

## **Signs of the End Times** **Matthew 24:9-14**

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to Matthew chapter 24. We're going to read together verses 1 through 14. Matthew chapter 24, verses 1 to 14:

“<sup>1</sup> And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup> And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

“<sup>3</sup> And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. <sup>5</sup> For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. <sup>6</sup> And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. <sup>8</sup> All these are the beginning of sorrows.

“<sup>9</sup> Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. <sup>12</sup> And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. <sup>13</sup> But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

Now last week, we began our exposition of Matthew chapter 24 by considering together verses 1 through 8. This extended discourse on eschatology that covers all of Matthew chapter 24 and all of Matthew chapter 25 that Jesus gave, was provoked by Jesus stating that the temple at Jerusalem would be leveled to the ground as an act of God's judgment on Israel for her rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jesus stated that the temple would be destroyed, both in Matthew 23, verse 38, when He said, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”; and in Matthew chapter 24, verses 1 and 2, when Jesus said, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”

Now this statement that Jesus made, that He made twice, about the destruction of the temple, amazed the disciples, and it provoked them to ask the question, “When shall these things be?” In other words, When will the temple be leveled? But that is not all they asked. They asked at the same time, two additional questions, questions that completely overshadowed the importance of that first question, for they went on in verse 3 to ask, What shall be the sign of thy coming and what shall be the sign of the end of the world? Notice verse 3: “And as he,” Jesus, “sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?” That is, when will the temple be leveled? And now they ask two additional questions: “*and*

what shall be the sign of thy coming,” *and* “what shall be the sign of the end of the world?” Those are the two questions that really overshadowed the first.

So the answer to these two latter questions—What shall be the sign of thy coming, and What shall be the sign of the end of the world—became the primary focus of the reply that Jesus gave to them in the remainder of this chapter, and on into the next. Jesus does answer their first question, “When will the temple be leveled,” later in chapter 24, but He handles it just incidentally, and He handles it in relationship to these two primary questions, which they asked after asking the first.

Jesus does answer their first question later in the chapter, but it is these last two questions that He first addresses in verses 4 to 14, and it is the answer to these last two questions, “What shall be the sign of thy coming,” and “What shall be the sign of the end of the world,” that is at the forefront of all that Jesus says in this discourse. This discourse is primarily about the sign of the second coming and the end of the world, and not the leveling of the temple.

So Jesus begins this discourse in verses 4 to 14 by addressing the question, What shall be the sign of the end of the world? And He begins to answer that question in verses 4 to 8 by telling us about the things that are *not* the sign of the end of the world. He begins to state that from this day, that is the day they were sitting there talking, until the end times begin, there will be three characteristics that will mark that period.

This period between the time of Jesus and the start of the end times that mark the end of the world will be characterized by great religious deception, verse 5: “Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” It will be characterized by great political turmoil, verses 6 and 7: “6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars... nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” And then, it will be characterized by great natural disasters, verse 7b to verse 8: “there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

But none of these things are signs of the end times, for in verse 6, Jesus says, “See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” And in verse 8, He says, “All these are the *beginning* of sorrows,” that is, these are just the preliminary sorrows, prior to the end times.

Now these things—great religious deception in verse 5; great political turmoil in verses 6 and 7; and great natural disasters in verse 7 through 8—are the things that have been going on for the last 2,000 years. For the last 2,000 years, there has been great religious deception, great political turmoil, and great natural disasters, all across the world continuously. Those things will continue to go on *until* the end times begin. They could continue to go on for a very long time yet.

But the point is this: These things are not and never have been signs of the end. They have been the norm, they are the norm now, and they will continue to be the norm until the end times begin. So what is described in verses 4 to 8 is the time period that we have been living in for the last

2,000 years, and still continue to live in at this present moment. The question then arises, when will the end times actually begin? When will the norm of great religious deception and great political turmoil and great natural disasters—when will that period of time end that is characterized by all of those things, and the end times actually begin? What will be the trigger that will set in motion the end times? What will be the event that begins the end times?

Well the answer to that question is that the event that triggers the beginning of the end times is the decision on the part of God to loose Satan from the bondage and restraint that he is currently under. When Satan is loosed, the end times begin. Now we of course will not *see* him loosed, because he's a spirit and we can't see those things. But what we will see and experience are the effects of him having been loosed.

