

2019-2020 Bible Study

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4/28/20

Matthew 24

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A Prayer to be recited before reading the Sacred Scriptures

- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.
- Send forth Thy spirit and they shall be created.
- And thou shall renew the face of the earth
- Let Us Pray*
- O God, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things and ever to rejoice in His consolation.
- Through Christ our Lord

Outline for Matthew 24

- **Matthew 24**
- The Destruction of the Temple Foretold
- Signs of Jesus' Coming and of the Close of the Age
- Persecutions Foretold
- The Desolation Sacrilege
- The Coming of the Son of Man
- The Lesson of the Fig Tree
- The Necessity for Watchfulness
- The Faithful and the Unfaithful Servant

Matthew 24

- **Matthew 24:3-5** *“As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately...and they will lead many astray”*
 - *“Tell us when will this be? What will be the sign of your coming? And the close of the age”*
 - Close of the age (The end of the world?)
 - The sign of Your coming –(Jesus’ second coming at the end of the world?)
 - This is an example of **Synonymous Parallelism**
 - *“O sons of Jacob, O people of Israel”*
 - *“I will destroy you on your city. I will annihilate your land”*
 - *“God was angry, he was furious in his wrath”*

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Father said that this is not what this passage is saying
- When we look at **Mark 13** and **Luke 21** we find a simple Gentile version **without the synonymous parallelism**
 - *“Tell us when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to be accomplished”*
 - *“Teacher, when will this be? And what would be the sign when this is about to take place?”*
- It is related to an allusion to the prophets who predicted the earlier destruction of Jerusalem in **Ezekiel 10:18**; and **11:23**; **Zechariah 14:1-4** where the Glory Cloud of God left the temple and rested on the top of the Mount of Olives
- Even though many commentators have been confused about this passage, **Mark** and **Luke** tell us clearly what these three things mean and that is the same thing

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Matthew gives a very Semitic way of speaking
- Father asked how we and the Jews divided up time?
 - The first temple era before the temple was destroyed
 - The second temple era after the second temple was built
 - When looking at the prophets we see:
 - The pre-exilic prophets
 - The exilic prophets
 - The post-exilic prophets
 - Thus, when one speaks about Jerusalem being destroyed it marks the end of one era and the beginning of another era

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- They were **not** talking about the “end of the world,” but of the end of the second temple period (era)
- The next passage will explain what Matthew is talking about, and it is not about the end of the world
- This departure of the Glory Cloud in 587 BC was followed by the first destruction of the temple by the Babylonians (**2 King 25:8-10**)

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- As we know, Jesus' departure from the second temple will be followed by the destruction of the temple in 70 AD by the Romans
- Unfortunately many Christians misunderstand this text from a Protestant point of view as a discussion of the "end of the world"
 - This has resulted in writings like those of Charles Darby and later, Tim Lahaye's *Left Behind Series*

An Explanation of the Rapture

- In 1830, Charles Darby, an Anglican priest living in England, turned Congregationalist (the group was called the Plymouth Brethren) first presented the modern theory called the “rapture”
- His theory entered mainline Protestantism by what was called the “Stowfield Study Bible” and has now become the most influential and dominant theological reference point in Protestantism (even some Catholics believe in the rapture)
- The theory purports that Jesus, before He comes back to judge the world, will come back secretly on the clouds and find born-again Christians and take them on the clouds back to heaven and give them to the Father

An Explanation of the Rapture (Cont)

- Then, Jesus will return to the earth to fight the antichrist who has by then arisen on the earth leading to the great battle of Armageddon in which Jesus will kill the antichrist
- This concept is known as “dispensationalism” within the rapture theory
- To be “raptured” means that one would be caught up into the clouds
- Those not raptured would be “left behind”

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- As mentioned, what these scholars had done was to take this passage and combine it with **1st Thessalonians 4** and the **Book of Revelation 20-22** ₂ (taken out of context) to produce this modern Protestant “eschatology”
- Father pointed out that this passage has confused commentators since the time of St. Jerome and the Church Fathers

