

“THE LAST HOUR”

Matthew 24:15-20

Are we perched on the edge of eternity?
Have we moved from “*the last days*” to “*the last hour*” of human history? Alexander Ross spoke to this . . .

It is important to remember that, according to the New Testament, with the coming of Christ, with His Death and Resurrection and Ascension, the last period of the world’s history has begun. God has spoken His final message in His Son (Hebrews 1:2). No event in the world’s history can ever equal in epoch-making importance the coming of Christ until He comes again. The Christian era, as it has been put, is “the last on the divine program; the next will be the coming of the Lord.” The Epistles of James

and John, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 168.

The Apostle John included this statement in his letter to the church. . .

1 John 2:18... Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

John was there on the Mount of Olives with Jesus and the other disciples in the last moments of His earthly life. They asked Him to lay out God's timeline for His coming and the end of the age. In the last couple of weeks, we've identified 7 signs that indicate the prospect of our Lord's return. They include. . .

- **Spiritual Deception**
- **Global Conflict**
- **Natural Disasters**
- **Christian Persecution**

- **Massive Apostasy**
- **Blatant Lawlessness**
- **Gospel Proclamation**

As these signs grow in frequency and intensity, we should be tipped off that Jesus is coming soon. When it comes to His second coming, He expects believers to have a growing awareness, a growing readiness, and a growing eagerness.

Take your Bible and turn to Matthew 24. This morning we're going to take a deep dive into a key part of biblical prophecy. Our text will include verses 15-25. If I had to reduce this text down to a one sentence challenge, it would be this. . .

PRAY FOR INSIGHT AND LIVE FOR JESUS!

If we're going to do this consistently, we must lock into two aspects of this text:

1. THE RISE OF ANTICHRIST

Don't forget what John wrote in his letter. . .

1 John 2:18... Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that *antichrist is coming*, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that the spirit of antichrist is prevalent in the world right now. We see it in the resistance to absolute truth, in the maniacal platform of the abortion industry, in the disintegration of the traditional family, and in the DEI craze. One day the antichrist will manifest himself!

- **He will be a charismatic, visionary leader.**
- **He will provide solutions to human problems.**
- **He will rule the entire world.**
- **He will be the very incarnation of evil.**

He will create a one-world government, a one-world religion, and a one-world economic system. He will rise to power by declaring himself to be a *man of peace*, but later he will plunge the world into global war. We read about him in these passages:

Daniel 11:36... “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.”

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4... Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, **4** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Revelation 13:7... It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

The antichrist may be alive today. I can't say for sure. I can say with absolute certainty that the signs of his activity are apparent. One day, and I believe soon, he will reveal himself to the world. That's why we must. . .

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In this text, we see the rise of antichrist. Secondly, we are introduced to. . .

2. THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Matthew 24:15... “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).”

“When you see”— Jesus is describing something that will be a public, obvious event.

“Standing in the holy place”— Because of the Jewish context, this can only mean the temple. Okay, we know the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 AD. When the Jewish nation was reconstituted on May 14, 1948, the idea of building a third temple on the temple mount seemed to be way out of reach. However, I’ve been to the Temple Institute. Believe me. They are preparing for a new temple—*a holy place that the antichrist will desecrate at the 3¹/₂ year mark of his evil reign*. The prophet Daniel referred to the abomination of desolation three times (9:27; 11:31; 12:11).¹

Daniel 9:27... “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 4, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985–1989), 34.

week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Daniel 11:31... “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.”

Daniel 12:11... “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there will be* 1,290 days.”

So, what is *the abomination of desolation*?

This heinous, blasphemous action was foreshadowed in 168 BC when Antiochus Epiphanes erected a statue of Zeus in the holy place and sacrificed a pig on the brazen altar. He then forced the Jewish priests to eat the pork. For that reason, he has been

labeled *“the antichrist of the Old Testament.”* The apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees describe in detail the rule of Antiochus and the Jewish resistance to his brutal actions. Antiochus slaughtered thousands of Jews and attempted to obliterate the Jewish religion.

In the future. . .

A man will ascend the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, go into the Holy of Holies within the rebuilt Jewish Temple, and proclaim himself to be God Almighty and he will demand that the entire world worship him. It is the ultimate sign that Jesus is coming soon!

Once the abomination of desolation takes place, it will soon be followed by an unmatched persecution of the Jewish people. According to Jesus, these will be the darkest days in Jewish history. He gave advance warning in verses 16-20. . .

Matthew 24:16–20... then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 “Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 “Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

The Jewish people living in Israel during this time must flee to the mountains! Nothing must hinder them.

Matthew 24:21... “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.”

The Lord Jesus alluded to Daniel’s prophecy again. . .

Daniel 12:1... “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of

distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”

Jesus said that this will be the most dreadful time in all of human history. When God pours out His wrath on a God rejecting world, it will truly be great tribulation. Satan will unleash his fury on the Jewish people and on those who believe in Jesus.

Matthew 24:22-25... “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There *He is*,’ do not believe *him*.” 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 “Behold, I have told you in advance.”

No one should be deceived about the nature of Jesus' coming. It will not be secret but as plain as lightning that flashes across the sky. But in the midst of such tribulation, there will be a temptation to look for false messiahs.

CONCLUSION

Are we living in the last hour? Is the return of Christ imminent? Absolutely.

When Dr. Robert Jeffress (now the pastor of FBC, Dallas) was in high school, his English teacher gave the students an assignment to present a creative report on the book of their choice. Since Jeffress was a believer, he chose Hal Lindsey's book—*The Late Great Planet Earth*.

He spent the first 30 minutes of his report explaining the events that would precede the Second Coming of Christ. He really emphasized how Russia would invade Israel. At the time President Nixon was in Moscow

trying to calm the tensions that existed between our country and theirs.

No one in the class knew that Robert Jeffress had arranged for the Assistant Principal to interrupt his presentation by announcing this over the intercom...

“Students and faculty, we have just received word from the United Press International that Russia has invaded Israel. President Nixon is returning from Moscow to Washington at this hour. Students and faculty are urged to leave immediately and seek shelter.”

The teacher shouted, ***“Oh no, it’s true!”*** She and the students headed for the exit. Jeffress assured them that the announcement was just part of his presentation. Unfortunately, the assistant principal had flipped the wrong switch and instead of the announcement just going to Jeffress’ room it went to the entire school.

Everyone was filing out of the school in a panic.

Listen, one day the graphic details of Matthew 24 will intensify and the world will literally be thrown into chaos and it won't be a prank.

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