

Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 24:1-31

“Beware and Look Forward”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

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As we come to **chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew’s gospel**, Jesus shifts gears. No longer talking to the religious leaders and no longer talking about the heresies of their religious practice ... the Lord now turn His attention to the disciples and discusses with them ... the end times.

Collectively, **these chapters** are known as the “Olivet Discourse” simply because Jesus went up to the Mount of Olives and discoursed with His disciples.

Now I think it might be helpful if we had a quick review of end time events before we eve’s drop on Jesus’ discussion with His disciples so let’s start this morning in **Daniel chapter 9**.

What we’re looking at here is the angel Gabriel speaking to the prophet Daniel about what is to come ...

Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people [The Jews] and your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place [The Temple in Jerusalem]. 25 "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince [Jesus] there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks ... 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come [The antichrist and those who follow after him] will destroy the city and the sanctuary. ... even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 "And he [The antichrist] will make a firm covenant with the many [The majority of the world] for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one [The antichrist]who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed [Jesus at His Second coming], is poured out on the one who makes desolate [The antichrist]."

Now part of the key to understanding this is that when Gabriel speaks of “weeks”, we can’t think of that as the standard, seven-day, American week. The Hebrew word is shabuwa` (shaw-boo'-ah) and it’s most literal meaning is “sevened”. That is ... a multiple of seven.

So, what Gabriel's describing then is seventy times seven or 490 years. But as he says ... those 490 years are broken up into two groups; one group of 483 years and then the final seven years.

And he says that the first 483 years will pass between the issue of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (**Nehemiah 2:5**) and the Lord's Triumphal entry into Jerusalem (**Matthew 21**).

And ... as prophesied ... in 445 B.C. King Artaxerxes issued the order to rebuild Jerusalem ... and exactly 483 years later Jesus made His Triumphal entry.

Gabriel also says there that after His triumphal entry ... the messiah would be "cut off", which, of course, is a reference to his crucifixion, death and ascension. And that event marks the end of the 69th week (or 483rd year) of Daniel's prophecy.

Now from where we are in **Matthew's gospel** ... Jesus is just three days from the cross ... three days from being "cut off".

And ... according to Gabriel ... after the Messiah was "cut off", the Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed ... and that happened, just as prophesied in 70 AD.

But what wasn't seen in Daniel's prophetic vision was that between the 69th and 70th week ... a gap was inserted. A gap of time variably known as the Age of Grace or the Time of the Gentiles or The Church Age ... the season in which we now live.

And just for reference sake ... **Daniel 9:27** tells us that... "**The [Antichrist] will make a firm covenant with the many for one week**", and that's the event that will mark the beginning of the 70th week or the seven-year period of time that we know as the Tribulation.

Now remember that scripture breaks the Tribulation up into the first 3 ½ years and the second 3 ½ years. The first part is filled with horrible tribulation and the second part is filled with significantly worse tribulation.

And **verse 27 of Daniel chapter 9**, tells us that at that halfway point between the 1st and 2nd halves of the Tribulation ... the Antichrist will break the covenant that he will make at the beginning of the Tribulation period. And that's the event that **Matthew 24:15** calls "**the Abomination of Desolation**". And after that ... all Hell literally breaks loose.

So ... with that background ... I think the stage is pretty well set for us to jump into **Matthew 24** ...

Verses 1-2: When Jesus says here to His disciples "**Do you not see all these things?**", He wasn't referring to the physical temple buildings, but to the larger spiritual picture.

Now remember ... what they're looking at here is the second temple. The first one built by King Solomon was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. After that, just as the Bible predicted, Zerubbabel began rebuilding the temple in 536 BC.

And to remind you of something we've talked about before ... the foundation stones of the temple were 20 feet by 40 feet and weighed 200,000 pounds each, but they fit so perfectly together that no mortar was needed. And yet, Jesus says that, "**not one stone ... will be left upon another**".

Q. And did that happen? – Of course, it did!

In AD 70 the Romans marched into Jerusalem under General Titus with two orders:

- 1.** Destroy the city but ...
- 2.** Do not damage or desecrate the temple. In fact, he told the troops that they should not even enter the temple.

But apparently ... at least one of the Roman soldiers was in the little soldier's room when that order was given, because the temple was set ablaze and stoked with sappy olive tree wood.

And remember that some of the walls on this thing were made of stone twenty-foot-thick ... which made it one huge and exceedingly hot oven. As a result, the gold overlay and implements were liquefied, and the liquid gold ran down between the foundation stones.

Which was enough to compel Rome to disassembling the temple ... stone by stone to retrieve it and thus this prophecy was perfectly fulfilled.

Verse 3: The Lord's disciples ask Him three specific questions here.

They ask:

- 1. Q. When will the end come?**
- 2. Q. They ask what signs would foretell His return?**
- 3. Q. And they ask what signs will warn us that the end is near?**

And the remainder of **this chapter** and all of **chapter 25** are Jesus' answer to these three questions.

So in preparation for that ... glance forward with me to **verse 34 of this chapter** ...

Matthew 24:34 this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Now, here in **verse 3** it says that Jesus is speaking to "the disciples", but **Mark 13:3** says specifically that it was Peter, James, John and Andrew.

And the reason that matters is because those four men all had one thing in common ... they were all Jews.

So again, in **verse 34** Jesus says ...

... this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

But the word “generation”, doesn’t have the base meaning that we’re accustomed to in English. It comes from the root word for “kin” or “relative” and in many passages and translations it’s appropriately rendered as “nation”.

