# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW
## The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28
## Study Ten

## More Misery Than We Can Imagine

***Matthew 24:15–28***

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*Despite our treacherous times, we can wake up tomorrow morning filled with hope. If we are not, we need time in God's Word. God's Word never leaves us with fear or discouragement but always with hope.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As we learned in our previous *Searching the Scriptures* study on Matthew 24:1–14, six signs signal the end of the age and the return of Christ:

- False messiahs "will deceive many" (Matthew 24:5)
- "Wars and threats of wars" will intensify (24:6)
- "Famines and earthquakes" will proliferate (24:7)
- Christians "will be arrested, persecuted, and killed" (24:9)
- Those who are not true believers will "turn away" from Christ (24:10)
- The gospel "will be preached throughout the whole world" (24:14)

Jesus said these distressing events will only intensify like labor pains (24:8). They'll then crescendo to the next and most severe sign: the "abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet" (24:15 NASB). When those who are alive see *this* sign, more misery than any human can imagine will follow:

> *"There will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began."* (24:21)

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Talk about a warning that'll make us shudder! So what event, exactly, did Daniel prophesy? What makes it so cataclysmic? How do Jesus' warnings concern us? In this study, we'll discover the answers, and we'll learn the outcome of creation's travail—the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds and the birth of a new age.

## PREPARE YOUR HEART

The same One who issues the warnings also provides the shelter. As you open this prophetic section of Scripture, adapt the psalmist's confidence in God into your own prayer of faith in God's loving care for you through future storms.

> *"How precious is your unfailing love, O God!*
> *All humanity finds shelter*
> *in the shadow of your wings."* (Psalm 36:7)

## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Matthew 24:15–28* thoughtfully, aloud if possible. The passage focuses on Jesus' somber forecast of the "abomination of desolation . . . standing in the holy place" (Matthew 24:15 NASB). In the interpretation phase, we'll explore the meaning of this mysterious event. For now, let's consider the terrible consequences of this "abomination" (NASB) or "sacrilegious object" (NLT).

### Observation: The Tribulation Reaches Its Zenith

The extreme language of prophecy can leave us scratching our heads in confusion. What does the author mean? However, before we attempt to interpret prophetic passages, we should simply observe them. What does the author say?[1] Use your skills of observation to answer the following questions.

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**The Consequences of Unrestrained Evil—Matthew 24:15–26**

According to *Matthew 24:15–18*, what did Jesus instruct people to do right away when the "abomination of desolation" appears? What do the examples of the person on the roof and the person in the field illustrate?

Why might a pregnant or nursing woman be in more danger in a time of distress (*Matthew 24:19*)? How would winter or the Sabbath cause a person to be in more peril (*24:20*)?

According to *24:21–22*, what reason did Jesus give to warrant ringing such an urgent alarm?

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In life-or-death situations, people naturally look to saviors for help and sages for understanding. According to *Matthew 24:23–26*, what did Jesus say about trusting "false messiahs" and "false prophets" during this period of tribulation? What will make people more likely to be duped by these charlatans?

> *Satan has an enormous amount of supernatural power. People have the idea that if a miracle occurs, it could only come from God. But Jesus gave an example of signs and wonders coming from the deceiver.* —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

**The Culmination of All Things—Matthew 24:27–28**

All of Jesus' prophesies lead up to what final event, according to *Matthew 24:27–28*? How did Jesus describe the suddenness of this event? What ominous image did Jesus use to sum up all the signs?

The return of Jesus will be like a giant bolt of lightning flashing from horizon to horizon. No one will miss Jesus when He returns. Unlike false messiahs cowering in the desert, Jesus will appear with such power and glory that the whole world will see Him!

In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll discover more details about Christ's return and how we prepare for Him. Until then, let's take a closer look at that mysterious event Daniel prophesied.

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## Interpretation: The Abomination of Desolation

What is the "abomination of desolation"? Perhaps the better question is, *Who*?

In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll discusses the possible identity of this enigmatic prophetic figure. Read pages 208–210 to answer the following questions. Other resources include *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* and the online commentary, *Constable's Notes*, at netbible.org.

Daniel's prophecy appears to have "near" and "far" referents, pointing to two abominations that have already occurred and an abomination yet to come. What two events in Jewish history foreshadowed the ultimate fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy?

Who will personify the "abomination of desolation" in the future?

