

End Time Events

According to Jesus

Jesus the Prophet

We so emphasize Jesus as Savior that we sometimes forget that He is also a prophet. As a matter of fact, He is The Prophet. The Lord spoke to Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18-19 that He would raise up a prophet and that His word should be heeded. Peter quoted this in his sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 3:22-23 NASB

- (22) "Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you.
- (23) 'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

This tells us that when Jesus functions as a prophet, we need to pay attention to His words because they are completely true. This is most important when He is speaking of future events.

Jesus elaborated on the end time events in what is sometimes called the "Olivet discourse", which the Lord considered important enough the it is recorded three times in the Scriptures: Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. There are some differences in terms of what each writer recorded but they all concern the same event.

The three writers each give us a slightly different viewpoint concerning the discussion. I used to own a video production company and many times we would do a three camera shoot. Each camera was recording the same event but from a different perspective: one might be a closeup, another might be a long angle view and another might be a medium, head-on view. The final product would be a mixture of the various views. The same is true of the three accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Each recorded the words and emphases of Jesus from his perspective. All three accounts should be read to get a full picture of the event.

To me, these words of Jesus become the backbone or spine of all prophetic understanding of end time events. When an anthropologist tries to reconstruct a skeleton, the starting point is the spine if it is available. If you have the backbone, it is relatively easy to fit the others pieces to it. However, if you try to start the reconstruction from the left appendage or foot, then it is very difficult to fit the pieces together. The same is true of our understanding of end time events. There have been some that have taken a few Scriptures from various places in the Bible and then have attempted to build from these a complete end time scenario. It think that doing this will always result in things that may sound nice but actually fall far short of biblical truth.

The Context

Before we get into the details of Matthew 24, let's look at the context in which Jesus spoke. Jesus

had just finished saying some hard things to the Pharisees in Chapter 23. The ending of that chapter reveals the position of the Lord concerning them.

Matthew 23:37-39 NASB

- (37) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.
- (38) "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!
- (39) "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Verse 37 says that they were unwilling to be gathered and protected by the Lord. Because of their unwillingness, their house was left desolate and they would not see Him again until they were receptive to the One who comes in the name of the Lord. The next verse (verse one of the next chapter) says that He left the Temple.

Matthew 24:1 NASB

- (1) Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

When Jesus left the Temple, the Glory left also. This was the last time that Jesus was in the Temple. In one sense of the word, He "shook the dust from His feet" and walked away because of their unwillingness to receive Him. As He left, the disciples pointed out temple buildings and, I am sure, commented on their beauty and majesty. And then Jesus drops the bomb on them.

Matthew 24:2 NASB

- (2) And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

This rocked their world. They considered the temple to be permanent. The thought that it would be destroyed cut the very foundation out from under them.

The Questions

The disciples probably considered this as they strolled to the Mount of Olives (its about a leisurely fifteen minute walk from the temple area). Unable to comprehend this, they asked questions of Jesus.

Matthew 24:3 NASB

- (3) As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Depending on how you read this, they asked either two or three questions. I think of it as three but two will also fit the answers. In the disciples minds, the destruction of the temple would be the end of the age so they kind of ran the thoughts of His return, the end of the age, and the

temple together because they thought they were asking one question.

However, these are the three questions:

1. When will these things happen?
2. What will be the sign of your coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Those that see two questions combine two and three into one question, What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

The Answers

Jesus gave detailed answers to these questions but not in the order asked. As a matter of fact, I think that He purposely mixed the answers so that spiritual discernment is required to fully understand what he was saying.

Jesus begins by answering the second question first—the sign of His coming—in verses four through fifteen. He starts with a warning about deception. It would seem that deception is rampant concerning His coming. One of the marks of the end times is the increase of deception even to the point that the very elect struggle with it.

Then Jesus moves on to wars. There is an increase of war of every type and combination of people, kingdoms, and nations. By the way, the Greek word of nation here is “*ethnos*” from which we get ethnic. We are seeing wars of genocide between ethnic groups today.

When you add the events that are listed in Luke 21:10-11 to these in Matthew, we have a series of events that will occur.

1. Deception (rampant)
2. Wars and war talk
3. Earthquakes
4. Plagues
5. Famines
6. Terrors
7. Great signs in Heaven

When all of these begin to occur together then it is the beginning of something.

Matthew 24:8 NASB

(8) "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

When these seven things begin to appear together (we have all of these happening right now) then it is the beginning of labor pains. Something is about to be born. (See also Romans 8:19-22). The question is what is being birthed?

The birthing is of the Kingdom of God with Christ on the Throne of His Glory. In First Thessalonians 5:2-3 the Day of the Lord is pictured as coming upon the world with destruction for the heathen like a woman in labor pains. I think that this is referring to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom where Christ physically reigns on His Throne for a 1000 years. This is further supported by Matthew 19:28 where Jesus refers to the regeneration.

