

## *The Church of the Servant King*

### **Mid-Week Bible Study**

#### ***The Gospel of Matthew***

(Mid Week\_Matt 24)

#### **Introduction**

Evidently, the discourse of Jesus to the multitudes in chapter 23 occurred within or about the temple area. The first temple of Israel was built by Solomon and was destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians and typically, that year marks the beginning of the 70 years of Babylonian Exile and the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of discipline per Leviticus 26:27ff that ended in 516 B.C. with the completion of the second temple.

The second temple was built under the encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah and the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (Hag 1:1) and was completed in 516 B.C.

The third temple was a renovation of the second temple by Herod which began circa 20 B.C.; however, the renovations were not completed until A.D. 64. Therefore, Herod's temple stood for only six years before it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The destruction of Herod's temple was so devastating that the precise location of the sanctuary is still unknown today.

In Matthew 23:37-39, Jesus acknowledges Israel's rejection of Him as the Messiah. Jesus knew that there was little possibility that Israel would ever respond to the offer of the kingdom through Him as the Messiah.

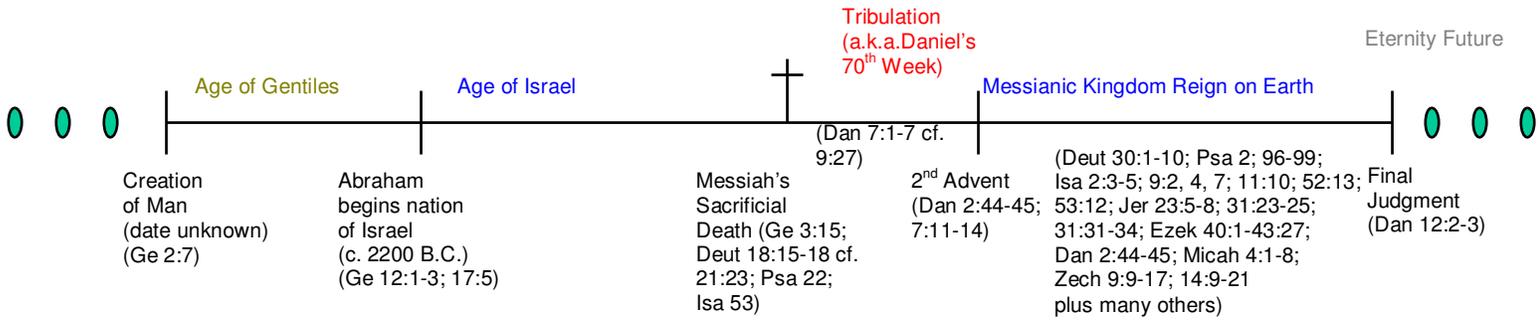
#### **The Signs of the Times and the End of the Age (24:3-14)**

1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." 3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The disciples were evidently puzzled by Jesus' statements that He made in 24:2. They must have pondered what Jesus said while on their short journey through the Kidron Valley between the Temple and the Mount of Olives. Their question in verse 3 reflects their confusion over what Jesus had taught regarding the establishment of the kingdom. Remember that the gospel that they had been commissioned to preach was the "gospel of the kingdom" as apostles

to Israel (Matt 10). The “gospel of the kingdom” was still the gospel with which Jesus was concerned (24:14). So Jesus is still teaching principles regarding the Age of Israel with no teaching relating to the Gentile-centric “Church Age” Body of Christ having yet occurred. The timeline that would have most accurately reflected His teaching and which would have been consistent with the understanding of the Hebrew prophets as well as what should have been understood by His disciples would have looked something like the following.

### The Prophetic Timeline from the Viewpoint of A Believer During Jesus’ Public Ministry



Jesus has previously taught the disciples about the kingdom as recorded by Matthew in such passages as chapters 5-7 and 13 and others. No doubt, He had also taught them additional information regarding the kingdom which is not recorded in Scripture. Their questions in verse 3 reflects their confusion over the subject for they are trying to reconcile His prophecy regarding the destruction of the Temple with the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on earth. Obviously, the timeline above and the Scriptures to support it were not entirely clear in their minds. So, Jesus tries to clear the picture up for them. It is VERY important to realize that Jesus' perspective reflected in this passage is one that only recognizes the Age of Israel and IMPLICITLY ASSUMES the acceptance of the Messiah by Israel at some point in the near future without the intervening Church Age. At this point, I believe that even Jesus in His humanity did not know about the establishment of the Church which was to be an intercalation into human history. This belief is based upon my understanding of the following:

- The nature of the hypostatic union of the deity and humanity of our Lord during His incarnation.
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit in His life.
- The nature of His spiritual life that serves as our prototype.
- The fact that it was the Father's plan that Jesus was executing (see Acts 1:6-8).
- The offer of the Kingdom to Israel through Peter after our Lord's resurrection (see Acts 3:19).