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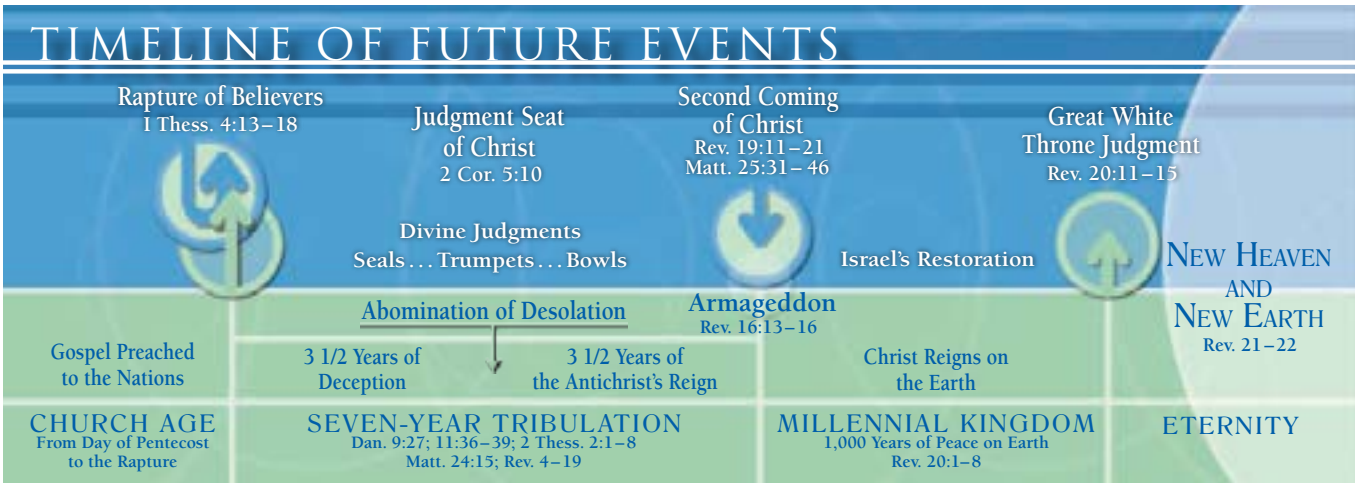
The following chart, "Timeline of Future Events," illustrates the sequence of events in biblical prophecy, including the rapture of believers, the seven-year tribulation, and the second coming of Christ.[2]




According to this timeline, when will the "abomination of desolation" occur?

The rise of the Antichrist will imperil all creation to such a degree that if God would not stop the destruction, "not a single person will survive" (Matthew 24:22). What horrors will the Antichrist unleash, and who are "God's chosen ones" that Jesus mentions (24:22)? Let's answer these questions by correlating Jesus' teaching with other passages of Scripture.

> *We've seen people running for their lives before, but nothing will compare to this scene in the future: refugees, worldwide, running to find any place to hide.* —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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### Correlation: The Antichrist

Paul referred to the Antichrist as "the man of lawlessness" and "the son of destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3 NASB). According to *2 Thessalonians 2:3–4*, what blasphemies will this individual commit by "standing in the Holy Place" in the temple (Matthew 24:15)?

According to *2 Thessalonians 2:9–10*, with whom is the Antichrist in league, and what will the Antichrist do?

Referring to the Antichrist as "the beast," John added what further details to Paul's description, according to *Revelation 13:5–7*?

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The persecuted Christians who suffer under the "abomination of desolation" will be those who believe in Christ after the rapture during the tribulation. They are "the chosen ones" whom Jesus addressed in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:24). What about us? Jesus will rescue Church Age believers "from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10 NASB) when He gathers His church at the rapture (4:16–17). We won't be victims of the Antichrist, but we can still learn from Jesus' warnings and apply His teaching to the times in which we live.

> *We're going through treacherous times. Are you living your life in abundance or are you running scared? The Bible has words of encouragement for you that will help.*
> —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

### Application: How We Can Live Confidently Today

Few eras in history are as volatile as our present day. Terrorists attack, rogue nations threaten to wipe us off the map, crazed gunmen shoot indiscriminately into crowds of innocent people. In the recent COVID-19 pandemic, viral villains invaded every corner on Earth. It feels like we're getting a dose of future miseries now! Here are three thoughts to steady our nerves.

First, *reject every temptation to live in fear.* The Lord says through Isaiah, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you" (Isaiah 41:10), and Paul reminds us, "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Second, *remember God is not almost sovereign.* He is not "mostly" but *fully* in control at all times. He "does as he wishes" (Psalm 115:3), and He will cause "everything to work together for the good of those who love [Him]" (Romans 8:28).

Third, *rely on the Word of God anytime you feel uncertain and insecure.* God's Word is "a light" for our paths in dark days (Psalm 119:105). As believers, we stand firm on the rock of God's truth to "give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled" (Romans 15:4).

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Which of these applications best fits your need today? Set to memory the verses referenced and quote them often.

Nothing stabilizes us in treacherous times like God's Spirit through His Word. At the center of Scripture is the hope we have in Jesus Christ, whose promises are true and whose coming is as certain as the dawn of a new day.

### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, all creation longs for Christ's return. Like a woman in labor, nature convulses until Your Son returns and a new kingdom is born. Help me to keep my heart faithful to Jesus and my eyes fixed on Your future. Keep me always hopeful for a better day in Your great new world. In Christ's name I pray, amen.*

ENDNOTES

1. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*" at insight.org.
2. The chart, "*Timeline of Future Events*," can be purchased at insight.org as a bookmark with explanatory details on the reverse side.

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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES STUDY

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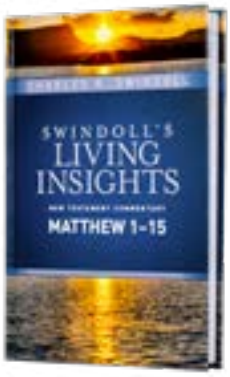
*Matthew 24:15–28*

## Tools for Digging Deeper

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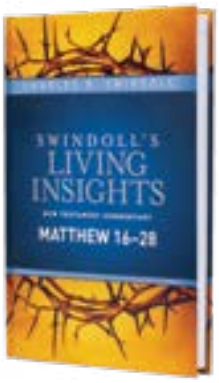


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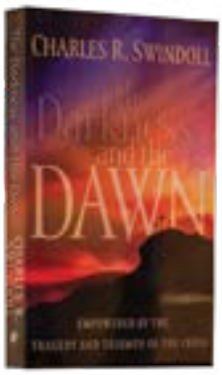


**The Darkness and the Dawn**
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For the 2021 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

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