

Matthew 24:23-24 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

See Matthew 24 Commentary all on one page

[Matthew 24:1 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:2 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:3 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:4 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:5 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:6 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:7 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:8 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:9 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:10 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:11 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:12 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:13 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:14 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:15 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:16 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:17 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:18 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:19 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:20 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:21 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:22 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:23 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:24 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:25 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:26 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:27 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:28 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:29 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:30 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:31 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:32 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:33 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:34 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:35 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:36 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:37 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:38 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:39 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:40 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:41 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:42 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:43 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:44 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:45 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:46 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:47 Commentary](#)
[Matthew 24:48 Commentary](#)

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Another Chart from Charles Swindoll](#)

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

Matthew 24:23 "Then if anyone says to you, '**Behold**, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not **believe** him: **tote ean tis humin eipe** (3SAAS) **Idou** (2PSAMM) ode o Christos e ode me pisteusete (2PPAAS - functions as an aorist imperative) :

- Dt 13:1-3 Mk 13:21 Lu 17:23,24 21:8 John 5:43
- [Matthew 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Holman - For there will appear false Messiahs and false prophets performing great miracles- amazing things!- so as to fool even the chosen, if possible.

JESUS WARNS OF DECEIVERS IN THE LAST DAYS

Then ([5119](#))(**tote**) is an adverb that functions as an expression of time. **Tote** means at that time or a point of time subsequent to another point of time. **Tote** is used with when (**hote**) and translated "when...then." (Mt 9:15, 13:26, 21:1, Mt 25:31, Lk 5:35, 14:10, 21:20, John 7:10, 8:28, 11:6, 12:15 Acts 13:12 [inverted order], Acts 28:1, 1Cor 15:28, 54, 2Cor 12:10, Col 3:4). **Tote** also functions as a marker = "at that time." (Mt 2:17) Finally, **tote** is used in narration to introduce what follows in time (Mt 2:7). Matthew has 89/158 NT uses (about 57%) of **tote** with the next most frequent book being Acts with 21 uses.

In sum, the idea of **tote** as signifying "**at that time**" begs the question "**What time?**" Let's go to the **context** for the answer. Jesus is continuing chronologically from the previous section (Mt 24:21-note and Mt 24:22-note) and so strictly speaking these warnings apply most directly to the time of the **Great Tribulation** (the last 3.5 years of **Daniel's Seventieth Week**). This is a time when one would naturally look for relief which might draw some to the false messiahs. The Messiah is indeed coming but not until the end (Mt 24:30-note, Rev 19:11-16-note). In sum, these warnings are directly applicable to those who are alive at the time the Antichrist desolates the rebuilt Jewish Temple and inaugurates the last 3.5 year Great Tribulation.

Zodhiates - The terror caused by the Antichrist during the second half of Daniel's seventieth week will be so great that the only hope will be Christ's direct intervention. The word "**then**" here, as we find in Matthew 24:9, 10, 16, 21, does not refer to an instant of time but to a period. Here the antecedent is "**those days**" (Mt 24:22) which in turn points back to "**great tribulation**" (Mt 24:21). ([Exegetical Commentary on Matthew- Dr. Spiros Zodhiates - 2006](#))

Hiebert says "**then** links this warning with the scene of extreme suffering just depicted. If any man, whosoever it may be, states the situation conditionally but implies that its fulfillment can be expected. To you marks that these messages will be directly aimed at the believers in Christ." ([The Gospel of Mark- An Expositional Commentary](#))

If anyone - The pronoun **anyone** (**tis**) which Greek expert **Zodhiates** says is "the masculine or feminine enclitic indefinite pronoun, anyone-false prophet of either sex."

Behold ([2400](#))(**idou**) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of **eidon** which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **Idou** calls attention to the extraordinary (cp Mt 3:16). **Idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" **Idou** is used by the Biblical writers to (1) prompt or arouse the reader's attention (introducing something new or

unusual), (2) to mark a strong emphasis ("Indeed!" Lk 13:16) and (3) to call the reader to pay close attention (very similar to #1) so that one will listen, remember or consider

Zodhiates adds that **idou** is a "demonstrative particle. "Lo and behold!", serving to call attention to something external or exterior to oneself; usually used at the beginning of a clause or only with kai (and), before it, but sometimes in the mid. of a clause before words which are to be particularly noted (Mt 23:34; Lk 13:16; Acts 2:7). ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary- New Testament](#))

The Christ - Note the used of the definitive particle **'the'** (ho) which indicates they are making the claim that they are the one and only true Messiah, the one who has been anointed. (See **Messiah** and also the **Messiah - the Anointed One**).