In His humanity, Jesus knew that the Age of Israel had a definite duration. The Holy Spirit taught His human spirit using such passages as Daniel 9:24-27.

No doubt, the disciples equated Jesus' prediction in Matthew 24:2 regarding the Temple to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9:26 that the "city and the sanctuary" would be destroyed by the "prince who is to come".

Verse 6 of Matthew 24 is further evidence of the fact that even the humanity of Christ was not anticipating the Church Age. Jesus speaks to His disciples as if they will personally experience these things. If Jesus in fact knew of the Church Age at this point in His ministry, it seems rather strange that He would be teaching His disciples as if they would personally experience something that we know to have been at least 2000 plus years in the future.

Jesus was also given additional revelation through the Holy Spirit (e.g. Matthew 24); however, I believe that there is no indication in the book of Matthew to date that Jesus' teaching reflects an awareness of the Church Age.

The famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are more fully described in John's Revelation. The word "sorrows" in verse 8 literally means birth pangs and refers to the period of intensified travail that the earth will go through just prior to the dawn of the Messianic restoration of the earth at Jesus' Second Advent. The earth is experiencing birth pangs today (Rom 8:22); however, they will be intensified just prior to delivery of the restored earth of the Millennium.

The "love of many will grow cold" (v. 12) refers to the cowardly acts of believers to preserve themselves during the pressures of the Tribulation. Many will accept the mark of the beast and even turn against other believers. On the other hand, it is very likely that some who have accepted the mark of the beast as unbelievers and who later become believers will use their mark to obtain food, clothing, etc. and thereby provide assistance to believers who have not accepted the mark of the beast.

The one who "endures to the end" (v. 13) is a reference to the believer who makes it to the end of the Tribulation without being killed. It has no reference to the Church Age believer and to interpret it in that manner is to violate all consideration of context.

Notice in verse 14 that the Gospel that will be preached is the “gospel of the kingdom”. During the Tribulation, people will be evangelized looking forward to the Second Coming of the Messiah Who died on the Cross.

### **The Great Tribulation (24:15-28)**

15 "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance. 26" So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. 27 "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

- The “abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet” refers to the prophecy in Daniel 9:27. In this passage, Daniel prophesies that “the prince who is to come” (v. 26 – the Antichrist) will make a covenant with “the many” (Israel) for “one week” (seven years – see prior study). It is interesting that Daniel’s prophecy has two significant parallels in Jewish history:
  - Antiochus set up an altar to Zeus in the temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C. (Daniel 11:31) which served as the spark for the Maccabean revolt. In this revolt, the Jews won their freedom from outside tyranny until the Romans invaded in 63 B.C.
  - In A.D. 70, the Roman leader Titus destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple and set up an idol in it. This parallel event highlights the fact that had Israel responded en masse to the presentation of the gospel of the kingdom during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D., the political forces would have been in place via the Roman empire to fulfill Daniel’s prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 regarding the last seven years of the Age of Israel.
- Paul prophesied regarding the prophetic Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Paul does not use the title “Antichrist”; however, his title (“the man of sin”, “son of perdition”) and description (“who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God”) parallels John’s description of the Antichrist of the Tribulation period (1 Jn 2:18; Re 13:14-15).
- Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost presents an excellent (and more detailed) analysis of Matthew 24 and these related passages regarding the Tribulation and the Antichrist in two of his books. See *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, pages 398-406 and *Things to Come*, pages 332-334.
- In Matthew 24:16-22, Jesus describes the dire situation that believers will face during this period in the Tribulation after the Antichrist erects his statue in the temple. Through it all, God’s instructions are designed to insure that a remnant of believing Jews (especially) and Gentiles will “endure to the end” (verse 13) to inhabit and populate the Millennial kingdom of God on earth.
- Jesus promises that those days will be cut short; however this does not mean that the days will not run their course or be decreased in number. He just means that if they were allowed to continue indefinitely without the terminating event of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, the entire human race

would be destroyed. Of course, if God allowed this to occur, Satan would win his arguments in the appeal phase of the trial we know as the Angelic Conflict, i.e. human history. Man's dominion over the earth would not be restored and a multitude of prophecies that depend upon and will prove the integrity of God's essence (i.e. sovereignty, veracity, omniscience, justice, righteousness, love, omnipotence, immutability, omnipresence, and eternal life) would remain unfulfilled.