Matthew 19:28 NASB

(28) And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

This says to me that the birth pains are the prelude to the birthing of the Kingdom and the regeneration.

Jesus elaborates with more birth pains that are specific to believers and not just the world in general.

Matthew 24:9-13 NASB

- (9) "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.
- (10) "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.
- (11) "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.
- (12) "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.
- (13) "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

The word for love in verse 12 is "agape", the God kind of love. This word is only applicable to God's people. Among God's people these types of birth pains will occur:

1. Betrayal
2. Tribulation
3. Apostasy
4. Deception
5. Increase of lawlessness
6. Decrease of the love of God
7. Necessity of endurance

After this listing of more birth pains, Jesus gives us THE sign of the end.

Matthew 24:14 NASB

(14) "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.

Notice that the gospel preached is not a gospel of salvation, or prosperity, or healing or any of the other "gospels" were hear preached on television and from many of the pulpits; but, it is the

gospel of the kingdom—the Lordship and rulership of Jesus. This gospel must be preached in the whole world and then the end comes.

Then, with the next verse, the focus changes from the world to Jerusalem and Judea. Jesus begins to answer the question, “When will these things be?”. The question was asked in the context of the destruction of the temple.

Jesus gives the the sign for the events and tells them when these are seen, there is an urgency to flee.

Matthew 24:15 NASB

(15) "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Luke 21:20 NASB

(20) "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

NOTE: I don't think we understand all that is meant by the “abomination of desolation” that is mentioned in Daniel. It is apparent that part of what is meant in Daniel has to do with Antiochus Epiphanes but there also seems to be elements that speak of a future fulfillment, possibly the Roman emblems and idols just prior to the temple's destruction.

It is a historical fact that the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and due to political reasons withdrew momentarily. Then the siege was re-established and Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Those that believed Jesus and His prophetic words escaped the destruction and those that didn't died or went into slavery. Over two million Hebrews were killed by the Romans and another million were sold in the slave markets. Luke gives us some more details

Luke 21:24 NASB

(24) and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The result is that Jerusalem will be occupied by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This is an important mark in the timeline of God. In Romans 2:9-10 there is a principle that is important to us—to the Jew first, then to the Greek. In God's dealings with us He deals with the Jews first and then the Gentiles. For example: just as the Jews have wandered far from their geographical inheritance, we, the church, have wandered far from our spiritual inheritance. Just as the Jews are now returning and beginning to occupy their God given physical inheritance, the church is beginning to return and occupy her God given spiritual promises and inheritance.

In Jeremiah 30:3-4 God says that the time will come when He will restore the Jews to the land of promise. After that comes a time of tribulation and distress and it is pictured like birth pangs. In verse seven, Jeremiah calls it the time of Jacob's trouble, or Jacob's distress.

We need to pay attention to this because the tribulation will be in two phases—first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. When the time of Jacob's trouble comes on Israel, it won't be long until phase

two hits the Gentiles. This could easily be the Great Tribulation mentioned in the scriptures.

After mentioning the trouble that will come, Jesus then gives another warning about deception. Many will say that Messiah is in the desert or the secret room. In other words, the characteristics of this deception is that Christ is hidden or in a hidden place not visible to all. Jesus then contrasts the deception with the Truth. He says don't believe them because the reality is that all will see the Lord just like a lightning flash; nothing will be hidden.

Matthew 24:27 NASB

(27) "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Jesus tells us that this will be immediately after the tribulation days.

Matthew 24:29-31 NASB

(29) "But immediately after the tribulation of those days 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.

(30) "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.

(31) "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.

This completes the answer about the close of the age. Immediately after the days of tribulation, the Lord returns and this age closes. It is important to understand both the sequence and the types of events because it will keep us from deception.

There is a teaching (dominion theology) running through the Body of Christ that basically says that the Church will conquer society before Jesus comes back and will hand Him a subdued kingdom at His return. If this were true, then based on Jesus words above, the church would have to cause the tribulation. That is certainly not in the Scriptures. This teaching is one of the deceptions spoken of here by the Lord.

Recap

To summarize the questions and answers:

1. When will these things be? (The temple destroyed)
 - A) When Jerusalem is surrounded by armies and the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel is manifested. (This occurred in AD 70)
2. What is THE sign of your coming?
 - A) The gospel of the kingdom is preached to all of the world as a sign to the nations.

3. What is the sign of the close of the age?

- A) The birth pains begin, the time of Jacob's trouble. The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Jerusalem is again fully occupied and controlled by the Jews). And THE sign: the Great Tribulation.

If we take words of Jesus in Matthew 24 as the spine or backbone of end time prophecy, then we can begin to fit the other scriptures relating to the end to it in a way that creates a cohesive whole without doing violence to the Word and without creating some logical construct based on presumptive interpretation as some have done.