

C3 GROUP QUESTIONS  
S2022-WEEK 8  
3/20/22

**Listen to, Learn about, and Love on one another**

- What do you think when you hear or read of a scandal involving prominent US government officials who acted unethically and illegally?

**Getting Started with a Warm-Up:**

- Please share with your group your thoughts about a situation when you listened to or attended a sermon or workshop by a Christian speaker who made questionable statements about the Christian faith.

**Getting Down to Business:**

The following questions are following this format: Scripture/Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP).

**1) Scripture/Observation:**

A) Read Matthew 24:4-5. What passage from scripture guides us in testing the legitimacy of someone claiming to be the Messiah or a prophet of God? (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 John 4:1-2)

4 Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, 5 for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many. (Matthew 24:4–5 NLT).

**Christians Must Be Ready for False Messiahs (24:4-5)**

The danger of being misled is mentioned frequently (vv. 4, 11, 24), and Matthew elsewhere has cause to report Jesus' warnings against signs-working prophets (7:15, 22; on signs prophets, see the introduction), a warning that is clearly part of the Jesus tradition (2 Thess 2:9). Today we might think of Jim Jones, David Koresh and New Age Christ figures (see Groothuis 1990). The death toll under Jones and Koresh, incidentally,

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serves as a helpful rebuttal to those who claim that all religions are the same and it matters not what one believes. But false messianic figures abounded in the first century as well (for example, Jos. War 2.259-63; 6.285-88; Ant. 20.97-98). (IVP New Testament Commentaries, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.+24%3A1-14&version=NIV>, accessed 3/17/22)

3 Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. 4 He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NLT)

**2:3 the rebellion.** This might refer to a falling away of many within the church (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–9; Jude 17–19), to an apostasy of the Jewish people, or to a worldwide rebellion against God.

**man of lawlessness.** This is an individual embodiment of wickedness, whose arrogant blasphemies Paul lists (cf. 1 John 2:22). He will draw away by deception those already inclined against the true God (v. 10) and will ultimately commit the sacrilege of thrusting himself upon humanity as its object of worship (v. 4). He comes by the power of Satan, as Christ came by the power of God, and he works fraudulent wonders as Christ worked true ones (v. 9; cf. Acts 2:22). Paul depicts this imposter as a parody or antithesis of the true Christ. Paul himself does not use the term “antichrist” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3), but it is a fitting designation. His fate is sealed; he will be destroyed by the coming of Christ. See “The Return of Christ” at 1 Thess. 4:16.

**2:4 exalts himself against every so-called god.** This description of the man of lawlessness echoes that of Daniel's little “horn” (Dan. 7:8, 20, 21; 8:9–12; cf. 11:31, 36) and foreshadows John's description of the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1–8).

**takes his seat in the temple of God.** Some conclude from this verse that the temple in Jerusalem, still standing when Paul wrote but destroyed in a.d. 70, must be rebuilt for the use of “the man of lawlessness.” Others understand “temple” in another of its New Testament meanings, as the

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church (Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:5). The reference may be an intentionally exaggerated way of talking about the imposter’s aspirations to heavenly power. Just as another prototype of sin, the king of Babylon wanted to set his throne in heaven (Is. 14:13, 14; cf. the king of Tyre in Ezek. 28:2), so the man of lawlessness will boast of himself as the possessor of God’s heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 13:6).

(ESV Reformation Study Bible,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Thessalonians+2&version=NIV;NLT>, accessed 3/17/22)

1 Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. 2 This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. 3 But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here. (1 John 4:1-3 NLT)

**V 1–3: TEST OF TRUTH** False prophets give false teaching by spirits other than the Holy Spirit. There is one main test of truth to apply to expose them. What do they make of the Lord Jesus Christ? The spirit of Antichrist is that the Lord Jesus Christ is not God who has come in the flesh. The deity of Christ is the crucial first test of truth. It is not the only one. (Bible Panorama commentary, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+john+4%3A1-3&version=NIV;NLT>, accessed 3/17/22)

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B) Read Matthew 24:6-7. What passages from scripture bring us comfort that God is still in control? (Isaiah 41:10, Joshua 1:9, Jeremiah 29:11, John 14:27-29, Philippians 4:6-7)

6 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately. 7 Nation will go to war

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against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. (Matthew 24:6-7 NLT)

### **Be Ready for Both Human and Natural Disasters (24:6-8)**

Jesus borrows traditional biblical language here (compare 2 Chron 15:6; Is 19:2; Jer 51:46; for rumors of wars, compare Dan 11:44). Most of the events of Matthew 24:5-14 occurred between A.D. 30 and 70 (Blomberg 1992:356, following W. G. Thompson 1974). Some even believe the gospel of the kingdom was proclaimed among the nations in a representative sense (Rom 10:18; Col 1:6; Blomberg 1992:356-57). The general character of the language prohibits us from limiting it to any such events, however (Beasley-Murray 1957:35, 39). Such events occurred throughout the period of 30-70 and have been occurring ever since. (IVP New Testament Commentaries, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%2024%3A1-14&version=NIV;NLT>, accessed 3/17/22.)

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

27 "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. 28 Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. 29 I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe. (John 14:27-29)

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace,

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which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

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C) Jesus said that persecution would accelerate as the end gets closer (Matthew 24:9). Read Matthew 5:10-11. What promise does Jesus give to those who experience persecution? How can this promise be comforting?

“Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers.” (Matthew 24:9 NLT)

**24:9** they will hand you over to persecution Jesus has expressed elements of this passage elsewhere in Matthew (Matt 10:17–18, 21–22, 24–25, 28, 34–39; 16:24–26). In the early church and its subsequent history, such persecution frequently led to martyrdom.

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Mt 24:9). Lexham Press.

9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. 10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (Matthew 5:9-10 NLT)

Jesus recognizes that one who lives according to the principles set forth in 5:3-9 will encounter opposition from those outside the kingdom. He therefore closes the beatitudes with an assurance of blessing for **those who are persecuted because of righteousness** (vv.10-12). Such persons should consider themselves fortunate, since (1) hostility from the enemies of God demonstrates to disciples that they are on God’s side and will receive reward from God on the Last Day; and (2) disciples who are persecuted share in the grand fellowship of the prophets, who experienced God’s peace through persecution and finally were vindicated by God. (Asbury Bible Commentary,

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<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mt+5&version=NLT>,  
accessed 3/18/22)

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D) Read Matthew 24:14. How is what Jesus is describing here possible? (Hint: consider all the ways we can expose people to the gospel.) Do you think it's close to happening?

And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14 NLT)

**24:4–14** Wars, earthquakes, persecutions, and false prophets are all signs of Jesus' coming, but they indicate only the certainty of judgment, not its time (vv. 6, 8). Such signs characterize the entire period between His resurrection and His coming in judgment. Knowing when Jesus would return would lead His disciples to laziness and laxity in their watchfulness. The "when" (v. 3) that Jesus gives is task oriented: it is after the gospel has been preached to the nations (v. 14). (ESV Reformation Study Bible, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mt+24&version=NLT>, accessed 3/18/22)

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### 2) Application:

A) How is a study of end times prophecy helpful for your growth as a follower of Jesus?

B) How would you encourage someone who is fearful of studying this kind of prophecy?

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**3) Prayer:** As you pray, thank the Lord for the signs and information He has given us in advance that can help prepare us for His return. Ask Him to help you to keep the proper perspective as we study these important truths over the next several weeks.