



Sermon Overview

Sunday, October 13 (Matthew 24.3-14)

Jesus' prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming are a call for His disciples to persevere in His power.

The disciples respond to what Jesus says about the judgment to come (24.1-2) by asking, *When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?* There seems to be two questions here (24.3) that set up the context for this chapter and chapter 25:

- First, *when will these things happen?* Specifically, *when will the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple happen?*
- Second, *what will be the sign of Your coming?* And, *the sign of the end of the age?* Both are asking the same thing, meaning the end of the age will occur when the second coming of Jesus occurs.

So, there are two main contextual points being addressed in chapters 24 and 25, *the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple* and *the end of the age when Jesus comes again*. It seems there are two sections. Matthew 24.4-35 deals historically with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and then Matthew 24.36-25.46 deals with the end of the age. A key verse that helps with the division of sections is Matthew 24.34, which says, *Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place* [The big question of this verse is, *what does Jesus mean by this generation?* I believe He is referring to the disciples' generation just as He does in 23.26.]. Therefore, Jesus seems to be speaking to his present audience and that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple will happen in the hearers' time. Then Matthew 24.36 has a transition statement with, *But of that day and hour no one knows...but the Father alone*, moves to the focus on the end of the age and the second coming [Note, I believe there are differing views on what 24.29-31 is referring to, but traditionally it is held as referring to the second coming of Christ.]. It is in these passages that Jesus answers the disciples' questions. It is important to note that Jesus, as Prophet, in chapter 24 is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the tribulation of that time, but seems to have a dual message about tribulation beyond that event as well.

Readiness is the consistent call that Jesus is making throughout Matthew 24 and 25. First, that people would be ready by being saved, but for those already saved it is a call for them to be ready for the deception, tribulation, temptation and persecution that is coming and even upon us now. So, Jesus calls His disciples of the first century and the twenty first century to endure and persevere to Jesus returns as they faithfully proclaim the gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28.18-20). So, may we persevere by the power of Christ and faithfully and passionately share the gospel at school, work, in our neighborhoods and the different spheres of influence we have. This is not left as an option for disciples, so let this call to proclaim the gospel sink in and let's truly ask, *what keeps us from sharing our faith with others?* *Could it be that we don't face persecution because we are not faithfully sharing the gospel?* Let the Lord stir your heart and make you a faithful proclaimer of the gospel.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the context of Matthew 24-25? What has Jesus just said about Jerusalem and the temple (23.37-39; 24.1-2)? What are the two questions that the disciples are asking Jesus (24.3)? Why is Matthew 24-25 worthy of our attention?
2. What is one way that the deception of the enemy will look like? What are the beginning of birth pangs that Jesus mentions? We are promised to go through trials. How does Scripture speak of that (Matthew 5.11-12; John 16.33; Romans 8.17; 2 Timothy 3.12; James 1.2; 1 Peter 4.12-14)?
3. What does this text say about temptation? Explain how this passage points us away from sinful, short-term pleasures.
4. What kind of treatment should believers expect as they await Christ's return? Why does persecution inevitably come? What great part of the coming kingdom does Jesus say we have in ushering it in (24.14)? How should the second coming of Christ inform our witness in the world?

How will we know when all the nations have been reached with the gospel of the kingdom?

*God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who all the nations are, but I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms; our responsibility is to complete the task. **So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission.** (Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 137)*

Such a statement in light of the text bids us to ask, what are we doing to finish the task? Who are we faithfully praying for *by name* to come unto salvation? Share with the group those you are praying for to be saved? Then hold each accountable to praying and sharing with them the gospel.

5. What keeps us from sharing the gospel? Pride? Fear? In light of Jesus' second coming in judgment how should that impact our sharing of the gospel?
6. Discuss and share as a group how to share the gospel (1 Peter 3.15; Romans 3.23; 5.8; 6.23; 10.9)?
7. In light of the text, what does the statement *the one who endures to the end, he will be saved*, mean?