

Mount Up Wednesday
The Wednesday Night Bible Study Ministry of
East Mount Zion Baptist Church
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The Study of Revelation
Matthew Chapter 24
The Olivet Discourse
(Extracted from The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Having completed His discussions and debated with the religious leaders, Jesus left the temple to return to Bethany by way of the Mount of Olives. The words Jesus had just uttered were still burning in His disciples' ears. He had denounced the nation and said it would be desolate (Matt. 23:38). If Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, how would there be a nation for Messiah to rule?

The disciples pointed out the buildings of the temple area to Jesus as if to impress Him with their magnificence. What could possibly happen to such impressive buildings, especially to the temple of God? Jesus' response brought them consternation: **"Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down."**

The temple would be destroyed and Jerusalem with it. This however, prompted the disciples to ask when all this would take place. As Jesus reached the Mount of Olives in His walk to Bethany, He sat down and the disciples came to Him. Four disciples, Peter, James, John, and Andrew (Mark 13:3), plainly asked Jesus two questions: (1) **When will this happen?** That is, when will the temple be destroyed and not one stone left on another? (2) **What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the Age.?**

These two questions prompted the following discussion by Jesus, commonly called the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25). The questions related to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and the sign of the Lord's coming and the end of the age. They have nothing to do with the church, which Jesus said He would build (Matt 16:18). The church is not present in any sense in chapters 24 and 25. The disciples' questions related to Jerusalem, Israel and the Lord's second coming in glory to establish His Kingdom. Actually, Matthew did not record Jesus' answer to the first question, but Luke did (Luke 21:20). The disciples felt that the destruction of Jerusalem, of which Jesus had spoken, would usher in the kingdom. They were no doubt, thinking of Zechariah 14:1,2.

Jesus began to describe the events leading up to His return in glory and to indicate signs of that return. In this section (Matt. 24:4-8) He described the first half of the seven-year period preceding His second coming. That period is called the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27). The events here, correspond to the seven seals in Revelation 6.

That period will be characterized by (a) false Christs, (b) wars and rumors of wars and (c) unusual disturbances in nature including famines. The fourth and fifth seals are death and martyrdom, and the sixth seal is earthquakes. These things, Jesus said, will be the beginning of birth pains.

Note: (not from the commentary) It is important to note that the next set of judgements, the Trumpet Judgements, unleashed more cosmic disruptions. Therefore, it would be safe to say that they were also to be included in the “beginning of birth pains.”

In Matt. 24:9, Jesus began His words with a time order word, “then.” At the middle point of the seven-year period preceding Christ’s second coming, great distress will begin to be experienced by Israel. The Antichrist, who will have risen to power in the world and will have made a protective treaty with Israel, will break his agreement at this time. (Dan. 9:27). He will bring great persecution on Israel (Dan. 7:25) and even establish his own center of worship in the temple in Jerusalem (II Thes. 2:3-4).

This will result in the death of many Jews (Matt. 24:9) and many people departing from the faith. Believing Jews will be betrayed by nonbelievers (v. 10), and many will be deceived by rising false prophets (Matt. 24:5; Rev. 13:11-15). Wickedness will increase, causing the love of most people to grow cold.

At this point, the Antichrist will set up an image of himself in the temple, to be worshipped. This event will be known as the “abomination that causes desolation.” This abomination was spoken of by Daniel in Dan. 9:27. It caused the total disruption of Jewish worship at that time.

Jesus goes on to say, that when this occurs, those in Judea should flee to the mountains. They should not be concerned with going back into their homes or taking anything into with them. This will be a very difficult time. He admonishment was to pray that this wouldn’t occur during winter and for pregnant women. He did encourage them by saying that this time would be cut short, otherwise no one would survive.

Those who remain faithful to the Lord until the end of that period of time will be saved, that is delivered (Matt. 24:13). This does not refer to a personal self-effort at endurance that results in one’s eternal salvation, but to physical deliverance of those who trust in the Savior during the Tribulation. They will enter the kingdom in physical bodies.