

Matthew 24:6-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-24/matthew-246-14/>

Jesus answers the disciples' third question first. Their question was "What will be the sign of the end of the age?" He answered that it will come after greatly increased lawlessness, and after the gospel of the kingdom is preached in the entire world as a testimony to all the nations.

The parallel gospel accounts of this teaching are found in Mark 13:7-13 and Luke 21:9-20.

After *Jesus* warned His disciples to not become deceived by the many false Messiahs who would appear, He answered their three questions regarding the destruction of the temple, His ascension to the Messianic throne, and *the end* of the age. He answered their last question first.

This third question was "What will be the sign of *the end* of the age?"

He began by telling His disciples what the final sign would *not* be: *You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars*. Neither actual *wars* nor potential *wars* (*rumors of wars*) will be the sign that *the end* of the age has come. Jesus said *see to it that you are not frightened* by news and rumors of these events.

The Greek word translated as *frightened* in this verse is not the typical Greek word for "fear." The usual term for fear is "phobeo" and we get the English word "phobia" from it. "Phobeo" can mean to be terrified or scared. But the Greek term used in this verse that is translated as *frightened* is pronounced "throeho." This term occurs only three times in the New Testament. And one of the other two occurrences is in Mark's parallel passage of Jesus's admonition (Mark 13:7). "Throeo" is a less intense term than "phobeo." "Throeo" means to be "startled" or "alarmed" or "bothered." Jesus certainly did not want His disciples to become terrified by the reports of *wars* when He told them *not* to become *frightened*. But more to His point, He told them to *see to it that* when you hear of these things that *you* don't become alarmed or bothered by them. In other words, "Don't let them upset or distract *you*. Stay focused on your mission."

The reason why the disciples should not become alarmed or bothered was because *that is not yet the end*. He said *for those things must take place*. The world, ever since the Fall of man in Genesis 3 has been at war with itself. This pattern *must* continue until God's redemption is complete, and the power and presence of sin are no more. As has been the case since the days of Adam, Jesus said *for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*. This is nothing new.

So too, *will there be in various places* natural disasters such as *famines and earthquakes*. Luke recorded that Jesus included "plagues" and "terrors and great signs from heaven" to these disasters (Luke 21:11). The Apostle Paul describes how the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth (together with God's sons and daughters) with anxious longing for the day of redemption (Romans 8:19-23). *Earthquakes*, floods, volcanoes, pandemics, hurricanes, and *famines* all became part of our world when we disobeyed God and tried to become like Him

based on our own reason and experience (Genesis 3:4-7). These disasters will continue to occur until God makes everything new (Revelation 21:5). When they occur, do *not* become suddenly alarmed (“throeo”) that *the end* must be near.

Jesus described *these* human and natural disorders as *merely the beginning of birth pangs*. They do not indicate *the end*. They do not even indicate the beginning of *the end*. *These birth pangs* have been ongoing ever since the introduction of sin and death into God’s perfect world. *Birth pangs* occur over a period of time, and get more severe as the *birth* approaches. They are a sign that the *birth* is on the way, but they are not the *birth* itself.

But birth pangs do grow increasingly frequent, severe, and painful. And that is what Jesus described when He said *they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name*.

The phrase *because of My name* could simply mean that the disciples *will be killed and hated because all the nations* hate Jesus (John 15:18-20). But this phrase could also mean something like, “for the advancement and glory of My name’s sake” or so that “*the gospel of My name* is proclaimed” (Matthew 10:39). Both meanings are likely intended. Mark’s record includes an additional warning: “Be on your guard” (Mark 13:9) with this statement. This indicates that Jesus expected us to encounter and endure circumstantial difficulty while awaiting His return.

Luke wrote an extended version of this remark (Luke 21:12-20). In it, Jesus revealed that the “*they who will deliver you*” over to persecutors will include your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends (Luke 21:16). In Luke’s account, Jesus also revealed to whom *they will deliver you*: “synagogues and prisons” (religious leaders); and “kings and governors” (political leaders) (Luke 21:12). In Luke’s record, Jesus shared that the reason why these things will take place is “for My name’s sake” (Luke 21:12). He explained that these trials “will lead to an opportunity for your testimony [about Christ and His gospel]” (Luke 21:13).

Jesus prepared His disciples for this coming difficulty and He instructed them.

“So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.”
(Luke 21:14-15)

This extended version of Jesus’s answer in Luke’s gospel was similar to what Jesus told His disciples when He first sent them out to preach *the kingdom* of heaven to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6-7; 10:17-22). At that time, He also commanded them to “be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

Then He was preparing them to proclaim *the kingdom* only to the Jews (Matthew 10:5). Now, He was preparing them to preach *this same gospel of the kingdom* throughout *the whole world* among *all the nations*. The *gospel* and *the kingdom* were the same on both occasions. But now that the Jews had rejected Jesus as Messiah (Matthew 23:37-39), He was informing His disciples that the scope and reach of *this gospel* just became much, much wider. The same shrewdness and

innocence would likely be needed for the wider mission Jesus was now describing, to take the good news of Jesus to the entire world.

Jesus was still prefacing His answer to the third question (which He answers first) regarding when will be the end of the age, and said, *at that time many will fall away* indicating that *many* of His own followers will be deceived and begin to actively work against *the gospel* and join *all* the *nations* in fighting against His *kingdom*. Sadly, *many* parents, brothers, relatives, and friends (Luke 21:16) *will betray one another and hate one another*.

Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many before the end of the age comes. These *false prophets* could be the *false* Messiahs that Jesus warned His disciples of in His preface to His answers (Matthew 24:4-5). If they are not the same group, they are at least very similar in their evil purpose and harmful effect.