- In verses 23-26, Jesus prophesies that the false Messiah (i.e. the Antichrist) and his prophets will have the ability to perform miracles. This passage should answer the question as to the source of many miracles today when compared with 1 John 4:1, 3 and 2 John 7. In other words, miracles are real, but the discerning believer is encouraged to know their source.
- Another passage that testifies to the deceptive miracles that will occur in the Tribulation is Revelation 13:11-18 in which the "false prophet" of Israel who is aligned with the Antichrist performs miracles to include causing the image of the beast in the Temple in Jerusalem to speak.
- The light of Jesus' coming will be all the more brilliant since during portions of the latter part of the Tribulation, the sun, moon, and stars will not give their normal light (Matt 24:29; Re 8:12).
- Jesus' statement in verse 28 is designed to illustrate that His coming will be a time of judgment.

### **The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-31)**

29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- The close of the Tribulation is marked by monumental cosmic disturbances and this fact was prophesied in the Old Testament also. See such passages as Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7, 8; Joel 2:20, 31; 3:15; Haggai 2:6; and Zechariah 14:6.

<sup>10</sup>For the stars of heaven and their constellations  
Will not flash forth their light;  
The sun will be dark when it rises  
And the moon will not shed its light. (Isa 13:10)

<sup>4</sup>And all the host of heaven will wear away,  
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;  
All their hosts will also wither away  
As a leaf withers from the vine,  
Or as one withers from the fig tree. (Isa 34:4)

<sup>7</sup>"And when I extinguish you,  
I will cover the heavens and darken their stars;  
I will cover the sun with a cloud  
And the moon will not give its light.

<sup>8</sup>"All the shining lights in the heavens  
I will darken over you  
And will set darkness on your land,"  
Declares the Lord GOD. (Ezek 32:7-8)

<sup>20</sup>"But I will remove the northern army far from you,  
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,  
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,  
And its rear guard into the western sea  
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,  
For it has done great things." (Joel 2:20)

<sup>31</sup>"The sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood  
Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (Joel 2:31)

<sup>15</sup>The sun and moon grow dark  
And the stars lose their brightness. (Joel 3:15)

<sup>6</sup>"For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. <sup>7</sup>I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2:6-7)

<sup>3</sup>Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. <sup>4</sup>In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. <sup>5</sup>You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! <sup>6</sup>In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. (Zech 14:3-6)

- The New Testament contains similar prophecies. See Revelation 6:12-14.

<sup>12</sup> I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. <sup>14</sup> The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Rev 6:12-14)

- In verse 31, Christ describes the restoration of the nation Israel back to the land. The entire discourse has been devoted to the prophetic program for Israel, therefore "his elect" refers to Israel, not the Church. More specifically, God's "elect" people in context are the believing Jewish remnant during the last days of the Age of Israel.
- During the Tribulation, this believing remnant is scattered among the Gentile nations and even those who are in Jerusalem at the time of the "abomination of desolation" will flee to Gentile nations for refuge.
- God will bring the believing remnant back to the land through the instrumentality of angels.
- This is the final restoration anticipated in Deuteronomy 30:1-8.

<sup>1</sup>"So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, <sup>2</sup>and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, <sup>3</sup>then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup>"If your outcasts are at

the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. <sup>5</sup>"The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. <sup>6</sup>"Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. <sup>7</sup>"The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. <sup>8</sup>"And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. (Deut 30:1-8)

### **The Parable of the Fig Tree (24:32-35)**

32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 34 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

- The fig tree is not Israel in this passage.
- The fig tree is just an analogy for Jesus' lesson.
- When the fig tree puts on leaves, anyone knows that summer is soon to come.
- In the same way, when these prophecies transpire, the disciples would have known that the Second Advent is at hand.
- The phrase "this generation" has two acceptable explanations:
  - It can mean "race" as in the Jewish race, OR
  - It can mean the generation that sees these prophecies fulfilled.

### **No One Knows the Day Nor the Hour (24:36-44)**

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. 42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

- Verse 36 is a passage that supports the position that God the Father is the author of the Plan that is executed by the Son and revealed by the Holy Spirit.
- Verses 37-39 document the fact that the normal things in life will continue until the Second Advent; however people will be lulled by indifference into believing that things will always be as they have been.
- In verses 40-41, the two taken are taken in judgment. This is just the opposite of what occurs at the Rapture.
- By analogy, the "master of the house" in verse 43 is Satan who has temporary dominion over the world until the "thief" (Christ) comes.

### **The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant (24:45-51)**

45 "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47 "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- The context is Jewish, not Church. Therefore, this passage does not refer to the faithful and unfaithful believer of the Church Age. It refers to the Age of Israel believer and unbeliever.
- The unfaithful Jew (unbeliever manifested by his indifference toward the Second Coming) will be judged at the Second Advent.
- The unbelieving Jew will not participate in the Messianic kingdom on earth and will weep and gnash his teeth in hellfire while missing the glories of the Messianic kingdom on earth and be cast into the Lake of Fire at the Great White Throne Judgment. (See our previous study in Matthew 8 in which we examined different views regarding the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth").