



Awaiting His Return

A straightforward study of the end of the age

Reed and Elizabeth Hewitt

Creators of LivingStrategically.com

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Introduction

The Word of God provides us numerous details about the second coming of Jesus the Messiah and the events leading up to it. Paul calls it "the summing up of all things *in Christ...*" (Ephesians 1:10). And that reminds us that Christ is the purpose of the storyline. We read in the opening of the book of Revelation that it's the revelation *of Jesus Christ* that He gives to us. It's all about Him who is and who was and who is to come.



So as we start this study together, let's keep Jesus as the focus. To make this a *straightforward* study, we won't get wrapped up in *all* the details but rather emphasize the main ideas. We will stick to Scripture and be wary of concepts of the end times that form from the "traditions of man". And we will have peace knowing that God, the author of history, has the entire plan under His control and He is faithful to complete it.

God's plan for the end times can be summarized by answering the following questions:

Who?	Christ Jesus, our King of kings and Lord of lords, who is also called Faithful and True (Rev. 17:14, 19:16, and 19:11)
What?	The summing up of all things in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:10)
When?	"I am coming quickly." (Rev. 22:7, 20)
Where?	Heaven and earth shall pass away, but there will be a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem (the holy city, where the Lord God the Almighty and the Messiah are its temple). (Rev. 21:1-2, 22)
Why?	Jesus returns "...to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12) and to establish His kingdom upon the earth (Rev. 21:3-5).

As Christians, our role in this story is to heed the warnings, witness to the lost, and yearn for the return of Christ, for the time is near. Let's dive into the study!

Signs of the Times

From cover to cover, the Bible tells God's story of redemption over the course of human history, which can be summarized in three key points. In the very first chapters of the Bible, sin enters the world and mankind has need of a Savior. In the New Testament, Jesus gives His life as a sacrificial substitution for our sins. And we learn that He is coming again to reign on earth forevermore.

It's been said that the Bible is one-third history, one-third poetry, and one-third prophecy. That's a lot of prophecy! We are told in Revelation 19:10 that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". If we want to study the full story of Jesus the Messiah, then we must become students of prophecy.



Since *all* that was prophesied about the first coming of Messiah was fulfilled, we can have faith in the *complete* fulfillment of the events pertaining to His second coming as well. Jesus told His disciples in Luke 24:44, "...*all things* which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Every prophetic event that is prophesied in Scripture will eventually come to pass!

Jesus Describes Things to Come

Shortly before His crucifixion, the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked for details about when He would return to set up His kingdom. "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)

Let's read this key passage in Matthew 24 and hear directly from Christ Jesus what is to come. (We have highlighted the main events in bold.)

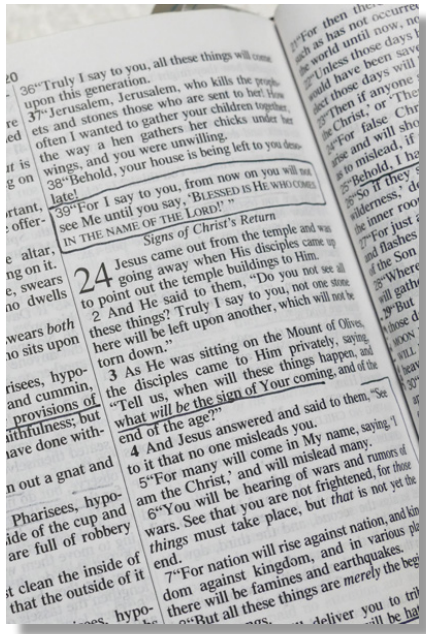
Matthew 24:4-16 and 24:21-31 (NASB):

⁴ *And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.*

⁵ *For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will **mislead many**.*

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.*

Every prophetic event that is prophesied in Scripture will eventually come to pass!



