



Lesson 11 - When will this happen?

Matthew Chapter 24 - Verses 1 - 25

Lesson 11

As we covered in Chapter 23, Jesus had just finished lecturing the Pharisees and teachers of the law about all the things they had done that mislead the Jewish people. It was a verbal thrashing that certainly helped to motivate them to get rid of Jesus. As the disciples leave with Jesus they do not know it but Jesus last statement to the Jewish leaders - Matt. 23:39 - "*For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'*" Is the prophecy that ties directly to Revelation where the multitudes are praising God and are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. This encounter must have seemed quite different to the disciples. They would have accompanied Jesus to the Temple many, many times before and yet this was different. Jesus knows he does not have long and as He walks past the temple in all its magnificence they point it out to Jesus.

Matt. 24:1-2 - *“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. “Do you see all these things?” He asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”*

Imagine walking through Washington DC and looking at all our national monuments and someone telling you that soon there will not be one stone left on another. It must seem unbelievable. Matthew first verse is tying together the preceding with the following and draw attention to this fabulous temple. Indeed Herod's crowning achievement as king over Israel was the rebuilding of the Temple. Interestingly it was finished only 6 years before it was destroyed. By all accounts it was a magnificent structure. But Jesus is not too impressed.

Matt. 24:3-4 - *As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you.”*

3 questions - When will this happen; what will be the sign of your coming; and the sign of the end of the age? So as we work our way through these lessons let's see how Jesus answers each question. He starts with the first one - when will this happen?

Matt. 24:5-6 - *“For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”*

Notice how Jesus warns the disciples that many will claim to be the Messiah AND they will deceive many. Jesus KNOWS that the Romans will soon destroy the temple and all of Jerusalem and He wants them to know that is not a sign of the end. John may be the only one of the disciples who lives to see the destruction of the temple and all of Jerusalem. We have had many wars and we have had several people claim to be a messiah and they have mislead some but not “many”. Probably the Mormons are the largest group of deceivers that we have had to deal with and that starts with Joseph Smith who claims that an angel gave him a new testament that superseded the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Matt. 24:7-8 - *“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.”*

Jesus starts using an analogy of the birth process. All through the Old Testament the Bible tells us that God uses famine as His punishment for disobedience. The phrase “there will be earthquakes in various places...” has been used many times by many people who are searching for increases in earthquake frequency and intensity. It is hard to evaluate because the Bible does not classify its earthquakes until we get to the Book of Revelation and then we have a couple that will be the worst earthquake that the world has ever seen. We would expect those to be greater than a 9.0 earthquake.

Matt. 24:9-11 - “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”

Jesus is establishing a chronology to the sequence of events when He says “Then...”. This will occur after the previous warnings. Persecution will be severe and widespread. We are starting to see some of it in the US and the rest of the world has been dealing with it for many years. Muslims are aggressively evil and bent on the destruction of anything that is not looking back at them in the mirror. As Christians we certainly feel that persecution strengthens our faith but that pressure also causes many to fall away.

Just in the last few days these are some events of persecution around the world:
Five Christians in Northeast India Beaten After Refusing to Recant Christian Faith
11/06/2019 India
Christian Villagers in Pakistan Beaten and Stopped from Constructing Church
11/08/2019 Pakistan
Chinese Christians Harassed for Purchasing Christian Books Online 11/06/2019

Check out the current list of Christian persecution at www.persecution.org. Our persecution is a derivative of Jewish persecution. Since Christianity is a spin-off from Judaism we get the same persecution.

Matt. 24:12-13 - “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

The Bible has many periods of wickedness and they were followed by God’s judgment on the people. It would be quite easy during our time in America’s history to say that

we are in a period of lawlessness and the love of many is growing cold. Lawlessness is a key attribute of the end times. Of course this term “lawlessness” does not mean man’s laws but God’s laws. We see many places where governments are legalizing activities that clearly defy God’s laws. These laws may be OK in man’s eyes but God will absolutely judge people using His law as the standard - not man’s laws.

