

## Posted 10–30–2020 The End Times Bible Study, Lesson #3

We are going to spend the next 3 or 4 days in Matthew 24. Today you should read Matthew 24:1–14. Take time to pray before you read.

vs. 1-2: It wasn't just the disciples who thought the temple was beautiful. In his history Josephus describes how impressive it was to those approaching Jerusalem. The Temple was covered on the outside with gold plates, that were so brilliant that when the sun shone on them, it was blinding to look at. Where there was no gold, there were blocks of marble of such a pure white that strangers, from a distance, thought there was snow on the temple.

The original Temple was built by Solomon. It was destroyed, along with Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 b.c. and was rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Ezra (Ezra 6:15) but was greatly expanded and improved by Herod the Great. It was the center of Jewish life for almost a thousand years - so much so, that it was customary to swear by the temple (Matt. 23:16) and speaking against the temple could be considered blasphemy (Acts 6:13).

After Herod's work, the temple was huge - nearly 500 yards long and 400 yards wide. Herod's rebuilding work started in 19 b.c., and was only completed in 63 a.d., taking more than eighty years. The temple was finished only seven years before it was destroyed.

When Jesus went out of the temple and his disciples came up pointing out the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Some 40 years after Jesus said this, there was a widespread Jewish revolution against the Romans in Palestine, and they enjoyed many early successes. But ultimately, Rome crushed the rebels. In 70 a.d. Jerusalem was leveled, including the temple - just as Jesus said.

It is said that at the fall of Jerusalem, the last surviving Jews of the city fled to the temple, because it was the strongest, most secure building in the city. Roman soldiers surrounded it, and one drunken soldier started a fire that soon engulfed the whole building. Ornate gold detail work in the roof melted down in the cracks between the stone walls of the temple, and to retrieve the gold, the Roman commander ordered that the temple be dismantled stone by stone. The destruction was so complete that today they have true difficulty learning exactly where the temple was.

This prophecy was fulfilled literally. There was a real temple, and it was really destroyed. The literal fulfillment of this prophecy establishes the tone for the rest of the prophecies in the chapter. We should expect a literal fulfillment for these as well.

v. 3: The disciples were perplexed by Jesus' prophecy and they come to him privately to ask two questions.

"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Matthew does not record Jesus' answer to this first question, but Luke does in Luke 21:8-36. (We will look at what all the synoptic Gospels tell us in this study.)

The disciples probably thought they asked only one question. In their minds, the destruction of the temple and the end of the age might have been tied together. But really, they asked two questions, and this second question is answered in the remainder of the chapter. The first question is "when." That still is the first question in the minds of many. The second question is the one that has which opened people up to much false teaching and worthless speculation.: "What will be the SIGN of your coming and of the close of the age?"

It may also be that this second question was asked as they remembered the events surrounding the temple's destruction by the Babylonians. The temple was destroyed and the people taken into exile in the context of national judgment and exile.

As Jesus answers this important second question, He will make many specific comments and predictions about the end times. These predictions have been the source of tremendous disagreement among Christians who have tried to understand them. Why didn't Jesus simply say it so clearly that there was no possibility anyone could misunderstand Him?

One reason why prophecy may seem "vague" is because God wants every age to have reasons to be ready for Jesus return. We should not think of Jesus' return as an event far off on a timeline, but something we have been running parallel with since the day of Pentecost.

Though some prophetic interpretations are different, we are sure of these two items: 1. He is coming again, and 2. we must be ready at all times.

vs. 4–8: First Jesus gives us a warning about how the devil will attempt to deceive us before Christ's return. In v. 5 he says, MANY false Messiahs/Christs will appear. (Another question for you to think about as we go through this study is, "What is the difference between the false Christs and the AntiChrist whom you will hear about later in this study. Note the emphasis on the multitude of false Christs and don't let their supposed success or fame deceive you. Jesus warned they would lead MANY astray. This is why you need to know your Bible and know the Biblical requirements which are revealed about HIS REAL RETURN. (Help me to remember to give you a list on this before we end this study.) Remember: I'm not as fast as I used to be and not as slow as I'm gonna be or as I also say, "My forgettery works better than my memory."

Next Jesus goes through a series of things which most people consider SIGNS of the times that lead up to the Second Coming of the Christ: wars, rumors of wars, v. 6; nations getting into conflict with one another or leaders of nations involved in conflict, plus famines and earthquakes in various places, v. 7.

