 Lu 21:21,22 Heb 11:7

CJB Matthew 24:16 "that will be the time for those in Y'hudah to **escape** to the hills.

YLT Matthew 24:16 then those in Judea -- **let them flee** to the mounts

### TIME FOR THE GREAT ESCAPE FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION

**Then** (5119) (tote) is a time sensitive adverb (see **expressions of time**) which means subsequently, after that; next; afterward, at that time; at the time in question.

**Then** should always prompt the question "**When is then?**" which will usually "force" you to re-read the preceding **context**. In this context, the "**then**" is when you see the **abomination of desolation standing in the holy place** which will precipitate the Great Tribulation. Jesus' words in Mt 24:15 remind me of the starter at an Olympic 100 meter dash. The gun sounds and the racers are launched from their starting blocks. When the gun "goes off" in Mt 24:15-note, it's time for the Jews to leave their "starting blocks!"

**Those who are in Judea** - Note that Jesus mentions the land of Judea not the whole earth. This part of the prophecy is distinctly directly to the Jews who will be living in Palestine when the abomination of desolation is revealed in Jerusalem. The Jews who are nearest to the Temple (**who are in Judea**) are the ones who are in greatest danger.

**McNeile** - "The hills of Judea abounded in caves and safe hiding-places; cf 1 Maccabees 2:28NRSV, Ex 7:16. In Luke the flight is from the besieging armies, in Matthew, Mark from the persecutions to be waged by Antichrist. It cannot be an *ex eventu* reference to the flight of Christians to [Pella](#) (**Ed: See Eusebius' description here**) for Pella was not in the mountains, but at the foot of the eastern range, in the Jordan Valley, about 17 miles south of the Lake of Galilee, and would be reached by traveling up the valley." ([The Gospel according to St. Matthew - 1915](#))

Some such as **Craig Blomberg** ([New American Commentary](#)) see the preceding call to **flee** the city as related to the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70AD. But **Blomberg** encounters a problem in Mt 24:21, admitting that "the concept of a period of **unparalleled distress** (based on Da 12:1-note) **causes problems**. If these two verses (**Ed: Referring to Mt 24:21-22**) simply depict the horrors surrounding the war of A.D. 70, it is hard to see how Mt 24:21 could be true. (Bolding added for emphasis) ([See critique of D A Carson \[holds a 70AD interpretation of Mt 24:15\] explanation of Matthew 24:21](#))

**Blomberg** goes on to posit that "If they (**Ed: Mt 24:15-20**) point to some end-time sacrilege, just before the Parousia, then it is hard to see how Matthew allows for a gap of at least two thousand years between Mt 24:20-21." It is probably best, therefore, to understand this period of great distress, or **the great tribulation**, as it is more commonly known, as **the entire period beginning with the devastation of A.D. 70 and continuing on until Christ's return** (cf. "immediately" in Mt 24:29)." (Bolding mine)

**Do you see what Blomberg is doing?** He is so set on Mt 24:15-20 being fulfilled in 70AD, that he is forced to speculate that there

is a **time gap** between the destruction in 70AD and the end times **great tribulation**!

**John Phillips** - Many think the ultimate place of hiding and security for these refugees will be the ancient rock city of [Petra](#). (Exploring the Gospel of Matthew)

**NET Note on flee to the mountains** - Fleeing to the mountains is a key OT image: Ge 19:17; Jdg 6:2; Isa 15:5; Jer 16:16; Zech 14:5.

Mt 24:16 describes fleeing at the beginning of the **Great Tribulation** (the "time of Jacob's distress" - Jer 30:7-note).