Now the passage we're going to be studying today, which is verses 9 to 14, sets before us the effects of Satan being loosed, and the things that we on earth will experience that will make it clear to us that he has been loosed. When we see the events in verses 9 to 14 begin to take place, then we know that the end is near. And until they take place, it isn't. Well let us then consider our passage together.

In the first place this morning, I want us to consider together the concept of the binding and loosing of Satan. Now before we approach verse 9 and the following verses—the subject of our study today, verses 9 to 14, is what we're going to be looking at today—before we approach those verses, we have to set some background from other passages that will help us understand verses 9 to 14. And crucial to our understanding of verses 9 to 14 is an understanding of the concept of Satan being bound and Satan being loosed.

Now the central passage that addresses this issue of Satan being bound and loosed is Revelation chapter 20. So I would like for you to turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of Revelation, chapter 20. We want to read together verses 1 to 10. What we're focusing on here is the binding and loosing of Satan. Revelation chapter 20, beginning at verse 1:

“<sup>1</sup> And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, <sup>3</sup> and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” Notice the binding and the loosing taking place in verse 3.

Now the scene shifts to heaven: “<sup>4</sup> And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” And they're living and reigning with Him in heaven. “<sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

And now the scene shifts back down to earth, verse 7. “<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,” notice the loosing here, “<sup>8</sup> and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth,” that is, north, south, east and west, “Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed [surrounded] the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. <sup>10</sup> And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Now what we have here in this chapter, and indeed in the entire book of Revelation, is what is called “apocalyptic literature.” Apocalyptic literature is different from ordinary literature, in that apocalyptic literature is written in highly symbolic and dramatically figurative language, largely couched in metaphor, in allegory, and similes. In many respects, apocalyptic literature is to be interpreted like parables are supposed to be interpreted. When Jesus gave a parable, nobody thought it was literal; they recognized this is a story that He’s telling, and each of these events in the story are symbols of something else. And that is how apocalyptic literature is written. It’s a genre of literature in which it is predominated by metaphor and simile and allegory. Notice if you will verse 1 opens with, “And I saw.” And what John is doing here by using this phrase “and I saw” is informing us of the visionary, and thus the symbolic and figurative nature of this passage. He’s having a vision here.

This passage, therefore, was never meant to be taken literally. It has many symbolic and figurative elements in it, and so it is to be interpreted then in light of how the symbols and analogies it contains are used in the passage, and also in other passages in the Bible as well. So we must ask the question, is there anywhere else in the Bible where Satan being bound is spoken of? And if so, then those passages of course are able to shed light on this one.

Now I indicated as I read the passage, and I want you to notice, the alternating structure of this section in Revelation 20. In verses 1 to 3, we have a description of the millennial reign on earth, and we have in verses 1 to 3 a description of Satan and the nations, okay? Verse 3, he’s cast into the bottomless pit; “the seal is set on him that he should,”—what?—“deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” So what is being spoken of in verses 1, 2, and 3 is Satan and the nations, and what God is doing in relationship to Satan and the nations.

And then in verses 4 to 6, we have a description of the millennial reign in heaven. The scene shifts up to heaven, and here we have a description of the souls who were beheaded and are reigning with Christ. Beheaded people don’t run around on the earth, okay? People on earth don’t sit in thrones in heaven, okay? And so these are people who have died during this

millennial period. They've been beheaded for the cause of Christ, they're martyrs, and they're in heaven with the Lord.

And then, having seen that verses 1 to 3 talk about the millennial reign on earth and Satan and the nations; and that verses 4 to 6 talk about the millennial reign in heaven and souls who are reigning with Christ; verses 7 to 10 then switches back to the millennial reign on earth and Satan and the nations once again. Notice verse 7: “<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, <sup>8</sup> and shall go out to deceive the nations which are” on the earth.

So verses 1 to 3 and verses 7 to 10 deal with Satan and the nations on earth; verses 1 to 3 and verses 7 to 10 deal with the Millennium on earth. So we have Satan being bound, and we have to ask ourselves the question, When was Satan bound and why was Satan bound? And this is where other passages shed light on Revelation chapter 20, when they used the same metaphors that Revelation 20 uses.