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- These phrases in Matthew say the same thing two or three times within the same sentence (**Synonymous Parallelism**)
- The Jews loved to repeat an idea within their writings (just like we love to use rhyme)
- But, as we have said, when looking at this passage in **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**, we see it without synonymous parallelism

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- This departure of God's presence was soon followed by the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by the Babylonians
- So, this passage is in fact predicting the eminent destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD which came within one generation of Jesus' departure from the temple

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Therefore, if one is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, it means the end of an old era and the beginning of a new one
- This is not about the end of the world, but the end of the era called the second temple period
- The sign of this will be *“one like the son of man, coming on the clouds to the ancient of days to be enthroned in all power”* (**Daniel 7:13**), not the end of the world
- Look at what Jesus says next *

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:6-14** *“And you will hear of wars and rumor of wars;...and then the end will come.”*
 - Here, Matthew provides the signs they were looking for to include: wars, and earthquakes which will mark the beginning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem
 - Further, you will know the end is coming when you hear of famines
 - Father then pointed out what was going on around 70 AD
 - The early church was spreading throughout the Roman Empire
 - Even within Caesar’s household, converts were springing up

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- This led to the beginning of the Roman persecution of the early church
- Since Christianity was growing among all the nations, they all began to turn against the Christians spreading the persecution throughout the empire
- Then we hear Jesus say, *“But he who endures to the end will be saved”*
- We heard that before in **Matthew 10** where He talked about an event that would occur before the Apostles had finished visiting all the villages of Israel
- Also, He said that if they endured to the end, they would be saved, which implied that there must be something afterwards

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- This event was about, *“The gospel will be preached throughout the world”*
- This has led people to speculate that the world will not come to an end until the gospel has reached the ears of every single human being
- But, Father pointed out that is not what is being said here
- It does not say the “whole world;” In fact, the Greek says: “the Empire”
- It implied the entire civilized world which, at that time, was under the Roman Empire
- By 70 AD much of this had happened, and then the destruction of Jerusalem happened *

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:15** *“So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)”*
 - Right here, we see a reference to the **Book of Daniel (the abomination of desolation Dn 9:27; 11:31; 12:11)**
 - We also find Daniel referring to the Son of Man coming on the clouds (this is a reference to the ascension of Jesus)
 - Scholars believe that the initial fulfillment of this prophesy may have occurred when Antiochus Epiphanes turned Jerusalem into a Gentile city and offered swine flesh on the alter in the temple (this led to the Maccabean revolt)
 - Here, Jesus was talking about a fuller fulfillment that is going to happen in the future

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what event Jesus was talking about, although it is clear that it was something that happened during the time of Matthew
- It may have been when the Roman general Titus entered the Holy of Holies or some sacrilege performed by Pilate
- It is also interesting that Matthew added, *“Let the reader understand”*
- We are not sure who put this in the text (Matthew, a scribe or someone later on), but it was meant to indicate that this event was taking place at that time (some time in the mid-60s which is when scholars believe Matthew’s gospel was written) *

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:16-27** *“Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains;...so will be the coming of the son of man”*
 - Once again, this is not about the end of the world, but about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD
 - Jesus was telling them that there will be very little time for them to flee when this comes about and it would make little difference if it happened in winter or when your wife was pregnant (if this was about the end of the world)
 - Historical tradition states that all of the Christians fled Jerusalem in 70 AD and settled in the town of Pella within the Decapolis *



Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:28** *“Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together”*
 - Eagle in Greek and Hebrew refers to the great carnivorous birds like vultures
 - Luke will tell us later on that when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, one will know that the destruction is near
 - In 70 AD, the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and Jesus may have been referring to eagles (since they were the standard of the Roman army)
 - Thus, if one looked over the wall of Jerusalem, you would have seen these massive eagles hanging from the standards of the Roman army *

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:29** *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened...and the powers of the heavens will be shaken”*
 - Again, this language needs to be understood as discussing the end of an era, a city, or a nation whose time was over
 - Although today we no longer use the heavenly bodies to tell time or seasons, they certainly did at that time
 - These could be seen as the clock and calendar of the ancient world
 - To say these bodies no longer gave light meant that an era was over