But among these false prophets will likely be the figure whom John identifies as “antichrist” (1 John 2:18). Paul called this figure the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). (See also Daniel 8:23-26; 11:31-39; Revelation 17:7-14). Jesus said that *lawlessness* will increase during the time leading up to *the end* of the age, and the man of *lawlessness*, the antichrist or beast, will likely have something to do with this increase.

Jesus revealed that things would grow so intense that breakdowns of social order would occur. *Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold*. When interactions with others turn violent, it is natural for people to stop caring for their neighbors, and to perceive and treat them as rivals or threats to their lives or security. This environment sounds quite similar to the situation described in Genesis 6:11, which describes the earth as being “filled with violence,” the situation that caused God to judge *the world* by destroying it with a flood.

All this *increased* chaos in nature, the amplification of *nations* raging and *kingdoms* warring against themselves, and the pandemic of *lawlessness* will engulf the world. As awful as it sounds, it is at least imaginable then how believers in Jesus who have been commanded to *love* others (Matthew 5:44; 22:39; John 15:12) would turn cold, and stop loving. But that is a death of caring. A death of loving your neighbor is a death to be avoided at all costs (John 15:13).

Jesus states: *But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved*. The Greek word translated here as *saved* is “sozo.” “Sozo” means “something is being delivered from something.” It is translated “well” in Matthew 9:22 when the woman is delivered from an illness through faith in Jesus. The context determines what is being delivered from what.

In this case, the context is about lawlessness causing *love* to *grow cold*. Jesus here is speaking of His followers being *saved* from having their *love grow cold*. The primary command Jesus gave His followers was to *love* one another (John 13:34-35, 15:12,17). This is our primary testimony to the world, and if we allow our *love* to *grow cold*, we lose our witness. Jesus warned the church at Ephesus that if they lost their *love*, their witness would be removed (Revelation 2:1-7). If we lose our *love*, we lose the entire purpose Jesus gave us to live in this world. If we do not follow the purpose Jesus gave us, we will lose the great reward He promises if we follow His ways. In order to keep *love* from growing *cold*, we need to *endure to the end* of the age.

As things get more and more lawless, we must continue to endure in loving, notwithstanding. If we do this, then we *will be saved* and delivered from great loss. Even though Jesus is speaking here specifically of enduring until *the end* of the age, when lawlessness abounds, this principle can be applied to enduring until *the end* of our lives. If we continue to endure in faithfulness, we will be:

- *saved* from missing *the kingdom* (Matthew 7:13-14; 2 Peter 1:10-11).
- *saved* from missing out on the Messianic Banquet at His inauguration (Matthew 8:11-12).
- *saved* from becoming fruitless in the kingdom (Matthew 13:18-23; John 15:6; 2 Peter 1:8)
- *saved* from being ashamed at His coming (Mark 8:38).
- *saved* from losing your eternal inheritance (Mark 10:17).
- *saved from* having the thief steal, kill, and destroy your abundant life (John 10:10).
- *saved* from squandering your opportunity to become a co-heir with Christ by suffering with Him (Romans 8:17).
- *saved* from losing your reward, even as you yourself are saved so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:15).
- *saved* from clinging to the rubbish of this world and missing the prize of God's upward call (Philippians 2:8, 14).
- *saved* from being denied your divinely appointed opportunity to reign with Him in the new heaven and earth (2 Timothy 2:12).
- *saved* from being disapproved and not receiving the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12)
- *saved* from not opening the door and dining with Jesus and being invited to sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:20-21)
- *saved* from losing our life/soul—"pusche" (Matthew 10:39; 16:26; Luke 24-25; Hebrews 10:39)

In Luke's account of this teaching, Jesus said all of this when He explained "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives" (Luke 21:18-19). The word for "lives" in Luke 21:19 is "psuche"—soul/life. The phrase "not a hair of your head will perish" is not a guarantee that you won't be physically hurt. Just before Jesus said this, He explicitly told the disciples "they will put some of you to death" (Luke 21:16). Rather this was an expression of

assurance that no real or lasting harm will come to *you* even as they persecute, betray, torture, and kill you (1 Peter 4:19).

Those who continue steadfastly in *love*, even though there is betrayal, *lawlessness*, and likely violence surrounding them, will be delivered from having their *love grow cold*:

“Blessed (“makarios”) are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 5:10)

The events that Jesus described in these statements have occurred both before He came to earth and have been occurring throughout *the world* ever since. All of the disciples would be persecuted, and most would be murdered for their faith. Countless faithful have been persecuted across the centuries and are to this very day hunted down, arrested, and killed. *These birth pangs* are *not* the sign that *the end* is here.

The sign that Jesus gave that the end is near is that *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*.

The end of the age will come only after the *gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations*. This might be done by those believers who *endure to the end* of the age and continue to live for Jesus and share *the gospel*, those who are delivered from their love growing *cold*. It also could be aided by events such as that in Revelation 14:6, where an angel flies through heaven preaching the everlasting *gospel*. Perhaps that is needed because *the love of many have grown cold*.

As the nations rage (Psalm 2), *lawlessness increases*, and the creation groans for its redemption (Romans 8:19-22), so are we to suffer with Jesus and shine our light amidst the gathering darkness. To be salt amidst the tastelessness of *the world* until *the end* is over and Christ has come.

This concludes Jesus’s answer to the disciples’ third and last question about the demolition of the temple; His coming; and *the end* of the age. This is the question that Jesus answered first.

The end of the age will come when this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations. When *the end* of the age comes, Jesus will return and inaugurate a new kingdom, and launch a new age in which He is the King dwelling upon the earth.

Next, Jesus answered the second question “*What will be the sign of your coming?*” asked by the disciples, as He is answering them in reverse order.

Biblical Text

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. 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.