So you're here in Revelation 20, and you're going to want to keep your hand here, okay, because we're going to come back to it. But I would like you turn to Matthew chapter 12. Now we're preaching through Matthew, aren't we, and we've already preached through this passage. And we would expect that Matthew chapter 12 would throw some light on Matthew chapter 24. It's all of the same writing by the same man, Matthew. So notice Matthew chapter 12, starting at verse 22 and reading down to verse 29:

“<sup>22</sup> Then was brought unto [Jesus] one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and [Jesus] healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. <sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?”—The one who is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant—“<sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. <sup>25</sup> And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: <sup>26</sup> and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.” Now here are two verses, verses 28 and 29, I want you to focus on: “<sup>28</sup> But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. <sup>29</sup> Or else”—now notice the metaphors here—“Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first”—here it is—“bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.”

Now clearly, the context of Jesus' statement in verse 29 is the binding of satanic forces. What's He doing here? He's casting out a demon. He's taking control of Satan and his angels, his demons. And the binding of the strong man in verse 29 is associated with this act of binding of satanic power and it is something that Jesus says that He is doing in establishing His kingdom at His first advent. Notice He says, verse 28, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”

So when Jesus established the kingdom of God at His first coming, He was binding and bound the strongman, namely Satan, so that Jesus then could enter his house, that is, enter *his* kingdom and ravage it. And what Jesus is doing is He's going into Satan's kingdom, having bound Satan, and He's taking his stuff; that is, He's taking his citizens, his people. He goes into Satan's kingdom and He takes whatever people out of that kingdom He wants, and He transfers them out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light.

You see, when Jesus started His kingdom, He was a King but He didn't have any subjects. And so now He's gathering subjects, and where does He get them from? He gets them out of the kingdom of Satan. Well, how does Satan let that happen? Well, Jesus tied him up. Now He can run around through his house. I mean, if I broke into your house, I'd have to deal with you before I could get to your stuff. But if I tied you up, then I can walk around your house, open all your drawers and look through all your stuff, and you're all tied up—you can't do anything to stop me, right? That's the picture here. Jesus has bound Satan, and now He's running around through Satan's house, taking his people for Himself.

So the binding of Satan is associated with the coming of Christ's kingdom at His first advent. In Matthew 12 and verse 29, it says, "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" That word "bind" is the same Greek word that is used in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 2, when it says He laid hold on Satan and bound him a thousand years. So Satan was bound by the events of Christ's first advent and at the time when Christ first came. So when was Satan bound? At the first coming of Christ, and through the ministry that was achieved by Christ at His first coming.

Now the second question is, How long is Satan bound? Well, our text in Revelation 20 is very clear, and you can turn back there now to Revelation 20. It says he's bound a thousand years. It says that a couple of times, okay? He is bound, verse 3, for a thousand years—"till the thousand years should be fulfilled." And then of course verse 7, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Now the question we have to ask ourselves is this: Is the thousand years literal or figurative? It has to be one or the other, as there are no other options.

Well, when we look at Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 to 3, we see there a chain, a key, a lock, and a pit. And all of these are employed in the binding of Satan. Now obviously, Satan is a spirit. He doesn't have a physical body. And you don't use a literal chain, a literal key, a literal lock, and a literal pit to bind a spirit, because it doesn't work. So clearly, the chain, the key, the lock, and the pit are all symbolic. And if the prison itself and everything associated with it is symbolic, then by what rationale should the prison sentence be taken to be literal? If the prison in which Satan is bound is symbolic, why would the prison sentence also not be symbolic? The point is, we must not do what the Dispensationalists do, and that is literalize symbolic language. The number here one thousand is used symbolically, and it represents an age-long, but definitely limited, period of time.

Now, you know, when the various covenants were given, like the Davidic Covenant, we didn't know how long it was going to be until it was fulfilled. It was an age before it was finally fulfilled. It was a long time—centuries and centuries and centuries. It was the same way with the Abrahamic Covenant.

And so, once again, the New Covenant era is a long time. It covers an entire age. And the number one thousand just simply refers to an age-long period that is definitely limited. I mean, He didn't say there's no number attached. The number conveys the idea that there is a fixed length to it, but that it's a very, very long time. So, when was Satan bound? At the first coming of Jesus Christ. For how long is he bound? For an entire age.

But in what respect was Satan bound, and in regard to what matters or issues? Well, he wasn't bound to total inactivity. We read, for example, in First Peter 5:8 that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We read in Second Corinthians 4 and verse 4 that the god of this world has blinded the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should come unto them and they should be saved. And so we read quite a bit about satanic activity still going on after the death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

So Satan wasn't bound to total, complete inactivity. Satan was bound with respect to the fact that he cannot deceive the nations. Notice what it says, verse 3: “and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive” who? “the nations no more.” Verse 7: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,<sup>8</sup> and shall go out to deceive the nations.”