Stuart Weber on those who claim to be **Christ** in the time of the Great Tribulation - People will be desperate for a Savior while in the midst of the greatest tribulation earth will ever know. Jesus now gave his disciples some guidelines for discerning when he was likely to return. Just as Jesus' disciples must have trembled at the fearful images of the Great Tribulation, so their hearts thrilled as he described the glory of his coming. (Holman New Testament Commentary)

Christ ([5547](#))(**Christos** from **chrío** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) means one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus (exceptions = "false Christs" - Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22). **Christos** is translated in the NAS 1995 edition as **Christ** (516x), **Christ's** (11x) and **Messiah** (4x - Mt 1:1, 16, 17, 2:4). The NIV and ESV never translate **Christos** as Messiah, but always as Christ. The Holman Christian Standard Bible has an interesting approach and translates **Christos** as Messiah many times depending on the context ([see explanatory note](#)) The NLT paraphrase translates Christos as Messiah over 80 times. The NET translates Christos as Messiah in Jn 4:29, Acts 3:20, Eph 2:12.

Do not believe - Although this is in the aorist subjunctive, in context it functions as an imperative or command. Most of the time believers are commanded to believe but here is one of the exceptions where they are told not to believe! Indeed believers are to reject all claims of Messiahs said to be hidden here or there, for as Jesus explains in Mt 24:27 the coming of the true Messiah will be like lightning -- unmistakable!

Believe ([4100](#))(**pisteuo** from **pistis**; **pistos**; see related studies the faith and the obedience of faith) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust, accepting it as genuine or real. Notice the next verse begins with "for" (gar) which explains why Jesus issues the warning to not believe their claims to Messiahship -- they will perform great signs and wonders, which one might think could only be performed by the Messiah. In the Gospel of John Jesus tells us how we might be enabled to discern truth from error - "If any man is willing to do (present tense - as one's lifestyle) His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself." (Jn 7:17) In this coming day of deception, believers walking by the Spirit of Truth will be enabled by Him to discern truth from error. (cf Gal 5:16-note, 1Jn 2:20-note, 1Jn 2:27-note).

Zodhiates points out that "The entire paragraph warns believers against single events of deception: first, by the use of the indefinite pronoun **tis**, anyone, and secondly by the presence of three verbs in the **aorist tense**: "**says... behold... believe.**" ([Ibid](#))

Matthew 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect: egerthesontai (3PPFPI) gar pseudo christoi kai pseudoprophetai kai dosousin (3PPFPI) semeia megala kai terata hoste planesai (AAN) eis dunaton kai tous eklektous:

- **False Christs** - Mt 24:5,11 2Pe 2:1-3 3:17
- **Will**: Dt 13:1 2Th 2:9-11 Rev 13:13,14 19:20
- **so as**: John 6:37,39 10:28-30 Ro 8:28-39 2Ti 2:19 1Pe 1:5 1Jn 5:18 Rev 12:9-11 13:7,8,14
- **If possible** - Mk 13:22 Ac 20:16 Ro 12:18 Ga 4:15
- [Matthew 24 Resources](#)

FALSE CHRISTS AND FALSE PROPHETS

Jesus has already warned of similar impostors throughout the age that precedes His return and they will unfortunately be very effective for they will **mislead** not a few but **many**!

(Mt 24:5-note) "For many will come in My name (**Ed**: But not in His authority or power), saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

(Mt 24:11-note) "And many **false prophets** will arise, and will mislead many.

For ([gar](#)) - **Terms of explanation** should always prompt a question to the good **inductive Bible student**. In this case - **What is Jesus explaining?** He is explaining why He is issuing the warning to pay attention and not believe "Christ sightings!" Alertness will be necessary because these imposters will buttress their claims with evidences that they possess supernatural power.

And keep in mind the context -- these pretenders are arising in a time of the global Great Tribulation, a time when men's hearts would be fainting from fear and unanswered questions ("What in the world is happening?" cp Lk 21:25-26) There is a natural tendency in such fearful times to seek answers from pretenders who seem so spiritually in touch with the supernatural world. But these men are not to be followed or believed (see also Mt 24:25-26).

