

IS MATTHEW 24 KNOCKING AT THE DOOR? (Matthew 24:1-44)

I. The prediction (Matthew 24:1-2).

- a. After having taught in the temple, Jesus, along with some of His disciples, started to leave the temple.
- b. As they got outside the temple and started heading toward Mt. Olivet, they came near the base of the temple.
 - i. This temple was built by Herod for the Jews some time after the temple that was built by exiles had been destroyed.
 - ii. It had taken a long time to build the temple (John 2:20).
- c. This temple was a source of great pride for the Jews and some of the disciples of Jesus were in awe of its beauty and size and pointed these things out to Jesus.
 - i. According to Josephus, some of the stones at the base of the temple were 37 ft long, 12 ft high and 18 feet wide.
 - ii. In other words, these were amazing stones and it boggles the mind how they were moved the way they were back then.
- d. Jesus then made an amazing prediction that would have blown the minds of the disciples with Him (Matthew 24:2).
 - i. He told them that there would not be one stone on top of another.
 - ii. Again, many of these stones were huge.
 - iii. No doubt that these men could not comprehend what Jesus was predicting.
- e. The Jews had the belief that this temple would only be destroyed when the world was.
- f. As we read this chapter, this prediction by our Lord is extremely important to keep in mind: Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed in such a complete manner that not one stone would be left on top of another.

II. The interrogation (Matthew 24:3).

- g. Having been floored by this prophecy of Jesus, four of the apostles come to Jesus and interrogate Him about what He had earlier stated.
 - i. Mark 13:3 tells us that it was Peter, Andrew, James, and John that asked these questions.
 - ii. All the disciples were not in on this discussion.
- h. Notice what they ask:
 - i. When will these things be?
 - (1) What things?
 - (2) It has to be the destruction of the temple.
 - (3) They were first, asking when the temple would be destroyed.
 - ii. What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?
 - (1) Some believe that the disciples thought both would happen at the same time so they asked these together.
 - (2) That may be so, or, they may have felt that this was a good time to ask about the return of Jesus.
- i. They were asking about two different events and this is critical to help us understand this chapter and the teaching of Jesus found in it.
- j. They wanted to know when the temple would be destroyed and when Jesus

would return and the age end.

k. Sadly, there are those who lump this whole chapter into one answer.

i. This has led to the Premillennial interpretation of this chapter.

ii. It has also led to a false belief by others that Jesus returned in AD 70, when the temple was destroyed.

l. What comes next is Jesus answering two different questions about two different events that would be in the future.

m. As we will notice, one will happen in the lifetime of the question askers and one will happen at some future time.

III. The explanation (Matthew 24:4-44).

n. Two questions have been asked now, by the disciples.

o. Jesus answered the questions in the order they were asked, dealing with the destruction of the temple first.

p. Jesus started answering the question by pointing out events that would take place before the destruction of the temple.

i. He warned them that there would be false Christ's coming on the scene.

(1) History points out this fact.

(2) Josephus, in his Antiquities, mentioned at least three men who claimed to be the Christ.

(3) We know that there have been those that claimed to be the Christ in our day.

(a) David Koresh, Jim Jones, Sun Myong Moon (head of the group known as Moonies) and others have claimed it.

(b) There is one man down in Florida that has a decent sized following who claims to both Jesus and the anti-Christ.

ii. Jesus also pointed out that there would be wars and rumors about other wars.

(1) In the 60's, Rome began to have more conflicts.

(2) Also, there were a few conflicts in various places where Jews were attacked and several thousand died.

(3) Before Vespasian finally came against Jerusalem, three other emperors threatened the Jews with war.

iii. Jesus then pointed out there would be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes; all of which took place before AD 70.

iv. Verse 8 is interesting (Matthew 24:8).

(1) Jesus basically said that things were going to get bad then.

(2) The word translated "sorrows" was used to describe labor pains.

(3) Jesus was saying those events will be like the contractions that point to the beginning of labor.

v. Another interesting point Jesus made was that by that time, the gospel would be preached in all the world.

(1) We know this to have happened before Jerusalem was destroyed (Colossians 1:23).

(2) This was the last sign that the destruction of Jerusalem was coming.

q. Jesus then pointed to the event itself and how people would know what was

happening.