So he was bound with reference to not everything that he does, but with reference to deceiving the nations. In other words, he was bound so that he cannot deceive the nations into making a concerted, intense, unified, prolonged, and comprehensive effort to destroy Christianity in the world, because when he's loosed, that's exactly what he does do—he gathers all the nations, north, south, east, and west, over the whole earth. He gathers them all together to go to war against the Christians, here called “the camp of the saints” and “the city of God.” The city of God is the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation 21, which is of course, the body of the redeemed.

So notice if you will Revelation 20, verses 7 to 10: “<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,<sup>8</sup> and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth,” north, south, east and west, “Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom”—notice—“is as the sand of the sea.” I mean, we're talking about the whole earth's population, minus the Christians.

Verse 9: “And they went up on the breadth of the earth,” that is, they covered the whole earth, “and [surrounded] the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city:”—the camp of the saints and the beloved city are the same thing, just two metaphors for the same thing, which is the people of God, the church—“and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”

That's the second coming of Jesus. Satan and his people will be destroyed with the brightness of Christ's coming.

So in verses 7 to 10, Satan is loosed, and the time period for which he is loosed is "a little season." That's what verse 3 says—"and after that he must be loosed a little season." So for a short time—that is, short in comparison to the millennial period, which is a long time—Satan is loosed in order that he may do what he has been restrained from doing for the last 2,000 years, which is uniting all the nations of the whole world in a determined effort to attack the camp of the saints, the beloved city, which is a metaphor for the Christian church. And so when Satan is loosed, all nations are deceived, and all nations are brought together to attack the Christians everywhere on the earth at the same time, so that they are surrounded, and there is no place for them to flee. There is no place for them to flee to refuge.

Now, historically, we've had places to flee to refuge, haven't we? When we got persecuted in England, what did we do? We sailed across the ocean to America. There has always been a place to flee from religious persecution. But in this day, there will be no place to flee to, to escape persecution.

So what we have is a long period of protection, here called the thousand years, followed by a short period of intense, worldwide, transnational persecution, which will be ended by the second coming of Christ.

Now I want you to keep your hand in Revelation 20, and I want you to turn to Second Thessalonians chapter 2. In Second Thessalonians chapter 2, we have parallel passage describing the end times and what's going to occur during them. This passage also addresses the binding and the loosing of Satan. Notice Second Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 1:

"<sup>1</sup> Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,"—now that's clearly the end times, right? When Jesus comes and we're gathered to Him, that's the end times. With reference to that end-time event, he says, verse 2, I don't want you to be "shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit," that is, by somebody saying he's got some revelation; "nor by word," somebody's teaching; "nor by letter," as if we wrote it, "as [if] from us, as that the day of Christ," that is the second coming, "is at hand." Paul says, the second coming is *not* at hand.

And I can say right now, standing in this pulpit, the second coming is not at hand. It isn't imminent. Paul didn't preach imminency. He didn't preach, You know what, Jesus can come back any second. You need to be ready—He can come back any second! Now it's true, he can come back any second for you individually. I mean, your heart could stop right now, and He'd be coming back for you. We're talking about coming back to the world—second coming. His coming for you is imminent at any moment, okay? That's why you always need to be ready to die, every second. But His coming to the world is not imminent. He says, The day of Christ is not at hand.



Verse 3: “Let no man deceive you by any means:”—and there’s plenty of people that are deceiving you, Tim LaHaye is chief among them—“for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first,” that is, a great apostasy in the Christian church. And secondly, that day will not come except the “man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;”—this is the Antichrist. Notice verse 4: “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

So the day of Christ, that is, the day of the second coming, isn’t going to happen until there’s this falling away, this great apostasy, and until the Antichrist, the man of sin, is revealed on the world’s stage. He says, verse 5, “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” He says, Why are you doubting them now? Verse 6: “And now ye know what withholdeth [or restrains] that he,” that is, Antichrist, “might be revealed in his time.” So something’s restraining the advent of Antichrist.

