

### The Prediction of the End of the Jewish Nation (Matt 24:1-35)

Matt 24:1-2 And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

- It was a great day for the disciples of Jesus, for their Master withstood the onslaught of attacks by the Jewish leadership and sent them packing before the presence of all. It was now time to head back to Bethany for the day was drawing to an end.
- It was during this moment of victory that that they were traveling eastward out of Jerusalem and would have been walking past all the great structures including the holy temple of God. This was a magnificent project that was started by Herod the Great in 19 BC and would not be completed for another 30 years in 60 AD. For the most part though the precious stones and décor was complete and it was easily one of the most impressive structures in the world, living up to the standards of King Herod.
- Around it were many other impressive structures that would have caught their eyes. As they were walking east toward the Mount of Olives, the late afternoon sun would have cast shadows off the impressive structures. It was during this moment that they proudly complimented these fine works of architecture.
- While still in the shadow of the beautiful temple, Jesus remarks that it would be completely destroyed, something that would have appalled the average Jews. Nobody said a word as they continued the three fifths of a mile up the Mount of Olives. It was at the top of the mountain overlooking the city that Jesus would elaborate further on the issue.

Matt 24:3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what {will be} the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

The Matthew account stresses three questions:

- 1) when will these things happen (*the destruction of the temple*)
  - 2) what will be the sign of Your coming (*the final coming*)
  - 3) and (*what will be the sign*) of the end of the age (*the end of the current age leading to the beginning of the new age*)?"
- To the Jew, this is really two questions as reflected in Mark and Luke, for they viewed the coming and the end of the age as taking place at the same event. It was the destruction of the temple that had them most perplexed, perhaps believing that Jesus was going to be taking over and ruling His kingdom from the temple. This did not fit their perception and they needed some clarification.
  - It is in the first question, the destruction of the magnificent temple that they were just bragging about that Jesus would elaborate His gloomy prediction.

Matt 24:4-8 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6 "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for {those things} must take place, but {that} is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are {merely} the beginning of birth pangs.

- Jesus mentions to a number of events that would precede the destruction of the great city of Jerusalem. He refers to them as "Birth Pains" because a woman has much labor that comes before the actual birth. In the same way, the travail of the impending annihilation will precede, but not surpass the final destruction. The beginning of the end for this city was spelled out in three categories:
  - False messiahs: The book of Acts introduces us to a few of these false christs –Theudas and Judas (5:36-37), an Egyptian (21:38), Bar Jesus (13:8) and even Simon Magus (Acts 8). He historian Josephus reported that his time there were many false messiahs that came forward. They were taking advantage of the unstable political situation of the oppressive Roman nation.
  - Wars and rumors of wars: The Caesars in the generation following Jesus were very much hostile against the Jewish nation. There were also several examples of civil struggles within the Jewish nation itself, being demonstrated by the factions of Pharisees, Sadducees, the Herodians, the zealots, the Essenes and others all struggling for identity during the days of Jesus. It became much more unstable in the days after His crucifixion.
  - Famines and earthquakes: History teaches us that there were a number of documented earthquakes and famines in the years following Jesus. Agabus predicted a great famine in Acts 11:28 during the reign of Claudius in 44 AD. There were also equally damaging famines recorded in 47, 51, 60 and 63 AD. It was the global warming of their day and was extremely hard on the culture.
- These were just the beginning of birthing pains compared to what would be coming in the future for this nation.

