

Matthew 24:1-14 & Questions

A question on many minds is: Where does the COVID-19 pandemic fit into end time prophecies? Is it one of the plagues mentioned in Revelation?

I don't think it is actually one of the plagues because each of them seem much more widespread and severe than COVID-19 has been. Now, I know we're not all the way through this epidemic cycle yet and many medical experts are predicting that we will face a devastating second round.

But, while I don't see this as one of the plagues I do believe it has a spot in Bible prophecy. And we find that spot in [Matthew 24](#). So, for the first part of our service, we're going to take a look at this passage.

Matthew 24:1-14

Jesus had finished a scathing rebuke of the Jewish religious leaders and then declared the Temple would be left desolate and He would not be back there again.

This shocked the disciples so much that they took the opportunity to point out how big and beautiful it was as they were on their way out. Jesus shocked them further when He said:

"Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down." ([Matthew 24:2](#), CSB)

They then left Jerusalem and went up to the Mount of Olives where the disciples approached Jesus with this question:

"Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" ([Matthew 24:3](#), CSB)

It seems the disciples thought the destruction of the temple was so momentous it would happen at Jesus' coming and the end of the world.

Jesus then did what is often true with Bible Prophecy – He gave a prophecy that was fulfilled in their time (regarding the destruction of the temple) but also looked down to the end of time. He said:

"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many." ([Matthew 24:4-5](#), CSB)

This has happened all throughout history to one extent or another.

"You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." ([Matthew 24:6-7](#), CSB)

There have been almost constant wars down through history, so this isn't something new.

"... There will be famines and earthquakes in various places." ([Matthew 24:7](#), CSB)

In the footnote to this passage, it says that multiple early manuscripts add *epidemics* here – both the King James Version (KJV) and New King James Version (NKJV) use the word *pestilences*. But again, there have been multiple famines, earthquakes, and epidemics all down through history. So what makes them a sign of the end?

Verse 8 gives us the answer:

"All these events are the beginning of labor pains." ([Matthew 24:8](#), CSB)

If you're reading from the KJV or the NKJV it says:

"All these are the beginning of sorrows." ([Matthew 24:8](#), NKJV)

"... beginning of labor pains" is the literal translation of this passage.

Now, I'm not an expert on labor pains. I have never experienced them and since both our children were adopted, I have never watched them in action.

However, this is what I understand about them. They generally start out less intense and spaced out a bit. And then they become more intense and more frequent the closer you get to birth.

So, what does this tell us about the time of the end?

It is telling us that as we approach the end of time, wars and rumors of wars, along with natural disasters, famines, and epidemics will increase in number and severity.

Is this what we're seeing? It sure appears so to me.

Now, this is not necessarily saying it's right at the door. We don't know how much longer it will be until the end comes, but these increases are definitely a sign Jesus pointed to. Jesus went on:

"Then they will hand you over to be persecuted, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one another." ([Matthew 24:9-10](#), CSB)

We see all this taking place around us right now. There are many places in the world where Jesus' followers are hated and are being persecuted and killed. In fact, there are more people losing their lives for Jesus' sake right now than at any other time in this world's history.

"Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." ([Matthew 24:11](#), CSB)

We see countless false teachers and self-proclaimed prophets pointing to a false gospel. And then Jesus ended His list of bad signs with this:

“Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12, CSB)

I don't remember a time during my lifetime when people have been so hateful towards others as they are right now. One only has to read a few lines in many Facebook posts to see this. People with differences of opinion can hardly communicate without resorting to ridicule, sarcasm, and hateful expressions.

But all these things are not the final, determining factor. He's not waiting for the world to get bad enough. It has always been bad. He's waiting for something to get finished.

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved. This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:13-14, CSB)

The word *endures* suggest to me the idea of holding on. It sounds like a commitment. It sounds like what we have just spent several Sabbath's studying – staying connected to Jesus regardless of what else happens.

And then the thing that will flip the final switch – the good news about God will reach everyone on this earth. Then, and only then, will Jesus come. Because Jesus wants everyone to have a chance.

Questions

Question 1: How do you explain Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-35 to someone who believes in the rapture?