Do you remember how I closed our lesson yesterday? I said, "Beware of Bible Teachers who teach the 2nd coming of Christ is such a way they create fear." The return of Jesus is to be a highlight for us, not a fearful experience. Did you note in v. 6 what Jesus said after we hear of these wars and rumors of war, "Don't be alarmed, but this is not yet the end." World Wars I & II were so named because many believed they were the wars to end all wars. That didn't work out did it? Then in v. 8 Jesus says all the unsettling things happening are just false labor pains. This still isn't the end. Notice carefully: Jesus never tells the believer to panic in the face of God's judgment. Memorize Romans 8:1 if you don't understand why you are not to panic.

Throughout the history of the church there have been rash predictions were made and relied on, and resulted in tremendous disappointment, disillusionment, and falling way. I have heard many prediction just in my short lifespan of almost 84 years. I had a lovely lady, a faithful follower of Jesus who got tangled up with some prophecy folks who came and told me several months before Christmas came in 1975 that she had a dream and God told her the world would come to an end before Christmas that year. My sound Biblical advice was, "Let's wait and see what happened."

In our next section of today's reading, vs. 9-14, Jesus describes what his disciples must expect during the time between his Ascension and Second Coming.

v. 9: We are introduced to one of the key words in talking about the end times: "Tribulation." This word gets caught up in the Dispensational Theology and millennialism conversation. You have two groups: Pre-tribulation and Post-tribulation. Will Christians go through the tribulation at the end or will God take them out of this earth to heaven (Rapture) before the tribulation arrives? We will sort this out towards the end of this study as discuss millennialism.

This verse speaks of an enemy on the outside. During persecution will be a difficult time (tribulation, death,) and hatred by all nations because of our love for and confession of Jesus.

v. 10: In this verse Jesus warns that "many will fall away." Those who used to be our friends in faith now betray us and hate us.

v. 11: Now we have a second warning of false prophets. Now it is those who had been faithful pastors in the past. They become false prophets and lead many astray. Don't depend on human leaders. Depend on the written and powerful Word of God, The Sacred Scriptures and the faithful witness of the Living Word of God, Jesus.

v. 12: The problems of the tribulation will cause many to grow cold. They may still associate with us, but their love for God is now missing. They no longer worship, study the Bible, or witness for the Lord.

v. 13: Jesus tells us, "Hang in there!" Endure to the end. You have been saved and marked by God as his own. Don't let the devil or anyone else tell you something different.

v. 14: This is the greatest SIGN of all. It is the only sign which ends with the powerful phrase, "then the end will come. What is it that has to be done? The gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, THEN THE END WILL COME!

#### SIGNIFICANT POINTS:

1. Even though God's temple is sacred and loved by him. It will fall when the people who worship there turn away from God. I've encountered a few people who believe America is bulletproof from the wrath of God because it was founded as a Christian nation. No one who turns away from God is bulletproof.

2. Instead of trying to figure out when the end will come or how close to it we are, we are to be ready at anytime for the earthly journey to end. Consider the millions who have died since Jesus ascended into heaven. Truth be told, we don't know how many more will die before he returns. Be ready: ALWAYS!

3. SIGNS of the times. When I was serving in Wisconsin, a couple of years prior to 1999, a church in Northern Illinois started to send out notices informing all the church of Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin that the world was going to end before the year 2000. Their answer to how this could be true was that they weren't predicting an exact date, but they were able to see the signs of the time, thus their letters. I prefer to refer to the "Signs of the Times" as the "Signs that God will come in judgment." God is warning us on every newscast, every storm weather report, each fall of our earthly economics, every new illness discovered, every death of family and friends: "Repent, the Kingdom is at Hand."

4. Twice in our reading today we saw the phrase, "lead many astray" (vs. 5 & 11) Be careful to whom you listen. There are misguided Christians out there and false prophets out there, and false god being bought and sold on every street corner. Don't be afraid. Jesus is protecting you. (suggested Memory Verse: John 14:26: But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. By the way, spend more time reading the Bible than reading books about the Bible. God said he guided (inspired) the writers of the Scriptures and he did not promise that about books about the Bible. Why read less than the best?

5. Don't live in fear of the "Tribulation." Tomorrows reading with tell you why!

6. The greatest sign is the spread of the gospel. If you believe, support mission work. God wants the whole world to know about Jesus. It is such a great work because everyone who sins, needs Jesus. There is no one who does not sin so tell everyone.

Close with prayer for you to be ready for Christ, every moment of everyday. Amen.

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