



## **TRIBULATION HAPPENS -** (Week 6) *Now & Then*

- **Introductory remarks**

**The discourse can be divided into three main sections. (Verses 4-34 speak of the destruction of the temple.)**

- 1. First, the disciples question Jesus about the end of the age and His Second Coming and Jesus gives them a summary of things leading up to the destruction of the temple in verses 4 – 14.**

2. Second, He gives them instructions for those days in verses 15 – 28.

3. Third, we have the discussion of the coming of the Son of Man coupled with the exhortation to keep watch for our Lord's return in verses 29 – 51.

- Matthew 23 and the interpretive key
- The timeline phrases
- Temple video

## **Matthew 24:1–25:46**

24 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup> But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

Jesus is not just Messiah, but He is also a prophet, because here we have an instance of Jesus predicting a future event that would be fulfilled in the lifetime of His disciples — the destruction of the temple. Jesus is crucified in approximately 33 A.D. and the destruction of the temple (by all historical accounts) happened in 70 A.D.

So, to keep the context in mind, they are discussing the destruction of the temple.

<sup>3</sup> 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?”

Look at this question, because it's really one question. They're asking Him, “When will the temple be destroyed?” But we can see from how they ask the question that they tie all three things together, the destruction of the temple, the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the age.

### • The White House

<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.

Even during the time of the apostles, false teachers had already come. In Acts 8, Peter and John encountered a false prophet named Simon.

False prophets were troubling the church in Thessalonica telling them the Second Coming of Christ had already occurred (2 Thess 2:1-2).

**The apostle John wrote that many antichrists had already come during his time. (1 John 2:18)**

**History is filled with examples both then and now of false saviors and false teachers. These false teachers and false christs will peek before the Second Coming.**

<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.**

**The end of what? Remember the three rules of biblical interpretation: context, context, context. What is the context here? The temple. So, He's referring to the end of the temple.**

<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.

**When they see these things they will know the destruction of the temple is near.**

<sup>9</sup> "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death,

**"They will deliver you up..." Doesn't it sound like Jesus is preparing them for an immediate fulfillment?**

and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

**It was true of the disciples that Jesus was addressing at that time and it is true of Christians today. Christians are still undergoing severe persecution and tribulation all over the world. We're all products of our environments in some ways.**

- **Tribulation and the prosperity gospel**

**Because here's a question that has been asked. "How can we go to Christians who are undergoing severe persecution today in places like North Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, etc., and teach them that the church will not go through the tribulation period?"**

- **Hea Woo's story**

**It has been estimated that since 1990 an average of 160,000 Christians have been killed every year. Thousands of others are imprisoned, tortured, exiled, blacklisted, deprived of their property, or abused in more subtle ways.**

So, this idea that the church will be delivered from the tribulation is a very American idea. It's easy to believe that when you're not being persecuted. The promise that Christians will be hated by all nations for His sake holds true even today.

How many of you are racist homophobes? Our tribulation is going to be social, but it's coming in greater waves.

- Washington State Supreme Court

## Acts 14:22

<sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

## Revelation 1:9

<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

## Matthew 24:10-20

<sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

This happens in every age during every intense times of persecution. It's been nice knowing some of you.

<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.

It is always more difficult to be a faithful Christian in a culture that opposes you.

<sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

This is a teaching that is called "the perseverance of the saints," which simply means that those who are truly Christ's will remain faithful to Him to the end of their lives.

- Historical time of persecution

<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.

There are two ways to understand this verse and I think they're both legitimate. One, is that the church does it work of preaching the gospel and when we've reached every people group on the face of the earth with the gospel, the end of days will come.

Second, the phrase “throughout the whole world” can be understood as a general phrase regarding the span of the world as they knew it. For instance, when a New Testament author writes, “And the whole city came out,” he just means there were a lot of people there, not literally everyone in the city. So, this phrase could mean that once the gospel is spread by the early church to every known area to them, the destruction of the temple will come.

Now, verses 15-28 are more specific. Jesus moves from signs to look for before the destruction of the temple to how to react when you see it.

<sup>15</sup> “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

**Here we go. This is end times nitty-gritty — the Abomination of Desolation. What does Jesus mean by this?**

**First, the author of Matthew adds “let the read understand.” So, this abomination of desolation is something that these first century readers would have recognized as they read this. This means our interpretation**

**must match that fact. This can’t be something completely futuristic that they wouldn’t be familiar with or understand.**

**This is something that Daniel prophesied about and something Jesus prophesied about, and something the readers of Matthew would be familiar with, which means — this prophecy was fulfilled during the life of these disciples Jesus is speaking to.**

**That’s why it makes more sense that the Abomination of Desolation has to do with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the desecration of its altar. (To desecrate something is to violently vandalize it.)**

**Jesus is prophesying about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and He gives the disciples instructions on what to do when they see the temple being desecrated.**

<sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, <sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>19</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

Now, when we turn to Luke (who is writing to Gentiles) to see what he says about these same events, it's clear that the destruction of the temple and the abomination of desolation go hand in hand.

## **Luke 21:20-21**

**20** "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. **21** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it,

Historically, when it became clear that Rome was going to use force to put down the ever-growing Jewish rebellion in 66 or 67 AD, those Christians remaining in Jerusalem relocated to the hill country.

The fact is, this was fulfilled in AD 70, when the city was destroyed by the Romans, Jews and Christians were slaughtered and scattered, and the temple was destroyed to the extent that "not one stone" was "left on another." The Roman emperor, proclaiming himself God, sat in the Holy of Holies, fulfilling the "abomination of desolation" predicted in Daniel. Just look at our Lord's own remark: "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,'

spoken through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Would the original audience not have clearly understood Jesus to be preparing them for events which were right around the corner? "So when you see standing in the holy place..." (Michael Horton)

During that time, it is described this way: "The whole city was leveled down and plowed with salt by the Romans, effectively wiping Jerusalem off the map."

It's also described this way by an ancient historian, Eusebius Pamphilius (325): "But the number of calamities which every where fell upon the nation at that time; the extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea were especially subjected, the thousands of men, as well as women and children, that perished by the sword, by famine, and by other forms of death innumerable,--all these things, as well as the many great sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, and the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety, and finally the general course of the whole war, as well as its particular occurrences in detail, and how at

last the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets, stood in the very temple of God, -- all these things any one that wishes may find accurately described in the history written by Josephus." (Book III, Ch. 5)

Another way of understanding this is from the standpoint of multi-layered prophecy. For example, about 500 B.C., the prophet Daniel prophesied the appearance of "[one who makes desolate] on the wings of abominations" (Dan 9:27). Jews believe that Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled by the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. when he invaded Jerusalem, entered the Temple, and erected an altar to the Greek god Zeus and sacrificed pigs and other unclean animals in the Temple.

But it was fulfilled again in A.D. 70, just as Jesus prophesied, when Roman legions sacked Jerusalem and entered the Temple with their pagan symbols and then destroyed it completely. Both of these events were in the past, but there will be a future third event still waiting to come to pass: the "man of lawlessness" who "takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thess 2:4), the so-called Antichrist

who will "utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling" (Rev 13:6). This world power, the final "abomination of desolation" in Daniel's prophecy, would appear on the scene shortly before Jesus returns.

## **Matthew 24:21-29**

<sup>21</sup> 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.

- 500 Jews being crucified each day
- Over 1 million killed
- "Never has a single city's population been so thoroughly exterminated and enslaved as during the fall of Jerusalem."
- When we understand the significance of the temple's loss in the history of the nation of Israel this is unprecedented loss.
- Judaism has never been the same since the destruction of the temple. A group of rabbis met secretly in 90 AD to figure out how Judaism would function without temple sacrifices.

- I think it's safe to take verse 21 at face value and say it has been fulfilled.

The question I have for you is, "What kind of tribulation are you prepared for? Do you believe tribulation and persecution are all future events? What if they're not? What if something is around the corner? Do you have any idea how you might react?"

Right now we still have great religious freedoms, but what are we doing with those religious freedoms? Are we prepared to aid our brothers and sisters in other countries who are undergoing persecution?

We can still invite people to church with little to no social loss. Are we bold enough to do so?