These men "would provide **great signs and miracles** that people will take as validation of their authenticity as God's Christ or prophet (cf. the Jewish leaders' demand of a **sign** from Jesus in Mt 12:38; 16:1; see also Jesus' description of miracle-working imposters in Mt 7:21-23)." (Stuart Weber - Holman New Testament Commentary)

False Christs (Mk 13:22) (5580) (pseudochristos from **pseudes** = false, untrue, pretentious, lying + **Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint = one who has been anointed, appointed to a task) are those who falsely claim to be the Messiah or as BDAG says a "bogus Messiah."

John warned that "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." (1Jn 4:3-4-note)

Warren Wiersbe - World conditions will be so terrible that men will wonder if any relief will come, and this will give false christs opportunities to deceive many. Satan is capable of performing "lying wonders" (2 Thes. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13-14). The fact that a religious leader performs miracles is no assurance that he has come from God. Many Jews will be deceived, for "the Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22). Jesus performed true signs in His Father's name, and the nation rejected Him (John 12:37ff). Satan's miracles they will accept. (Bible Exposition Commentary)

ESV Study Bible note on **false prophets** - **False prophets** are people who claim to speak for God but are actually speaking by demonic influence (1Jn 4:3-4). In today's age of "*tolerance*," discriminating discernment can be viewed as being judgmental (cf. "Judge not," Mt 7:1-note). Yet Jesus also taught, "Do not judge by appearances, but **judge** with right judgment" (John 7:24)...(In note on Mt 7:15-20-note) Maintaining the earlier balance of not judging (Mt 7:1-5-note) yet not being naively accepting (Mt 7:6), Jesus teaches his disciples that they must be wisely discerning when professed **prophets** come into their midst. The life of the **prophet** and the results of his influence on others are the fruits that will indicate whether or not his message is consistent with the kingdom life of righteousness. (Crossway Bibles, 2008) (Bolding, italics and notes added)

John Walvoord - While false Christs and false prophets have always been in evidence, they will be especially prominent at the end of the age in Satan's final attempt to turn people from faith in Christ (**Ed**: Cf "Knowing that he has only a short time." = Rev 12:12-note = Last 3.5 years = Rev 12:6-note and Rev 12:14-note). ([Matthew 24 The Signs of the End of the Age](#))

False prophets (note plural speaks of more than one - like a den of vipers) will offer the lie that they speak as a spokesman of God with a message from Him.

False prophets ([5578](#))(**pseudoprophetes** from **pseudes** = false, untrue, pretentious, lying + **prophetes** = prophet from **pro** = before or ahead of time + **phemi** = to speak, affirm) who teach any other way than that our Lord has clearly marked out. These men (1) claim to be prophets from God and (2) utter falsehoods under the name of divine prophecies.

Moses defined a **prophet** -

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Dt 13:1-3)

False prophets are not just wrong but are very dangerous (cf "savage wolves" Acts 20:28, 29, 30-note), and one should not expose their minds (**Remember**: The battle is not as much physical as it is mental, so the battlefield is our mind and the great divine weapon is His Word and Sword of Truth, Ep 6:17-note, [2Co 6:7, Col 1:5-note, 2Ti 2:15-note, Jas 1:18-note]) to their false message because they inevitably pervert (Acts 20:30-note where "**perverse**" = to turn or twist the truth throughout and) distort their listener's thinking and poison their souls. False prophets are more deadly than physical wolves and other predators, because they can kill not just the body but the soul.

In the last of the "last days," the end times (Rev 20:10-note). Below is a description of **the ultimate False Prophet in the**

Revelation (from Tony Garland's highly recommended literal interpretation of the Revelation = [A Testimony of Jesus Christ](#))

The False Prophet is the second beast which John sees which comes up out of the earth having two horns like a lamb and who spoke like a dragon (Rev. 13:11-[note](#)). His appearance is benign, like that of a lamb, but his prophecies and commands have their source in the devil. This is why Scripture refers to him as the "False Prophet" (Rev. 19:20-[note](#); Rev 20:10-[note](#)).

The False Prophet performs great signs and miracles which are used to witness to the **Beast** from which he derives his power. "He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast" (Rev. 13:12-[note](#)). He causes those on the earth to worship the Beast and to make an image to the beast (Rev. 13:14-[note](#)). He is even granted power "to give breath to the image of the beast" (Rev. 13:15-[note](#)). It appears that the miracles he performs are genuine, but what they attest to is false. It is the False Prophet who causes all men to receive a mark in order to be able to buy or sell (Rev. 13:16-17-[note](#)).

Along with the [dragon](#) and the [Beast](#), he forms an anti-trinity wherein the dragon occupies a position like that of the Father, the [Beast](#) like that of the Son, and the False Prophet like that of the Holy Spirit, but testifies to the false son. All three are the source of demons which gather the kings of the earth to battle (Rev 16:13,14-[note](#)). (See [Campaign of Armageddon](#)) Both the False Prophet and the Beast are taken at the Second Coming of Christ and cast into the Lake of Fire as its first populace (Rev. 19:20-[note](#)). They are still there one thousand years later when joined by the devil (Rev. 20:10-[note](#)).

No doubt the False Prophet plays a key role in the deception which Paul described in his letter to the church at Thessalonica:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2Th. 2:9-12).

He is an instrument of both the dragon and the Beast, but ultimately of God. See [Symbols of Kingdoms](#) See commentary on [Revelation 13:11](#). ([A Testimony of Jesus Christ - False Prophet](#))

Related Resources:

- [ISBE article on False Prophesying](#).
- Multiple Scriptures related to false prophets

Great signs and wonders - Notice that these are not routine signs and wonders (as if that would not be enough to mislead!) but "*mega*" (Greek = megas) **signs and wonders!** How great? They are so convincing that they could even mislead believers (if that were possible). Supernatural signs suggest a supernatural source, and in this case the source will be Satan not God.

Paul describes the deceptive days of the Great Tribulation which will last 3.5 years:

The one (2Th 2:8 - Antichrist) whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan (Satan energizes the Antichrist), **with all power and signs and false wonders**, 10 and with all the **deception** of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved (Note the only antidote for Satan's deception is God's truth!). 11 And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, 12 in order that (term of purpose) they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (Notice they made a choice to reject truth, so in essence God rejects them). (2Thes 2:9-12)

Signs ([4592](#)) (**semeion** akin to *semaino* = to give a sign; *sema* = a sign) is a distinguishing mark or symbol that carries a special meaning or like a simple sign points to something else. In Scripture when *semeion* used of God's miraculous works (that which is contrary to the usual course of nature) it points to spiritual truth. **Hiebert** says signs "are finger posts to a higher reality." (**ibid**)

Semeion can be a sign, a mark, a token, or a miracle with a spiritual end purpose. In other words a sign can be either natural or supernatural. A sign is an object, quality, or event whose presence or occurrence indicates the probable presence or occurrence of something else.

In a number of NT contexts *semeion* takes on the sense of a miracle because of its unusual nature, especially as that which is contrary to the usual course of nature (e.g., Jn 2:23, Acts 4:16, 22 - And the KJV translates *semeion* as **miracle** 23x in John).

These **great signs and wonders** are astonishing performances that are striking and have a dramatic effect on those who witness them. Have you ever seen a phenomenal magic trick that is so incredible that the first reaction of the audience is a gasp of utter astonishment and only after the gasp do they applaud?

Wonders ([5059](#))(**teras**) are similar to signs but appeal to the senses, being recognized as a phenomenon that needs to be explained. **Hiebert** adds that "**Wonders** views these signs with reference to the astonishment that they produce; they are startling, amazement-evoking portents." ([Ibid](#))

Teras is derived from the verb **tereo** which means to keep, watch and thus conveys the idea of something which due to its extraordinary character is apt to be observed and kept in the memory. It is a miracle regarded as startling, imposing or amazing. **Teras** refers to "something strange", a phenomena which compels one's attention and causes one to "look again" or causes the beholder to marvel. **Teras** is always in the plural and always translated "wonders."

Wonders (teras) accompanied **Moses** (Acts 7:36; Sept.: Ex. 7:3; Deut. 6:22; 7:19; Jer. 32:20); **Christ** (John 4:48); and the **apostles** and **teachers** (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4).

BDAG says **teras** is "something that astounds because of transcendent association -- prodigy, portent, omen, wonder in our literature only plural and combined with semeion."

Friberg adds that **teras** refers to a "wonder, marvel, portent, something so unusual it arouses close observation."

