

# Bible Studies for Life: May 1

*Know What's Coming • Matthew 24:15-22*

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I had to do something two weeks ago that I absolutely hate doing. I had to make the decision to cancel our Wednesday night services at First Church, Terry. Tornado warnings and hailstorms were projected to hit our area at the exact same time as our evening services, and I felt like the wisest thing to do was to err on the side of caution, heed the warnings, and cancel services.

It's hard to know what to expect in terms of weather in Mississippi because our weather is so fickle, but we made the right decision. Unlike the weather in Mississippi, we can, to a degree, know what to expect before the end of all things takes place.

I believe Jesus gives us some very practical words of application as we consider the end of all things in our passage this week. So what can we glean from this passage?

**First, we shouldn't be shocked when the skies above us look increasingly dark.** In the verses prior, Jesus warned the disciples of wars, rumors of wars, famines, persecutions, and tribulations. He describes these events as the "beginning of birth pains" (Matthew 24:8).

In verse 15, Jesus talks about the "abomination of desolation

spoken of by the prophet Daniel” as a warning sign of darker things to come. There are interpretive challenges concerning what the “abomination of desolation” is exactly, and men a lot smarter than myself can’t agree on what this means.

Some people believe this is a reference to the pagan king Antiochus IV Epiphanes allowing the slaughter of pigs in the temple around 167 B.C. Some believe it’s a reference to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Still others believe it’s a future reference to when the antichrist will proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

This is nowhere near a first-tier issue for believers, and in no way should cause us to begin speculating as to who the antichrist will be or become a source of contention in our churches. The point of application is clear: don’t be shocked when the road ahead is plagued with great difficulty.

Difficult days are necessary. Things will have to get a lot worse before they get better. When we see these days we should say along with the late Adrian Rogers, longtime pastor of Bellevue Church in Memphis and two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention, “It’s beginning to look gloriously dark.”

Dark days can only mean that we are getting closer and closer to eternity in heaven.

**Secondly, we should make necessary preparations.** Please hear me out. I’m not suggesting you should begin filling up a bomb shelter with rice, beans, dry goods, and band aids, but I am saying that you should prepare spiritually.

Jesus speaks of the days after the abomination of desolation as being days of “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:20), and at the very least Christians need to be prepared to suffer persecution the likes of which we have never seen before.

Nominal Christianity that won’t even motivate us to attend a

prayer meeting will not survive these dark days. We desperately need the Lord to open our eyes to see His beauty and grip our hearts with the majesty of His Gospel.

Then and only then will we be willing to suffer for His name. Please prepare yourself today for what can come tomorrow.

**Finally, friends, we should be encouraged because the end of all things should remind us of our infinitely glorious hope.** Jesus promised that the tribulation of these days would be absolutely unprecedented, but we can rest in the fact that Jesus said, "for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (Matthew 24:23).

I believe this is a direct reference to the rapture of the Church, but you don't have to agree with me. One truth on which we should all agree is that as things go from bad to worse in our world, the suffering we will endure here on earth is nothing compared to the suffering we deserve in hell.

Praise God for the good news of the Gospel! As we long for the return of Christ, may we be reminded there are billions of lost people in our world today who are still on a road that will lead to the very suffering from which Believers have been rescued. Fuel our urgency, Lord!

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