And this is key, because as we go through this message on what to expect in the end times ... you will notice that two things are missing ... the rapture and the church (**1st Thessalonians 4:17 & 1st Corinthians 15:52**).

That tells us:

- 1.** That this message is aimed at the Jewish nation and ...
- 2.** Since the Jewish nation, as a whole, continues to reject Jesus as the Messiah, they will not be raptured with the church, but will serve God during the 7-year Tribulation period on earth.

Verses 4-8: We’ve talked before about the “waves” of God’s wrath during the Tribulation Season. Much like a woman’s labor pains ... they will be relentless.

You may remember from our study of **Revelation** that the wrath of God is poured out during the Tribulation in three consecutive waves, with each wave consisting of 7 “contractions”, if you will; the 7 Seal Judgments, the 7 Trumpet Judgments and the 7 Bowl Judgments (**Revelation 6:1 - 8:6**).

And again ... since the majority of Jews will not be raptured ... a knowledge of what to expect during the Tribulation Period makes sense and would be helpful.

Verses 9-13: So, the promise is that during the Tribulation things will go from really bad to even worse for the Jewish people.

Q. But how are we to interpret verse 13, where it says ... “... the one who endures to the end, ... will be saved.”? – Again ... keep in mind that we’re not talking about Christians here ... we’re talking about the Jews and we’re not talking about the Age of Grace in which we live, we’re talking about the seven-year Tribulation period.

So, with that in mind ... we know that “the end”, for these Tribulation Saints can only come in one of three forms:

- 1.** Surviving until Christ’s Second Coming

- 2.** Martyrdom for their faith in Christ or ...
- 3.** Caving in and giving themselves over to evil because of the persecution they'll face ...

Revelation 13:16 And ... [the antichrist will] **causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.**

Taking this mark that we generally refer to as The Mark of the Beast, for those in the Tribulation ... is very similar to our committing the one unforgivable sin of Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 12:31**). Once they take the Mark ... they are Satan's!

So those who endure will be saved!

Verse 14-16:

Revelation 7:4 ... I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel

So, 144,000 Jewish witnesses are sealed right before the mid-point of the tribulation. Right before the antichrist sets himself up in the temple and demands to be worshipped as the savior of the world. Again ... that event referred to as the "Abomination of Desolation".

But these 144,000 Jews are commissioned and sealed by God to deliver the gospel message to "the whole world".

Verses 17-21:

Revelation 12:6 Then ... [Israel] **fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.**

1,260 days or 3 ½ years (the last half of the Tribulation). And this place prepared by God is believed to be the rock fortress of Petra in Jordan.

Verse 22: The **first half of this verse**, when translated literally, is written in the past tense ... as if it had already occurred. The **latter half** however, is written in future tense.

It's telling us again that God's mercies are an unalterable, forgone FACT!

Verses 23-26: Of the events and stumbling blocks that will occur during The Tribulation, Jesus says here ... "**I have told you in advance.**"

- 1.** He's told them that He's coming back and ...
- 2.** Here He tells them that many false Christs and false prophets who will try to mislead people. Even the Jews if possible.

And it should remind us ... that we've also been told in advance ... the next major scriptural event for us is The Rapture. So, if someone jumps onto the scene claiming to be the Messiah ... whether that's tomorrow or during the Tribulation ... it's a lie.

Verses 27-28: When Jesus takes us home to be with Him in the Rapture, it will be a silent event that results in an instantaneous disappearance of all believers, but that's not what we see described here in **Matthew**.

This is the description of "The Lord's Second Coming". His appearance in the sky and physical descent back to earth ... touching down on the Mount of Olives.

So, people won't have to guess about His Second Coming. It will be as noticeable as lightening flashing from the east to the west. As recognizable as buzzards circling over a carcass.

Revelation 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. ...

Verses 29-31:

Q. Do you remember talking last week about the Lord's stated desire in Matthew 23:37? –

"[Oh] Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings ...

I love the fact that His Second Coming will be the fulfillment of that desire.

Q. Did you see that in verse 31? – "**... He will send forth His angels ... and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His [Jewish children] from ... one end of the sky to the other.**"

The sun and the moon will be extinguished, and the stars will fall ... and then ... then He will appear!

But despite those wonders ... I think my favorite part of this passage is right there at the beginning of **verse 30** ... **And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.**

Notice that this sign is singular and it's in the sky. It's a reference back to **verse 27** and the mention there of these flashes of light (like lightening) in the sky.

It's what we call the "Shekinah glory of God". The bright light of God's glory.

We're first introduced to it way back when Moses received the Law of God on Mount Sinai ...

Exodus 34:29 It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai ..., that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with ... [God] ... **30** So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

Moses was glowing. He'd taken on the glow of God by merely being in His presence.

We also see a glimpse of this Shekinah Glory at the announcement of Jesus' birth ...

Luke 2:9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them ...

And we get yet another glimpse when Jesus was transformed on the mount of transfiguration.

Matthew 17:5 ... a bright cloud overshadowed them ...

And all Christians will bask in it for all eternity as John says in **Revelation 21:23** ... speaking of our heavenly home ...

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Conclusion: You see ... that's the whole purpose of this Terrible Tribulation period ... not to punish people, but to bring them to repentance. To contrast the Light of God with the darkness of evil. That the people might choose God and the Light of His glory!

2nd Timothy 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Sixty-nine of Daniel's seventy weeks have already passed ... may we live in such a way that we can say with The Apostle John "Maranatha ... Come quickly Lord Jesus!" May we soon be absorbing His Shekinah glory in person!