

Jesus had delivered His last teaching in the temple. He and His disciples had gone to Gethsemane. There He told them about the destruction of the temple and the difficult days that lay ahead for them. It was sobering teaching. In Mark's gospel the description of nations fighting one another, false messiahs, and of persecution was followed by Jesus saying, "But the end is not yet" (Mark 13:7ⁱ). In other words, there are two parts to Jesus' answer to their question. Our passage today covers the prophecy of the destruction of the temple which was soon to come, and then it moves to the end time and Jesus' return.

²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Luke 21:20-22 First we come to the answer to the question, "When will these things happen?" In other words, when will the stones of the temple be torn down? About forty years after Jesus ascended, the Jews revolted against Rome. Titus led legions from Rome to surround the city to starve them out. Eusebius, a fourth century church father, tells us that Christians could see the city being encircled and most of them followed Jesus' instruction to flee. They went north to the Arnon Valley and east toward Pella, where they waited to see what would happen.ⁱⁱ Heeding Jesus' prophecy saved their lives.

Those Jews who fled into the city found starvation setting in. Factions within the city fought each other over who would lead. And when they were almost too weak to put up any resistance, Rome broke through the walls. The survivors were crucified or enslaved. It is estimated that 1.1 million Jews perished. No wonder He wept over the city on Palm Sunday (Luke 19:41ⁱⁱⁱ). The city and temple were razed to the ground.

That event may possibly foreshadow a similar event in the end-time. In our study of Zechariah and Isaiah we saw that prophecies can have intermediate fulfillments. There is one interpretation that this whole prophecy including the next section was fulfilled in 70 A.D. Those who are of that conviction are referred to as Preterists. But the question as stated in Matthew 24:3 is, "When will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" The first part is the trials of believers along with the destruction of the temple. The second part of the question is asking when will Jesus return, meaning the end of the present age and the beginning of the Messianic age. Zechariah speaks of the time of Israel's trouble when two-thirds of the people in Jerusalem will perish just before the Messiah appears to save them (Zechariah 13:8^{iv}). And Revelation 12:6^v tells us that believers will flee to a special place. So, it may be that verses 20 through 23 will have another fulfillment.

²³ Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. Luke 21:23 There was certainly wrath against the Jewish people in A.D. 70, and there was again in World War II, and there will be again in the tribulation. Mark's summary of this teaching tells us that the people were to flee when they saw the abomination that causes desolation (Mark 13:14^{vi}). That is taken from Daniel 9:27^{vii} and 11:31^{viii}. That passage refers to the abomination being set up in the temple in the middle of the seventieth week, which to my understanding is the middle of the Great Tribulation.

While the destruction of A.D. 70 was horrific, I do not know of an abomination placed in the temple then (Revelation 13:15^{ix}), nor a treaty broken by the one who makes desolate. While General Titus desolated Jerusalem, it was the Jews who rebelled thus breaking the peace. This indicates to me that there is an ultimate fulfillment during the last seven years. Some interpreters argue that the language is prophetic and therefore written in broad terms, not specifics. I find that God's Word is specific, though it often uses symbolic terms which are usually explained somewhere in Scripture.

²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Luke 21:24 One commentator wrote that there was not a Jew who was not killed or taken into slavery. History records that 97,000 Jews were taken as slaves just as Jesus predicted.

Though what is believed to be the remains of the temple mount was taken by the Jews in the Six Day War, the Jews have allowed the Palestinians to dictate what happens there. Rome did allow Jews to attempt to rebuild the temple, but they stopped it before it was finished. Gentiles have trampled on the mount ever since and do so today.

On my trips to Jerusalem in the 1990s I could go into the Dome of the Rock, the place that is believed to be the sight of the Holy of Holies but is now a Muslim shrine. Non-Muslims are no longer allowed entry. I taught a class on the temple mount with an open Bible. Bibles are now forbidden as well as any teaching materials. While Jews control access for security and peace, Palestinians control what happens there. They moved timbers of cedar stored behind the Al Aqsa mosque that were carbon dated back to Solomon's temple. They came out of the mosque during a renovation, apparently reused from Solomon's temple. Muslims excavated part of the mount with a backhoe and dumped the earth, which Israeli archeologists confiscated and found it contained many artifacts. Muslims will not allow access to the halls that were beyond the Hulda gates, the very corridor and stairways Jesus and His disciples used. And Gentiles will continue to trample the area underfoot until the times of the Gentiles are over (See Romans 11:25b-29).

I assume that means that when the last Gentile is converted, and when the fullness of Messianic Jews has come into the kingdom, then Jews will again control the area. That is when Jesus returns. We saw the description of that in Zechariah 12 through 14.

The first part of the disciples' question of when will the temple be torn down has been answered. With the introduction of the times of the Gentiles, a period we call the church age today, Jesus moved on to the second question concerning the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Luke 21:25,26 Verse 25 is the language of the prophets declaring conditions that will put mankind in a fearful and anxious condition, the result being described in verse 26. Joel 2:30,31 describes a similar time. ³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. It was used in Haggai to predict tumultuous times. Haggai 2:21 ²¹ "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the

earth, We think that the sun will rise each morning and the ground will remain firm under our feet and the ocean stay within its boundaries. But when there are earthquakes and tidal waves, what we took for granted as being stable suddenly changes. We don't know what to expect next. We realize how fragile we are and the powerful forces around us over which we have no control. And when we feel out of control, we become fearful of what might happen next.

The same thing happens when nations struggle for power. That is what apocalyptic language represents in the “roaring of the sea and waves” (Revelation 17:15^x). It may represent both the physical nature around us and political turmoil. Here in the USA we have had a stability for several hundred years, but that is rare in world history and it appears to be changing as our nation turns to other gods. People have lived throughout time with one power after another raiding, pillaging, plundering, and enslaving others. Man will always try to rule over others for their own greed and pleasure, and that often results in being uncertain of what tomorrow will bring. That is our fallen world and governments of man.

²⁷ *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* Luke 21:27 What Jesus was describing is worldwide anxiety of what is about to happen. That is when He will return. They should fear, for He is coming to judge us all. The One whom they resisted all their lives is coming to hold them accountable. He is the One they fought in their conscious and whose wooing of their souls they resisted. Matthew 24:30^{xi} tells us the world will mourn when they see Him coming. And like a superhero movie, only infinitely greater, He will appear in the sky with power and great glory. He will come to save us from ourselves, to end the suffering man inflicts and the ravages of sin, which is rebellion against His goodness.

My understanding of the Second Coming is that He is coming to re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem and rule the world for a thousand years (Isaiah 9:7^{xii}; Revelation 20:6^{xiii}). Those who survived the tribulation will see what life would have been like on the earth had Jesus reigned instead of fallen man. Faith will be sight. There will be no doubts then. Justice will be swift and righteous. Peace will prevail for a thousand years. But nations will still rebel at the end and be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:7-9^{xiv}; 15^{xv}).

²⁸ *Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*” Luke 21:28 To the disciples He said that when those times of chaos and uncertainty come, stand tall and look up, because our redemption is at hand. And it was for them. They were hunted and persecuted and then executed, which was their entrance into the eternal presence of Jesus their Lord. The work in them was complete (1 John 3:2^{xvi}). But this also applies to the believer in the end-times when those conditions come on all the earth. Persecution should not cause us anxiety and fear as turmoil does for the world. It should cause us to be excited and encouraged, for in the same way the world persecuted the prophets before us (Matthew 5:11,12^{xvii}).

The tribulation period, the last seven years before Jesus' return, will see unprecedented attacks on Christians, for the Antichrist makes war on the saints (Revelation 13:7^{xviii}). But our testimony of assurance in Jesus will be a sign to them, as the Apostle Paul wrote, ^{28b} *This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God.* Philippians 1:28b And that is how we should behave

even if it is not the end. It is the testimony of many martyrs, for the one thing the world fears most is death, but it is something we see as our graduation. Don't fear this virus. Act with prudence and wisdom, but believers have no reason to fear!

²⁹ *And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near.*

³¹ *So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.* Luke 21:29-31 Figs were one of the four main products of agriculture in Israel. The fig was easily dried and stored. It provided a sweet source of calories and nutrition. The leaves provided shade in the summer. All who were listening to Jesus knew that when it began to leaf out, summer was almost upon them. In the same way, when we see the signs in the heavens and worldwide turmoil and anxiety, we would know the kingdom was near, meaning Jesus' return.

Paul tells us that He will come like a thief in the night when unbelievers are not expecting Him. Despite the anxiety of the time people will be declaring that peace and safety will prevail. But Paul also tells us that believers will recognize the time and be expecting Jesus to return (1 Thessalonians 5:1-5^{xix}).

³² *Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.* Luke 21:32 That generation would see the destruction of the temple, which was the original question about the magnificent stones of the temple being all torn down. Many people, however, took it to mean that the Lord would return in that generation. Ever since then the church has lived with a healthy expectation of the Lord's return. I believe we should as well. It is a check on our heart's attitude (1 Corinthians 1:7^{xx}; 1 Peter 3:12^{xxi}). The group think of the media, it's outright distortion of the facts, current technology, Israel's return as a nation, and Russia's alignment with Iran all seem to be pointing to the time being near. Are you ready? Does your lamp have enough oil (Matthew 25:6-9^{xxii}).

³³ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* Luke 21:33 The Psalmist declared God's Word was forever fixed in heaven (Psalm 119:89^{xxiii}). **When Jesus said His words would not pass away, He was saying His words are the LORD'S words.** The Word of God will endure, though all else passes away. His promises cannot fail (2 Peter 3:10^{xxiv}). Our class on Bible numerics from Dr. Panin's lifelong research showed us that the Bible is more than the words of man. It is God breathed (2 Peter 1:20,21^{xxv}). It is so interwoven with God's miraculous patterns of seven to show us it is divinely inspired. We have tried it and found it to always be faithful.

At the end of the Millennial Age the Lord will do away with the present earth and heavens and create a new heaven and earth, but His word will remain. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3, ¹¹ *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* That is where our hope is! If your hope is in the world, you will be disappointed. The world cannot satisfy our hearts.

³⁴ *"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.*

³⁵ *For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.* Luke 21:34,35 Pay attention to yourselves. Watch your attitudes and behavior. It is easy to slip into worldly patterns. God has given all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17^{xxvi}), but if He is not the focus,

we can live for those glasses of wine at the end of the day and escape the anxieties of life through alcohol or entertainment instead of placing our trust in the Lord and casting our burdens on Him. Life in Christ is an uphill climb with Him. If we get out of His yoke and stop making an effort, we will find we are sliding downhill. Our hearts can easily be weighed down with the fallen condition of this world. The pain and loss all people endure can be depressing. When our eyes turn from Jesus to the sorrow and loss that we all experience, depression can set in (Hebrews 12:2^{xxvii}).

But our response should be different from the world's response. We know where we are going. We know the loved ones we will see again. We know God will meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19^{xxviii}). We count our blessings and revel in Jesus' love and our hearts are uplifted.

³⁶ But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 21:36 Stay awake spiritually. Don't be lulled into the world's answers thinking anything else will satisfy. Don't ever think you can face life on your own. Even the Apostle Paul despaired of life at one time (2 Corinthians 1:8^{xxix}). Recognize how much you need Jesus' and His strength to endure. Pray for that strength and maturity. Grow in grace and mature to face the trials of life with joy and confidence in Jesus (James 1:2^{xxx}). Know that we are going to stand before Jesus and give an account of the things done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10^{xxxi}).

³⁷ And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸ And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him. Luke 21:37,38 That last week before the cross, Jesus stayed on the Mount of Olives at night and went early each morning to teach the crowds waiting for Him in the temple. It was His final opportunity to speak to the crowds, and in doing so, He was preparing them for the upcoming Pentecost with the proclamation that would come through Peter. He was preparing His bride.

In verses 34 and 36 we have two commands that should influence every Christian's life, **watch yourselves and stay awake!** One fruit of the Spirit is self-discipline (Galatians 5:23^{xxxii}). These teachings to His disciples of things to come was more pastoral than prophetic. He is telling us life is hard and here is what you need to do. Don't be deceived; expect hardship; let the Spirit speak through you, endure, stand straight and raise your head, watch yourselves, and stay alert. He's coming soon! Are we living in expectation of His return?

Questions:

- 1 How did Christians know when to flee Jerusalem?
- 2 What were the two questions the disciples asked?
- 3 What were signs of Jerusalem's destruction?
- 4 What is the clue that Jesus then went on to describe the end time?
- 5 What does “sea and waves” and “powers of heaven” represent?
- 6 What follows that tumultuous time?
- 7 What are we to do?
- 8 How does that testify to the world?
- 9 What are we to watch out for?
- 10 What are the final instructions of Jesus to the disciples regarding the end time?

ⁱ **Mark 13:7 (ESV)**

⁷ And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet.

ⁱⁱ *History of the Church*, 3.5.3, cited in Morris

The Enduring Word Bible Commentary - Luke.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Luke 19:41 (ESV)**

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,

^{iv} **Zechariah 13:8 (ESV)**

⁸ In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive.

^v **Revelation 12:6 (ESV)**

⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

^{vi} **Mark 13:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

^{vii} **Daniel 9:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

^{viii} **Daniel 11:31 (ESV)**

³¹ Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

^{ix} **Revelation 13:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

^x **Revelation 17:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.

^{xi} **Matt6hew 24:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

^{xii} **Isaiah 9:97 (ESV)**

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

^{xiii} **Revelation 20:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

^{xiv} **Revelation 20:7-9 (ESV)**

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

^{xv} **Revelation 20:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

^{xvi} **1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

^{xvii} **Matthew 5:11-12 (ESV)**

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

^{xviii} **Revelation 13:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,

^{xix} **1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 (ESV)**

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

^{xx} **1 Corinthians 1:7 (ESV)**

⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

^{xxi} **2 Peter 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

^{xxii} **Matthew 25:6-9 (ESV)**

⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'

^{xxiii} **Psalms 119:89 (ESV)**

⁸⁹ Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

^{xxiv} **2 Peter 3:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

^{xxv} **2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

^{xxvi} **1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

^{xxvii} **Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

^{xxviii} **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

^{xxix} **2 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

^{xxx} **James 1:2 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

^{xxxi} **2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

^{xxxii} **Galatians 5:23 (ESV)**

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.