Matt 24:9-14 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

- Jesus mentions another set of three signs that more directly affect the Christians in particular.
  - Persecution: The book of Acts is filled with many of these examples of persecution of the Christians.
    - Stephen was the first of these martyrs in Acts 7.
    - By the time chapter 8 begins, we see the church being fully persecuted by the Jews of Jerusalem and many of them fleeing the city and being scattered out.
    - Saul was in full swing persecution mode in Acts 9.
    - Peter was imprisoned after the killing of James in chapter 12.
    - As Christianity spread, so did the persecution. The mission team was persecuted by hostile Jews in chapter 13.
    - Paul was stoned and left for dead in chapter 14.
    - They were beaten and locked up in a Philippian jail in Acts 16.
    - They dragged the brethren before the courts in chapter 17.
    - Paul had to take on the greedy idol-makers of Ephesus in chapter 19.
    - There were many other examples in the remaining chapters of the Bible, but you get the point. Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem the persecution against the church was great, just like Jesus predicted.
  - Heresies: The church had to always be on guard against heresies leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.
    - Judaizers in Acts 15, Gnostics in 1 John, false doctrines of angels in Colossae, perversions in Corinth, mysteries in Ephesus and legalism in Galatia. It was everywhere the church went and kept grew worse prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, just as Jesus predicted.
  - The Preaching of the Gospel to the whole world: Prior to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, the gospel would spread to the whole world. The word that is used for the “whole world” refers to the known inhabited world. It was also used in some of the following verses:
    - Rom 1:8 “...because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.”
    - Rom 10:18 “...Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”
    - Col 1:6 “...just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing...”
    - The reason for the point concerns those that try to say it must be referring to a much later date because the Americas and distant lands must refer to the “whole world”. That is not what it meant, but the “known inhabited world”.

- By the time Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, the gospel had spread from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. The “known world” was familiar with the message of Jesus, just as He predicted.
- Jesus predicted with great accuracy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple of God. He asked that His disciples must stay faithful through all this and that there was more to come.

Matt 24:15-22 “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19 “But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! 20 “But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; 21 for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. 22 “And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

- Jesus refers back to Daniel concerning an event called the “Abomination of Desolation”. He is quoting the prediction of this event from Dan 9:27 *“...on the wing of abominations {will come} one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*
- The temple was violated at least twice after this prediction. Antiochus Epiphanes and his Syrian armies invaded during the Inter-testament period and allowed his troops to sacrifice a pig on the altar, fornicate in the temple and ransack it. General Pompey also committed abomination of desolation in 63 BC after invading the city and personally entering the Holy of Holies.
- Neither of these events measured up to what Jerusalem would receive in 70 AD, for this event refers to the “*complete destruction*” of the temple of God. Luke adds in his account in *Luke 21:20* “*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand.*” There was something that was going to occur right before the complete destruction of Jerusalem as the armies surround the city. According to history what was it?
- History teaches us that the Jews rebelled against Roman rule in 66 AD and Nero was not going to let it stand. He sent General Vespasian and 60,000 plus Roman soldiers to conquer the nation of Judea. As the Romans marched toward Jerusalem, they conquered all the communities on the way and by 68 AD, the northern part of the country was crushed and the final assault on Jerusalem began. Hundreds of thousands of Jews fled to the great city for direction and protection.
- As the Roman troops lay siege against Jerusalem, General Vespasian learned that Emperor Nero was dead. Vespasian decided to pull back a

few miles from the city and reorganize the troops, taking a group with him to Rome to reign as the new Emperor. Before departing a few days later, he charged his son, Titus, to continue the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

- It was during this brief time of pullback of the troops in July 69, that the Christians were flee Jerusalem, for there would be no more time to get out. It is obvious this is not referring to the end of the world for the Christians were to flee to the mountains from this destruction, not going back to get a thing or hanging around for any reason. What was the attitude of the Jews who were confused concerning the pullback?

Matt 24:23-28 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There {He is,}' do not believe {him.} 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. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance. 26 "If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, {or,} 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe {them.} 27 "For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

- It was during this brief break from the siege that some in the Jerusalem population boldly and dishonestly claimed to be the deliverer of the people. With the Roman army having pulled back, there were great rumors that the Messiah nearby and that it was the reason for this occurring. Others claimed that the Christ deliverer was in the temple. Some even claimed to be the Christ themselves. It was a time of great confusion in the city as hundreds of thousands of people were fatigued, hungry, and thirsty from the siege that had already gone on for months. Finally, the siege was over and the Romans have fled! This must be the moment of our great delivering from the Roman pigs!
- What occurred when Titus returned with the troops to finish the siege would make the first few months look like a nothing, for the devastation would be of a cataclysmic scale. This was emphasized in what Jesus said next.

