

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1962

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PART 61: DESTRUCTION & PERSECUTION

REVEALING THE FUTURE

The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is a compilation of several events that will take place in the future. The stories Jesus tells are not necessarily in chronological order.

THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE

Let's begin with the prediction of the temple's destruction in Jerusalem. This was not the same temple built by King Solomon some 900 years earlier and been destroyed by the Babylonians around 587 B.C. Ezra rebuilt the temple 72 years later in 515 B.C. But this temple was very small in comparison to Solomon's magnificent edifice.

During the reign of Herod the Great (37 B.C. to 4 B.C.), he began a massive building project to expand the temple ground with new walls, effectively doubling the size of the temple area, making it the largest religious sanctuary of its time. Wanting to match the size and beauty of King Solomon's temple, King Herod ordered the temple renovated. It was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

Herod extended the temple grounds to some 35 acres and it was on this complex that the Antonia Fortress housed the temple garrison.¹ There were also a number of other buildings such as housing for the priests working the temple. Work on the temple buildings and its grounds continued until A.D. 63.

The walls of the temple grounds, its many gates, the temple, and the other buildings was impressive; the apostles were certainly impressed with the buildings of the temple ground. **Matthew 24:1; Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5**

THE TEMPLE DESTRUCTION

Jesus returned to the temple a final time around A.D. 33. Even though the God-man was still in human form, He nevertheless knew the future and revealed the magnificent temple ground would be destroyed someday. The Son of God predicted the invaders would not leave one stone upon another; it would be total destruction! **Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6**

When the disciples heard this prophecy, they wanted to know when this devastation would take place. **Matthew 24:3**

WHAT JESUS PREDICTED

Jesus did not directly answer their question because the Godhead never sets specific dates for future events. They cite seasons and events which indicate something is about to happen, but a definite time is never given. This is the method by which the angel dealt with Daniel. **Daniel 12:4-13**

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Herod-third-temple.html>



DECEPTION

Then Jesus addressed deception. He stated that many deceivers will claim to be the messiah or declare to speak on the messiah's behalf. **Matthew 24:4-5**

The apostle John would later reinforce what Jesus said about deception. **1 John 4:1-6**

The apostle Paul stated much the same thing. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

WARS AND RUMORS

Jesus stated that there will be wars and rumors of wars in the future as nation rises against nation, famines arise with pestilence, and earthquakes damage different regions of the earth. **Matthew 24:7**

All these events are the beginning of sorrows. **verse 8**

TIME OF SORROWS

Jesus spoke these words around A.D. 33. Some 1,900 years later, the earth has seen thousands of wars, along with pestilence, earthquakes, and rumors of war. Jesus ended this section by saying that these are the beginning of sorrows.

Jesus never responded directly to the question for when the temple would be destroyed. It was only in a future revelation that we discovered the time of sorrows is the beginning of the Antichrist's reign. **Revelation 13:1-8**

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

Some 33 years after Jesus prophesied to His disciples, a Jewish rebellion in A.D. 66 began to push the Romans out of Jerusalem and portions of Judah. The Roman counterattack two years later invaded Galilee and Judah. By A.D. 70, Jerusalem was taken by Roman legions and the predicted destruction began until one stone was not left upon another on the entire 35-acre temple ground.

FUTURE PERSECUTION

Jesus never explained why future persecution would take place. **Matthew 24:9-11**

The God-man stated that iniquity (gross injustice, wickedness, lawlessness) would abound and the love of Christians would turn cold. **verse 12**

The Son of God said that Christians who stand firm and don't give up will be saved. What did this mean for the early church and/or modern believers?

1. This could apply to the early church being temporarily saved from death when the Romans arrived to besiege Jerusalem. History reveals that no Christians were killed because they remembered the words of Jesus and left the city.
2. It could also refer to an everlasting salvation from hell and the Lake of Fire.

Since Jesus did not specify exactly what He meant, we can only surmise that Jesus will rescue us, if we do not give up. **verse 13**

When Jesus spoke about the future persecution, none of the books of the New Testament existed. As a matter of fact, no human being at this time knew much about

the Devil except what the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel had written. But the information released was incomplete and did not make sense.

The rebellion of Lucifer led to the devastating space war throughout the universe. This fact was not revealed until some 60 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, when the apostle John was taken to heaven and given this information. **Revelation 12:7-12**

Jesus told us that the Lake of Fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels. **Matthew 25:41**

This indicates there must have been a trial after the space war when Lucifer and his minions were sentenced to the Lake of Fire. So, what possible explanation is there for their presence on earth? Given the way our court systems work with appeals, why would it be strange to think that the Devil did not also appeal his sentencing? That is certainly a plausible explanation.

The apostle Paul's account in the Book of Romans goes a long way to filling in the discrepancy. God stood accused by Lucifer in front of the whole creation of not being righteous. From Satan's point of view, why would God sentence one of His creatures to everlasting torment in the Lake of Fire. This is why humans exist. God is proving His righteousness. **Romans 3:21-26**

Thus, humanity is proving God's righteousness as the Devil contests every believer in Christ. With this knowledge we can now understand **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7**

This is the reason why Christians are persecuted.

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?