**Zechariah** describes another "fleeing" from Jerusalem by the Jews but it is apparently toward last part of the 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation (because it is associated with the Lord's return Zech 14:3-4. **John MacArthur** calls the Zech 14 passage "the climax of the time of Jacob's distress." - Jer 30:5-7) -

"And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come (cp Mt 24:29-30), and all the holy ones with Him!" (Zechariah 14:5)

**John MacArthur** - Since God first called and made His eternal covenant with Abraham, Satan has sought to destroy God's chosen people, the Jews, and their God-ordained nation of Israel. To have destroyed the Jews would have been to destroy God's redemptive plan for mankind, because "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). To have eliminated the Jews before Jesus was born would have broken the line of promise and thwarted the birth and therefore the redemptive ministry of the Messiah, who had to be a descendant of Abraham and of David. Having failed at that, however, Satan still seeks to destroy individual Jews in order to prevent Christ's ultimate redemption of them and to destroy Israel as a nation in order to prevent its restoration under His divine rule. It must be added that God has allowed Satan some success in his attacks on Jews. Because of their covenant violation, unbelief, and apostasy, Satan has sometimes actually acted as God's executioner to punish them. Because they will refuse to worship him and especially because they belong to God, the Antichrist will also unleash exceptional fury against those who come to believe in Jesus during the last days. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

**J Vernon McGee** - You and I are not expecting to flee to the mountains of Judea. I live very near the San Gabriel Mountains, and my neighbor tells me that if an atom bomb is dropped in Southern California, he is going to head for a certain canyon up there (and I may follow him!), but that will not fulfill this prophecy. In fact, it has nothing whatever to do with it. Rather, it has to do with people who are in Judea. Our Lord is giving that prophecy to those people, not to us. (Thru the Bible Commentary)

It is interesting to note that while the Jews are charged to make the choice to flee (flee is in the active voice = calls for exertion of personal volition) supernatural assistance will be provided for "the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman (Israel), in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place (God has already provided a personal refuge)." (Rev. 12:14-[note](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - The readers of this prophecy in the latter days will know what to do: Get out of Judea! These instructions are **similar** to those given in Luke 21:20ff, but **they refer to a different time period**. Luke's instructions apply to the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the "sign" was the gathering of the armies around the city. Matthew's instructions apply to Jewish believers in the middle of the Tribulation, and the "sign" is the desecration of the temple by the image of the Antichrist. **Those who have confused those two "sign events" have ended up believing that Jesus Christ returned in A.D. 70!** (Ed comment: While true to some extent, some who interpret 70AD fulfillment see Mt 24:29-30 as a yet future event) (The Bible Exposition Commentary) (Bolding added) **See Chart Summarizing differences between Matthew 24:15ff and Luke 21:20-24**

**Must flee** (escape) ([5343](#))(**pheugo**) means to flee away in the sense of to take to flight in order to seek safety. To flee in the sense of to escape something, being made safe from danger by eluding or avoiding it (He 11:34, Mt 3:7, Acts 27:30). **Flee** is in the form of a **present imperative** command - keep on fleeing. The urgency of the warning bespeaks of the severity of the holocaust to come! Run for your life because the Antichrist will abruptly (at the midpoint of 7 years) turn from Israel's friend who cuts a covenant (Da 9:27) to Israel's foe seeking to persecute and exterminate the Jews! (Da 7:21, 25, Rev 12:6, Rev 12:14, Rev 13:5).

The apostle John described this treacherous time when Israel **must flee** writing that

the **woman** (Israel) fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for **one thousand two hundred and sixty days** ( = "The Great Tribulation" of Mt 24:21-note)... And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the **woman** (Israel), in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she \*was nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent. (Rev 12:6-[note](#), Rev 12:14-[note](#)).

**Jeremiah** described this future **Great Tribulation**:

(**Context**: Babylon about to destroy Jerusalem in 586BC = dark days coming soon, but in this passage Jehovah promises better

days will follow in the future!) For, behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel (Israel had been taken into captivity in Assyria in 722BC over 100 years prior, but clearly they are not "lost" to God) and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to **the land** that I gave to their forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and they shall possess it (Note he is speaking of a future promise to Israel not the Church!).'" 4 Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah, 5 "For thus says the LORD, 'I have heard a sound of terror, Of dread, and there is no peace. 6 'Ask now, and see, If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? (Clearly this time will bring horrible persecution to the Jews) 7'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it (cp same description in Mt 24:21-note and Daniel 12:1-note); And it is **the time of Jacob's distress**, But **he will be saved from it**. (Jer 30:3-7-note)

