

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtminc.org Today's Date: July 24, 2022

What Did Jesus Say About The End?

by Dan Trygg

“As Jesus left and was going out of the temple complex, His disciples came up and called His attention to the temple buildings. ² Then He replied to them, ‘Don’t you see all these things? I assure you: Not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down!’ ³ While He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached Him privately and said, ‘Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?’” Matthew 24:1-3

When we begin to consider what Jesus had to say about the end times, it is important to ask, “Who were the gospels written to?” While each of the gospels seems to have their own focus, it would seem to be quite evident that they were written to believers. They tell the story of Jesus, important aspects of His life, ministry, and teachings that would be helpful to those who were following Him. **They were primarily written to the church, not to the non-Christian world.** The things revealed and recorded were meant to inform, encourage, and instruct the followers of Jesus, so that they might live effectively for Him. **Jesus’ teaching about future events occurs in each gospel, but His instructions about the end times is found especially among the first three gospels.** Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 17:20-37, and 21:5-36 are the main passages that talk about future events. There are also some glimpses in Matthew 13:36-43, 47-50 that are significant. I would encourage you to read through these passages, to familiarize yourself with the content of each passage. Look for similarities, differences, and connections to OT prophecies.

Matthew 24:1-3 sets the stage for this instruction. **The disciples had been admiring the great and beautiful buildings of the Temple complex, and pointed them out to Jesus. In response, He told them that the Temple would be destroyed, ...**not one stone will be left here upon another which will not be thrown down!” This would have been shocking! The Temple was glorious, ...beautiful, ornate, a glory in which the Jews took much comfort and pride. Yet, Jesus was saying that it would be demolished! **So, it was *this* shocking revelation that initiated the questions the disciples asked, and the teaching of Jesus which followed.**

In most of our English translations, it looks like the disciples asked three questions, but in reality there are only two: (1.) “When will *these things* happen?” (2.) “And what is the *sign of Your coming and consummation of the age*?” There is no “the” before the word translated as “consummation” (cf. Mk. 13:4; Lk. 21:7). In the Greek, this word is the same form as “coming”, and is in a parallel function in the sentence. So there are two issues: “When will the Temple be destroyed”, and “when will Jesus come back and the age come to an end.” Jesus answers these questions, but people have different interpretations concerning how His answers are meant to be understood. **It seems, however, that verses 4-13 describe signs or events that will happen throughout the age, ...and they certainly have.** There have been people who have promoted misleading teaching about the coming of Christ, ...there have even been false Christs, people who have come in Jesus’ name, and some who even proclaimed themselves as being Christ Himself. They *have* misled many. There have been wars and rumors of wars, ...kingdoms fighting against kingdom. Jesus said that “those things must take place, but that is *not* the end.” There will be famines and earthquakes, plagues and frightening signs in the heavens (Lk. 21:11). The Lord likens such events to be like “the beginning of birth pangs”. That would seem to imply a growing frequency and intensity. **In addition to these recurring events, there will also be persecution.** “They will hand you over to affliction, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. Many will fall away, and will betray one another, and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most peoples’ love will grow cold.” Then Jesus adds, “But the one enduring until the end, this one will be saved.” Jesus is saying, “This is *not* going to be a cake walk. There are lots of difficulties, hardships and persecutions to face. The one who overcomes, who perseveres, *that* person will be saved.”

Then, in verse 14, **there is one important accomplishment that Jesus said must happen before the end. “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”** Somehow the message of the kingdom of God will be proclaimed throughout the entire world, ...at least enough to be a testimony or witness to all nations. The followers of Jesus must bring the good news to all the corners of the world. Just think of the enormity of this task! At that time, it was just Jesus, His twelve disciples, and a few others. Now, nearly two thousand years later, it would seem that we are closing in on that goal, in that the gospel has been preached in a great portion of the world. But the truth is that **there are currently about 17,000 people groups that remain unreached. They have never heard, and have no access to, the gospel.** Only God knows how He intends to evaluate this accomplishment, but it is quite clear that we are not currently adequately fulfilling this objective.

