

## **BIBLE VERSE**

### **Ephesians 4:14**

**14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

The purpose of the church is to mature you with the word of God, so you know truth and you have a hope.

This is what this series is about. It is to show you in the Bible what “The End” is about, what to expect, and what our posture is.

TJ preached last week and he said...

### **Purpose of this study:**

**We study the end so our love does not grow cold, become sidetracked, and that we may endure through suffering.**

**My goal in this series is to help you see the hope of Christ through his word.**

Today, I want to examine Jesus’ words about the end. And we are going to do bit of heavy lifting that I think is important.

First things first...WHAT IS THE END?

Well, to me and to most of the Bible, the end is about one thing...

“It is the hope of believing people that the incompleteness of their present experience of God will be resolved, their present thirst for God will be fulfilled, and their present need for salvation will be realized (The Hope of the Early Church, 1).”

In short, **The End is about Christ coming again and righting all the wrongs in the world.**

The end is about God restoring his righteous order in a broken world.

So, while we will answer questions about the various details found in revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel and the like at the end of this series...

The end is really about one thing...our restoration and resurrection by God through Christ.

This is our hope...

So, today I am going to ask you to set aside what you think you know, what you have heard, and let’s just simply look at what Jesus says about the end and respond accordingly...

So, open up your Bible to Matthew 24.

We are going to look at the most important and most clear words Jesus has to say about “The End” which is in Matthew 24-25 (Known as the Olivet Discourse). It is a complex passage. Jesus asks two primary questions...

**When will these things be (Matthew 24:3)...meaning the temple?**

## **What will be the sign of your coming back (the end of the age) (Matthew 24:3)?**

Jesus answers both questions which makes this passage pretty difficult to understand, but I think we can wade through it.

The teaching of the Olivet discourse is much debated and frequently misunderstood, largely because it is viewed through the lens of a particular theological system or interpretive scheme that makes the message appear complex.

But the disciples were not learned men, and Jesus' purpose was to give them clarity and encouragement, not complexity and anxiety. The intricate interpretations that are sometimes proposed for this passage would have left the disciples utterly dumbfounded. It is preferable to take Jesus' words as simply and as straightforwardly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' followers at the moment were Jewish. All the disciples were Jewish and had Jewish expectations.

Luke tells us that they had the same expectation as many...that the reign of God would come immediately...

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#### **Luke 19:11**

**11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.**

What were those expectations?

Well, the Jews knew intimately the many Old Testament promises of future blessing, deliverance, and prosperity. They knew God had promised to rid them of all their enemies and to establish His eternal kingdom of righteousness and justice on earth.

They knew that the Lord's Anointed One—His Messiah, or Christ—would come and establish the rule and reign of David again on earth, a reign of peace, prosperity, and safety that would never end. Their great longing was to see that day when God restored the kingdom as He had promised.

By the time of Jesus, the Jews had formed in their minds a very clear scenario of how they believed those predicted events would unfold.

To understand what the Jewish expectations were, it is helpful to read their literature from that time. In his *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* ([Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1893], pp. 154–87), Emil Schuer gives excerpts from numerous extrabiblical Jewish writings of that era which reveal those expectations.

- 1: Terrible Tribulation (Zechariah 14 and Jewish Writings)
- 2: Elijah like forerunner
- 3: Messiah appearing and vindicating his people and setting up his kingdom.
- 4: Alliance of nations to fight against the messiah.
- 5: Destruction of opposing nations.

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 4, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 2.

- 6: Restoration of Jerusalem (Renovation of old city or new one coming down)
- 7: The scattered Jews brought back and gathered in Israel again.
- 8: The region of Palestine being the center of the world and the nations subjugated to it.
- 9: Establishment of the Messiahs kingdom leading to eternal peace.

So during Jesus' day, in the minds of the Jews of Jesus' day, the time was ripe for the Messiah's coming. They had suffered long enough.

At that point, however, Jesus' ministry rapidly and radically departed from their expectations. According to their thinking, the next steps would be the gathering of the nations against the Messiah and His dramatic and effortless victory over them.

That idea apparently was also still in the minds of the Twelve. Jesus' many predictions that He must suffer, die, and be resurrected had simply not registered with them. In some way or another they either had discounted those teachings or had rationalized and spiritualized them into being something other than literal, physical, and historical realities.

