

Faith that Endures

(Online Study, Tuesday Evening at 7:00 PM)

Week 9: Endurance to the End-- Matthew 24:12–14

Setting the Context: The Destruction of Jerusalem

Matthew 24 cannot be rightly understood apart from the question that opens it. As Jesus leaves the temple, His disciples point out its magnificent buildings, and He answers bluntly: *“Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down”* (Matt. 24:2). The disciples then come to Him privately and ask, *“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”* (Matt. 24:3). The rest of the chapter — and the whole of 24:4–35 — is Jesus’ answer to that question about the temple and the end of the Jewish age.

That answer was fulfilled within a single generation. In A.D. 70, the Roman armies under Titus besieged Jerusalem, razed the temple, and brought the Jewish sacrificial system to an end. Jesus Himself put a timestamp on His words: *“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”* (Matt. 24:34). Roughly forty years after He spoke, it happened exactly as He said.

This is the “big picture” of Matthew 24. The chapter is not a coded roadmap of modern geopolitics, a secret rapture, a seven-year tribulation, or a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ. Such schemes read into the text what is not there and miss what *is* there: a prophecy about the end of the temple age, spoken to the generation that would see it fulfilled. Reading verses 12–14 in this historical frame keeps us honest with the text and protects us from speculation.

A Brief Flyover of Matthew 24

Before we narrow in on verses 12–14, it helps to see the flow of the chapter:

- Vv. 1–3 — The setting: the temple will be destroyed; the disciples ask when.
- Vv. 4–14 — Signs that will characterize the period leading up to Jerusalem’s fall: false messiahs, wars, famines, persecution, lawlessness, cold love, and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel.
- Vv. 15–22 — The specific crisis: when they see “the abomination of desolation” standing in the holy place, those in Judea are to flee to the mountains. Luke’s parallel makes it plainer: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near” (Luke 21:20).
- Vv. 23–28 — Warnings against false christs who will arise during the chaos.
- Vv. 29–31 — Apocalyptic language (sun darkened, moon not giving light, the Son of Man coming on the clouds) describing the covenantal judgment on Jerusalem, using the same imagery the prophets used for the fall of Babylon, Egypt, and Edom (Isa. 13:10; 19:1; 34:4–5).

- Vv. 32–35 — The lesson of the fig tree and the decisive timestamp: “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”
- Vv. 36–51 — “That day and hour” which no one knows. Godly students of Scripture differ here. Some hold that the whole chapter, including these verses, continues to describe the destruction of Jerusalem; others understand Jesus to pivot at verse 36 and speak of His final coming at the end of time. We need not settle that question to hear the application the Lord draws from it: constant watchfulness and faithful service, because the day is unknown.

Whatever view one takes of verses 36 and following, verses 12–14 sit squarely in the section that addresses the disciples’ question about the temple. They were written to prepare first-century disciples to endure the storm that was coming on their own city within their own lifetime, and the enduring principles they teach carry forward to every generation of God’s people.

The Passage: Matthew 24:12–14

“Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

Verse 12 — Lawlessness and a Love Grown Cold

In the years between Christ’s ascension and the fall of Jerusalem, lawlessness spread on every side. The Roman world saw the terrors of Nero’s reign and the first state-sponsored persecution of Christians. Within Judaism, the Zealots and the Sicarii committed political murder and stirred revolt. Jewish historian Josephus records the brutality that tore Jerusalem apart from within even as Rome closed in from without. In such a climate, love cools. People weary of doing good. Suspicion replaces hospitality. The pressure to compromise becomes relentless.

Jesus is not describing people who never truly believed. He is warning disciples that sustained moral chaos erodes the heart. The danger is not usually dramatic apostasy; it is drift. Devotion fades. Prayer thins. Assemblies are missed. Love for the brethren cools into indifference. The principle carries forward to every generation of Christians, including ours.

Verse 13 — Endurance to the End

“The end” in this context is the end Jesus has been speaking of all along — the end of the Jewish age, marked by the destruction of the temple. To “endure to the end” meant, for that first-century audience, to remain faithful through the lawlessness, the persecution, and the siege itself. Those who heeded Jesus’ warning in verse 16 and fled to the mountains when the armies approached were literally saved from the devastation that fell on Jerusalem. The early church historian Eusebius records that the Christians in Judea fled to Pella before the city was destroyed — a direct obedience to Christ’s words here.

Yet the principle stretches far beyond A.D. 70. Salvation throughout the New Testament is never presented as a one-time, unconditional transaction that cannot be lost. It is entered into obedience (Rom. 6:17–18; Acts 2:38), lived out in faithfulness (Phil. 2:12), and consummated only for those who *continue* in the faith (Col. 1:21–23; Heb. 3:12–14; Rev. 2:10). The man who endures *to the end* — not merely the man who once began — will be saved. This plainly refutes the notion that a single past moment of belief guarantees heaven regardless of how a person lives thereafter. Christ’s own words require perseverance.

Verse 14 — The Gospel Preached in All the World

Premillennial schemes often seize on this verse to argue that Christ cannot return until some future global missionary saturation is achieved. But Jesus says *this* gospel will be preached in the whole world *before the end comes* — and the “end” in the near context is the end of the temple age in A.D. 70.