John gives good advice to those who see these amazing **signs and wonders** - "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1Jn 4:1-note)

The ESV Study Bible note adds "Christian faith is not spiritual gullibility. test the spirits. The unseen spiritual influences that guide people's speech and actions can be "tested" by observing their doctrine and conduct as well as by the gift of **spiritual discernment** (cf. 1Cor 12:10 = "and to another [is given by the Spirit] the distinguishing of spirits"; 1Cor 14:29 = "let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment."). (Bolding added)

PURPOSE OF SIGNS AND WONDERS: TO LEAD ASTRAY

So as to mislead, if possible - This description makes the point that these signs and wonders will have potentially great persuasive power. The "if" is an "if" of supposition, not of reality. In other words **if possible** implies these pretenders will not be able to mislead **the elect**.

Mislead even the elect - As noted in the other uses of **elect** in Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:22), this term refers first of all to Jewish believers. Clearly however this term (and the warning) is applicable to any Gentile believers during these last 3.5 years (e.g., see Mt 24:31). While a believer might be temporarily misled, it is impossible to continually mislead them to the end of their life. (Cp enduring to the end - Mt 24:13-not).

Mislead (deceive) ([4105](#))(**planao** from **plane** which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word "planet") means literally made to wander and so to go (active sense) or be led astray (passive sense as of sheep in Mt 18:12-13). In spiritual terms, **planao** means to be made to err from the right way, the highway of truth and holiness. Straying in the spiritual sense occurs when one does not adhere to the truth (James 5:19) and/or forsakes the right way (see 2 Peter 2:15-note)

If possible - It is not possible to continually mislead one who is chosen by God for salvation. In a sense, the converse truth is that those who endure to the end will be saved. (Mt 24:13-note). And remember they are not saved because of their own power or ability to endure, but because the omnipotent Holy Spirit in them continually enables them to endure! Stated another way, those who endure will demonstrate by their endurance that they are genuinely saved.

John Phillips - "The Lord warned His people not to be deceived, not to be lured out of hiding, for His return would be very evident." (Exploring the Gospel of Matthew)

Gundry - If possible, even the selected ones" puts emphasis on the extremity of this danger of deception. (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation)

Possible([1415](#))(**dunatos** from **dunamai** = referring to power one has by virtue of inherent ability and resources; see study of **dunamis**) means powerful, able, strong. **Able** describes that which has sufficient or necessary power, means, skill, or resources to accomplish an objective. Praise our Shield and Defender Who ensures that even **great signs and wonders** will not be able to mislead us!

Elect ([1588](#))(**eklektos** from verb **eklego** which in middle voice [eklegomai] means select or pick out for one's self which is derived from **ek** =out + **lego** =call) means literally the "called out ones" or "chosen out ones". The idea of **eklektos** is the ones who have been chosen for one's self, selected out of a larger number. **Kenneth Wuest** explains that "**election** does not imply the rejection of the rest (those not chosen out), but is the outcome of the love of God lavished upon those chosen-out." ([Word Studies](#)) **Webster's Dictionary** definition of **elect** is not bad -- "to pick out; to select from among two or more, that which is preferred...in theology, to designate, choose or select as an object of (divine) mercy or favor".

In the **context** of Jesus replying to the questions of His Jewish disciples (Mt 24:3note, Mk 13:3 = "Peter and James and John and Andrew"), many would interpret this a reference primarily to the elect from Israel (aka the believing Jewish **remnant**), those Jews who have been born again by grace through faith in Yeshua. Of course, this truth would still apply to any and all elect who are alive at this time.

J Vernon McGee on the **elect** - In the Scriptures there are two elect groups: the elect of the nation Israel and the elect of the church. We have to use common sense to determine which group is meant. Who has our Lord been talking about up to this point? Israel. All right, Israel is the elect in this verse, also. Jesus is not talking about the church. (Thru the Bible commentary)

Day Unknown - To many Londoners, 1666 looked like the year when Jesus would return. Prophecy enthusiasts had added 1,000 years since Christ's birth to 666, the number of Antichrist, to arrive at the date 1666. The world did seem to be on the verge of destruction when in 1665 a plague claimed the lives of 100,000 people in London. Then in September 1666, a London fire destroyed tens of thousands of buildings. Some wondered, Didn't the Bible predict catastrophes at the end of the world? (see Mt. 24:1-8). Yet the year 1666 passed, and life went on seemingly as it had before. Even in our own day, there are those who have predicted the end of the world. A date is predicted, the media covers the frenzy, and then that day passes uneventfully.