Verse 7: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:”—this process is in process—“only he who now letteth [restrains] will let [continue to restrain], until he be taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> And then shall that Wicked [One] be revealed, whom the Lord... shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:.” The Lord will consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, “

Verse 9: “even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup> And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: <sup>12</sup> that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Now I want to point out the parallels between this passage and Revelation 20. In Revelation 20, in verses 1 to 3, we see Satan bound by a chain and an angel—angel binds Satan, right? That’s what it says. Revelation 20:3 The angel comes and binds Satan with a chain. In Second Thessalonians 2, verses 6 and 7, he talks about Satan being restrained. In verse 6, he talks about *what* he is restrained with—and now you know *what* restrains and what is *doing* the restraining—the chain. Verse 7, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now [restrains] will [continue to do so] until he be taken out of the way.” In verse 7 it talks about *who* is doing the restraining. Who’s doing the restraining? The angel.

So *what* is doing the restraining in verse 6 is the chain; and *who* is doing the restraining in verse 7 is the angel. And when the chain and the angel are taken away, what happens? Satan’s loosed. That’s pretty plain. So there’s going to be this short time of loosing, it says in Revelation 20 and verse 3, after this long period of protection, this thousand-year metaphorical period. And during this period, after Satan is loosed, what happens to the nations? They’re deceived, right?

Well, notice in Second Thessalonians, when the restraint and the restrainer is taken out of the way and the man of sin is revealed, the nations are deceived. Verse 3: There's going to come this great falling away—people are going to depart from Christianity and follow Antichrist. And why are they going to do it? Notice verse 9: “even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” So when Satan is loosed, he's going to raise up this Antichrist, this man of sin.

This man of sin is going to be able to do all these fantastic miracles. He's going to deceive, who? The vast majority of the Christian church, who's going to apostatize and start to follow him, and they're going to be deceived, “with all deceivableness,” verse 10, “of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” They went to church. They heard the truth, but they never really believed it. They never really embraced it. And so when the deception came, they abandon the truth. Why? Because they loved their sin more than they loved the truth. They “had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

And so because they had pleasure in unrighteousness and believed not the truth, verse 12, therefore God sent them this strong delusion of the Antichrist, that they would believe his lie because they never would embrace the truth. In other words, they loved their sin more than they loved the truth, and they were willing to abandon the truth in order to keep their sin. And Antichrist says, You can keep your sin. Look at me—I'm God. Wouldn't it be great for the flesh if you had a god who said to you, Indulge the pleasures of the flesh. You wouldn't have a battle on your hands, would you? You wouldn't have to repent of anything, would you? That's what the false god Allah is. He says to the Muslims, kill, lie, steal. I'll reward you! Allah is in the mold of Antichrist.

Well, leaving him aside, notice Satan and the nations are destroyed, in Revelation 20 verses 9 to 10. And so what happens to Satan in the end? He's destroyed. Fire comes down from heaven and wipes him out as he's surrounding the camp of the saints and trying to destroy them. Well what happens in Second Thessalonians? The man of sin and those who follow him are judged by Christ, verse 8: “And then shall that Wicked [One] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” Brightness of the coming is like the fire of Revelation chapter 20, verses 9 and 10: “and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them,” and they're “cast unto the lake of fire.” Second Thessalonians 2, verse 12: “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

So we see these exact same parallel teachings: Revelation 20, verses 1 to 3—Satan is bound by a chain and an angel; Second Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 6 and 7—there is an item that restrains Satan and there is an individual that restrains Satan, which are the chain and the angel.

There's going to be a short time of loosing after the Millennium, Revelation chapter 20, verse 3 and verses 7 to 10. During this period, the nations are deceived. Second Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 2, 3, and 8—the restrainer is taken out of the way, the man of sin is revealed, the

deception occurs, all shortly before the second advent, the people all believe the lie. Revelation chapter 20, Satan and the nations that persecute the Christians are destroyed. Second Thessalonians 2, verses 8 and 12, the man of sin and those who follow him are destroyed and judged, and damned by Christ. So the two passages are very parallel and have the same events.

So let me summarize. At the end of the thousand years, that is, at the end of the church age—this long period of protection—we have:

1. Intensified activity of Satan. He's loosed. He's now doing more than he did before.
2. The appearance of Antichrist and great apostasy of the Christians; II Thessalonians 2:3.
3. The worldwide persecution of the church; all nations now are against Christians, and unitedly as a matter of national policy and national cooperation, we're going to have a united nations of persecution of Christians.
4. The preservation of the church from that determination to destroy it, by Christ's second coming, that instead destroys Antichrist and all the wicked.