The New Testament itself testifies that this worldwide proclamation was fulfilled within the apostolic generation. Paul writes to the Colossians that the gospel “*was proclaimed in all creation under heaven*” (Col. 1:23); that it “*is constantly bearing fruit and increasing ... in all the world*” (Col. 1:6); that its sound “*has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world*” (Rom. 10:18); and that the faith of the Romans “*is being proclaimed throughout the whole world*” (Rom. 1:8). On Pentecost, Jews “from every nation under heaven” heard the gospel in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5). By the time Titus marched on the city, the testimony Jesus promised had been delivered.

The abiding lesson is that the kingdom does not wait on world events; the gospel goes forward. The mission continues to this day, and faithful disciples still take part in that testimony — not as a countdown to the return of Christ, but as an overflow of a living faith.

Guarding Against False Teaching

Because Matthew 24 has been the quarry from which premillennial and dispensational theories have been cut, it is worth naming plainly what the passage does *not* teach:

- It does not teach a secret rapture of the church. No such event appears in the text, and no New Testament writer ever describes one. The so-called “rapture” doctrine is a nineteenth-century invention, largely popularized by J. N. Darby and later by the Scofield Reference Bible.
- It does not teach a future seven-year tribulation distinct from the sufferings of the first-century church. The tribulation Jesus names was real, localized, and historical, falling on that generation (Matt. 24:21, 34).
- It does not teach a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ from Jerusalem. Christ reigns now, at the right hand of God (Acts 2:29–36; Eph. 1:20–23), and His kingdom is the church (Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28).

- It does not teach “once saved, always saved.” Jesus Himself ties salvation to endurance, and the consistent witness of the New Testament is that a Christian can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4; Heb. 6:4–6; 2 Pet. 2:20–22).
- It does not teach that only a pre-selected elect will persevere while others cannot. Jesus addresses all His disciples and calls every one of them to endure. Perseverance is the responsibility of every believer, enabled by God’s grace but exercised through our own faith and obedience (Phil. 2:12–13).

What it *does* teach is simple and sobering: the kingdom of Christ was established, the old order was judged, and those who remained faithful through the storm — then and now — are saved.

Group Discussion

What changes when we read “the one who endures to the end will be saved” in its first-century setting — the destruction of Jerusalem — rather than as a prediction about the last days of world history? How does the historical context sharpen the meaning without diluting the call to perseverance today?

Personal Reflection

Are there areas of your spiritual life that have grown cold or routine — prayer, worship, love of the brethren, personal study, service? What would it take, by God’s grace and your own diligent faith, to rekindle an enduring love for God and an active commitment to His kingdom?

Read Matthew 24:12–14

Study Questions

1. Look back at Matthew 24:1–3. What question did the disciples ask Jesus, and why is that question the key to understanding the rest of the chapter?
2. Jesus says in Matthew 24:34, “This generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” Why is this verse fatal to schemes that push the fulfillment of Matthew 24 into our future?
3. In verse 12, what historical conditions in the decades before A.D. 70 would have caused “lawlessness” to abound and love to grow cold? What parallels, if any, do you see in our own day?
4. Is Jesus in verse 12 describing people who were never truly converted, or believers whose devotion has cooled under pressure? What difference does the answer make for how we watch over our own hearts?
5. In verse 13, what does “the end” refer to in its immediate context? How does seeing it as the end of the Jewish age (A.D. 70) make sense of Jesus’ warning to flee Judea in verses 15–21?

6. How does the teaching “the one who endures to the end will be saved” show that salvation is conditional and ongoing — not a one-time transaction that cannot be lost? Compare Colossians 1:21–23, Hebrews 3:12–14, and Revelation 2:10.
7. What does “enduring to the end” look like in the daily life of a Christian? Is it dramatic heroism, or the quieter work of consistent faithfulness in worship, service, and love?
8. In verse 14, Jesus says the gospel will be preached “in the whole world ... and then the end will come.” According to Colossians 1:6, 23, Romans 1:8, and Romans 10:18, had that worldwide proclamation already taken place before Jerusalem’s fall? What does that tell us about whether verse 14 points to a still-future event?
9. Why is it important to reject the premillennial idea that Matthew 24 describes a secret rapture, a future seven-year tribulation, or an earthly thousand-year reign of Christ? What damage does such teaching do to the plain meaning of Jesus’ words?
10. Taking verses 12–14 as a whole — warning, promise, and mission — what practical steps can you take this week to guard your heart against growing cold and to remain faithful to the end?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages:

Revelation 2:1–7 — The church at Ephesus had sound doctrine and patient endurance, yet had “left their first love.” A searching picture of how a faithful congregation can still grow cold.

Galatians 6:9–10 — “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” Endurance is worked out in steady, ordinary obedience.

Hebrews 3:12–14 — Daily exhortation guards the brethren from an “evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” We have become partakers of Christ, “if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”

Colossians 1:21–23 — Christ reconciles us “if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”

Luke 21:20–24 — Luke’s parallel to Matthew 24 replaces the “abomination of desolation” with “Jerusalem surrounded by armies,” making plain what Jesus was describing.