**Daniel** also described this future **Great Tribulation**:

"Now at that time (**What time?** Check context of Da 11:36-45-note = the time of the Antichrist) Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a **time of distress** (Lxx = **thlipsis**) such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued (How? When the Deliverer returns in Ro 11:26-27-note). (Daniel 12:1-note)

**Tony Garland** - At the midpoint of the final seven years, he rises from the abyss (Rev. 11:7-note), undoubtedly Satanically empowered, and all the world marvels at his supernatural recovery (Rev. 13:3-note). Revelation 12 indicates that it is Satan who intensely persecutes Israel during this period. It seems very likely that it is primarily through possession of this man, no doubt in association with his miraculous rise from the abyss, that Satan works his intense persecution of the Jews. This is no ordinary persecution, it involves Satan himself acting through this individual. ([Matthew 24 Commentary Notes](#))

The command to **flee** applies primarily to the **Jews** who will experience the unbridled vitriol of anti-Semitism at the hands of the Antichrist who is demonically empowered by the ultimate anti-Semite, Satan (Rev 13:4-5-note), who himself is cast out of heaven at the midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth week and has great wrath that drives him to persecute the "**Woman**" (Israel) seeking to carry out the "final solution" of total annihilation of the Jews! (Rev 12:9, 12-13-note). Satan knows that he has only **ashort time** (Rev 12:12-note), specifically 1260 days or time, times and half a time (Rev 12:6, 14-note). Zechariah says that 2/3's of the Jews will be killed (probably more than 10 million killed) but 1/3 will be saved by the return of the Deliverer (Zech 13:8-9, Ro 11:26-27-note), this latter group representing the **remnant** who look upon Christ in grace enabled repentance and trust at His return (cf. Zech 12:10-13:1).

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**AN ORDINARY DAY** - While exploring a museum exhibit titled "A Day in Pompeii," a writer was struck by the repeated theme that August 24, 79 AD began as an ordinary day. People were going about their daily business in homes, markets, and at the port of this prosperous Roman town of 20,000 people. At 8 a.m., a series of small emissions were seen coming from nearby Mount Vesuvius, followed by a violent eruption in the afternoon. In less than 24 hours, Pompeii and many of its people lay buried under a thick layer of volcanic ash. Unexpected. When you see the "small emissions" in the form of the abomination of desolation, you can know that "day" for this world is short, and life as we know it will turned into a "hell on earth" for 3.5 years as the full fury of Satan is allowed by God to erupt and cover the entire earth. When you see the "small emissions" Jesus described it is time to flee!

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**Matthew 24:17** Whoever is on the housetop **must not go down** to get the things out that are in his house: ο επι του domatos me katabato (3SAAM) arai ta ek tes oikias autou:

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- **Whoever:** Mt 6:25 Job 2:4 Pr 6:4,5 Mk 13:15,16 Lu 17:31-33
- **housetop:** Mt 10:27 Dt 22:8

### **SAVE YOUR PERSON NOT YOUR PERSONAL PROPERTY**

**Jesus** commands those who are alive in the day of the abomination to save their life, not their property! No material possession is worth a human life.

I have often thought if I were awoken suddenly by a fire raging in my house, what would I try to rescue? Jesus says save your life for a "fire" will soon be raging, stoked by the anger of Satan who is thrown out of heaven and knows his time is short - Rev 12:9, 12-note! How short? 3.5 years, time, times and half a time or 1260 days! That's how long he persecutes (pursues) the woman, Israel. (Rev 12:6-note, Rev 12:13-14-note).

**Hiebert** on **Whoever is on the housetop** noting that Jesus describes "by means of concrete pictures the extreme haste that will then be essential." (Ibid) - "The housetop, the flat roof of the Oriental house, was generally reached by an outside stairway (cf. Mk 2:2-4). It was used for various purposes: sleeping (1Sa. 9:25-26), keeping a watch (Isa. 22:1), worship (Zeph. 1:5; Acts 10:9), proclaiming tidings (Matt. 10:27), and the like. If a man happened to be up there when the crisis broke, he must rush down and flee without even stopping to remove." ([The Gospel of Mark- An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Robert Gundry** - The disciple lounging on the flat roof of his house (compare Acts 10:9) would be tempted to come down an outside staircase, enter the house, and take household articles unnecessary but dear to a person of leisure and means. (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation)

