

Matthew Chapter 24

Verses 1-4: This section forms Jesus' last major discourse and His most prophetic and apocalyptic message of the coming of the end of the world (or the present age). While the message includes a prediction of the imminent fall of Jerusalem, it also goes far beyond to point us to the distant future during which the "times of the Gentiles" will continue until the end of the Great Tribulation.

Jesus then left the city, crossed the Kidron Valley, and went east of Jerusalem to the "mount of Olives" from which He could look down on the temple courtyard. Here His disciples asked Him three questions:

- 1. When shall these things be?" the destruction of the temple;**
- 2. What shall be the sign of thy coming?" Greek Parousia, technical term for the coming of the King;**
- 3. And of the end of the world?" Greek aion, "the age".**

Therefore, the entire discourse must be looked upon as answering all three of these questions.

Matthew 24:1 "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to [him] for to shew him the buildings of the temple."

"Buildings of the temple": This temple was begun by Herod the Great in 20 B.C. and was still under construction when the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70. At the time of Jesus' ministry, the temple was one of the most impressive structures in the world, made of massive blocks of stone bedecked with gold ornamentation.

Some of the stones in the temple complex measured 40x12x12 feet and were expertly quarried to fit perfectly against one another. The temple buildings were made of gleaming white marble, and the whole eastern wall of the large main structure was covered with gold plates that reflected the morning sun, making a spectacle that was visible for miles.

The entire temple mount had been enlarged by Herod's engineers, by means of large retaining walls and vaulted chambers on the South side and Southeast corner. By this means the large courtyard area atop the temple mount was effectively doubled.

The whole temple complex was magnificent by any standard. The disciples' conversation here may have been prompted by Jesus' words (in 23:38). They were undoubtedly wondering how a site so spectacular could be left "desolate."

Matthew 24:2 "And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

"Not be left here one stone ... upon another": These words were literally fulfilled in A.D. 70. Titus, the Roman general, built large wooden scaffolds around the walls of the temple buildings, piled then high with wood and other flammable items, and set them ablaze.

The heat from the fires was so intense that the stones crumbled. The rubble was then sifted to retrieve the melted gold, and the remaining ruins were "thrown down" into the Kidron Valley.

Jesus was speaking prophetically of the destruction of the temple that He loved so well. This was the temple where He had driven the money changers out. He had taught reverence in the house of God, that it should be a House of Prayer.

When Jesus (the Lord of the temple), left, it was desolate. The outward magnificence was gone when the holiness was gone. In less than 40 years, this temple would be destroyed in a bloody battle.

Matthew 24:3 "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

The "Mount of Olives (Olivet)," is a small range of several summits (highest elevation 2,723 feet), running north-south for two- and one-half miles. The range overlooks Jerusalem from the east, across the Kidron Valley. Jesus often went to the Mount of Olives to teach (Matt. 24:3), to pray (Luke 23:39-40), and to rest (Luke 21:37).

On the western slope, near the base, is a spot known as the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus agonized in prayer on the night before His crucifixion (Luke 22:39-46; Mark 14:32). Jesus fittingly used Olivet to deliver one of His major prophetic discourses (Matt. 24 – 25), since from it He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-12), and to it He will return at His second coming (Zech. 14:4).

These disciples had all the things grouped together. One question, when will the temple be destroyed? The physical temple would be destroyed in less than 40 years. The temple of His body would be destroyed in just a few days.

"What will be the sign of thy coming": (Luke 19:11), records that the disciples still "supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately." The destruction of the temple (verse 2), did not fit the eschatological scheme they envisioned, so they asked for clarification.

Jesus addressed their questions in reverse order, describing the prophetic sign of His coming (actually a series of signs in verses 4-35), and then addressing their question about the timing of these events beginning (in verse 36). When they asked about His coming (Greek, Parousia; literally "presence"), they did not envision a second coming in the far-off future.

They were speaking of His coming in triumph as Messiah, an event which they no doubt anticipated would occur presently. Even if they were conscious of His approaching death, which He had plainly prophesied to them on repeated occasions, they could not have anticipated His ascension to heaven and the long intervening church age. However, when Jesus used the term Parousia in His discourse, He used it in the technical sense as a reference to His second coming.

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you."

"Take heed": Jesus, in reply to their question, first gives them a caution to beware of deception. They were to be constantly on their guard, because many would arise to deceive the people.

Many shall come in my name, not in the name or by the authority of Jesus, or claiming to be His followers, and to be sent by him, but in the name of the Messiah, or claiming to be the Messiah.

Jesus warned them, the very first thing, that there would be deceivers. His first answer: "Take heed that no man deceive you". There were even deceivers then and now, but not the magnitude that there will be in the end days.

Verses 5-14: "Many shall come" refers to the parade of false messiahs who have now spanned the centuries of church history and have led many astray into false religious cults. "Wars and rumors of wars" refers to peace being taken from the earth and the constant wars that have continually marked the "age of the Gentiles."

"Famines, and pestilences:" These events mark only the "beginning of sorrows" (Greek *odyn*), "birth pangs." This is followed by martyrdom and the rise of "false prophets and the abounding of "iniquity."

The "gospel of the kingdom" refers to the missionary expansion of the church "in all the world." The gospel shall be preached in all the world (Greek *oikoumene*), the inhabited world, and unto "all nations" (Greek *ethnos*), "Gentile nations," as contrasted with the Jews. "Then shall the end come" would then refer to the end of the church age.

Matthew 24:5 "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

"For many shall come in my name": By his orders, or with delegated powers and authority from him; but should assume the name of the Messiah, which was peculiarly his, to themselves. And take upon them his office, and challenge the honor and dignity which belonged unto him.

"Saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many". This is the first sign, preceding the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; as there was a general expectation among the Jews of a Messiah. That is, of one that should arise and deliver them from the Roman yoke, which was the common idea tacked to that word.

In this period of time, many set up themselves to be deliverers and redeemers of the people of Israel: who had each of them their followers in great numbers, whom they imposed upon, and brought to destruction.

Even during the time of John, John spoke of antichrists being in the earth. These were not "the" Antichrist, but types of antichrists (those who were opposed to Christ's teachings). Paul spoke of heretical seducers. There were also others like Mohammed, that were worshiped instead of Messiah.

In our day, there are many people claiming to be Christ. Worse than that, people have begun to deny that Jesus is God the Son. They are bringing Him down to the level of mankind, and they are also trying to elevate themselves to the level of Jesus.

The deception of false religion is rampant. There are more false gods than ever before.

Matthew 24:6 "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

"But the end is not yet": False prophets, as well as wars and rumors of wars, characterize the whole of the present age, but will escalate toward the end (2 Tim. 3:13).

There have been wars raging ever since Jesus made this statement. Wars have been on the increase in the last few years, and especially in the Middle East. Right now, there is conflict going on, on every continent. Young people are being killed every day in Israel. The Arabs and the Jews have been in constant conflict.

There is conflict in many of the streets in major cities in many countries of the world. The whole world is like a stick of dynamite about ready to explode. There are enough bombs already made to blow the whole world up. It is possible for some maniac to push a button and start an (all out), nuclear war. So certainly, this part of the prophecy is already fulfilled.

Matthew 24:7 "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."

"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom": At Caesarea, the Jews and Syrians contended about the right to the city, and twenty thousand of the Jews were slain. Sedition and civil war spread throughout Judea. Italy was also thrown into civil war by the contests between Otho and Vitellius for the crown.

"And there shall be famines": There was a famine foretold by Agabus (Acts 11:28), which is mentioned by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Eusebius, and which was so severe in Jerusalem. Josephus says, that many people perished for want of food. Four times in the reign of Claudius (41-54 A.D.), famine prevailed in Rome, Palestine, and Greece.

Pestilences - Raging epidemic diseases. The plague, sweeping off multitudes of people at once. It is commonly the attendant of famine, and often produced by it. A pestilence is recorded as raging in Babylonia, 40 A.D. (Josephus, Antiq. xviii. 9. 8); in Italy, 66 A.D. (Tacitus 16. 13). Both of these took place before the destruction of Jerusalem.

"Earthquakes" - In prophetic language, earthquakes sometimes mean political commotions. Literally, they are tremors or shakings of the earth, often shaking cities and towns to ruin. The earth opens, and houses and people sink indiscriminately to destruction. Many of these are mentioned as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome, and says that in the reign of Nero the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae were overthrown, and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed and almost destroyed by an earthquake.

Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, and Samos. Luke adds, "And fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven," (Luke 21:11). Josephus, who had probably never heard of this prophecy, and who certainly would have done nothing designedly to show its fulfillment, records the prodigies and signs which He says preceded the destruction of the city.

And then in the 20th and 21st century, things are getting much worse.

Even in World War II, many people believed that this was the fulfillment of this "nation shall rise against nation".

I saw a movie not too long ago, and it discussed how many thousands die every day from the famines around the world, Ethiopia and India are both plagued with famine right now. It seems that the

countries with the famine are those who are worshipping cows and other objects of the Creator, and not the Creator, Himself.

You don't know what to do in these cases. Is this God attempting to change them? Should we go in and stop this problem? There are many thoughts on the subject. It hurts to see the pictures of the starving children. We would surely have to say that the famines are already happening.

Pestilence is another problem. Even here in the United States, pests are producing at an alarming rate. There have been tremendous amounts of insecticide used to stop pests. Some insecticides have been banned, because they have gotten into the water system, and humans have a great amount of them in their blood.

We cannot say for sure, but many believe that so much use of insecticide has brought on large percentages of cancer incidents today. This too, seems to have been fulfilled.

Earthquakes have been on the increase. Everyone in the United States has been concerned about a large one hitting around the St. Andreas fault that goes through California. Here again, we could say that this part of the prophecy has been fulfilled.

Matthew 24:8 "All these [are] the beginning of sorrows."

"Beginning of sorrows": Famines, earthquakes and conflicts have always characterized life in a fallen world; but by calling these things "the beginning" of labor pains, He indicated that things will get totally and remarkably worse at the end of the era as these unique tribulations signal the soon arrival of Messiah to judge sinful humanity and set up His millennial kingdom (1 Thess. 5:3; Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1 – 9:21; 16:1-21).

As I said, it seems that all of the above are already happening. So we can assume from that we are already in the beginning of sorrows.

Matthew 24:9 "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

"Deliver you up": This is a technical word, in this context, used for delivering a prisoner for punishment. Persecution of believers has often been the official policy of governments. Such persecutions give opportunity for testifying to the truth of the gospel (John 16:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:16).

The account of this in Luke adds "before all these things". We do know that many of the disciples were delivered up and were martyred for the cause of Christianity. I believe that this Scripture covers Christians and Jews. Jews, even in recent years, have been persecuted and martyred.

Hitler killed about 1/6 of the Jewish people in World War II. We hear of religious atrocities in Russia today. Many are feeling the hand of persecution. I believe it goes even farther than the physical death of those who stand for true Christianity.

In our society today, if a person truly loves God and tries to do something to further the kingdom, he is labeled as a fanatic.

Our nation, which is classified as a Christian nation, (and certainly did start out as a Christian nation), is hated around the world. The blessings from God have been on the United States, because of the stand

we have taken toward Christianity. However, now that so many false religions have entered, it seems that the blessings from God are being lifted.

After World War II, many Far East religions crept into the country. Eastern mysticism is even infiltrating the main line Protestants churches. Mind control is being practiced and called faith. We see a watered down Christianity that is without power.

(2 Timothy 3:5), calls it: "having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof".

Even inside the church world there is bickering, fighting, and back biting. The message of Christianity has been so watered down, that our ancestors would not even recognize our services as having church. Even in our own ranks, some of the new messages have removed the deity of Christ.

If you take a stand against these false teachings, then you are classified as being disturbed. If you truly love Jesus, it is time to be "disturbed." You can see, with no problem, that surely this part of the prophecy has been fulfilled, as well. This is the case in the next verses.

Matthew 24:10 "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."

"Many be offended": Literally "cause to stumble", suggesting professing believers who fall away, and even turn against "one another in shocking acts of spiritual treachery". Those who fall away in such a manner give evidence that they never were true believers at all.

Matthew 24:11 "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."

"And many false prophets shall rise": Out of from among the churches of Christ; at least under the name of Christians. For false teachers are here meant, men of heretical principles, pretending to a spirit of prophecy, and to new revelations, and a better understanding of the Scriptures.

And others shall deceive many: as they all of them had their followers, and large numbers of them, whose faith was subverted by them. And who followed their pernicious ways, being imposed upon and seduced by their fair words, specious pretenses, and licentious practices.

In many churches, very little praying is going on. It is very difficult to separate the activities that are going on in the church with the activities of the world. The world has been brought into the church. Very few churches really have services where you can feel the presence of God. We have gotten so worldly that God really doesn't feel very welcome.

True repentance and commitment are hardly even part of the function of the church, anymore. Some churches go months and months without one single conversion.

False prophets, preachers, and other officers have brought such a watered down version of Christianity into the church that, except for the fact you are in a church house, you would believe you were at some form of world entertainment.

The messages and services are appealing to the flesh. Many are being deceived. The only way not to be deceived is to know what the Bible says yourselves. Read it every day. Ask God to help you. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and help you to discern right from wrong.

Satan is clever, and he is out to destroy Christianity and the Christians. The only weapons that we have to fight him with are the name of Jesus Christ, the blood of Jesus, and the Word of God. Do not be deceived; learn the warnings in the Bible.

Be wise in Jesus. Truly, this part of the prophecy has been fulfilled as well.

Matthew Chapter 24 Questions

1. When Jesus went out from the temple, who came to Him.
2. Why did they come?
3. When Jesus showed them the temple, what did He say about it?
4. Was this prophecy fulfilled? How soon?
5. What questions did the disciples ask Jesus on the Mount of Olives.?
6. What two temples were meant here?
7. Is the end of the world and the end of the age the same thing?
8. What was Jesus' first warning to them?
9. What would these proclaim?
10. What did John have to say about this?
11. What did Paul call them?
12. In verse 6, He said there would be what?
13. Name 2 groups that have never stopped?
14. Describe the whole world at this moment?
15. In verse 7, who is the conflict with?
16. Where are most of the famines? Why?
17. What is the side effect of the pestilence?
18. In verse 8, Jesus said all these signs were what?
19. What begins to happen to Christians everywhere?
20. What two groups have suffered martyrdom?
21. If you love God today, you are labeled as what?
22. Where did the false religious in the U.S. come from?
23. What is one practice of eastern religion that is being passed off as faith?
24. In 2 Timothy 3:5, what is the description given our watered down religion?

25. In our ranks, what has been done to Christ?
26. What does the Scripture say will happen among the brethren?
27. Who will arise and deceive many?
28. What is one of the most damaging messages being taught in churches today?
29. Jesus said the church was to be called what?
30. Modern messages and activates in most churches appeal to the what?
31. What is the only way not to be deceived?
32. Have all these prophecies been fulfilled?