

## **Exegetical Notes, Matthew 24:1-14**

### **“The Little Apocalypse: Do Not Be Deceived”**

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### **Matthew 24:1-14**

(This section of scripture is called the “Little Apocalypse” or the “Olivet Discourse.” It is the last great discourse or section of teaching by Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. Its subject is the “end times” or the end of time.

#### **Verse 1**

*Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.*

- This last great section of Jesus’ teaching occurs as he and his disciples are leaving the temple in Jerusalem following his denouncement of the teachers of the law as hypocrites, blind guides, and snakes. As they departed from the temple, the disciples were impressed by its buildings. This was Herod’s temple. It was a truly impressive sight. .

#### **Verse 2**

*“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”*

- Some of the foundation stones in Herod’s temple were 10 to 12 feet in length. They were huge stones.
- Jesus predicted that all of these stones would be thrown down so that none of them was left in place. This prediction must have seemed unbelievable to the disciples.
- However, this literally came true in 70 AD. The Romans completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem in that year. This destruction included the temple. Some of the stones of the temple were pried apart to collect the gold between them.
- As we begin this section of teaching related to the end times, it is important to recognize that the first prediction that Jesus made related to the end times has already come true. This fact makes it reasonable for us to trust the predictions that follow which have not yet come

true. Because the first prediction, the destruction of the temple, has happened in fact, we know that the others will also happen at the appointed time.

- The time table established here by Jesus is in complete accord with that revealed by God in Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation. In Daniel 9:23ff we are told that 420 years will pass from the time the temple was rebuilt until the anointed one, the Messiah, Jesus, will be “cut off.” After the death of the Messiah, the city of Jerusalem and the temple will, again, be destroyed (Daniel 9:26). This event, the destruction of the temple, will precede the 70th week, the final week in time before the second coming of Jesus known as the tribulation. What this means is that the events preceding the beginning of the tribulation have already occurred. We stand on the verge of the beginning of the end times!

### **Verse 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?”***

- The setting of this verse is extremely significant. Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, a low hill directly east of Jerusalem. In Zechariah 14:4 we are told that when Jesus returns to the earth to fight the last battle “his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.” This same passage describes how the Mount of Olives will be transformed at that time. This same fact is echoed in Ezekiel 11:23 and 43:1-2. Jesus begins to instruct his disciples about the end times from the very place where he will stand to fight the final battle before he establishes the kingdom of God.
- Jesus’ discussion of the end times is initiated by the questions of the disciples. They cannot let go of Jesus’ prediction regarding the destruction of the Temple. They want to know two things: when the temple will be destroyed; and what will be the sign of Jesus’ return at the end of time.
- Jesus answers those questions in this discourse, Matthew 24:1-52.

### **Verse 4-6**

***Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Christ, and will deceive many. You 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.***

- Jesus begins his answer with a warning. The Disciples must be on guard so as not to be deceived regarding the matter of the end of time.
- Jesus, first, warns the disciples to be on guard against false prophets. These persons come in Christ's name. That means that they say they belong to Christ and are his disciples. However, they also claim that they are "Christ," Messiah. They claim to be the true Messiah. Jesus says that many such false prophets will arise.
- Second, Jesus says that there will be wars and rumors of wars. But the disciples are not to be alarmed by these reports because they are not the sign of the end time's arrival.

### **Verse 7-8**

***Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.***

- Jesus says again that there will be war on the face of the earth as it waits for the end of time.
- Jesus says that there will be famines and earthquakes, too. All of this together is the sign that labor is beginning. The end of time is approaching. But the early contractions are just signs that the moment is drawing closer. It has not yet begun.
- Jesus is describing the time in which we live, the time between the first sign of the end, the destruction of the temple, and the beginning of the great seven year tribulation.

### **Verse 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.***

- It is true that during the years immediately after Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples of Christ were persecuted and even put to death. But then for hundreds of years Christianity became the acceptable religion for most of the civilized world. Persons were persecuted for being Christians and even put to death for it. There were certainly places throughout all of history where Christians were persecuted for their faith and even killed. But Jesus' phrase, "you will be hated by ALL nations," did not apply.
- However, about 50 years ago this all began to change. Some scholars say that we now live in the post-Christian Era. As Christianity becomes increasingly less popular culturally, the words of Jesus

become very haunting. Apparently this time of persecution is just around the corner.

### **Verse 10-11**

***At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.***

- Simultaneously with the outbreak of worldwide persecution upon the Church, many people will abandon their faith and turn away from Jesus.
- When they turn from their faith, they will betray others who remain true to Christ.
- At the same time new teachers, this time teachers who do not come in Jesus' name, arise with other suggestions that confuse and deceive people.
- This may describe a time before the great seven year tribulation or it may describe events that happen during that time. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation all speak of this kind of thing happening in the tribulation. If these are tribulation events, and we see the decline of Christian popularity as described above, then that would indicate that we are standing on the threshold of the tribulation period.

### **Verse 12-13**

***Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.***

- Certainly this description applies to our time. We are living through an age in which people embrace wickedness, and fewer people love God and embrace the truth in Christ. However, these words could also apply to the tribulation period in which both of these things will be true as well.
- The promise here is that those who remain true to their faith despite persecution, increasing evil, and false teachers, will be saved.

### **Verse 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.***

- When the Church has completed the Great Commission of carrying the gospel message of God's salvation in and through Jesus Christ, the end will come.
- This has happened!

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Little Apocalypse: Do Not Be Deceived*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)