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- A wonderful example of this can be seen in **Isaiah 13:9-10** which described when the Medo-Persians came to destroy the Babylonians
- Father said that this passage was filled with hyperbole used to describe how the Persians controlled the fertile crescent and were poised to destroy Babylon *

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:30-31** “ *Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven,...from one end of heaven to the other*”
 - Father asked, “where did He go?”
 - If we look back at **Daniel 7:13**, we will see that this is when Jesus will have the ultimate power over the nations
 - This is the end of an era and the beginning of the new “kingdom of God”
 - This is the fifth kingdom discussed in **Daniel**
 - Sending out His angels (messengers) is about the history of the Church

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- In the **Book of Revelations** the apostles (bishops) are referred to as angels
- This passage is about the apostles of the church spreading out and gathering God's people (from all four directions of the Gentile world)
- Father said that this happened in 70 AD when the church fled from Jerusalem to the city of *Pella*
- From that moment onward, Jerusalem was no longer the center of Christianity (although it will always be a place of honor)
- The heart of Christianity will go to Antioch, Constantinople, Rome, and Alexandria where the church will gather the elect from the four winds *

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:32-35** *“From the fig tree learn its lesson:...this generation will not pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”*
 - Father went into great detail to point out that this was about the generation alive at the time of Jesus, not the last generation before the end of the world
 - A biblical generation was considered to be for 40 years
 - Jesus said this about 30 AD and in 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed, a period of 40 years later
 - Father suggested that this is very similar language to that in **Isaiah 13** which describes the destruction of Babylon

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:36-51** *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only...there men will weep and gnash their teeth”*
 - Jesus said that this will happen so fast that it will be like what happened in the time of Noah
 - Once again, Father pointed out that this is where some of the *“Left Behind”* messages originate
 - They, under this idea of the “rapture” (which is not mentioned in the scriptures) to be based on **1st Thessalonians 4**
 - There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that Jesus was going to show up and snatch a bunch of people out of their clothes leaving their shoes on the ground and fly off and hide in the clouds

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Father concluded that this entire idea is based on a misreading of these passages as being about the end of the world
- Jesus, as reported by Matthew, was pointing back to the time of Noah (**Genesis 7:21-23**) where it says that “the flood came and swept them all away,” and then He added, “So will be the coming of the Son of man”
- In Genesis, it says that only Noah (and his family) were left behind
- He was considered “righteous,” survived, and inherited the kingdom of the earth

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Jesus seems to be saying that, like the flood, the wicked will be washed away while the righteous will be left behind
- Father said that it seems as though the Protestant eschatological message has it backwards
- Father again reiterated that this was not about the end of the world
- He then suggested that we look at the scriptural interpretation of that in **Revelation 20:14-15** *

Revelation 20

- **Revelation 20:14-15** *“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire: and if any one’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”*
 - They were not left behind, but taken away and thrown into the lake of fire
 - The rest were left behind awaiting the descent to the earth of the New rebuilt Jerusalem as a new Garden of Eden
 - Thus, at the end (as seen in Revelation) was to remain in the land awaiting the new Jerusalem and not:

Revelation 20 (Cont)

- Left behind
- Taken
- Washed away by the flood
- Taken by the Babylonians
- Taken by the Romans
- Taken into the lake of fire
- Father said that we will get into more detail on these events when we look at the Book of Revelation
- At this point, we will continue our review of **Matthew 25**

The Saint Raymond Prayer

- Glorious Saint Raymond of Peñafort, wise and holy patron,
come to the aid of those entrusted to your care,
and all who flee to your protection.
Intercede for us in our need,
and help us through your prayers, example, and
teaching,
to proclaim the truth of the Gospel to all we meet.
And when we have reached the fullness of our years,
we beseech you to guide us home to heaven,
to live in peace with you, Our Mother Mary, and Our
Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hail Mary Prayer

- Hail Mary,
Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of death. Amen.