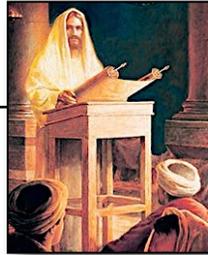


What Jesus Taught About the **End Times**



Matthew chapters 24-25 are called “**The Olivet Discourse**” because it was delivered by Jesus to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. Interestingly, as Jesus was talking to His disciples, He was sitting at the very place the prophet Zechariah had foretold the Messiah would stand when He returned to earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom: “*On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west. Half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south.*” Zechariah 14:4 NLT.

The focus of The Olivet Discourse is **Christ’s second coming to establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth.**

Central Lesson:
God has a plan for the world and for our lives.

The Setting of the Olivet Discourse

Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple in Jerusalem. His disciples were admiring the beauty of the buildings. Jesus said to His disciples: “*...Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!*” Matthew 24:2 (NLT).

Jesus words came to fulfillment **less than forty years later**. Jerusalem was attacked by the Romans in A.D. 70 under the leadership of Titus, the Roman general. Thousands of Jews were killed, the city destroyed, and the destruction of the temple was complete. Josephus, the Jewish historian, had given his allegiance to the Romans and accompanied Titus to Jerusalem. He was an eyewitness of the city’s fall. He writes that fires raged through the city. The flames melted large amounts of gold in the temple which flowed into the crevices of the blocks. The Romans took the temple apart, stone by stone, to recover the melted gold. Jesus’ prophecy was literally fulfilled—*Not one stone will be left on top of another!*

The Disciples’ Three Part Question

Jesus’ disciples were troubled. They asked him three questions (Matthew 24:3). The answer that Jesus gave is the longest answer given to any question asked in the New Testament. “*...Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?*” (24:3)

General Observations about Matthew 24-25

1. Israel was the focus of His answer, not the **CHURCH**.

The Church was a *mystery* when Jesus said these things (Eph. 5:32; 3:6). The Church did not exist until the Jewish holiday of Pentecost ten days after His ascension into heaven (Acts 1-2). The Gospel of Matthew was written to the Jews. The nation of Israel is His focus as seen by the references to (1) the Temple “*the holy place*” (v.15), (2) Daniel’s prophecy about “*the abomination that causes desolation*” (v.15) (3) Judea (v.16), (4) the Sabbath (v.20). The term “*the elect*” - NIV or “*chosen ones*” - NLT (v.22, 24, 31) is not a reference to the Church but people who turn to Christ during the Tribulation period.

2. The emphasis on “**BIRTH PAINS**” indicates that the signs are an early warning of Christ’s 2nd coming, not an immediate fulfillment (v.8).

Birth pains are at the end of a pregnancy just before birth. Likewise, these signs will take place just before Christ comes again. Birth pains get closer together and are more intense just before birth. In the same way, these signs will increase in **frequency** and **intensity** as time moves closer to Christ’s 2nd coming.

3. Jesus was focusing on His **RETURN** at the *end* of the Tribulation period to set up His Millennial Kingdom, *not* the **RAPTURE** of the church before the Tribulation.

Jesus does not refer to the Church, the Church Age, nor the rapture in The Olivet Discourse. His focus is the Tribulation period (24:21-22) and the Second Coming of Christ to the earth (cf. 24:30). **However, if the signs for the Second Coming are starting to appear today, the Rapture has to be even closer.**

4. The signs that Jesus list will appear mainly during the **TRIBULATION** period although they may *begin* appearing in the **PRESENT** age.

Many of the signs *begin* appearing in the present church age and will continue appearing in greater frequency and intensity until their final fulfillment in the Tribulation.

5. The Bible prohibits **DATE** setting for the Coming of Christ.

Although we can know the *general* time of Christ’s coming, we cannot know the exact time (Matt. 24:32-33). Many individuals have attempted to set dates for the Rapture and the Second Coming. All of these have come and gone. The Bible is clear that no one should try to set dates (Matt. 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13; Acts 1:7).

Specific Signs from the Olivet Discourse

Jesus predicted the following signs:

1. Deception (vs.4-5, 11).
2. Wars & rumors of wars (vs.6-7).
3. Famines (v.7).
4. Earthquakes in various [unusual] places (v.7).
5. Pestilences [disease] (Luke 21:11).
6. Fearful events & great signs from heaven (Luke 21:11).
7. Persecution of Christ-followers (v.9).
8. Defection from following Christ (v.10).
9. Betrayal & deep hate (v.10; Lk 21:16; Mk 13:12).
10. Increase of wickedness (v.12).
11. Cold hearts (v.12).
12. Worldwide preaching of the gospel (v.14).
13. The Antichrist declares himself god in the temple of Jerusalem (v.15).
14. Great distress—unequaled to the past & future (vs.21-22).

How to Respond to End Times Teaching - Matthew 24-25

(1) Guard against deception (24:4), (2) Don’t be alarmed (24:6) or frightened (Luke 21:9), (3) Pray (24:20), (4) Keep watch (24:42; 25:13), (5) Be ready (24:44), (6) Be faithful (24:45; 25:21, 23), and (7) Serve Christ by serving others (25:40).

Central Lesson:

God has a plan for the world and for our lives.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday’s study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.