

Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2020 10:44 AM
Subject: Lat Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 24

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come!" (Matthew 24:24)

Last week, Matthew 23 closed with Jesus "lamenting" over Jerusalem and declaring that their "house"--the great and magnificent temple of Jerusalem--would be "left desolate"! And, in Matthew 24, as Jesus was leaving the temple with His disciples, they must have looked back at it with admiration, probably wondering how such a beautiful and impressive structure could ever be "left desolate"! To which Jesus repeated what He had said earlier but, this time, even more emphatically: "Truly I say to you that not one stone here will be left upon one another, which will not be torn down!" Not surprisingly, the temple would be burned and totally destroyed by Titus and the Romans in 70 A.D. But what the disciples didn't know was that there would be much more (Much more!) "desolation" (and not just in Jerusalem, but in the whole world!) in the days to come!

And so, when they finally reached one of their favorite places to get together privately in the Mount of Olives, which lies east of Jerusalem and on the eastern side of the Kidron Valley (overlooking the temple), the disciples wanted to know more about what Jesus was talking about!

This was the most appropriate possible place for Jesus to give His final discourse, known as the "Olivet Discourse"! For one, this was the very place the prophet Zachariah had prophesied (in Zachariah 14:4,9) that "His" (Messiah's) feet would one day stand, speaking of the "last days," when He would literally return to "be king over all the earth"! And two, it (the Mount of Olives) would be the very place where Jesus would, in a matter of just days, leave His disciples, and His earthly ministry, and ascend up into the clouds, and back to heaven! Just as the angels would announce, in Acts 1:11, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven!" And so, it would also be the very place where Jesus would return at His second coming! But more on this later!

Meanwhile the disciples wanted to know more! "Tell us more (they said!), when will these things happen? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? (These questions could only have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, for our learning!)

Verses 4-28 provide Jesus' direct revelation of "things" that would happen in a period which would become known to Christians as the "Tribulation Period" followed "immediately after" those days by the "second coming of Christ" (things the disciples had no way of understanding in that day but, as Jesus would say in verse 25, given "in advance" (of them happening) Obviously for us and all "posterity" in this "Church Age"!

And so, what are some "things that will happen," according to Jesus, in the Tribulation period and what will be the "sign" of His coming back to this earth? It's all outlined for us in Matthew 24, in the verses to follow:

Many would come "in His name, claiming to be "the Christ," and would "mislead many people on the earth at that time (which would not, if we understand the Bible correctly, include Christians, by the way, who would have been "raptured" prior to the start of the Tribulation, according to I Thessalonians 4:16-18). (Some Bible-believing Christians take a different view on this, by the way!)

"Wars and rumors of wars," with "nations rising against nations..."

"Famines and earthquakes!"

Followers of Jesus (those converted during these terrible times--and there would be some--perhaps many!) "delivered up and hated, and some killed, because of Jesus' name!

Many who had earlier "confessed" Jesus "falling away and betraying and hating one another"!

Wow! More false prophets arising and misleading many!

The "love of many (professing Christians?) growing cold"! (But the Bible makes it clear, that true believers would "persevere to the end"!)

And the "gospel of the kingdom preached to the "ends" of the world!

But that's only the beginning! The first three and a half years of the 7-year tribulation (according to Daniel 9:24-27)! The second half of the Tribulation would be even worse! Beginning with the "abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet" (Daniel 9:12), when "forces would arise (speaking, we understand it, of the Antichrist and his agents) who would desecrate the sanctuary," among other things!

Jesus said the "things" that would happen during this time would be "such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will!" And that "unless those days had been cut short, no life would have survived!"

But then (He said)! "Immediately after the tribulation...the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken! And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory! And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other!" (Do you think the world at-large will notice His second coming? Are you kidding? So, unlike His first coming as a lowly babe in the manger!)

Well, that's it! All that Jesus tells His disciples (and us, at this point) about "things that will happen" and "signs" of His coming, and the "end" of the age! Wow! (We need to compare Scripture with Scripture to get a fuller understanding of "things to come"!)

But Jesus next would share some parables to shed more light on these events!

The parable of the "fig tree"! It sounds like Jesus is depicting the rebirth of the State of Israel (which many have seen coming about in our lifetimes) as a sign of His coming! (And we continue to look to see what God is up to with Israel!) And the illustration of how His coming will be "like the days of Noah, when, before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage (just normal living for the most part, the way it sounds, but without any thought about God!) until the day that Noah entered the ark!" (Authenticating the story of Noah, and the inspiration of Scripture, in addition to foreshadowing signs of His coming!)

Well, there's more! The "two servants" and the "head of the house" not knowing about, or ready for, the thief that came in the nite! All of which raises an alarm to all of "us" of the importance of being ready because, as Jesus said in verse, 44, "the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will!" He is coming again!

Well, looking back on Matthew 24, do you think this revelation of "things" that will happen at the "end of time" was given by Jesus just for His disciples in the privacy of the Mount of Olives? Or perhaps even more so for those who would follow after the "Easter story" (which we're about to "celebrate"!) becomes history and the "church age" begun? Sounds like it was for us and our descendants! And, so what's the "bottom line"? You decide! It sounds like we certainly need to "watch and be ready" for His return and live our lives accordingly! And, as David Platt, of McLean Bible Church, expresses it: "Trust in His authority! Persevere in His power! And long for His return!"

Have a great Easter, men! And God be with you and yours in this "special" time, hopefully the "last days" of the coronavirus, of which our Lord and Savior is well aware (and has His own purpose and timing)!

The end! (But the "best" is yet to come!)

Lowell