

PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH

Part I

Text: Matthew 24:1-51

Key Word: Deception

Key Thought: We must Be Aware of False Christ's and False Prophets

If you were to ask most evangelical leaders what they thought the next major event is for the church, I'm sure you would get a diversity of answers. I don't believe that many would disagree with the Biblical teaching of the Return of Christ. Yet there are three main views on the Rapture of the Church and the Return of Christ.

Dr. Paul D. Feinberg (Th.D.) is the professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Dr. Gleason L. Archer Jr. (Ph.D.) is professor emeritus of Old Testament and Semitic Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Dr. Douglas Moo (Ph. D) is professor of New Testament Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. **All three are well known and well-respected teachers and authors from the same divinity school. Yet they are hold different positions on the Rapture of the Church.**

Dr. Feinberg is a **Pre-tribulationist**; Dr. Archer is a **Mid-tribulationist** and Dr. Moo is a **Post-tribulationist**. You may find it surprising that three distinguished teachers all from the same divinity school believe differently. They are very well versed in the Bible. They have all taken extensive studies in both Hebrew and Greek. They are prolific writers. How can they be so different on their interpretation of Biblical eschatology? It simply goes to show that none of us needs to stand up and boldly proclaim that we have all the answers.

The disciples were curious as well about some very important questions dealing with future events. They asked three questions.

1. When will this happen?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

They asked these three questions because of what Jesus had said to them as they were leaving from Herod's majestic temple.

"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Matthew 24:2

What Were These Disciples Told about the Signs Proceeding the Return of Christ?

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8)
II. THE INCREASE OF PERSECUTION (Matthew 24:9-10)
III. THE ABUNDANCE OF OPPORTUNITY (Matthew 24:12-14)

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8)

One thing I must make clear is that there are two important events still to take place. One is the **Rapture of the Church** and the other is the **Second Coming or the Return of Christ** to earth. Jesus does not return to earth during the Rapture. We will meet Him in the clouds of heaven. On the Second Coming His feet will touch “terra firma.”

Jesus began by compacting many events into a few verses of Scripture.

A. Deception by False Messiahs (Matthew 24:4,5,24)

“The names of 24 false Messiahs are recorded as having appeared between the time of the Emperor Adrian (AD. 76-138) and the year 1682.”

[Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

Josephus the Jewish historian wrote about many false christs who deceived thousands of people into a false liberty and many were killed by Felix (the governor of Judah) in the wilderness (cf. Acts 21:38). Simon Magnus convinced many that he was the great power of God (Acts 8:10). There was also Theudas who led 4,000 men to their death.

There are at least 3,500 self-proclaimed Messiahs in the United States alone today. Most have insignificant followings. The Bible warns us that this will happen.

B. Deception of False Prophets (Matthew 24:11; 24)

Our generation has not escaped the influences of false prophets. We still are affected by the false prophecies of Joseph Smith in 1830 (The Church of Christ of the Latter Day Saints - Mormons); Charles Taze Russell & Samuel Rutherford founded in 1872 (The Jehovah Witnesses); Mary Baker Eddy died in 1910 (Christian Science); Sun Myung Moon died Sept 2010 (Unification Church); Jim Jones (The People's Temple - Johnstown, Gyana - 1978 [900+ poisoned]); Victor Paul Weirwille died in 1985 (The Way International); and David Koresh (Branch Davidians - 1993)

We will always have false prophets. I feel they are more dangerous than false messiahs because most people are not foolish enough to follow someone who claims to be Christ. My greater concern is about those who preach false doctrines and lead people from the truth of God's Word. Therefore, I'm going to take the rest of my time to speak about these prophets.

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8) (Contd.)

B. Deception of False Prophets (Matthew 24:11; 24) (Contd.)

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

16. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?

17. Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

19. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 7:15-20

*"But there were also **false prophets** among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -- bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

2. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

3. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping."

II Peter 2:1-3

*"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many **false prophets** have gone out into the world.*

2. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

3. but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, that spirit is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world"

I John 4:1-3

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8) (Contd.)

B. Deception of False Prophets (Matthew 24:11; 24) (Contd.)

1. Two Kinds of False Prophets

The first is a **lying false prophet** who announces events or says things that do not come true. He is obviously a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). The penalty in Old Testament times was death for false prophets (Deuteronomy 18:20). This kind of false prophet is the most easily recognized and least dangerous of the two.

The second kind of false prophet is more deceptive (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). He is impeccable in his words at first. An exhortation comes to pass. No fault can be found with his speech. **Nevertheless, over time he draws the hearts of the people away from the Lord God Almighty.** Finally, he leads them off to serve other gods. This kind of person is very dangerous, indeed the more dangerous of the two.

2. Four Kinds of False Prophecy

The details of these false prophecies are listed in Jeremiah 14:14.

False Visions: These may come from the evil heart of the false prophet, or they may come from an evil spirit that controls him. The false visions are truly "seen" by the false prophet, but their source is devilish.

Divinations: Diviners may examine the entrails of animals or how rice floats in water. Or they may use a thousand other ways to divine. But their information is finally false even though some things may appear to be true, and entrapment of the simple is made easy. **True prophets of God do not read palms, tea leaves or witch water.**

Idolatry: This breaking of the first of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3) is the third form of false prophecy. Idols in themselves are nothing at all (Jeremiah 10:1-5). However, if they are seized by demons, then the idols reflect the power of the demons involved. The Ten Commandments explicitly forbids idols or graven images of any kind. When demons empower the idols, it is not long before prophecies emerge from the demons. We dare not have anything with such demons (1 Corinthians 10:21). Their prophecies are false.

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8) (Contd.)

B. Deception of False Prophets (24:11; 24) (Contd.)

2. Four Kinds of False Prophecy

Delusions: These may not necessarily come from the devil. They may simply be fabricated by the persons themselves. They are still false, however, and very dangerous. Jeremiah reminds us that even though false prophets prophesy and say all kinds of fascinating things, the Almighty is saying, "*I did not send them*" (*Jeremiah 14:15*).

These **willing listeners are under judgment** just as severe as those who prophesy falsely:

"They are not . . . excused because false prophets told them lies, for they have given credit to these lies."

C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch
Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes
(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), volume 8, 250

This message will be completed in a few weeks. In the meantime we need to all be sensitive and cautious to the information that we accept as truth.

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Date: Aug 7/22

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: You Alone/Draw Me - D

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What Were These Disciples Told about the Signs Proceeding the Return of Christ?

I. THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PAINS (Matthew 24:4-8)

A. Deception by False Messiahs (24:4,5,24) - *cf. Acts 21:38; Acts 8:10*

B. Deception of False Prophets (24:11; 24) - *Matthew 7:15-20; II Peter 2:1-3; I John 4:1-3*

1. Two Kinds of False Prophets - *Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Deuteronomy 13:1-3*
2. Four Kinds of False Prophecy - *Jeremiah 14:14*

False Visions:

Divinations:

Idolatries: *Exodus 20:3; Jeremiah 10:1-5; I Corinthians 10:21*

Delusions: *Jeremiah 14:15*