⁷ For **nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.**

⁸ But all these things are merely the **beginning of birth pangs.**

⁹ Then they will **deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.**

¹⁰ At that time **many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.**

¹¹ Many **false prophets will arise and will mislead many.**

¹² Because **lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.**

¹³ But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

¹⁴ This **gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.**

¹⁵ Therefore when you see the **abomination of desolation** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

²¹ For then there will be a **great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

²² Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him.

²⁴ For **false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.**

²⁵ Behold, I have told you in advance.

²⁶ So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them.

²⁷ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the **sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **Son of Man coming on the clouds** of the sky with power and great glory.

³¹ And He will send forth His angels with a **great trumpet [shofar]** and they will **gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Jesus gives us a tremendous gift in Matthew 24 (also recorded in Luke 21 and Mark 13). He wants His followers to be on the lookout for signs of His return, so He spells out exactly what to be looking for. There are many other passages in the Bible pertaining to the second coming, but this is one of our favorites because it comes directly from Christ Jesus and it is quite straightforward.

Summary of Events from Matthew 24

From the above passage, let's put together a summary of events building up to the end of the age. It is important to note that the signs increase in intensity and frequency the closer we get to Messiah's return, just like contractions (birth pangs) increase in intensity and frequency for a woman in childbirth.

- False messiahs
- Wars and rumors of wars
- Famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places

"But all these things are *merely the beginning of birth pangs.*" (verse 8)

- Persecution and martyrdom of believers all over the world
- Great falling away, betrayals, hatred within the Body of Christ
- False prophets, lawlessness (especially against God's laws and authority)

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." (verse 13)

- Abomination of desolation standing in the holy place
- Great tribulation, unlike anything since the beginning of the world
- False messiahs and false prophets displaying great signs and wonders, trying to mislead
- Celestial signs in the sun, moon, and stars; heavens shaken
- Return of Christ, coming on the clouds at the last trump

Note that the abomination of desolation is a critical reference point in this sequence of events. The Bible does not give a specific timeline for events before the abomination of desolation but it does for events afterwards.

The signs of the times detailed in Matthew 24:4-14 (the first half of the passage) have been



happening since the resurrection of Jesus around AD 30, and He even makes the point that we should not interpret them as signaling "the end".

However, once the abomination of desolation takes place, we have a clear timeline given by Daniel the prophet and reiterated in the book of Revelation. The Bible is very clear that Christ will return 3½ years after the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place, meaning in a yet future temple in Jerusalem.

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The Great Tribulation

During this final 3½ year period before Jesus returns, the world will experience the Great Tribulation. Satan and his false prophets will display great signs and false wonders with every kind of wicked deception so as to mislead many. He will stir up all kinds of evil, especially against believers in Jesus the Messiah.

Even so, we believe it will be a time of great revival where a flood of new believers will put their faith in Christ Jesus!

Reflect on these verses:

*[They were] strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through **many tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22*

*...what **persecutions** I [Paul] endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be **persecuted**. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:11-13*

*But the one who **endures to the end**, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:13-14*



End of the Age

After 3½ years of the Great Tribulation, Christ Jesus returns at the last trump/shofar to set up His kingdom on earth! This is where God's prophetic story reaches a climax in a period known as the "day of the Lord", which refers to the second coming of Christ.

Before we turn to the final four chapters of the Bible (Revelation 19-22) to see what happens from the day of the Lord onward, let's first reflect on the following verses to gain an understanding of the key details pertaining to the day of the Lord's return.



Reflect on these verses:

*The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood
before the great and awesome **day of the Lord** comes. Joel 2:31*

*But **immediately after the tribulation of those days** the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Matthew 24:29*

*Behold, the **day of the Lord** is coming...
For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light;
The sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light.
Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity...
Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place
At the fury of the Lord of hosts in the day of His burning anger. Isaiah 13:9-13*

*...when the **Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven** with His mighty angels in flaming
fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey
the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8*

*I [Paul] have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me **on that day**; and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for **His appearing**. 2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until **the coming of the Lord**, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet [shofar] of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18*

*Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**; for the trumpet [shofar] will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:50-52*

From these verses (and numerous other passages in the Bible) we see repeating themes for the day of the Lord's return. It is a day of mourning for those who don't know Jesus as Lord and Savior, but in contrast, a day of rejoicing for those who do!

