

**Review:** after covering an overview of Millennial and Rapture views, and a survey of the Kingdom, we turn to an overview of eschatological passages in the New Testament.

## I. Matthew. (ca. A.D. 50)

- Presents Jesus as Messiah and King
- Written to present Christ to the Jews

We covered eschatological passages in Matthew 5-7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, introduce 24-25

Note: at this point I depart from Custer's syllabus. As noted in the footnote last week, Custer holds that Mt 24.4-14 describes the whole Tribulation. I think this error throws off his whole discussion of Mt 24-25. Consequently, I replace it with my outline from my Thru the Bible study.

## Z. Mt 24.1-51

Matthew 24-25 contains the Olivet Discourse — a private message by the Lord for His disciples.

1. In the Lord's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, he prophesied that desolation would come on 'your house' (Mt 23.38). Such talk must have caused deep misgivings in the disciples who point out the magnificence of the temple structure to the Lord as they pass out of it (Mt 24.1).
2. The Lord makes a dramatic and definite prophecy: not one stone of the temple will stand on another (Mt 24.2).
3. As they travel out of the city back to Bethany, the Lord and the disciples pause on the Mount of Olives. The disciples directly ask Jesus to explain his meaning (Mt 24.3).
  - a. The Mount of Olives is the place where the Lord will stand when he returns to the earth (Zech 14.4). "This prophecy is foundational to the discourse that follows."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable. (Mt 24:3).

Zech 14.4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

- b. The disciples have two questions:
- 1) "When will these things happen?"
  - 2) "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"
- c. The disciples are trying to sort out their understanding of all the Lord's teaching, their past teaching received from John the Baptist, and the synagogue teachers of their youth concerning the kingdom.
- 1) In asking about the Lord's 'coming' they are referring to the prophecy that Jerusalem would not see him again until he 'comes' in the name of the Lord (Mt 23.39). When will that be?
  - 2) In asking about the end of the age, the disciples want to know when the current age will end and when the Messianic age will begin.

"Both of the disciples' questions, occurring as they did together, suggest that the disciples associated the destruction of the temple with Jesus' return to it and the end of the present age. The Old Testament taught that several eschatological events would happen in the following order. First, Jerusalem would suffer destruction (Zech 14.1–2; *cf.* Mt 24.2). Second, Messiah would come and end the present age (Zech 14.3–8; *cf.* Mt 23.39). Third, Messiah would set up His kingdom (Zech 14.3–11). The disciples wanted to know when in the future the destruction of the temple, Jesus' return to it, and the end of the present age would occur."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable. (Mt 24:3).

- d. Matthew's record of the Lord's answer does not include an answer to the first question, although in Luke he addresses it (Lk 21.20-24).
4. The Lord begins by describing conditions of the present age, leading up to the time of the end (Mt 24.4-14).
    - a. There will be many false Messiahs, don't let anyone lead you astray (4-5).
    - b. There will be wars and war-talk all over the world, don't let this alarm you (6-7a).
    - c. There will be famines and earthquakes, disasters of all kinds; these are just the beginnings of trouble (7b-8).

The Lord uses a figure to describe disasters, wars, troubles, false Christs, etc. as 'beginning labour pains.' This is not the main trouble, but they are early sensations of the great throes of pain the world will endure before the end comes.

- d. They will deliver the apostles (and preachers after them) to death (9).
- e. Many will fall away; many false prophets will arise (10-12).
- f. The Lord promises to save the one who endures to the end (13).
- g. The proclamation of the gospel must go out through the whole world (14).

Note: some conservative Bible teachers see vv. 4-14 as describing the Tribulation period, not the Church Age. Others see the break in v. 9, with the 'then' of that verse. For the most part, the conditions described in these verses seem to fit the current age. The statement in v. 14 that says, 'then the end will come' seems conclusive to me.

5. “Then” the last trouble comes – the last week determined upon Israel, the day of Jacob’s trouble, the Tribulation (Mt 24.14-28).
- a. We should note here that the first half of the Tribulation isn’t discussed in Matthew 24.
  - b. The Lord gives *the sign* that those on the earth after the Rapture (1 Th 4.16-18) must discern when the end is coming – the abomination of desolation mentioned in Daniel the prophet (14, cf. Dan 8.13, 9.27, 11.31, 12.11).
    - 1) In Dan 11.31, the prophet spoke of Antiochus Epiphanes who would erect an altar to Zeus in the temple and offered a pig on the brazen altar.
    - 2) Dan 9.27 speaks of one coming who will make a covenant with the people of Israel for seven years (‘one week’) who will break the covenant in the middle of the week and set up the abomination.
    - 3) Daniel and the Lord are referring to a coming man of sin, the Antichrist, who will set up an idol to himself in the middle of the tribulation period that will be *the sign* of the Lord’s coming and the end of the age – just three and a half years to go (2 Th 3.4, Rev 13.14-15).
  - c. The Lord warns those who must flee when they see this sign – don’t stop for anything! He also expresses compassion for those hindered by children who will (15-20).
  - d. The reason: “For then there will be a great tribulation” — this is the Great Tribulation, the second half of the Tribulationary period (21-22)
    - 1) It is without parallel in history (21)
    - 2) Unless these days are cut short, all life would end (22a)
    - 3) The Great Tribulation has limited duration for the sake of the elect (primarily the remnant of Israel) — for their sake, the Great Tribulation will end (22b)

- e. The Lord admonishes those who hear not to let those who say, 'Look here' or 'Look there' for the coming of Christ deceive them – his coming will be plain and his judgement will be sure (23-28)
- 1) Deceivers will try to mislead even the elect (especially, it seems, during the tribulation), saying "He is here," or "He is there" (23-26)
  - 2) When he comes, just as lightning is visible to all, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (27)
  - 3) The proverb describes the visible gathering of vultures over a dead body – the proverb means this world is a stinking corpse, when it has come to its end, all the signs will point to the Lord's coming (28)