Here are the two verses in question:

“Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.” (Matthew 24:40-41, NLT)

“... That night two people will be asleep in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.” (Luke 17:34-35, NLT)

First of all, these verses do not really prove anything one way or the other regarding the rapture. They simply state that some will be saved and some will be lost.

Understanding which one will be saved and which one will be lost is a little difficult but Scripture does give us some hints.

In this section, Jesus appears to use what is referred to as *Judgement and Remnant Language*. This simply means when God moves in Judgement, there are always two groups – the group suffering the consequences and a remnant (or a small group) that is saved. This is not because God is trying to increase the suffering, but because the majority have turned away from Him and are reaping the results of that choice.

This is language that started with the Babylonian Captivity. In this case the majority of Israelites received judgement and were taken away in captivity. But, there was a remnant left in place.

We see the idea in various places in Scripture, but it turns up again when Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares ([Matthew 13:24-30](#)). Again here, at the harvest (representing Jesus Second Coming) the tares were taken and destroyed and the wheat was saved.

This is also evident in the example Jesus used just prior to His statement of one being taken and the other left. He said:

“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.” ([Matthew 24:37-39](#), NLT)

At the flood, everyone except Noah and his family were swept away to destruction. Noah and his family were left for salvation. The next words out of Jesus’ mouth were:

“Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.” ([Matthew 24:40-41](#), NLT)

Scriptural evidence suggests one was taken away to judgment or destruction while the other is left for salvation. However, it would be a stretch to say this is a slam-dunk. The passage doesn’t really prove the case for or against *The Rapture*.

The bigger issue is whether or not a secret rapture is Biblical. That’s a bit more than we can take on today.

But I believe a careful study of Scripture does not support a secret rapture. There is nothing secret or quiet about Jesus’ Coming.

At the very end of the reference section there is a section titled [Resources Regarding the Rapture](#). There you will find some links to additional resources if you would like to study this further.

Question 2: (Bev Maxey) *I’m confused about [Proverbs 26:4-5](#). They seem to contradict each other, with the exception of the results.*

Here is this passage:

Don’t answer the foolish arguments of fools, or you will become as foolish as they are.

Be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools, or they will become wise in their own estimation. ([Proverbs 26:4-5](#), NLT)

This certainly seems to be a contradiction of ideas. In verse four it tells you to ignore the arguments of fools, and verse five tells you engage them.

This illustrates a difference in the way we think and the way a person brought up with an Eastern Mindset thinks.

The Bible was written in the framework of an Eastern Mindset. For them, two statements we would consider contradictory are two ways of looking at the same thing with the truth being somewhere between the two statements.

We look at the differences in politics as the right and the left. In our culture, we have come to the place where those on the right can hardly stand those on the left, and vice versa. The Eastern Mindset would say that both are needed to bring balance

We see this in Jesus' teaching as well. He said:

"Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters."
([Matthew 12:30](#), CSB)

"For whoever is not against us is for us." ([Mark 9:40](#), CSB)

The truth lies between these two apparently conflicting ideas, depending on the circumstance.

So in Proverbs it is telling us that sometimes we need to let the fool be, and other times we need to correct them so they won't get big headed (and perhaps so other people will know the truth).

However, I did notice one other important difference between these verses in Proverbs.

Verse 4 is focused on you – what will you become if you engage a *fool*?

Don't answer the foolish arguments of fools, or you will become as foolish as they are.
([Proverbs 26:4](#), NLT)

Verse 5 is focused on the *fool* – what will happen to them if you don't confront them?

Be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools, or they will become wise in their own estimation. ([Proverbs 26:4-5](#), NLT)

This adds another dimension to this passage. There is both an element of self-protection and speaking the truth. There is a time and place for each consideration.

Jesus did both in His life. He totally ignored the questions and comments of King Herod while being questioned. But He often spoke the truth into a variety of situations.

I suppose one aspect of being wise is knowing which course of action to take when. As Proverbs also said:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. ([Proverbs 3:5-6](#), NIV)

Assignment

Spend a bit of time this week considering **Psalm 139**.