**Housetop** (1430)(**doma** akin to **demo** - to build) denotes the top of a house which was usually flat "and guarded by a low **parapet** wall (see Dt 22:8). It was much frequented and used for various purposes, e.g., for proclamations, Matthew 10:27; Luke 12:3; for prayer, Acts 10:9. The house was often built round a court, across the top of which cords were fixed from the parapet walls for supporting a covering from the heat. The housetop could be reached by stairs outside the building; the paralytic in Luke 5:19 could be let down into the court or area by rolling back the covering. External flight from the housetop in time or danger is enjoined in Matthew 24:17; Mark 13:15; Luke 17:31." ([Housetop - Vine's Expository Dictionary](#))

**Doma** was where Rahab the harlot hid the Israeli spies in Jericho (Joshua 2:6; 8). In Jdg 16:27 **doma** describes "3,000 men and women were on the **roof** looking on while Samson was amusing them." The psalmist writes "I lie awake, I have become like a lonely bird on a **housetop**." (Ps 102:7) Pr 25:24 says "It is better to live in a corner of the **roof** Than in a house shared with a contentious woman." Sometimes grass was apparently grown on the housetops (Isa 37:27, 2Ki 19:26) **Doma** was the site of one of the saddest stories in the OT - "Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the **roof** he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance." (2Sa 11:2). Since it was on the roof David sowed lust which led to the sins of adultery and murder, it was fitting that it would be on the **roof** he would reap what he had sown as his son Absalom had a tent pitched that he might go "in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." (2Sa 16:22, cp Gal 6:7,8!) This could have been prevented if David had used the **roof** for prayer like Peter (Acts 10:9)! The Jews in Judah also should have emulated Peter but instead they "offered incense to Baal on their **roofs** and poured out libations to other gods to provoke" God to anger (Jer 32:29, cp site of pagan altars - 2Kgs 23:12, 2Chr 28:1 = King Ahaz)! Housetops were a site where lamentation and mourning were carried out (Jer 48:38, )

**Thayer** - . The house-tops of the Orientals were (and still are) level, and were frequented not only for walking but also for meditation and prayer: Acts 10:3; hence, on the house-tops, i.e. in public: Matthew 10:27; Lk 12:3; 2Sa 16:22.

**Liddell-Scott-Jones** - (I) 1. house: also, chief room, hall: hence, pl. for a single house, 2. of the gods, "immortal Olympia rooms having", of Poseidon, the nether world, Od. 12.21; of a temple, 3. housetop, LXX Dt. 22.8, Matthew 24:17, (II) household, family

**Doma** NAS Usage: housetop(4), housetops(2), roof(1).

**Doma** - 7x in 7v - Matt 10:27; 24:17; Mark 13:15; Luke 5:19; 12:3; 17:31; Acts 10:9

**Doma** 24v in the Lxx -

Deut 22:8; Josh 2:6, 8; Jdg 9:51; 16:27; 1Sam 9:25, 26; 2Sa 11:2; 16:22; 18:24; 2Kgs 19:26; 23:12; 2Chr 28:4; Neh 8:16; Ps 102:7; 129:6; Prov 25:24; Isa 15:3; 22:1; 37:27; Jer 19:13; 32:29; 48:38; Zeph 1:5;

**ISBE** says that "The roof ("housetop", gagh; doma) was an important part of every house and was subjected to many uses. It was used for worship (2Ki 23:12; Jer 19:13; Jer 32:29; Zeph 1:5; Acts 10:9). Absalom spread his tent on the "top of the house" (2Sa 16:22). In the Feast of the Tabernacles temporary booths (šukkāh) were erected on the housetops. The people, as is their habit today, gathered together on the roof as a common meeting-place on high days and holidays (Jdg 16:27). The wild wranglings which can be heard in any modern native village, resulting in vile accusations and exposure of family secrets hurled from the housetops of the conflicting parties, illustrate the passage, "And what ye have spoken in the ear in the inner chambers shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 12:3). ([House - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#))

**McNeile** says "They must be ready to meet the Son of Man bereft of everything." ([The Gospel according to St. Matthew](#))

**Must not go down** (2597)(**katabaino** from **kata** = down + **baíno** = go or come) means to come or go down, descend from a higher to a lower place. Jesus uses the **aorist imperative** which is a command that conveys to the one who witnesses the abomination to act now (not go down)! Don't delay!

Matthew 24:18 Whoever is in the field **must not turn back** to get his cloak: kai o en to agro me **epistrepsato** (3PAAM) opis

- **Parallel passage** in Mark 13:16. No parallel in Luke 21:20-24).

**NET** The one on the roof must not come down to take anything out of his house,

**ESV** Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,

**NIV** Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.

**NLT** A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack.

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**Whoever is in the field** - If one went to work in the field, he would take off his outer cloak and lay it at the side of the field. Jesus is saying that the charge to flee to the mountains is so urgent, that the worker should not even return to the edge of the field to retrieve his cloak, but should flee the field in order to save his life! That is how near and great is the danger!

**Gundry** - As hasty a getaway as possible is needed, even if it means leaping from roof to roof to avoid clogged streets, even if it means leaving a supposed necessity such as a cloak. (Ibid)

This warning reminds me of Jesus' words '**Remember Lot's wife**.' (Lk 17:32) In that day to be strongly attached to material things will cost one their life. So just as Lot's wife could not resist turning around to see what was happening to her home, and lost everything (Ge 19:26), so too it will be with Jews who refuse to heed Jesus' warning to flee. A cloak would be nice to have on a cold night, but it would better to retain one's life. Jesus is saying in essence "Chose life!"

**Must not turn back** (1994)(**epistrepho** from **epí** = motion toward + **strepho** = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to revert, to turn about, to turn around, to turn toward, to return and figuratively to convert. Jesus uses the **aorist imperative** which is a command that conveys a sense of urgency. Do this now! Don't delay! Just do it! Yes, cloaks are valuable, even essential to some degree for normal life, and yet as valuable as the cloak was, it was to be forsaken in lieu of flight for one's life!

**Cloak** (2440)(**himation**) describes a garment of any sort, but especially an outer garment and in the plural (ta himatia) for clothes in general. In contrast the Greek word **chitin** refers to the garment worn under the outer cloak. The **himation** was something thrown over the inner tunic (chitin) and in secular Greek was sometimes used for the Roman toga. The outer garments were often laid aside (Mt. 21:7, 8; Acts 7:58; 22:20; Ex. 22:26, 27; 1Sa 21:9; Is. 3:6, 7). The smell of garments deceived Isaac into believing it was Esau rather than Jacob (the deceiver) (Ge 27:27) **Himation** is used figuratively of the "clothing" of the created heavens (Ps 102:26, Heb 1:11-12). Joseph's loose outer garment saved him from the clutches of Potiphar's wife (Ge 39:12-13) but ironically were the evidence to substantiate her false accusation (Ge 39:18). The prophet Joel says "rend your heart and not your **garments**." Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil." (Joel 2:13)

Jesus used himation figuratively to describe the minority of believers at "Sardis who have not soiled their **garments**; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy." (Rev 3:4,5, cp Rev 3:18) which resulted in their future state of being "clothed in white garments." (Rev 3:5). See [Sketches of Jewish Social Life by Edersheim](#) (go to paragraph "eighteen garments.") Jesus clothing "**clothing** became white and gleaming." (Lk 9:29) Jesus used **himation** to illustrate the inferior aspect of the righteousness offered by the law compared to the righteousness He would make available - "no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old **garment**; for the patch pulls away from the **garment**, and a worse tear results." (Mt 9:16, 17, Mk 2:21, 22, Lk 5:36, 37). The woman was healed from her 12 years of hemorrhage when she (by faith) simply "touched the fringe of His (Jesus') **cloak**." (Mt 9:20, 21, cp Mt 14:36, Mk 5:27-30, 6:56, cp Lk 8:44) When Jesus was transfigured "His **garments** became as white as light." (Mt 17:2, Mk 9:3) On "Palm Sunday" as Jesus made his last entrance into Jerusalem riding on a coat covered with coats (Mt 21:7, Lk 19:35) "the crowd spread their coats in the road." (Mt 21:7, Mk 11:8, Lk 19:36). The high priest "tore his robes" as he accused Jesus of blasphemy! (Mt 26:65, cp Acts 14:14, 16:22) "when they had crucified Him, they divided up His **garments** among themselves by casting lots." (Mt 27:35, Mk 15:24, Jn 19:24)