The day of the Lord is immediately preceded by celestial signs in the sun, moon, and stars, with the heavens and earth shaken. Then, the Son of Man appears in the clouds at the last trumpet/shofar, coming to punish sinners for their wickedness and put an end to mankind's rebellion against God. But for those who have longed for His appearing (the Christians/His elect) there will be a crown of righteousness waiting for them.

When Jesus returns with His angels, His elect will be gathered from all over the world. The dead will rise first and then Christians who are still living at Christ's return will be caught up with them in the clouds. In a split second, we will all receive heavenly bodies!



The Culmination of All Things

Unless you have been a student of Bible prophecy, you may be surprised to learn that God has many events planned after the day of the Lord. That's not the end of His story (history)!

Let's use the following outline as we individually read the last four chapters of Revelation on our own. We'll begin with Revelation 19:11 and read to the end of chapter 22.



- Jesus returns, with the armies of heaven, to strike down the nations and make war in righteousness (19:11-16)
- Battle of Armageddon (19:17-21)
- Beast and False Prophet thrown into Lake of Fire (19:20)
- Satan bound for 1,000 years (20:1-3)
- Millennial reign of Jesus with His saints (20:4-6)
- Satan released from his prison, consumed by fire from heaven, and permanently thrown into the Lake of Fire (20:7-10)
- Great white throne judgment, where the dead are judged according to their deeds if not found in the Book of Life (20:11-15)
- New heavens and new earth and the holy city, the New Jerusalem - where the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Rev. 21-22)

At the end of the age, Christ Jesus makes all things new. There will be no more death or curse of sin. And those whose names are found in the Book of Life will serve the King of kings and Lord of lords forevermore!

The Millennium and Eternity

When studying the End Times, it is easy to focus on the doom and gloom of the Great Tribulation, the rise of the antichrist, and the lawlessness of the age. But the outline in the previous section shows two points that deserve more explanation, and which make up for every moment of darkness and catastrophe that preceded them!

The Millennium

The millennial reign of Jesus begins at the seventh trumpet in Revelation:

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." Revelation 11:7

His first act is to return to earth, gather His saints by resurrection and rapture, and wage history's most devastating, one-sided war against the antichrist. He will restore peace and order to the world and heal the scars of the Great Tribulation in this period of rest and renewal. If you've ever imagined what the world would be like without corrupt politicians, organized crime, and all the injustices of society, then the millennial reign of Jesus is what you are longing for. Just as God concluded His work in creation with a sabbath day of rest, He will conclude history with a sabbath millennium.

Some have asked why God would delay eternity by inserting this thousand-year period at the end of the age. If evil has been vanquished and the saints have been transformed into their eternal form, then why not jump straight to the new heavens and the new earth?

We believe that God had a purpose from the beginning of creation that has not yet been fulfilled. He intended for man to rule over the earth while remaining in perfect fellowship with God. Adam failed in that mission because of sin, which could only be atoned for by the death of a perfect man. Jesus became a human being in His first coming to serve as the perfect sacrifice, but He remained human in His resurrection. As a human, He will fulfill God's original role that was given to mankind, exercising righteous dominion over the earth. He even begins by doing what Adam should have done in the Garden of Eden: kicking Satan out. With Jesus on the throne and with the influence of Satan banished, creation will become a redeemed version of what it was originally intended to be. (See Isaiah 11 for more about the millennium.)

At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released for one final (and futile) rebellion, followed by the final judgment, and then comes eternity.

Eternity

The Bible's description of the new heavens and the new earth is brief, but exceptionally vivid.

It will be a universe of unimaginable beauty and brilliance, the best of heaven and the best of earth rolled into one. The very presence of God will reside with mankind. Not only will death be a thing of the past, but the Bible even says, "there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain" (Revelation 21:4). There will be no chance of repeating the fall of man.

The new creation will be perfect, and it will go on forever, which might be the most difficult part for us to truly comprehend. In our brief lifetimes, we have no frame of reference for infinite time. Eternity will make the whole of human history appear fleeting by comparison, like the pain of labor and delivery compared to a lifetime of the joys of parenthood. It might take us a few thousand years (or even a few million) to get an inkling of what it means to live *forever*.

With the millennium and eternity in mind, we can find the motivation and sense of hope that we need to remain faithful until the day of the Lord.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:10-13



But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant...

Hebrews 12:22-24

Tree of Life

God's prophetic story starts and ends with Jesus the Messiah. Ephesians 1:10 tells us, *"The plan of the fullness of times is to bring all things together in the Messiah—both things in heaven and things on earth, all in Him."*

When sin entered the world at the beginning of this age, mankind needed a Savior. Our sin nature separated us from God Almighty and we could only be united again if a sinless offering was given in our place. Christ Jesus came as God's one and only Son to die for you and me, so that we could have eternal life with Him.



If you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus, the end times events that we've covered in this eBook may bring uncertainty and fear. But for those who are God's children, we have been redeemed through His blood and saved from eternal wrath.

We read in the final chapter of God's Word that Jesus is coming again to render to every human according to what they have done during their time on earth. Only those who have the blood of Jesus covering their sins will have the right to the Tree of Life and spend eternity with Him in Heaven.

Reflect on these verses:

And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

*Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong;
and the one who is filthy, still be filthy;
and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness;
and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy."*

*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me,
to render to every man according to what he has done.*

*I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

*Jesus is coming
again to render
to every human
according to
what they have
done during their
time on earth.*

*Blessed are those who wash their robes,
so that they may have the right to the tree of life,
and may enter by the gates into the city.
Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons
and the murderers and the idolaters,
and everyone who loves and practices lying.*

*"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches.
I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."*

*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."
And let the one who hears say, "Come."
And let the one who is thirsty come;
let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.*

*I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book:
if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;
and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy,
God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city,
which are written in this book.*

*He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

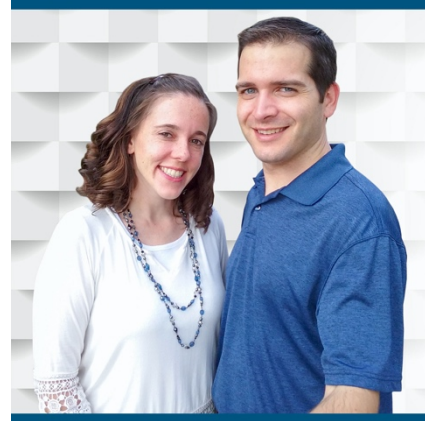
Revelation 22:10-21 (NASB)

Bottom line – all of history is centered on Jesus the Messiah and His return is coming soon.
Have you asked Him to become your Lord and Savior? Will you spend eternity with Him?

About Us

Living Strategically is not an organization or company. It is a strategic mindset that we attempt to live by and share with other Christians.

We are Reed and Elizabeth Hewitt, a husband and wife team that lives in South Texas. For our day jobs, we are Communications Consultants. In 2013, we felt led to create LivingStrategically.com to utilize our backgrounds in education and communications to influence our culture for Christ.



Our foundational verses are Ephesians 5:15-17:

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,
making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

We define *living strategically* as using our time, energy, money, and talents in ways that make an impact for eternity. It is investing our temporal assets to gain eternal dividends. It is acting with great intention and purpose, knowing that one day we will give an account to the Lord for our stewardship of His assets.

We hope you will join us on this journey as we help you strategically pursue your God-given purpose and make the most of your time on earth. If you'd like to get in touch, email us at info@livingstrategically.com.

Alright y'all, until next time...
keep living strategically!

Reed & Liz Hewitt

Helping you strategically pursue your God-given purpose.
www.LivingStrategically.com