Matt 24:29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- Where have we heard this language before? It was the same language that the prophets of Old used to describe the destruction of other nations including Israel.
  - Isa 13:10 describes the Babylon destruction on Jerusalem *“For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light.”*
  - Isa 34:4-5 describes the destruction of the nation of Edom *“And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as {one} withers from the fig tree. 5 For My sword is satiated in heaven, behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom, and upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.”*
  - Ezek 32:7-8 describes the destruction of Egypt *“And when {I} extinguish you, I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. 8 “All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land,” declares the Lord GOD.”*
  - Many times we find the prophets of the OT using this technique to symbolically describe cataclysmic destruction of a nation. Is it really difficult to expect the greatest Prophet of them all to follow a different technique?
- What about this “coming in the clouds” bit? Certainly this must be referring to the end of time. Not really, for the approaching judgment on a nation was often described in the past in such a way.
  - *Ezek 30:3 “For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time {of doom} for the nations.*
  - *Nahum 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means leave {the guilty} unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.*
- What happened to those that remained in Jerusalem when General Titus returned with the troop? According the historian Josephus, the following destruction took place:
  - Food was very scarce because of the many months of siege that cutoff supplies to the city. The Jewish soldiers tormented the citizens for what little food there was. Children stole food from the elderly and mothers stole food from their infants. There was cannibalism as one mother did the unthinkable by eating her own baby.
  - The Zealots inside the city walls executed all those that mentioned anything about surrender. There was a great division among the people that added to the confusion as what to do.
  - The Bodies of thousands upon thousands lie in heaping, insect-covered piles since there was no where to bury them.

- Just outside the walls of the city tens of thousands of the Jews that had attempted escape were caught, crucified and left to hang before their fellow Jews on the wall in order to intimidate them.
- False prophets claimed that God was going to deliver them. The people were hungry, thirsty and worn out.
- By the summer of 70 AD, The Romans breached the third wall. The city was burned with fire as over a million Jews perished and nearly a hundred thousand were carried away into slavery. It was written that death was so great that blood of Jews quenched the flames.
- On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 70 AD, the temple was destroyed and the holy articles were carried away with the captives. So great was the destruction of Jesus' prediction that there remains today in Rome the Arch of Titus, showing the carrying away of the Lamp Stand from the temple.
- Just like the prophets of old used the "shaken heavens" language to describe the approaching destruction of the enemy, Jesus with great accuracy described what would occur against the city that would put Him to death. This is why the text refers to the destruction as the coming of "the Son of Man", for it was His words that made it so. He will not abandon His elect even if they are caught up in all this mess.
- Some might still cling to the concept this is referring to an event yet to come thousands of years after Jesus spoke this, but listen further.

Matt 24:32-35 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, {right} at the door. 34 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

- Jesus reminds them that these are all signs leading to the complete annihilation of Jerusalem.
- The clincher in understanding that He is still dealing with the first question about the destruction of Jerusalem rather than the end of time is that His contemporaries, the people of His generation, will still be around when this judgment is carried out. You can bank on it.
- Heaven and earth will pass away, but the words that Jesus spoke just prior concerning the destruction of Jerusalem will not pass away. This is quite significant for it is in the next section beginning in verse 36 that Jesus will move onto the "passing of heaven and earth", the end of the age.

### What can we learn from Jesus' answer concerning the destruction of Jerusalem?

1) Some of what we believe needs to be thought out more clearly.

2) Much of what the denominations teach about this passage is quite perverted.

3) All of what Jesus said will happen just as He proclaimed.