Paul used **himation** in a figure of speech "when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." (Acts 18:6) The final uses of **himation** in Scripture describe our Redeemer "clothed with a **robe** dipped in blood" "And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev 19:13, 16).

**Zodhiates** adds that "The himation seems to have been a large piece of woolen cloth nearly square, which was wrapped around the body or fastened about the shoulders, and served also to wrap oneself in at night (Ex 22:26, 27); hence it might not be taken by a creditor, though the tunic could be (cf. Mt 5:40; Lu 6:29 [see Matt. 9:20, 21, 14:36; John 19:2; Acts 12:8])." (Word Study NT)



**Himation** Usage in **NAS**: cloak(8), cloaks(1), clothes(1), clothing(2), coat(4), coats(8), dresses(1), garment(8), garments(18), outer garments(2), robe(4), robes(4).

**Himation** - 60x in 58v -

Matt 5:40; 9:16, 20f; 14:36; 17:2; 21:7f; 24:18; 26:65; 27:31, 35; Mark 2:21; 5:27f, 30; 6:56; 9:3; 10:50; 11:7f; 13:16; 15:20, 24; Luke 5:36; 6:29; 7:25; 8:27, 44; 19:35f; 22:36; 23:34; John 13:4, 12; 19:2, 5, 23f; Acts 7:58; 9:39; 12:8; 14:14; 16:22; 18:6; 22:20, 23; Heb 1:11-12; Jas 5:2; 1 Pet 3:3; Rev 3:4f, 18; 4:4; 16:15; 19:13, 16

**Himation** is used about 285 times in the Septuagint -

Gen 9:23; 27:27; 28:20; 37:29, 34; 38:14, 19; 39:12f, 15f, 18; 44:13; Ex 12:34; 19:10, 14; 22:9, 26f; Lev 6:27; 10:6; 11:25, 28, 32, 40; 13:6, 34, 45, 47, 49, 51ff, 55ff; 14:8f, 47, 55; 15:5ff, 10f, 13, 17, 21f, 27; 16:4, 26, 28; 17:15f; 19:19; 21:10; Num 4:6ff, 11ff; 8:7, 21; 14:6; 15:38; 19:7f, 10, 19, 21; 20:28; 31:24; Deut 8:4; 10:18; 21:13; 22:3, 17; 24:13, 17; 29:5; Josh 7:6; 9:5, 13; Jdg 8:25f; 11:35; 14:12f, 19; 17:10; 1 Sam 4:12; 19:13, 24; 21:9; 28:8; 2 Sam 1:2, 11; 3:31; 12:20; 13:31; 14:2, 30; 19:24; 20:12; 1 Kgs 1:1; 11:29f; 12:24; 21:16; 2 Kgs 2:12; 4:39; 5:7f, 26; 6:30; 7:15; 9:13; 11:14; 18:37; 19:1; 22:11, 19; 25:29; 2 Chr 34:19, 27; Ezra 9:3, 5; Neh 4:23; 9:21; Esther 4:1, 17; 5:1; Job 1:20; 13:28; 24:7; Ps 22:18; 45:8; 102:26; 104:2, 6; 109:18f; Prov 6:27; 25:20; 27:13; 30:4; Eccl 9:8; Song 4:10f; Isa 3:6f; 4:1; 9:5; 14:19; 33:1; 37:1; 50:9; 51:6, 8; 59:6, 17; 61:10; 63:1f; Jer 36:24; 41:5; 43:12; 49:29; Ezek 16:16; 42:14; Hos 2:5, 9; Joel 2:13; Amos 2:8; Hag 2:12; Zech 3:3, 4, 5

**Matthew 24:19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days: ouai de tais en gastri echousais (PAPFDP) kai tais thelazousais (PAPFPD) en ekeinai tais hemeraiis:**