- i. Matthew 24:15 is one of the most abused verses in the New Testament when it comes to Premillennial thinking.
- ii. For instance, John MacArthur, a well known Baptist preacher and writer, says that it is the AntiChrist who will appear as being helpful to Israel but will try to lay waste to that nation.
- iii. Daniel mentioned the abomination that makes desolate three times.
 - (1) The first time, Daniel 9:27, is a reference to a Syrian leader named Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - (a) He hated the Jews and murdered many and sold many into slavery.
 - (b) He put his altar on top of the temple altar in Jerusalem and offered a sow on it to defile the temple.
 - (2) The other two times Daniel mentions the abomination seem to both be references to the same event, the event here mentioned by Jesus.
- iv. In this case, it is a reference to a pagan army around the city of Jerusalem set to destroy it.
 - (1) The pagan army, of course, was the Roman army.
 - (2) This loathsome army, such because they were pagans, were going to make desolate the city and temple.
- v. When they saw this, those that knew what was to come, they were to flee away from there as fast as possible.
 - (1) They weren't to take anything with or go back for anything, just leave.
 - (2) It would be very difficult for those that were pregnant or nursing as we can understand.
- vi. History bears out the fact that no Christians lost their lives in the siege and eventual destruction of Jerusalem.
 - (1) Eusebius, an early church historian, wrote that the Christians escaped across the Jordan River to a city called Pella.
 - (2) Those in Jerusalem were able to escape because one of the Roman generals, for some unknown reason, moved his troops back from the city, which gave Christians an opportunity to flee.
- r. One thing we need to understand, is that this can't be a reference to the 2nd coming of Christ because there will be no chance to flee when the Lord returns.
 - i. The Lord told these men that there would be an opportunity to escape the abomination that makes desolate.
 - ii. Such would not be the case if the Lord was speaking about His return.
 - iii. When He comes back, as He will point out, there will be no escaping.
- s. Again, Jesus pointed out that there would be false teachers arrive on the scene and not to believe them.
- t. There would be one sign that pointed out the truth and that was where the eagles were.
 - i. Some think it is simply a reference to vultures picking over the carcasses of the dead in Jerusalem.
 - ii. However, the standard of the Roman Legions all had an eagle on them.
 - iii. It is probable that Jesus was giving a foreshadowing not only of the events, but what nation would cause the destruction.

- iv. Wherever they saw the Roman army, that is where the destruction would be.
- u. Jesus was letting them know how terrible it would be.
 - i. Josephus says that over 1 million people died in the city with another 250,000 killed in the villages round about it.
 - ii. The savagery of the Romans against those in the city was terrible.
- v. The destruction of the temple, in AD 70, was not supposed to have happened.
 - i. Titus, son of Vespasian, and then Caesar, had ordered it not to be destroyed.
 - ii. However, a fire broke out in it and the gold of the temple melted and poured out into the cracks of the rocks that formed the temple.
 - iii. Because of that, the soldiers tore the stones from one another to get the gold, thus not leaving one stone on top of another.
- w. A very difficult part of the chapter is now before us.
 - i. Beginning in vs. 29, our Lord began to use what is known as apocalyptic language.
 - ii. It is similar to Joel 2:28ff, Isaiah 13, passages in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation.
 - iii. We don't have time to go into all of it, but sadly, some have used this passage as a description of the Lord's return.
 - iv. Such can't be the case because of what is said in verse 34.
 - v. Jesus was telling the apostles here that the events that would take place in Jerusalem were a symbol of Jesus coming in judgment against the Jews for the sins they had committed and were to commit against Him and His people.
 - vi. Verse 31 refers to messengers going out and bringing in the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel.
 - (1) Angels is a word that is also translated ministers in other places.
 - (2) This preaching to the whole world mentioned earlier, which took place, and the coming in of the Gentiles, were signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem.
- x. Notice the simple parable Jesus then gave.
 - i. When you saw the green leaves on the fig tree, you were supposed to understand summer was near.
 - ii. In like manner, when these things took place, the preaching to and conversion of the Gentiles, the coming of the Roman army, they were to know that the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent.
- y. All of this was to happen and nothing was to be left undone according to the Christ.
- z. Jesus then, in verse 36, turned His attention to their final question: when are you going to return?
 - aa. Jesus spent far less time telling them about His return than the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - i. The reason for this is that He did not know when He would return.
 - ii. Only God the Father knew at that time when the Lord would return.
 - bb. There will be no signs of the Lord's return.
 - i. Everything will be going on just as it had been.
 - ii. Just as in the days before the flood, life was normal.

- iii. It came upon them, the flood did, by surprise.
- cc. The Lord's return will be in the same manner and we must be ready for that day.
- dd. Another false doctrine that is taught based on this chapter is that of the rapture.
 - i. Notice verses 40-41.
 - ii. This passage has caused those that believe in Premillennialism to think that some will be left behind.
 - iii. This passage simply states that the righteous will be taken away from the wicked.
 - iv. One of those men is wicked and one is righteous and same with the women in the next verse.
 - v. The ones left are those who are lost, they are not left in the sense that they will stay on earth.
 - vi. When the Lord returns, it will be at the destruction of all things (2 Peter 3:10).