Verses 15-20 seem to refer initially to the destruction of the Temple in the first century, **but with an eye to yet a future fulfillment**. Note that **Jesus refers back to the abomination of desolation**, mentioned by Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). The “abomination of desolation” refers to something that is detestable, ...an unclean, defiling thing that brings destruction with it. In Luke 21:20, Jesus said that the sign to watch for is “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.” **Jesus’ counsel was to flee for their lives from Jerusalem, and escape to the mountains. There was no time to waste.** They were not to go down into their houses, or return to gather belongings. They were to flee, immediately. **Many of the Christians saw the armies gathering, remembered these words of Jesus, and fled to safety.** This prophecy was initially fulfilled by the Romans, when they laid siege to the city, broke through its walls and defeated the Jews in 70 A.D. They entered the Temple courts, killed the priests, who were offering sacrifices, and they made sacrifices to their flags and the gods they associated with their military might.

Matthew 24:21-22 indicate there will be a “great tribulation” or “affliction”, one more severe than any that had taken place in history up to that point, nor any afterward. If those days were not shortened, no one would survive, ...but on account of the “elect”, the “chosen ones”, those days *will be* cut short. **Obviously, we have not yet seen this.** This has not happened in history. **Note, too, that the “elect”,** a term commonly used for believers in Christ (Matt. 24:31; Lk. 18:7; Rom. 8:33; 16:13; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:4,9; 2 Jn. 1:1,13; Rev. 17:14), **are still present during this tribulation. In fact, it is because they are there, that the duration of that severe affliction will be shortened.**

At this juncture (vss. 23-28), **Jesus warns again about false messiahs, and false prophets.** They will arise at that time and perform great signs and wonders, in an attempt to mislead even the “elect”. Jesus makes the point to say, “Behold, I have told you in advance.” If anyone claims that Jesus is in the wilderness, or in some hidden or private location, do not believe it. Jesus specifically said, “Even as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, in this same manner will be the coming of the Son of Man.” **Jesus will not come secretly.** Wherever there might be a corpse, the vultures will gather. (This seems to refer to the fact that He is coming in judgment. Often vultures or eagles would follow advancing armies to feed on the corpses from the battle. – Note that when Christ returns the carrion birds will be summoned to the great battle to eat the flesh of the armies who oppose Him – Rev. 19:17-18)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give light, the stars will fall from the skies, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken (vs. 29). The celestial events Jesus describes here are also mentioned in a number of OT prophecies about the judgment of God that will take place on “the day of Yahweh” (cf. Isa. 13:6-13; 24:17-23; Jer. 4:23-28; Ezk. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10,30-31; 3:15; Amo. 5:20; 8:9; Zep. 1:14-17). **“And at that time (Gk. – tote) the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and at that time (Gk. – tote), all the nations will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory** (cf. Dan. 7:13; Rev. 1:7). **And He will send out His angels with a great trumpet-sound, and they will gather together His elect** out from the four winds, from the extreme-ends of the heavens to the other extreme-ends” (Matt. 24:30,31).

In Matthew 13, there are two parables that refer to the end. In Jesus’ explanation of the parable of the tares sown among the wheat, He said, “...the good seed are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one.”³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.⁴⁰ So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” **Note the parallels. It is at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out His angels.** Here, they will gather the wicked to be destroyed, **...but then the righteous will shine like the sun.** The parable of the dragnet also refers to the end of the age (vss. 47-51). The angels will come forth and separate out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. **In these parables, the wicked and the righteous remain together until the end of the age.** Here, the angels remove the wicked from among the righteous. Take note, however, that **the good seed, and the good fish, are gathered up and preserved** (vss. 30,48). **Daniel 12, which Jesus quotes here, it is also talking about the end of the age.** He says, “There will be a time of distress such as never occurred since nations came into being until that time. But at that time, all your people who are found written in the book will escape. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but others to everlasting contempt. **Those who have insight will shine brightly...**” (vss. 1-3).

What did Jesus teach? **(1.) Kingdom influence will spread throughout the earth** (24:14; cf. Dan. 2:35); **(2.) The abomination of desolation will be in the holy place** (24:15; Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11); **(3.) Jerusalem would be destroyed again** (24:2; Dan. 9:26); **(4.) There will be a great tribulation** (24:21; Dan. 9:12; 12:1); **(5.) Believers will be here during that time** (24:22; cf. Dan. 9:12,13); **(6.) There will be persecution and affliction** (24:9; Dan. 7:25); **(7.) There will be signs in the heavens, after the tribulation** (24:29); **(8.) The Son of Man will come visibly on the clouds** (24:30; Dan. 7:13); **(9.) He will send out His angels with a trumpet sound to remove the wicked and gather His elect** (24:30,31; cf. Zech. 9:14-16).