In fairness to the disciples, the Old Testament prophets also saw the Messiah's coming and establishing His kingdom as a single event as well.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus in this passage is trying to explain to them the nature of his coming again while at the same time helping them understand that what they will see in the near future is not his immediate return.

So look at Matthew 24 and look what Jesus says to them.

This is how Jesus responds to these two questions:

**When will these things be (Matthew 24:3)...meaning the temple?**

**What will be the sign of your coming back (the end of the age) (Matthew 24:3)?**

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#### **Matthew 24:4-14**

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. <sup>6</sup> And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. <sup>9</sup> "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus is letting them know that there will be a lot of terrible things that happen in the world.

- False Christs
- Wars
- World catastrophes (earthquakes, famines)
- People abandoning the faith

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<sup>2</sup> Emil Scheur, "A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ, 154-187

- Lawlessness
- And the preaching of the Gospel

These are generic things that will happen throughout the generations. Then, Jesus gives a specific prophecy for a specific time...he is warning the disciples of something coming very soon...

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Matthew 24:15-28

15 "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

When he talks about "*the abomination of desolation spoken by the prophet Daniel*," that is an intentional reference to Daniel 8:13, Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, and Daniel 12:11, where the prophet Daniel, centuries before, foretold a time when a foreign ruler would come into the temple and profane it. Most Jewish people linked that prophecy with something that happened around 168 B.C., when a ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes came into the temple, erected a pagan altar in it, and sacrificed a pig over it, thus defiling the house of God.

But it's as if Jesus is saying here, "That's only a foretaste of what will happen when Jerusalem is destroyed. And sure enough, approximately 40 years after Jesus spoke these words, around 70 A.D. Roman armies began surrounding the city of Jerusalem to overtake it. And when they would overtake it, the Roman army would destroy the temple and instead make sacrifices to false gods, declaring Titus, the Roman emperor, to be supreme.

And Daniel 12:1 uses this same phrase—"There shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been seen until that time"—the same phrase that's used here in verse 21. And it was a horrifying, ghastly time. Seventy A.D., the destruction of Jerusalem was a virtual blood bath of Jewish men and women who were pummeled by the Roman army.

The Jewish historian Josephus described the savagery, slaughter, disease, and famine that marked the Jewish people during those years. Parents reduced to cannibalism with their own children. Many were taken into slavery. Millions died.

All of this would take place 40 or so years after Jesus said these words, so here He tells His disciples, looking back on the city of Jerusalem, "When this happens ... flee! When the Roman army comes to attack the city and destroy the temple, don't even go home and get your clothes. If you're in the field, leave immediately."

So...see Jesus' thinking.

Don't be lead astray because of wars, earthquakes, famines and catastrophes will happen.

Something specific will happen in your lifetime disciples (The fall of the temple)

Then something happens...a second prophecy...

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#### **Matthew 24:29-31**

29 "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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Now, I don't want you to get hung up on immediately...like it is something we would say. I went to the store and immediately got stuck in traffic.

Think of it more like suddenly.

So, here's how you think of it...

Life will be full of calamity (earthquakes, famines, catastrophe, war)  
Make sure disciples that people don't draw you away with these things.

Then, suddenly when you are not thinking about it, I will come.

So, what are to do with the fall of Jerusalem? This prophecy in the middle....what are we to do?

Well, the best way to describe it is like this...

Clara loves to hike. I mean here happy place is the mountains...mine is too. So, this summer we are in Oregon. And we do this hike through this canyon and you would go up these elevations. And I remember climbing this one particular area and thinking once I get there we are at the peak, but we weren't, it revealed a greater peak that was more breath-taking.

This is what I think Jesus is doing. He says...

Ok life is going to be full of calamity...

Make sure that during these calamities no one draws you away with false notions of who I am.

There is going to be an immediate calamity (the fall of Jerusalem) that will frighten you...when this happens...get out of Dodge (so to speak)...

But I am telling you about the fall of Jerusalem (which will certainly be devastating) but it is a sign to you that something greater in the future will happen and that is ultimately my return.

Does that make sense?

Then he says this...

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### **Matthew 24:34-35**

**<sup>34</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (PEAK 1) <sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (PEAK 2)**

And then Jesus goes on to say this...