- This week, read **Psalm 139** through at least one time each day – try reading it in several different translations.
- What do you find comforting in this Psalm?
- Is there anything about this Psalm that makes you uncomfortable? Why do you think that is?
- If you dare, pray the prayer found in verses 23-24? Be sure to note what God reveals to you in answer to this prayer. You may want to even memorize these verses.
- What is the most important thing you are learning from this passage?
- How will what you have learned affect the way you live your life? Why?

Notes

Text you find in [this color](#) is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](#). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Scripture References

[Proverbs 3:5-12 \(NIV\)](#): *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

⁷ *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*

⁹ *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

¹¹ *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. ([Proverbs 3:5-12](#), NIV)*

[Proverbs 26:4-5 \(NLT\)](#): *Don't answer the foolish arguments of fools, or you will become as foolish as they are.*

⁵ *Be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools, or they will become wise in their own estimation. ([Proverbs 26:4-5](#), NLT)*

[Matthew 12:25-37 \(CSB\)](#): *Knowing their thoughts, he told them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸ If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

²⁹ *"How can someone enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. ³⁰ Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters.*

³¹ *"Therefore, I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come.*

³³ *"Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you*

are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. ³⁵ A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil.

³⁶ "I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."
(Matthew 12:25-37, CSB)

Matthew 13:24-30 (CSB): He presented another parable to them: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while people were sleeping, his enemy came, sowed weeds among the wheat, and left. ²⁶ When the plants sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ The landowner's servants came to him and said, 'Master, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy did this,' he told them.

"So, do you want us to go and pull them up?' the servants asked him.

²⁹ "No,' he said. 'When you pull up the weeds, you might also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I'll tell the reapers: Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to burn them, but collect the wheat in my barn.'"

(Matthew 13:24-30, CSB)

Matthew 23:37-39 (CSB): "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"
(Matthew 23:37-39, CSB)

Matthew 24:1-14 (CSB): As Jesus left and was going out of the temple, his disciples came up and called his attention to its buildings. ² He replied to them, "Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down."

³ While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

⁴ Jesus replied to them, "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many. ⁶ You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these events are the beginning of labor pains.

⁹ "Then they will hand you over to be persecuted, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name. ¹⁰ Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one

another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:1-14, CSB)

Matthew 24:37-44 (NLT): “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day.

³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. ³⁹ People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

⁴⁰ “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

⁴² “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming.

⁴³ Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. (Matthew 24:37-44, NLT)

Mark 9:33-41 (CSB): They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them,

“What were you arguing about on the way?” ³⁴ But they were silent, because on the way they had been arguing with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, he called the Twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last and servant of all.” ³⁶ He took a child, had him stand among them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one little child such as this in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but him who sent me.”

³⁸ John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”

³⁹ “Don’t stop him,” said Jesus, “because there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name who can soon afterward speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ And whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ – truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward.” (Mark 9:33-41, CSB)

Luke 17:26-37 (NLT): “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. ²⁷ In

those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.

²⁸ “And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business – eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building – ²⁹ until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ On that day a person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. A person out in the

field must not return home. ³² Remember what happened to Lot's wife! ³³ If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it. ³⁴ That night two people will be asleep in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left."

³⁷ "Where will this happen, Lord?" the disciples asked.

Jesus replied, "Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near." (Luke 17:26-37, NLT)

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NLT): But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

⁵⁴ Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

"Death is swallowed up in victory. (Isaiah 25:8) ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (Hosea 13:14)

⁵⁶ For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. ⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

(1 Corinthians 15:51-52, NLT)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NLT): And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, NLT)

Resources Regarding the Rapture

You can find many more articles engaging this topic by simply doing a Google search of *Rapture*.

- [The Rapture](#) (Wikipedia)
- [The Rapture](#) (Encyclopedia Britannica)
- [9 Reasons We Can Be Confident Christians Won't Be Raptured Before the Tribulation](#)
- [Five Reasons the Rapture is Never Going to Happen](#)
- [Sorry, 'Left Behind' Fans, the Rapture Is Not in the Bible](#)
- [The Rapture - Is It Biblical?](#)
- [What Does the Bible Say About the Rapture?](#)
- [What Is the Rapture?](#)