Now that's plain from Revelation 20, and it's plain from Second Thessalonians chapter 2.

Well, we are now ready for Matthew 24. We're now ready to examine Matthew 24, verses 9 to 14, so turn there now please. Having seen the background concept of the binding and the loosing of Satan in Revelation 20 and in Second Thessalonians chapter 2, in the second place, let us consider together the explanation of Matthew 24, verses 9 to 14.

Here we are in Matthew 24. Now what we said is verses 4 to 8 describe what's been going on during this millennial period, during this long period of protection. There is great religious deception, to be sure; there's great political turmoil, to be sure; and there are great natural disasters, to be sure. And that's been going on for 2,000 years, while we've been spreading the gospel through the world—through the earth.

Christians have always had a place of refuge, away from persecution. There's always been nations, and today there's nations, that are happy to have Christians in them, and it's not a matter of government policy to persecute them. So religious deception, verse 5; political turmoil, verses 6 and 7; natural disasters, verse 7 through 8—this is just the preliminary stuff. But notice the very first word in verse 9, "*Then...*"

The word "then" in verse 9 introduces a transition from what was described in verses 4 to 8. It tells us of a change, a new and different and subsequent situation to what is in verses 8 and 9, that is going to arise subsequent to the period described in verses 8 and 9. It says, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and"—notice—"ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

Now it has not been the case up to this point in time that Christians have been hated of all nations. There have always been nations that were receptive, or at least not hostile to Christians

and Christianity. America is a classic example. There has always been nations to which persecuted believers could flee and find refuge and peace to practice their religion. It has not yet been the case in the history of the world that Christians have been hated of all nations. But “*then*” it will not be the case.

And what will trigger this change where now all nations will turn against Christians? The answer is, the loosing of Satan is what’s going to trigger that event. When he is loosed, he is going out and deceive all nations—north, south, east, and west, over the whole scope of the earth—as many as the sand of the sea, to surround the saints in such a way that there is now no place on earth for them to flee to. Right now, if you want to flee persecution, there’s a place to go. There won’t be, in that day.

So verse 9 says, *Then*—when Satan is loosed. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” That is what’s being described in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 9, when it says “And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about,” and their purpose was to destroy them.

Now notice verses 10 and 11. It says, “<sup>10</sup> And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” Now this in verses 10 to 11 is simply the great apostasy spoken of in Second Thessalonians 2 and verse 3, and the great deception spoken of in Second Thessalonians 2, verses 9 to 12. Verses 10 and 11 describe the great apostasy and the great deception spoken of in Second Thessalonians 2, that is brought about by professing Christians falling away to worship the man of sin, who then turn and become persecutors and haters of true believers. It says in verse 10, “And then shall many be offended,” that is, when they realize they’ve got to suffer for Christ, then they’re going to be offended at Christ, and they’re going to “betray one another.” They’re going to point out to these persecuting governments—There’s a Christian, there’s a Christian, and they’ll know who we are, because they used to dwell among us. “And shall hate one another.” That is, these apostates will hate the Christians, when previously, they were part of them.

“<sup>11</sup> And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” You remember in Second Thessalonians, it says the antichrist, the man of sin, is able to do signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness? And so, not only is Antichrist going to be able to do this, but he’s going to send out his prophets to preach his message to all the ambassadors of all the nations of the world to gather them together. And they’re going to go out to the Christian church and say, Turn away from Jesus and follow Antichrist, follow this man of sin, this son of perdition. He is your God. Because he’s going to sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he *is* God, right? And so people are going to switch allegiance from Jesus to this man who claims to be God on earth.

Verse 12: “And because iniquity shall abound,”—remember these people loved their unrighteousness. They had pleasure in unrighteousness. “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” As they follow the man of sin and have pleasure in

unrighteousness, their love for Christ will become cold, their love for the true believers will become cold, and they will become offended at the believers and they will hate the believers and they will betray the believers into the hands of these persecuting governments, and they will be afflicted and killed by these persecuting governments.

So this, then is the great tribulation that will occur. And this great tribulation is going to be expanded on later in this chapter, of which the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem is but a foreshadowing. But what we have here in summary in verses 9, 10, 11, and 12, is simply what it's going to be like during the great tribulation, after Antichrist arises.

Now verse 13: “*But,*” in contrast to those people described in verses 10 to 12, “he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Here is the mark of the true believer—he endures. He doesn't fall away. He doesn't participate in the great apostasy. His love for God and his love for people does not grow cold. He does not become offended at God for the suffering he must endure from the persecutors. He does not betray or hate his fellow believer. He is not deceived by the false prophets and the signs and lying wonders of the wicked one. In a word, he's not a rocky-ground hearer. He endures in his faith in Christ, and he endures in his faithfulness to Christ, until either the end of his life or the end of this world, whichever comes first. He endures to the end—either the end of his life, if he's a martyr; or, to the end of the world when Christ comes back. He never apostatizes.

Verse 14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” So we have now come in our text to the end of the world. There it is. That's the end.

The gospel witness of the believers will not be extinguished by the man of sin. They will not, because there's persecution, go crawl in a cave somewhere and pull it in after them, and shut their mouths. They're going to keep preaching. You see that in Revelation—the two witnesses? Even though there's this massive hatred against them, they go out and preach. And, yeah, they're slaughtered. But you know what? They preach. And it's never been the case where persecution has ever shut the mouths of true Christians. They just keep preaching. And the message of the martyrs is going to be spread through the whole world. The gospel will reach all nations, the gospel will penetrate deeply within those nations, and when it has, then the end will come.

So back to the question the disciples ask, verse 3: “What shall be the sign of the end of the world?” Answer: The great tribulation brought about by Satan being loosed, the great apostasy by Christians, the revelation of the man of sin—the Antichrist, Christians being hated of *all* nations, and the gospel being preached by fearless Christians in the whole world—*then* the end will come. Those are the signs of the end of the world. The sign of the end of the world is Satan being loosed, and all the things that flow out of that that are described in Revelation 20 and in Second Thessalonians chapter 2.

Now you know when the end of the world will come, in the sense that you know the signs that will tell you it's near. You remember Jesus goes on in Matthew chapter 24 and talks about the budding of the fig tree. He says when you see the fig tree budding, you know summer is near. Likewise, when you see all these things, you know the coming of the Son of man is near.

So while we don't know the day or the hour, we do know the general time, because we see the signs of the times that tell us that the time is short until Jesus appears. And what are those signs? The great tribulation brought about by the loosing of Satan, which produces great apostasy by Christians; the revelation of the man of sin, namely the Antichrist; Christians enduring and preaching the gospel to the whole world, in the face of this great apostasy and in the face of this great persecution and this hatred of all nations. And we know that when that stuff's going on, Jesus is coming back right away. And until that stuff happens, the day of Christ is not at hand—Second Thessalonians, chapter 2 and verse 2. It's not at hand.

So, what we have—to recap Matthew 24, verses 4 to 8—it's what's going on right now; Matthew 24, verses 9 to 14—what's going to happen in the end times. The key word that marks the transition from the present times to the end times is in verse 9, “*then*”.

I want to remind you that while this teaching is very interesting, the purpose of it is to tell us two things. Number one, God is in control. He knows exactly what's going to happen. So we don't need to fear the future. And number two, we need to be always on guard against apostasy in our own lives, against being deceived by others about who is Christ, when is Christ coming, and following false Christs. So the lesson of eschatology is: Don't fear the future, and don't fall into the deception that is coming in the future. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your word, and thank you for the way these passages all fit together, just naturally, without any twisting of them around, or fancy explanations. Lord, we know that your word is plain and clear and simple. Help us, Father, to rightly understand it and to rightly respond to it.

Father, I pray that we would not be afraid of the future. We know that you know what it's going to hold, and we know that you know what it's going to bring, and we know that you're in control of it all. And so we don't know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow, and therefore, we fear not tomorrow.

And Lord, we pray that you would preserve us from deception. Lord, I pray that we would not be deceived into following false Christs and falling away from Jesus. This world calls us to depart from Him every day. But the pressure to depart from Him is going to increase as the evil of the age increases.

And Lord, we pray that you would help us to endure to the end, in faith *in* Christ, and in faithfulness *to* Christ, until the end of our lives or the end of the world, whichever comes first.

Help us to keep preaching the gospel, Father. Even when we're persecuted for doing it, help us to preach it. And Father, if we're martyred through it, then our reward is just greater.

Father, thank you for the blessing of these passages. May we understand them properly. In Jesus' name. Amen.