- Dt 28:53-56 2Sa 4:4 2Ki 15:16 La 4:3,4,10 Ho 13:16 Mk 13:17,18 Lk 21:23 Lk 23:29,30

### WOE TO MOTHERS: PREGNANT OR NURSING

Just as it was difficult for pregnant and nursing mothers to flee in the days of the **sign** of the Roman Armies *surrounding* the Holy City in 70 AD (see Lk 21:20-note, Lk 21:23-note, cp Lk 23:29), so too it will be difficult to flee when they see the distinctive **sign** of the abomination of desolation *standing* in the Holy Temple in the future.

While this will be a time when one should not have children, it is not as if they can anticipate when this the **abomination** can occur. **But is that really true? Can one know that the time of the abomination of desolation is about to take place?** If one interprets the "*eschatological numbers*" (see below) literally, then it is **possible** that one could have insight that the revelation of the Antichrist committing the **abomination of desolation** would soon occur. **How can one say that? What "eschatological numbers" would help?** Daniel 9:27 says the Antichrist "will make a firm covenant with the many for one week (7 years), but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering." So clearly when the Antichrist makes a seven year covenant with the nation of Israel, one can begin a countdown of 3.5 years (42 months, 1260 days) until the time when he breaks the covenant and his true devilish character and agenda are fully revealed to the Jews and to the world. Notice that putting a "stop to sacrifice and grain offering" in the (rebuilt) Temple definitely parallels with the abomination of desolation in the holy place (the rebuilt Temple). If the holy place is defiled and made desolate it is very unlikely that sacrifice and grain offering will continue in the Temple. In fact Jesus says when that day comes, it is time to flee!

**Woe** (alas) ([3759](#)) (**ouai** pronounced "oo-ah'ee," an eerie, ominous foreboding sound some say is like the cry of an eagle) is an onomatopoeic word (an imitation of the sound) which serves as an interjection expressing a cry of intense distress, displeasure or horror. It may convey a warning of impending disaster to the hearers. Most NT uses of **ouai** are in the context of warning about inevitable, impending judgment. Jesus used "**Woe**" frequently in the Gospels often in an eschatological context (Mt 24:19; Mk 13:17).

**Why "woe" to them?** Clearly it will be more difficult for pregnant women and nursing mothers to flee the coming wrath of the Antichrist (Rev 12:6-note) energized by the great wrath of Satan who is thrown down (Rev 12:9, 12, 14-note) at the midpoint of **Daniel's Seventieth Week**, which is also the beginning of the **Great Tribulation**, that last terrible 3.5 years which is "inaugurated" by the **Antichrist** (and/or his image - Rev 13:15-note) committing the **abomination** that makes the holy place (the rebuilt Jewish Temple) desolate (Mt 24:15-note, 2Th 2:4-note).

**J Vernon McGee** who I respect as an expositor makes a statement that is not as Scripturally sound as **most** of his comments - "It is believed that there will be a great population explosion at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The fact that this earth is becoming overweighted with people in our day **may be another evidence that we are approaching the end of the age**" His statement in bold is not supported by Scripture and is somewhat speculative.

**Matthew 24:20 "But **pray** that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath:**proseuchesthe** (2PPMM) de hina me genetai (3SAMS) e phuge humin cheimnos mede sabbat:**

- Ex 16:29 Acts 1:12)

**NET** Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

**ESV** Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

**NIV** Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

**NLT** And pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

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**Hiebert** - If the flight would come in the winter, during the rainy season, the rains and swollen streams would definitely add to the danger, and they would be unable to glean food from the countryside as they fled. Plummer comments, "Here prayer for temporal advantages is clearly sanctioned." ([The Gospel of Mark- An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Pray** (4336)(**proseuchomai** from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim.

**Why not winter?** Robert Gundry says that is "when heavy rains in Judea would make flight into the mountains difficult or impossible because of flooded roads and ravines." (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation, Hendrickson Publishers)

**That (hina)** is used to introduce clauses that show a purpose or goal. So the idea is pray "in order that" or "so that" your flight will not be in the winter...

**On a Sabbath** - Clearly the mention of this Jewish day of worship indicates Jesus is addressing primarily Jews and not Gentiles in the Olivet Discourse. And specifically Jesus is alluding to the original command by Moses in Ex 16:29 - "See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; **let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.**"

**Wiersbe** observes that "This entire paragraph relates only to Jews, for no Christian believer would worry about breaking a Sabbath law. This event ushers in "the Great Tribulation."

**Gundry** says "**not on... a Sabbath**" for "that is when services to travelers would be suspended and traveling when others aren't traveling would expose you to capture (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation, Hendrickson Publishers)

Acts 1:12 describes "**a Sabbath day's journey**" - The Mount of Olives was about one half mile from the city of Jerusalem, located just east and separated by the Kidron Valley. According to rabbinic limitation, a Sabbath day's journey was one thousand larger paces, equal to about 7.5 furlongs ~ 1,650 yards which was "about 2,000 cubits ~ a little more than 0.5 mile (almost one km). This was the "legal distance" the rabbis allowed Jews to journey on the Sabbath. This limitation was apparently arrived at on the basis of Ex 16:29 interpreted by Nu 35:5." (Ryrie Study Bible)

Jesus' knew that Orthodox Jews were legalistic and thus limited in how far they could travel on a Sabbath day. If the **abomination** occurred on a Sabbath, they might be loathe to leave (flee)! They might be more inclined to keep the law rather than to save their life! Thus Jesus calls them to **pray** in essence that the **abomination of desolation** would not occur on a Sabbath.

**H Porter** describes Sabbath day's Journey -

(sabbatou hodos): Used only in Acts 1:12, where it designates the distance from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, to which Jesus led His disciples on the day of His ascension. The expression comes from rabbinical usage to indicate the distance a Jew might



travel on the Sabbath without transgressing the Law, the command against working on that day being interpreted as including travel (see Exodus 16:27-30). The limit set by the rabbis to the Sabbath day's journey was 2,000 cubits from one's house or domicile, which was derived from the statement found in Joshua 3:4 that this was the distance between the ark and the people on their march, this being assumed to be the distance between the tents of the people and the tabernacle during the sojourn in the wilderness. Hence, it must have been allowable to travel thus far to attend the worship of the tabernacle. We do not know when this assumption in regard to the Sabbath day's journey was made, but it seems to have been in force in the time of Christ. The distance of the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem is stated in Josephus (Ant., XX, viii, 6) to have been five stadia or furlongs and in BJ, V, ii, 3, six stadia, the discrepancy being explained by supposing a different point of departure. This would make the distance of the Sabbath day's journey from 1,000 to 1,200 yards, the first agreeing very closely with the 2,000 cubits. The rabbis, however, invented a way of increasing this distance without technically infringing the Law, by depositing some food at the 2,000-cubit limit, before the Sabbath, and declaring that spot a temporary domicile. They might then proceed 2,000 cubits from this point without transgressing the Law.

And in some cases even this intricacy of preparation was unnecessary. If, for instance, the approach of the Sabbath found one on his journey, the traveler might select some tree or some stone wall at a distance of 2,000 paces and mentally declare this to be his residence for the Sabbath, in which case he was permitted to go the 2,000 paces to the selected tree or wall and also 2,000 paces beyond, but in such a case he must do the work thoroughly and must say: "Let my Sabbath residence be at the trunk of that tree," for if he merely said: "Let my Sabbath residence be under that tree," this would not be sufficient, because the expression would be too general and indefinite (Tractate `Erubhin 4:7).

Other schemes for extending the distance have been devised, such as regarding the quarter of the town in which one dwells, or the whole town itself, as the domicile, thus allowing one to proceed from any part of the town to a point 2,000 cubits beyond its utmost limits. This was most probably the case with walled towns, at least, and boundary stones have been found in the vicinity of Gaza with inscriptions supposed to mark these limits. The 2,000-cubit limits around the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:5) may have suggested the limit of the Sabbath day's journey also. The term came to be used as a designation of distance which must have been more or less definite. ([ISBE Sabbath Day's Journey](#)) (See also [Sabbath Days Journey - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#))