

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOV 7TH-8TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

THE FUTURE (THE POINT OF APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS) THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (MATT. 24-25)

This last discourse (speech) of Jesus is about God's judgment on Jesus' opponents and how the faithful should hold on until His return.

- Matthew 24-25 is one fluid speech that covers **both prophecy and preparation**. The 1st part of the discourse is about what is going to happen, the last part is about how to prepare.

MAKING SURE WE DON'T MISS THE POINT

There's much debate and speculation of when, where, and how the prophecies about the future will play out. **The point is not to decode a series of events, but to make sure we're ready all the time for whatever happens.** Some events in Mt. 24-25 have happened, some have been happening for 2000 years, and some are in our future.

A HARD LESSON TO LEARN

The disciples, like us today, wanted to skip ahead to the eschatological (eternal) kingdom of Jesus without having to suffer too much. But that wasn't, and still isn't, Jesus' plan for His disciples. **We often want to safely bide our time until Jesus takes us away, but this kind of passivity is not the heart of God.**

THE MAIN POINT OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

The main purpose of prophecy and apocalyptic writings in the Bible is to stimulate holiness (living in line with the teachings and principles of Jesus).

- The Bible doesn't use secret messages or entertain conspiracy theories. **It warns us that time will one day end, and it shows us how to prepare for it.**

THE BEGINNING (MATT. 24:1-8)

BRAGGING ABOUT TEMPORARY THINGS

Many Jews valued their city, nation, and temples more than anything else. Jesus told the disciples that these man-made institutions in Jerusalem would all be knocked down.

- It isn't that patriotism, accomplishments, or nice buildings are wrong per se, but when they are the most important things they've become idols.**

IT GOES BACK TO THE HEART

The Jews put so much stock into the temple, but as a people they were not close to God. So, in the process of looking good on the outside, they neglected the state of their hearts. **God's judgement was drawing near, but the people were too self-absorbed to see it coming.**

THE DISCIPLES WERE ASKING A COUPLE THINGS

The 12 wanted to know about the timing of the temple's destruction, & how to recognize Jesus' second coming, "the end of the age." The disciples thought the destruction of the temple and His return would happen simultaneously.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

As Jesus was sitting in the same place He will eventually return to at the very end of time (Zech. 14:4), He teaches the disciples about the near and distant futures. Jesus paints a picture of **the escalation of evil** that will take place from the 12's generation all the way to the final generation before Jesus' return.

FALSE CHRISTS HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR AWHILE

Jesus tells them that "many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many." This has been happening for thousands of years but will escalate to the point of global blasphemy (the anti-Christ). We can simply look at the shift from Christianity in the last 2 decades.

WARS, REBELLIONS, AND FAMINES

Wars and talk of war have always happened, that is why Jesus says to not be alarmed. The same goes with rebellions, famines and earthquakes. Jesus alludes to the increase of this until He returns. These things will build to a crescendo of chaos and evil and then the end will come.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF "LABOR PAINS"

The analogy of birth pains has 3 implications: 1) These events are connected to the end, but not necessarily signs of the end. 2) When the end draws near, it will be extremely painful for everyone alive. 3)

- It is all leading to something new, a birth of a new life in eternity which will be the greatest thing ever.**

HATRED (MATT. 24:9-14)

WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS A FINAL END TIME

The preceding list of "signs" was interrupted by Jesus' warning to not take them too seriously, but as this chapter moves on, the cautions are less, meaning that **the more time moves on, the more serious we should get.** Regardless of when the end comes, **every day that passes should be another day we grow more aware of eternity.**

"THEY WILL HAND YOU OVER TO BE PERSECUTED..."

Because the disciples of Christ would address the world's broken value system, selfishness, and sin, people all over the earth would hate them and kill them. Many people will choose comfort and ease over following Jesus.

"BUT THE ONE WHO ENDURES TO THE END..."

Jesus was trying to teach us not to freak out about things not indicating the end, but to be aware of the increasing activity leading to the end of time. **We must all persevere through the trials of our generation, knowing that as time passes it will get more difficult because evil is increasing. THIS MEANS WE MUST BE ALERT AND DILIGENT!**

Because evil is escalating, we must be intentional and dedicated to growing our relationship with God and leading others to do the same. The *how* is simple: **read the Word and be obedient to it, pray and listen to God, be present at church, and find community.**

ALL NATIONS WILL HEAR THE GOSPEL

Before Jesus returns every nation on earth will have access to the Gospel. This will either bring people into a relationship with Jesus, or render them guilty for denying Him.

- With current technology, we are seeing accessibility to the Bible and the knowledge of Jesus spread to even the most remote areas.

AN ABOMINATION (MATT. 24:15-22)

THE "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"

Abomination means a detestable thing or act that takes place where something holy should be. *Desolation* means it will cause devastation.

- This prophecy was fulfilled at more than one point in past and future history and will be fulfilled again. In these verses, Jesus is talking about Rome desecrating the temple in 70 A.D.

THEIR "ABOMINATION" WAS COMING SOON

Jesus was warning the people of Judea that they will have to "flee to the mountains" in order to escape the violence of Rome in their area. Jesus warned that if they delay their escape they'd be caught in destruction. Virtually every generation of Jewish people has experienced turmoil. Even now a mosque stands where the temple used to.

THE ULTIMATE ABOMINATION: THE ANTICHRIST

Paul mentions the "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thess. 2 and John mentions him in Rev. 13. The final "abomination of desolation" will be a global icon that the world adores and follows.

- Though there has and will be multiple "abominations," things will escalate to the point of a global worshipping of an antichrist.

VERSE 21-22 MOVE INTO THE DISTANT FUTURE

As bad as Rome destroying Jerusalem and desecrating the temple sounded, Jesus assured the disciples that one day a tribulation unlike anyone had ever experienced would take place. This is called The Great Tribulation. This is the second half of the last 7 years of life as we know it. **Evil will increase to the point where Christ must return.**

SHORT, BUT INTENSE

Jesus says, "Unless those days are cut short, no one would be saved." This can mean either the wrath of God would be so intense it would destroy everything, or the evil and persecution during this time would break even the best Christians if God didn't step in. But, "because of the elect," God will show mercy and intervene.

NOT GETTING BETTER / STIMULATING HOLINESS / OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

The Bible gives no indication that society will get better as time passes. Have we accepted that the "good ole days" have passed? **Are we prepared for what will come?** Have we insulated ourselves with His Word, prayer, and asking to be filled with His Spirit? Is the increasing evil around us pushing us towards Jesus or tempting us to withdraw? The chaos and **fruit of this culture should prompt us to walk towards God.** God is going to allow and even do things in order to get us to look at Him and live righteously. The Bible does indicate that the gospel will spread and many will come to know Jesus Christ. As evil increases, so will the church. **The church has an opportunity to reach broken & hurting people to show them a better way.** Are we intentionally doing this?