

Title: The Great Questions of the Times

Text: Matthew 24:1-3

Open your Bibles, please, to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 24. The Gospel of Matt. 24. I would like to begin a series of Prophetic messages from the ~~great~~ ^{greater} prophetic discourse that Jesus ever gave. This discourse was given on the Mt. of Olives. And in this discourse we have unfolded by Jesus the answers to the questions that have been ask down through time concerning the Lords return.

Matthew 24, beginning at Vs 1. I invite you to follow along.

Please stand

(Read Matthew 14:1-3)

PRAYER

Now, according to this portion of scripture the disciples were concerned with three questions. You will find them in Vs 3. NUMBER 1: "Tell us, when will these things be." Number 2: "What will be the sign of your ^{coming} coming", and Number 3: "what will be the sign of the end of the age."

Now, there are two that I would like to point out as we start this series.

1. Number one, "these things" refer to the "things" that He just got through telling them. And that was that the temple would be destroyed. In Vs 1 Jesus showed his disciples all the buildings of the Temple and said to them in Vs 2: "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."

So, the first question deals with the disstruction of the Temple in Jersualem. The last two questions deal with the sign of His second coming; and the sign of the end of the age.

2. The second thing I want to point out is that the word "age" should not be translated nor interpreted as "end of the world". The end of the world is not under discussion. It is the end of "THE AGE." O.K. WHAT AGE?

If you would look back to Vs 36 of chapter 23, you will find the answer to that question. You will also find some principles that will guide you in understanding Matt. chapter 24 and 25. And if you do not understand these prnciples you will really get confused as we discuss Matt. 24 and 25. And you will mis-interprt what is going on.

So, please notice carefully what Jesus says in Vs 36.....

(Read Vs 36-39)

~~And if you do not understand these principles you will really get confused in Matthew 24 and 25. And you will mis-interpretate what is going on. So, please notice carefully what Jesus says in Vs 36. (Read Vs 36-39)~~

Now, we have some important principles, here.

(1) Number 1, Jesus is talking to the Nation of Israel. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem He is dealing with the children of Jerusalem. "How often I wanted to gather your children together." So, Jesus is talking to the nation of Israel. Not the church. *Very important to remember.*

(2) Number 2. ~~Notice~~ Notice that one of the things that Jesus is longing to do is to gather these children together. That is taking place, today. It is not yet in complete fulfillment. But, God is bringing the entire nation of Israel together in His land. It is happening before our *Very* eyes.

(3) A third principle. You will notice, Jesus predicts that their house which I believe refers to the "temple," ...their house would be left desolate.

Dear friends, the Temple has been absolutely desolate ever since 70 A.D. There is no Temple. In 70 A.D. the Temple was destroyed by Roman soldiers. And there has never been another Temple. The prophecy of Jesus *for Vs 2* came true. *24:1-2*

In 70 A.D. the Roman governor Titus moved in with his leagues to capture Jerusalem. The seige lasted 3 years. Finally the city fell. It fell because people were starving to death. In fact, food was so scarce that people were turning to cannibalism. ~~And~~ this caused the city to surrender.

And the Roman soldiers marched into the city and completely destroyed it. And when they came to the Temple it is very interesting what happened. Because some 40 years earlier, Jesus predicted (Matthew 24:2) that not one stone would be left upon another, which will not be torn down." And that was literally fulfilled.

By the way this isn't Solomons Temple. Solomons Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

Herod the Great who began ruling about 40 B.C. rebuilt the Temple. It took about 46 years. Herod rebuilt the Temple and in construction he used a lot of gold and silver and jewels. History records that gold and precious jewels were used to build the Temple. Gold was actually laid between the stones.

When Titus, the Roman governor, came into the Temple area, we are told that he was literally amazed at the precious stones and gold found in the Temple. And he ordered his army to destroy the Temple. And the purpose was to get all this gold, even the gold between the stones. So, the walls were torn apart, in order to get at the gold.

And some 40 years before this happened Jesus prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed and not one stone would be left upon another. And the Roman governor Titus literally knocked every stone down so that they could get all the gold. History records this fact.

So, the answer to this first question that the disciples ask is not found in Matthew 24 and 25. The answer is recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew is only concerned with question 2 and 3. ^{24: 20-24} *The Sign of Year Comm.* *The Sign of the end of the Age*

Now, Matthew 24 and 25 is dealing with the nation of Israel; not the church. The church age began on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the death of Jesus on the cross. On that day, the day of Pentecost, began the church age. It is also called the BODY OF CHRIST. And the BODY OF CHRIST includes every single person who has ever come to believe in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile.

And from that point, the day of Pentecost, until the beginning of the Great Tribulation ---this time period is known as the Church age. The Tribulation will begin with the RAPTURE of the church as explained in I Thess. 4:17.

So, the church ^{age} is not ~~part of that~~ ^{The "AGE"} AGE that Jesus is talking about here in Matthew 24 and 25. He is talking about a Jewish age and those events that will take place during the tribulation period. This is so important to an understanding of what Jesus is teaching.

Let me give you one example: Look at Matthew 24:13. Vs 13 could not be said of believers of the church. It says, "the one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved." That is not true of believers. God never says to believers that we have to endure in order to be saved. But, that will be true of those in the TRIBULATION PERIOD. And it will be true of the Nation of Israel during that time. But, it is not true of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The N.T. teaches that the moment you accept Christ as Savior, you are by way of Position in the Body of Christ. You have eternal life. And you do not have the condition of "enduring until the end." As a matter of fact, if you receive Christ, right now, and then the RAPTURE of the church takes place, you will not even be around down here at the end of the age. You will be caught up to be with the Lord during the TRIBULATION PERIOD.

O.K. if that phrase ^(END OF MY LIFE) is not referring to the church age, what age is it referring to? JESUS IS TALKING ABOUT A JEWISH AGE. The Jews thought, basical, in two realms. That is, that we are in an age right now. This present age is evil and corrupt. And it will end when the Messiah comes and starts a new age. And age of happiness and blessings.

If you were living in that day, ^{The} ~~th~~ day of Jesus, you would be thinking in terms of two ages. The one I am in right now, which will end in great tribulation.....the time of Jacob's trouble as it is called in the O.T. It will be a time of persecution on the nation of Israel, ~~such as they had never seen.~~

But, notice..in thier day..the days of Jesus, the people thought they were going through Jacob's troubles. That is why they were looking for the Messiah. They thought that the persecution they were suffering ^{under the Romans} was the great tribulation..the fulfillment of the prophecies of the O.T. And so to them, the age was very close to ending, you see.

That is why they were looking for the Messiah because when the Messiah comes He would usher in the "NEW AGE". The 1000- year reign of the Messiah on this earth.

The Messiah would set on the throne of David in Jerusalem ruling over the whole earth. Now, that event will happen when Jesus comes back to earth at the end of the Great Tribulation. The end of the age will come. Christ will stand with his feet on the Mount of Olives, according to Zechariah 14. The same place where He ascended into heaven in Acts chapter 1. It will be a great event. And the Bible teaches that the whole world will see that coming.

But, in Matthew 24 and 25 we are talking about a Jewish age. Not the church. And if you don't see that, you will have a hard time understanding these two chapters. You will get confused. You will misunderstand the prophecy. And you will be thinking some things are true when they are not. Dear friends, please remember that Matt 24 is talking about a Jewish age that ends with Tribulation; and about the Messiah coming that will usher in a new age.

Now, let's come back to the scripture. In Matt. 24 the disciples ask Jesus two questions: THE SIGN OF YOUR COMING. How will we know when the Messiah will actually come back? AND WHAT WILL BE THE SIGNS CONCERNING THE END OF THIS AGE.

You see, they thought they were in ^{The end of the Day} that age and ~~they~~ were expecting Jesus to say: "Hay, guys, everything you are suffering now ought to prove to you that this is the end of the ages." But, He did not. He said something much deeper.

I would, also, like you to notice that Vs 8 is a breaking point in this section of scripture. After discussing some of the signs, Jesus says, "all these are merely the beginning of birthpangs or sorrows."

you see According to the Book of Revelation, the great tribulation period of 7 years is divided into two ~~halves~~ ^{parts}. $3\frac{1}{2}$ years in each ~~half~~ ^{part}. And the Bible clearly teaches that the first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of the tribulation period there will not be widespread persecution of the Jewish nation.

As a matter of fact, during the first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of the tribulation period the Jewish nation is under the protection of a world political leader who is rising to power during this time. ~~He is described as being a little horn out of ten horns in a vision Daniel saw.~~

According to the Book of Daniel, there will be 10 nations that will become world powers during the end ^{of the age} times. And during the first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of the 7 year tribulation, a new king will arise. He may be from an old nation. But he will be a new man on the scene. He is described ^{in Daniel} as being a little horn out of ten horns in a vision Daniel saw. The point is that this new king will seem unimportant at first. But, soon he will consolidate his power by taking over the other nations. This could be done through an alliance or through ^{conquest} ~~aggression~~. But, during this time he will consolidate his power over the other 9 nations.

And this man in his rise to power makes a covenant with Israel. He promises to restore the Temple and sacrificial system of Israel. But, in the middle of that 7 year tribulation period, He will break that covenant and then will begin the time of Jacob's trouble. Great tribulation such as the world has never seen will take place. And it will center on the nation of Israel. If you want to read about the events during this tribulation, you can find them record in the Book of Revelation Chapter 6-19.

So, notice Vs 8: All these things are merely the beginning of sorrows or birthpangs.

So, I take that to mean, following the words of Jesus, that Vs 4-8 describe the first half of the tribulation period. And Vs 9-28 describe the last half of the tribulation period.

Now, knowing all of that, we are now in a position to consider the signs of the end of the age. There are six signs that Jesus said will show to you that ~~the~~ end of the ^{Jewish} age is about to happen. And we will look at those signs next week. They are fantastic.

But, please remember, these signs will refer to the end of the Jewish age. Not, the end of the church age. And this Jewish age will end when the Messiah comes in power and glory and the whole world will see him. 7 years previous to that event, Christians will be caught up to meet the Saviour in the air. This is called the rapture of the church. The word "rapture" means "caught up." We will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, according to I Thess. 4. This happens 7 years before the period that Jesus is discussing in Matt 24-25.

Now, why do I make such an issue of this point? For this reason: As we discuss these signs and if you think you see them happening, today, I remind you that these signs don't have to be seen today. They are signs characteristic of the 7 year period called the great tribulation. But, if you are seeing ^{shadows of} them today, you can count on it---that we are near the time of the RAPTURE.

The Bible teaches that nothing needs to happen before the RAPTURE. There are no signs that need to be fulfilled before the RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH.

The Bible teaches that we need to be ready. That Jesus could come at any moment for His church. The rapture of the church will happen in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. And we will have no second chance, then, to reconsider our commitment to Christ.

^{Dear Friends} If you have never received Jesus as your Lord and savior, at the moment of the rapture, you will not be able to say: "HAY! wait a minute. I want to accept Christ...NO WAY...In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, Jesus will call us up to meet Him in the sky.

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And then the signs that we are going to discuss next week will take place.

So, if you think you see signs today, take heed for your redemption draws near.

Dear friend, if the rapture of the church would occur right now, would you be ready? Would you be part of that great host of believers that will be caught up to meet Christ in the air? The only way you can have assurance that you will be there is through faith in a person who lived and died and rose again: Jesus Christ. If you have never invited Jesus to come into your life, may I urge you to do so, right now...before it is eternally too late.

SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER