

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
11-29-23

Matthew 24

Jesus Predicts The Destruction Of The Temple – Verses 1-2

¹ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ²“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

24:1-2 Although no one knows exactly what this temple looked like, it must have been beautiful. Herod had helped the Jews remodel and beautify it, no doubt to stay on friendly terms with his subjects. Next to the inner temple, where the sacred objects were kept and the sacrifices offered, there was a large area called the Court of the Gentiles (where the money changers and merchants had their booths). Outside these courts were long porches. Solomon’s Colonnade was 1,562 feet long; the Royal Portico was decorated with 160 columns stretching along its 921-foot length. Gazing at this glorious and massive structure, the disciples found Jesus’ words about its destruction difficult to believe. But the temple was indeed destroyed only 40 years later when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Jesus’ Prediction Brings Up Two Questions – Verse 3

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

24:3 Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the very place where the prophet Zechariah had predicted that the Messiah would stand when he came to establish his kingdom (Zechariah 14: 4). It was a fitting place for the disciples to ask Jesus when he would come in power and what they could expect then. Jesus’ reply emphasized the events that would take place before the end of the age. He pointed out that his disciples should be less concerned with knowing the exact date and more concerned with being prepared— living God’s way consistently so that no matter when Jesus came, they would be ready.

Jesus Describes World Conditions During The Period Between His Ascension And The Time Immediately Preceding His Second Coming – Verses 4-8

⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.

24:4-7 The disciples asked Jesus for the sign of his coming and of the end of the age. Jesus’ first response was “Watch out that no one deceives you.” The fact is that whenever we look for signs, we become very susceptible to being deceived. There are many “false prophets” (24: 11, 24) around with counterfeit signs of spiritual power and authority. The only sure way to keep from being deceived is to focus on Christ and his words. Don’t look for special signs, and don’t spend time looking at other people. Look at Christ.

24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows: Though none of those events are the specific sign of the end, collectively they are a sign. When Jesus described these calamities as the beginning of sorrows, He literally called them the beginning of labor pains. Just as is true with labor pains, we should expect that the things mentioned — wars, famines, earthquakes, and so on would become more frequent and more intense before the return of Jesus — without any one of them being the specific sign of the end.

Jesus Describes What His Disciples Must Expect During The Time Between His Ascension And Second Coming – Verses 9-14

9 “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. **10** At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, **11** and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. **12** Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, **13** but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. **14** And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

24:9 You may not be facing intense persecution now, but Christians in other parts of the world are. As you hear about Christians suffering for their faith, remember that they are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for them. Ask God what you can do to help them in their troubles. When one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. But when all the parts join together to ease the suffering, the whole body benefits (1 Corinthians 12: 26).

24:11 The Old Testament frequently mentions false prophets (see 2 Kings 3: 13; Isaiah 44: 25; Jeremiah 23: 16; Ezekiel 13: 2-3; Micah 3: 5; Zechariah 13: 2). False prophets claimed to receive messages from God, but they preached a “health and wealth” message. They said what the people wanted to hear, even when the nation was not following God as it should. There were false prophets in Jesus’ day, and we have them today. They are the popular leaders who tell people what they want to hear, such as “God wants you to be rich,” “Do whatever your desires tell you,” or “There is no such thing as sin or hell.” Jesus said false teachers would come, and he warned his disciples, as he warns us, not to listen to their dangerous words.

24:12 With false teaching and loose morals comes a particularly destructive disease— the loss of true love for God and others. Sin cools your love for God and others by turning your focus on yourself. You cannot truly love if you think only of yourself.

24:14 Jesus said that before he returns, the gospel of the kingdom (the message of salvation) would be preached throughout the world. This was the disciples’ mission— and it is ours today. Jesus talked about the end times and final judgment to show his followers the urgency of spreading the Good News of salvation to everyone.

The Sign: The Abomination Of Desolation, Spoken Of By Daniel – Verse 15-16

15 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— **16** then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

24:15-16 What was this “abomination that causes desolation” mentioned by both Daniel and Jesus? Rather than one specific object, event, or person, it could be seen as any deliberate attempt to mock and deny the reality of God’s presence. Daniel’s prediction came true in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the sacred temple altar (Daniel 9: 27; 11: 30-31). Jesus’ words

were remembered in A.D. 70 when Titus placed an idol on the site of the burned temple after destroying Jerusalem. In the end times the Antichrist will set up an image of himself and order everyone to worship it (2 Thessalonians 2: 4; Revelation 13: 14-15). These are all abominations to God.

Jesus Warns What Should Be Done When The Abomination Of Desolation Appears: Flee Immediately – Verses 17-20

17 Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

24:17-20 We know from this passage and other passages that God will remove His church before the fury of the Great Tribulation, catching them away to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Yet this information is valuable for the followers of Jesus so they can understand His plan for the future. This information is especially valuable for those who will become His disciples in the Great Tribulation after the church is gone.

Coming After The Abomination Of Desolation: Great Tribulation – Verses 21-28

21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. 22 “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. 23 At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time. 26 “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

24:21-22 Jesus, talking about the end times, telescoped near future and far future events, as did the Old Testament prophets. Many of these persecutions have already occurred; more are yet to come. But God is in control of even the length of persecutions. He will not forget his people. This is all we need to know about the future to motivate us to live rightly now.

24:23-24 Jesus’ warnings about false teachers still hold true. Upon close examination it becomes clear that many nice-sounding messages don’t agree with God’s message in the Bible. Only a solid foundation in God’s Word can equip us to perceive the errors and distortions in false teaching.

24:24-28 In times of persecution even strong believers will find it difficult to be loyal. To keep from being deceived by false messiahs, we must understand that Jesus’ return will be unmistakable (Mark 13: 26); no one will doubt that it is he. If you have to be told that the Messiah has come, then he hasn’t (24: 27). Christ’s coming will be obvious to everyone.

Coming After The Great Tribulation: The Return Of Jesus Christ – Verses 29-31

29 “Immediately after the distress of those days “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 30 “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

24:29-31 The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light: Several prophetic passages describe the cosmic disturbances that will precede and surround the glorious return of Jesus (Joel 2:10, Revelation 6:12-14, Isaiah 34:4). The nations of the earth will mourn because unbelievers will suddenly realize they have chosen the wrong side. Everything they have scoffed about will be happening, and it will be too late for them.

Jesus Speaks More Regarding The Timing Of These Events – Verses 32-35

³² **“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**

24:32-35 Jesus assured that when these signs appeared as He foretold (the abomination of desolation, followed by great tribulation, followed by signs in the heavens), His return to the earth would follow. When a fig tree buds, there is an inevitable result — summer is near and fruit is coming. In the same way, when these signs are seen, the coming of Jesus in glory with His church to this world will inevitably follow.

The Day and Hour Unknown – Verses 36-41

³⁶ **“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.**

24:36 It is good that we don't know exactly when Christ will return. If we knew the precise date, we might be tempted to be lazy in our work for Christ. Worse yet, we might plan to keep sinning and then turn to God right at the end. Heaven is not our only goal; we have work to do here. And we must keep on doing it until death or until we see the unmistakable return of our Savior.

24:40-41 Christ's second coming will be swift and sudden. There will be no opportunity for last-minute repentance or bargaining. The choice we have already made will determine our eternal destiny.

Jesus Cautions His Disciples To Be Ready For An Unexpected Coming – Verses 42-44

⁴² **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

24:42-44 Jesus' purpose in telling about his return is not to stimulate predictions and calculations about the date but to warn us to be prepared. Will you be ready? The only safe choice is to obey him today (24: 46).

Parable Of The Two Servants – Verses 45-51

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

24:45-47 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing: Jesus told us that we must carry on with diligence while the Lord is gone. We must be that faithful and wise servant who takes care of his master’s business while the master is away.

24:47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods: Jesus also promised that we will be rewarded for our diligence. The servants serve the master, but the master knows how to take care of and reward the servants. Jesus asks us to spend the time of waiting taking care of his people and doing his work here on earth, both within the church and outside it. This is the best way to prepare for Christ’s return.

24:50 The evil servant, who was not ready for the master’s return, sinned in at least three ways. He was not about the business that the master left for him. He fought with and mistreated his fellow servants. He gave himself to the pleasures of the world instead of serving his master. This emphasis on constant readiness is a challenge for the Christian today. It can be said that many Christians are not ready in the same three ways. Each reader should be greatly impressed by the urgency of Jesus’ appeal.

24:51 “Weeping and gnashing of teeth” is a phrase used to describe despair. God’s coming judgment is as certain as Jesus’ return to earth.