Since we live in America we tend to view everything as to how it affects us but we are about 5% of the world’s population. To understand prophecy and what Jesus is talking about we have to look at the world at large - not just the US. Standing firm to the end - this is going to be a challenge - especially since you will not know how much longer will it be until the end. These signs of persecution, lawlessness and love for one another growing cold are signs of societal breakdown.

Matt. 24:14-16 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

This is a key part of the end times - “the gospel will be preached in the whole world” and THEN the end will come. This means the gospel will be preached - that does not guarantee acceptance. The testimony serves two purposes - first to share the information of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and secondly it condemns the guilty. This is a contrast between those who LISTEN to the Gospel and open their hearts to its message and those who DO NOT LISTEN and reject the Gospel.

As we have studied in Daniel, here Jesus refers to the “abomination that causes desolation” those in Judea are to flee to the mountains. So, where is Judea? Judea is the main part of Israel that goes from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. It would include the West Bank area where Israeli settlements are today.

Matt. 24:17-18 - “Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.”

This is to indicate how sudden the attack will be. Think of this from the perspective of the people who had to recently evacuate their homes due to the California forest fires. There were news reports of people being awoken at night and told that they had 15 minutes to pack up and get out. THIS warning from Jesus is more urgent than that!

Matt. 24: 19-20 - *“How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.”*

Adding further emphasis to His warning Jesus points out that the urgency and the difficulties that this time will bring will be especially bad for pregnant women. It is easy for us to see that if you are a Christian woman and pregnant and suddenly the urgency Jesus is talking about means you will experience severe problems. Just imagine - no access to hospital care, proper food, a reasonably safe home to raise the children. In many parts of the world today it is like this. There are many countries like Syria and most of the Middle East and lots of Africa countries where basic needs for expecting mothers and small children are just not there. This is what Jesus is talking about.

Then He adds even more emphasis to it that you had better pray it does not happen in the winter or on the Sabbath. The Jews are not supposed to work on the Sabbath and so He is illustrating the difficulty in trying to flee for safety on the Sabbath.

Matt. 24:21-22 - *“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”*

Again, establishing some chronology for us Jesus says “For then...” which means after all these other things - NOW there will be great distress. As we read in Revelation the chaos that will ensue will be like nothing the world has seen before. One thing about Jesus warnings is that they are very geographically specific to Israel, but as we know, anything that affects Israel will affect the rest of the world.

The last part is even more intriguing - *“If those days had not been cut short...”*. What can this mean? Generally it is thought that this is referring to Jesus’ return to help Israel defeat all their enemies, but we only have what the Bible says. However, by the time we actually KNOW what it refers to, it may be too late:).

Matt. 24:23-25 - *“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.”*

I think this may be the most difficult time for Christians. Persecutions will, of course, be terrible but seeing many people claiming to be Jesus returning and then perform

miracles like Jesus is going to make it hard to avoid being deceived. How will we know the difference? We cover that next week. Notice the emphasis that Jesus is putting on avoiding deception here. He says quite plainly - "*if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it.*" This is Jesus' warning to His disciples. Look - here is the Messiah, or There he is... - DO NOT BELIEVE IT!!!

"They will perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." We keep seeing Jesus warnings about being deceived. How can we, as mere mortals, avoid this deception? We absolutely have to study Bible prophecy from the standpoint of diligently watching so that we are not deceived. I think this is elevated several levels above just generally reading the Bible and listening to the sermons on the basics of following Jesus. Those are certainly fundamental to our Christian life but avoiding being deceived is a whole new challenge.

As Christians who are focused on not being deceived we have to have a world vision. We have to understand where we are in the chronology that Jesus and the prophets have laid out for us. The more we study and pray the more our eyes will be opened to see and hear the events that help us understand where we are in God's plan. The world will need Christians who are resistant to the false claims so we can help the rest of the world to avoid following the anti-Christ and chasing after false Messiahs. Are we ready? Are we up to the task?