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#### **Matthew 24:36-44**

**<sup>36</sup> “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. <sup>37</sup> For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. <sup>42</sup> Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

So, again what is the meaning here. Jesus goes back to say that his coming will happen in the ordinary rhythms of life that include earthquakes, famines, wars, life. People will try to deceive you into thinking that these things mean something, but really Christ could come today, tomorrow...on a Wednesday when its 70 degrees or on a Friday when its -10.

The point of this whole message of Jesus is this...**Get ready and stay ready because you do not know.**

Jesus then moves to his point of application. In other words, Jesus is saying here (disciples) how you are to respond and he tells them three stories.

Now, for lack of time I can't go into great detail about the stories. You can read them in chapter 25 of Matthew.

### **The Ten Virgins**

#### **Principle of Application: Be ready to endure**

In this story Jesus tells of 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom. The foolish ones were not prepared to endure (because they took no extra oil). The wise were ready and even though the bridegroom took time to come (This is Jesus' way of saying to the disciples that it would not be immediate), they took extra oil meaning they were ready to endure.

So the application to the return of Christ...

#### **Be ready to endure**

There will be many things that will come and bring you off course (much like Jesus says in the very first part of chapter 24). Many “false Christs” will come into the world and say this sign means this, follow me. This sign means that follow me, but ignore all of them and wait for his return.

Don't be distracted but patiently wait for his return no matter what man may try to distract you.

### **The talents**

**Principle: Don't waste or hide or hoard your resources but continue using what he has given you for his good.**

The parable of the talents goes like this. A master leaves but give each of his servants talents (something he owns but they steward). One he gives 5, one he gives 2, one he gives 1. The one who had 5 and 2 immediately put it to work. The one with the 1 simply hid it for safekeeping. The master comes back (after a long time the Bible emphasizes again) and expects a return. The one with the 5, earns 5, he is rewarded. The one with the two, earns two and he is rewarded. The one with the one has nothing...not even interest and is punished... why? Because he wasted what the master had given him.

**Principle: Don't waste or hide or hoard your resources but continue using what he has given you for his good.**

I am immediately reminded of people building bunkers during Y2K. I am not joking about it. They spent precious time and resources building something to endure, but they had the picture of enduring wrong. Enduring in the kingdom of God means that you are still taking the seed of the Gospel and planting it. Don't waste or hide or hoard, but continue sowing.

### **The Sheep and the Goats**

This is not a parable, but Jesus is tying it all together here and we still see a principle of application.

**Principle: While he is away make sure our good works are pointed to the least of these.**

Jesus says that there are two types of people. There are sheep, who are righteous. You know they are righteous because of what they are doing.

Look at what it says...

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#### **Matthew 25:35**

**<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'**

Now, simply put, they are correcting the wrongs in the society. They are doing acts of (biblical) justice. They are attempting to restore and heal people. There is a compassionate bent here and towards people who cannot repay.

There is something so interesting. Jesus is saying that these people are the ones that are righteous because they are mimicking him. They are not saved by their works but rather their belief in God is on display outwardly compared to others who do nothing...and it's implied that they live for themselves.

**Principle: While he is away make sure our good works are pointed to the least of these.**

Now, let me put it all together for you.

The pinnacle of our belief is that he will come again.

There will be times of chaos and catastrophe that will try to pull us away from this. But, you can be sure he is coming again just as he prophesied the fall of Jerusalem.

But until then, here is what we are to do...

Patiently wait and endure it all.

Continue to do and focus on what he called us to do...good works that glorify him.

To people who are the least among us.

**Close:**

This is a remarkable passage. So often when we think about end times things, we are busy trying to discern the times, we are trying to read the tea leaves, we even try to resist the inevitable.

Here's what I know. Scripture gives hints and clues about what will happen in the end; however Jesus specifically tells his followers to stop looking and focus on what he has called us to do.

Since he is coming again that has two implications...

**FIRST CALL**

First, he is coming back. Which person will you be? The person that is gathered with him or the person left in the field?

Jesus is very specific. There is only one way to know and that is to receive him as he says he his...the risen son of God.

PRAYER FOR SALVATION

**SECOND CALL**

So, you believe in him. We believe he is coming back. It could happen at any moment. What are you doing with what he gave you? Are you sowing what he is giving you...he is not going to ask you about your finances or what you did for work or what your political leanings, he is going to ask you what you did with his gospel...who did you share it with when you had the chance, whose coming into the kingdom because of you.

If we believe he is coming again, we must get back to work in reminding others of his return.

PRAYER FOR RENEWED CALLING