

Are There Signs Of The Second Coming?

A Study of the Signs of Persecution and Tribulation

(Matthew 24:9; 2 Thess. 1:4-10)

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Are There Signs of the Second Coming of Christ? It is often argued that there are no signs of the Christ's Second Coming. The signs given by Jesus in Matthew 24 refer to his coming in A.D. 70.

In Matthew 24:9 Jesus gives the sign of the persecution that would precede His coming in A.D. 70. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake."

The apostles and the church were persecuted.

Peter and John were arrested and harassed in Jerusalem, (Acts 4:21). Later they were beaten, (5:40) Stephen was stoned to death, (Acts 7:54-60). After his death, a great persecution arose against the church.

"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem..." (Acts 8:1). Paul said that "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God," (Acts 14:22)

Then Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." (Acts 9:1, 2)

Herod decided to harass some from the church. He killed James the brother John with the sword. (Acts 12:1,) and following this to please the Jews, had Peter arrested with the intent to kill him also (v. 4). The later chapters of Acts record the persecution of Paul confirming the words of Ananias at the farmer's baptism; (Acts 9:16).

There is no want for evidence that the words of Christ came true for the first century church and the persecution that continue to mount as many epistles record their suffering and tribulation, (Heb. 10:32-34; 1 Peter 1:7; 2:21; 3:9, 13; 4:1, 16; 5:10) to name a few.

The Great Tribulation

Later in Matthew 24:21 Jesus spoke of the great tribulation, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. He alludes to the words of Daniel (9:24-27; 12:2). To leave no doubt of

which time He assigned the great tribulation, He expressly said, "that generation" would by no means pass away until all those things had happened. (Matthew 24:34)

These are among the signs that preceded the Lord's coming in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Since Jesus gave the sign of persecution of the saints as a sign of His coming in A.D. 70, we therefore must place the sign of persecution of the saints in connection with that event. As stated previously, Jesus allegedly gave no signs of his second and final return. This is the position of the futurists, (those who believe that Christ's final return did not occur in A.D. 70 but remains yet unfulfilled and future to us today.)

Thessalonians Persecution -A Sign --Destruction of Jerusalem or Future Coming?

The futurist interpretation is woefully problematic. Paul writes to the Thessalonians about persecutions they were enduring. "For you brethren became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16)

Paul clearly identifies the Jews as the murderers of the Lord and the persecutors of the apostles and saints. He says they were filling up the measure of their sins, literally, their cup of iniquity. This identifies them as those whom Jesus foretold would be left desolate.

"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See your house is left to you desolate! (Matthew 23:32-38)

Clearly the above passage identifies Jerusalem as the murderers of the Lord and the persecutors of those whom he would send to them. They killed the apostles and saints, and persecuted them from city to city, and beat them in the synagogues. See Acts 7, 12, and 16.

In Matthew 10:23, Jesus again connects the persecution of the saints with His return. "*When they persecute you in this city, flee to another, For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*" These persecutions would continue all the way up to the time that the Lord returned. Since

persecutions are admittedly one of the signs leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, (Matt., 24:9) this passage finds its fulfillment in that event. The refuge from the persecutions was found by fleeing to one of the cities of *Israel*, clearly a reference to the fact that Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed.

The next passage is devastating to those who believe there were no signs of the Second Coming. It is found in the first chapter of 2 Thessalonians Chapter.

“So that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” (vv. 4-10)

Observe that Paul says the Thessalonians were enduring persecutions and tribulations. He says that these persecutions were “manifest evidence” of God’s righteous judgment. The words “manifest evidence” is from the Greek term, “*endeiksis*”. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, page 213.* The word means a demonstration, proof, a “sign”. (See Strong's Concordance no. 1733). In other words, Paul says that the persecutions which the Thessalonians were then experiencing and enduring were a sign, a demonstration and proof of God’s righteous judgment.

What was God’s righteous judgment of which the sign of persecution endured by the Thessalonians was proof? Paul says it is a righteous thing with God **to repay with tribulation those who trouble you**. We have shown that those who troubled the Thessalonians were the Jews, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. See also Acts 17:5, 6; 13 where the Jews came from Thessalonica to Berea to harass Paul.

We have shown that wrath was about to come upon the Jews per the Thessalonians text. Here the apostle says God would repay them with tribulation for persecuting the saints. **This is a sign!** It is **the very sign of persecution and tribulation** spoken of in the Olivet discourse concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Not only would God’s righteous judgment repay the Jewish persecutors with tribulation, it would also bring blessings to the church. “And to give you who are troubled [a] rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His might angels” (v. 7) God would give the Thessalonians a rest from the persecutions of the Jewish persecutors when the Lord returned from heaven! This passage shows that there were signs; the sign of persecution which preceded the Lord’s second coming. This coming is primarily to put

Jewish persecution against the church to an end, a fact that was unquestionable after the Jewish temple fell in A.D. 70.

This coming is also said to be the time when the Lord Jesus would come in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it is the judgment. Peter, also speaking of intense Jewish persecution referred to the coming judgment in A.D. 70. He wrote, **that 'the time had come for judgment to begin at the house of God** *'and if it begins with us first, what shall be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?,' (1 Peter 4:17, emp. mine)*

These Jewish persecutors would be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

Observe that this coming is in ***“that Day”*** the day which is admittedly the second coming of Christ, and equates with Matthew 24:36. ***“That Day”*** in this context is the day when the Lord would come to destroy the Jewish persecutors against the church as identified by the sign of the persecutions and proven from 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. Therefore, ***“that Day”*** is the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

This confirms the application of the text in Luke 17:30,31, to refer to the A.D. 70 coming. *“Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one, who is in the field, let him not turn back.”* Observe that ***the day*** when the Son of Man is revealed is called ***that day***. ***That day*** is the time when the disciples were not to return to their houses to retrieve their goods. This is also admitted by futurists to be the A.D. 70 coming of Christ according to Matthew 24:15-17; Luke 21:20-22.

In addition, it is argued that Matthew 24:27 refers to the future second coming and parallels Matthew 24:36. We have demonstrated that **Matthew 24:36 is the same as 1 Thessalonians 1:10 which equates with the Lord’s coming to destroy the Jewish persecutors**. Therefore, the destruction of Jerusalem is the coming of Matthew 24:27.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that Jesus gave the signs of persecution and tribulation as signs which would precede His coming in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is admitted by the futurists. We also demonstrated that those who were guilty of murdering the Lord and his prophets, the apostles and persecuting the saints were the Jews who were yet filling up their cup of iniquity as noted in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and Matthew 23:32-38. It cannot be that a prophet perishes outside of Jerusalem, Luke 13:33.

We observed where Jesus commanded his disciples to flee the persecutions by taking refuge in the cities of Israel. He said that they would not have gone over all the cities of

Israel before he returned. This was their assurance that they would always be able to escape for refuge until he returned.

We demonstrated that 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 is unquestionably a passage discussing the Lord's second coming, in which he comes to take vengeance. However, this same passage identified both the persecutions and the tribulation as the signs that manifested God's righteous judgment. God would take vengeance on those responsible for the persecutions, again, the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted the saints.

Finally, we demonstrated that this coming would occur "in that day" the day that all futurists say is the second coming. It equates with "that day and hour" of Matthew 24:36 and Luke 17:30. Since it is tied to relief from Jewish persecutions, and the sign of Jesus coming, it refers to A.D. 70.