

MATTHEW 24: 1 - 14

WHEN WILL THESE THINGS BE?

Last week we went over our basic outline. I believe it is most likely different from any you may have seen previously, though it is not new by any means. This chapter as does the next, follows a very basic theme, which is based on the questions asked Jesus by His disciples as they were exiting the Temple complex. If we keep this in mind, along with the context of the chapters immediately preceding these questions, then we can proceed with consistency and not jump back and forth between the questions asked. That has been a problem for some time as some have come into this chapter with presuppositions, which deter them from following what the language actually is saying. As I said last week, I believe when we are finished, you will have a much clearer understanding of what is being said here.

Let's begin with what was actually asked after Jesus totally blew the minds of His disciples by stating that the Temple would be destroyed. In the minds of the disciples this just could not be. They, along with all Israelites had been awaiting a restoration of the glory days of Israel under King David. This was to come about, in their minds, through a Messianic figure from the line of King David. However, this Messiah was thought to be more of a king and a conqueror than a divine figure. In the minds of most, things were going according to plan. They had a beautiful Temple and all that it afforded them. All that was lacking was for their Messiah to come and remove the yoke of Rome. Jesus was thought to be this Messiah upon His arrival to Jerusalem. And the fact is that He is/ was the Messiah, but the way in which He would go about this mission was not the manner in which the populace or the scribes believed. The last thing anyone thought would happen was that the Temple, the dwelling place of the presence of God would be destroyed along with Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. But alas, God's ways are not our ways.

Mt. 24:1-3

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat 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?"

If we had been there or even if we were reading this in Greek, the way it is written

down, things would not be as confusing as some have made them.

Jesus stated that not one stone would be left upon another. Everything would be “thrown down.” Here Jesus tells them that the Temple would be destroyed. Why does it have to be destroyed? We talked about this last week.

Upon dividing the languages at the tower of Babel, God dispersed the people according to family groups. If you look at Dt. 32, you will see that when this happened God also gave the people over to other gods. (Little “g”) He then chose Abraham and made a covenant with him. Abraham’s people were to number as the stars of the heaven and the sand of the sea. This seed line would become the nation of Israel. God then brought them out of the exodus and gave them the land of Canaan, the plat of land God chose for Himself from among the nations of the earth. Then Israel, as a nation was to be the children of God. With this placement, they had the responsibility of not only worshipping the one true God, but were to also keep charge of His Word in order that the rest of the nations might eventually come to know God in order that the entire world would come to know God and be His imagers here on earth. All the inhabitants of the world were to eventually be a holy nation, sons of God on earth as in Heaven.

Israel had collected and preserved the Word of God but had failed to understand the relationship God wanted. Instead of a relationship, dead, dry, religion had supplanted what God had really wanted all this time. This was the atmosphere into which Jesus was born and ministered.

After three years or so of ministry in which Jesus taught what the kingdom was really like, He was still misunderstood. And now judgment had come to that generation and the cup of their iniquity was now full. That generation (+/- 40 years) would feel the judgment of God as they were the ones who would kill the Messiah, not having given credence to Him at that time or His Word over the centuries. God would no longer dwell in a temple made with hands but would now dwell in the individual believer. The people of God would no longer be restricted to a national identity but would now include those who believed from every corner of the globe as the Gospel would be preached to every nation, including the Jewish one.

- From Dt. 32 to Pentecost. The reclaiming of the world.

Having said all that, we now return to Matthew 24.

Mt. 24:1-3

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3 Now as He sat 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 first question asked was, **"When will these things be?" What things? - The destruction of the Temple.** The second part of the question is very specific in Greek. **And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"**

The Jews expected the beginning of a new age when the Messiah returned. This would, in their minds be a restoration of the golden age as it was under King David.

The key to the specificity is the Greek word used for "coming." That word is **"parousia."** It is specifically used in the NT for the second coming of Jesus. It is used here and only two other times in Matthew 24. This is important because it will help to separate what Jesus is speaking of in this pericope. You will see the word, "coming" linked with another OT phrase in these verses also, but that Greek word isn't parousia. And, as I hope to prove to you, that coming is not the same as the second coming of Jesus. Differentiating between these two comings should clear the air. If we were to hear this conversation in the original language things wouldn't be confusing at all. If we look at the phrasing as would the Jewish people who lived in an OT context, then it is anything but confusing. It is only when we read these things absent of the OT context and the specifics of the original language that two separate events are muddled into one, confusing the answers, the questions and the timeline prophecy teachers attempt to construct from them.

So, the first question is when will "these things happen?" This question is asked as a direct response to Jesus' statement that the temple will be totally destroyed.

Jesus then answers their question in a direct but consoling way.

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

In most attempts to deal with this passage, people constantly jump back and forth between Jerusalem and the "tribulation period." It doesn't make any sense to do that in any conversation. Please see that verses 4 – 35 are Jerusalem-centric, that is they center on Jerusalem. (Verses 15 – 20) This is the answer to the first part of the question.

In an effort to quash eschatological anxiety, Jesus tells the stunned disciples not to be troubled. All these things will come. There will be many false “Christs” and deceivers. They will hear of wars and rumors of war. For nation WILL come against nation and kingdoms WILL come against kingdoms. There WILL be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. These things WILL happen. Why? They will happen because they always have and they will continue to happen. These things are commonplace. It is amazing to me that prophecy teachers will take these things and construct an end times scenario which directly relates them to the second coming. But Jesus is saying exactly the opposite. These are NOT signs of the end. They have happened throughout history and they will continue to happen. So don’t be alarmed. ***These things are mentioned here in order to discourage such speculation and efforts to make them into part of some eschatological scenario.*** These are rather routine events in world history. Any time catastrophic events occur, there is always someone willing to say it is a “sign of the times.” This is just what Jesus is trying to dissuade.

- They myth of increasing earthquakes and such.
- The warning of false Messiahs will be touched on again in verses 22-26. We usually read this as an attempt by someone in this day claiming to be Jesus. But in first century Palestine it would have been more akin to someone claiming to be the liberator of Israel from the Roman yoke. This is why the people chose Barabas over Jesus.
- Josephus writes of various men who claimed to be divinely sent in order to rally the Jews to revolt against Rome in the mid 60’s AD, which ultimately led to the revolt.
- **Acts 5:36, 37 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.**
- When Paul was arrested, he was thought to be an Egyptian insurrectionist.
- **Acts 21:38**
- **38 Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?”**
- Wars and rumors of wars: Rome was at war with the Partheans (Persia) in AD 36. Antipas was at war with a Nabatean king in AD 36-37. Rome was in a weakened state in AD 68/69 when they were embroiled in a civil war. This was known as the year of the four emperors.
- Then in AD 66 The Jews revolted. Theudas and the “Egyptian” were precursors to this.
- Verse 7 (nation vs. nation, kingdom vs. kingdom) in light of Isa. 19:1,2 **1 The burden against Egypt.**

- **Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud,**
- **And will come into Egypt;**
- **The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence,**
- **And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.**
- **2 “I will set Egyptians against Egyptians;**
- **Everyone will fight against his brother,**
- **And everyone against his neighbor,**
- **City against city, kingdom against kingdom.**
- These things and this language was commonplace in the Jewish world.
- Take note of the imagery used of the Lord riding on a swift cloud. This language is commonplace in OT imagery. Remember this next time you read of clouds concerning the coming of the Lord.
- Earthquakes: Asia minor AD 61; Italy AD 62; Jerusalem AD 67!
- **Acts 16:26**
- **26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.**
- **Matthew 27:51**
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- **51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,**
- Plus there was another serious earthquake at an unspecified time in Palestine.
- Famine: **Acts 11:28**
- **28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.**
- According to Josephus this happened somewhere around AD 46. These are normal occurrences.
- Labor pains: **These are metaphors for the suffering of nations and cities in the OT. References: Isa. 13:8; Jer. 6:24; 22:23; Micah 4:9,10 (historically) Isa. 26:17-18 (eschatologically)**
- “Birth pangs” is a live metaphor that had no specific meaning at the time. The context drives the meaning. Here the context is the suffering of Jerusalem.
- All these things are the beginning. Don’t be any more alarmed than you normally would. They have always happened and they will continue to happen.

9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will

rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The word “then” links the contents of these verses with the same interim period, but now the focus moves from world events and their impact on Jesus’ disciples to the more specific experience of the disciple community in perilous times. These verses tell them to stand firm in these difficult days.

- The context: They will deliver YOU up to tribulation and kill YOU. Many of the disciples were killed in they years leading up to 70 AD. (Peter and Paul we can somewhat date in the early 60’s AD.)
- It appears that there would be issues within the early church where people, due to the political unrest would turn on each other. In fact that did happen under the Emperor Nero, which is believed to be the Emperor under whom Peter and Paul were martyred.
- He who endures to the end. Not speaking of salvation. Those who get out of Jerusalem prior to the final siege. There was actually one false prophet that encouraged many Jews to enter the city walls of Jerusalem just prior to the siege so they would be protected. They died. While those that left and fled to the mountains were spared.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

This verse has been used thinking that it speaks of the end times due to the fact that the Gospel has not been preached to the entire world. But, we need to look at this phrase. The Greek word translated here as world, “oikumene” (oy-kou-men’-ay) actually has a more local definition. It speaks of the known Greek world. We can see this phrase used similarly in other NT references.

- **Lk. 2:1 1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.**
- **Acts 11:28**
- **28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.**
- **Acts 17:6**
- **6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.**

And then the Apostle Paul referenced this very thing in his writings.

Romans 1:8

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Romans 10:18

**18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:
“Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world.”**

Romans 16:26

26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—

Colossians 1:6

6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

Paul was able to say that the area from Jerusalem to the Adriatic had been fully evangelized by the mid fifties AD. Because of that he was ready to move on to Spain. (Rom. 15:18-24) This means that the Gospel was being proclaimed “all over the world” prior to the destruction of the Temple. This included the “nations” or Gentiles as Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles.

The “end.”

Some would have it that this is speaking of the end of the world/ end times. But once again, if we look at the Greek there is a distinction made. The word translated “end” in verse 6 is the same one we have in verse 14. That word is “telos.”

Telos – Gr. A termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be (always of the end of some act or state, but not the end of a period of time)

The word used in the second part of the disciples’ question: **3 Now as He sat 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 word translated “end” in this question is a different word. It is syntelia, pronounced, soon-tel’-i-ah.

Syntelia – Gr. Completion, consummation, end

This is a different word altogether. If you think this may be a case of over-parsing the words, remember we are reading a conversation. The disciples and Jesus wouldn't be arbitrarily switching words. That would be confusing. We don't do that when

conversing, especially within the same conversation.

I know I have thrown a lot of references and words at you this morning, but that is only because we are reading a translation, 2,000 years removed from its immediate context. If we had been there with them as Jews, these things would have been clear.

We worship an amazing God! He predicted these things and many of them have come to pass. In fact, once we get into the original language and context, it is even more remarkable. And once you sit down and look at it, it is so much less confusing. Try reading the passage again with the phrases in context and the Greek words in place of the English and it should begin to be clearer.

The study of God's Word, especially the prophetic passages is a journey and some times a chore. But it is necessary in order that we rightly divide the word of truth.

Jesus warned the disciples that many things, which have always happened, will continue to happen. And they will continue. But we aren't to be knocked down by these happenings. We need to see them for what they are – a continuation of things as they have always been.

He encouraged the disciples to stand firm when things got bad and not to be discouraged when people turn on us, or our faith. These things will happen also. They always have.

And finally know that Jesus is coming back for us! As we will see in the balance of our study, there will be a clear distinction between that coming and the things spoken of concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Just know that one day, He will return for us and we can take that to heart as well as "the bank."