

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW – THE OLIVET DISCOURSE
YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH – Fall 2022

“...whoever reads, let him understand” Matt. 24:15b

Week 3 – Israel: The Epicenter of the World!

September 27, 2022

The significance of studying end times is to understand God’s heart!

From the prophetic books of the Bible, we are face-to-face with Who God is, and heart-to-heart, as believers, with understanding God’s heart! Have you ever thought of end times in this way?

Prelude to Matthew 24....

Matt. 23:37-39 - O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’

In the book of Matthew, the gospel writer, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, wrote to a Jewish audience. We must comprehend that Jesus’ teaching on the Mount of Olives in Matt. 24 is in reference to Israel and NOT the Church. Jesus is announcing judgment on Jerusalem representing the nation of Israel. The Church had not yet been birthed. Matthew 24 and 25 are not addressing the Church.

CONSIDER:

- God’s program/plan for Israel is not being fulfilled in and through the Church.
- God’s plan for Israel will be fulfilled in the Tribulation (Jer. 30:7)) and in the Kingdom of God (the Millennial Kingdom) promised by God to Israel.

This is a teaching throughout Scripture. Understanding these two sentences will impact how you approach the Bible and understand the Bible.

There are believers who see the Church in Matthew 24.

Some believers take that view further and believe that the Church is going to go through the Tribulation.

Some believers take this view even further and believe that God is finished with Israel and that the Church is the true Israel

In Matt. 23:37-39 we hear Jesus’ heart. Jesus had cried “Woe” to the scribes and Pharisees...condemning them. Jesus then turned to the city of Jerusalem which housed the collective body of the Jewish religious leadership.

CONSIDER: John the Baptizer ministered outside the city of Jerusalem. Jesus during his earthly ministry at His first coming spent more time in Galilee than in Judea where Jerusalem was built on a threshing floor and where the temple was constructed. What is Jesus telling His beloved city of Jerusalem?

Jesus spoke of His house, the temple. In Isa. 56:6-7 the temple... *shall be called a house of prayer for ALL nations.*

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BACKSTORY: in Ex. 25:8 we read of God speaking to Moses, directing the children of Israel - *let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.* THIS IS GOD'S HEART! God desired to dwell with the children of Israel.

Ex. 40:33-34 - *So Moses finished the work. ³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* GOD dwelled in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness and in Solomon's temple (the first temple) in Jerusalem when it was constructed...UNTIL the glory of God departed before the Babylonian captivity. Because of Israel's abominations/idols that were set up in the Temple in Jerusalem, the glory of God departing from the Temple (Eze. 8 to 10)!
Eze. 10:4 - *Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub (over the mercy seat on top of the ark of the covenant) and paused over the threshold of the temple;*
Eze. 10:18 - *Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple...*
Eze. 11:23 - *And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.* The mountain was the Mount of Olives.

On Lamb Selection Day (the 10th day of Nisan on the Jewish religious calendar), which the Church calls Palm Sunday, before Jesus' crucifixion (on the 14th day of Nisan), Yeshua, Jesus, the Glory of God in the flesh, entered Jerusalem, in approx. 33 AD, from the Mount of Olives through the Eastern Gate! Jesus entered Jerusalem via the route that the GLORY OF GOD took as He DEPARTED from the Temple. And He proceeded to the temple...to the outer courts.

Jesus cleansed the Court of the Gentiles in the temple complex. The moneychangers were set-up within the Temple courts to exchange the foreign coins into the appropriate coinage. There was an exorbitant price charged for this exchange of the foreign coins. A sacrifice offered had to be made with an animal without blemish. The children of Israel could purchase an animal within the Temple court. If they brought an animal of their own to the Temple and if their animal was found to be blemished, the worshipper had to purchase an animal from the "Temple herd" at a tremendously inflated price.

The Temple had become a den of robbers/thieves (Jer. 7:11). God had called the Jewish people to serve as witnesses to the nations of the one true God (Isa. 43:10). What kind of witness was this in the Court of the Gentiles...the only place where Gentiles could walk in the house of prayer for ALL nations? The place of prayer had become a place of profit-taking and disobeying God's law!

The glory of God NEVER occupied this second temple.

O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem...Jesus continued to cry out to Jerusalem before His crucifixion...How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Jesus longed to gather the children of Israel together. But, they were not willing!

Jesus was passionate about keeping Israel safe. He wanted them to know His love. In Scripture, *under His wings* is a figure of speech representing the protective refuge of God's presence (Ruth 2:10-12; Psa. 36:7; Psa. 57:1; Psa. 61:4; Psa. 63:7 ESV).

Jesus departed from the Temple and never again returned to the Temple during His earthly ministry.

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One Bible teacher commented that Jesus departed like one who did not mean to return!?

Let's look further at what Jesus ANNOUNCED.

Matt. 23:38-39 – *See! Your house is left to you desolate... **39** for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'*

OBSERVATION??

Yes, Jesus left...BUT in that departure, Jesus PROMISED to RETURN!!! AND HE WILL. He is GOD! GOD DELIVERS ON HIS PROMISES!

What is going to cause Jesus to return?

*...you shall see Me no more **till** you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'* WHO will speak these words?

Who is "you"? ISRAEL! Has this occurred as yet? NO! This will take place in the future!

Jesus left the outer courts of the temple and departed. Approx. 40 years following Jesus' departure from the Second Temple, the Romans destroyed that Second Temple.

Consider what the Prophet Haggai prophesied, *'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they (all the nations) shall come (Isa. 2:2) to the Desire of All Nations (JESUS! Psa. 2:9 – "I will give you the nations for Your inheritance") and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁸ 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁹ 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts. Has this occurred as yet? NO! This will take place in the future.*

I'm suggesting that the temple of which Haggai speaks is the Fourth Temple which will be built in the Millennial Kingdom, the earthly Kingdom of God about which Jesus has been teaching! God's glory will fill the Millennial Temple (Eze. 43:5)...the Fourth Temple. The context of this prophecy spoken by Haggai appears to speak of the establishment of Jesus' earthly, Davidic, 1,000 year kingdom and His presence in the temple during that kingdom.

The first, second, and fourth temples have been mentioned. Will there be a Third Temple? “How can that be?” Today the Temple Mount is managed by an Islamic religious organization, the Muslim Waqf, which manages sacred Islamic sites. The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are on the Temple Mount.

Do you know the definition of “epicenter”? The epicenter is a point directly above where shock waves of an earthquake radiate!

Have you heard that...

Israel is the epicenter of the world.

Jerusalem is the epicenter of Israel.

The Temple Mount is the epicenter of Jerusalem.

Is “epicenter” graphically explaining what has been transpiring in the history of Israel/ Jerusalem/the Temple Mount and what will continue to transpire?

Zech. 12:2-4 – God says, ² Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness (causing reeling, trembling, confusion) to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³ And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very

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heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

Psa. 83 – the list of enemies of Israel directly surrounding her desire to form a confederacy against Israel proclaiming in this psalm, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. (Psa. 83:4)

Consider “threshing”! To thresh means to trample! Israel was an agricultural society. Much is written in the Hebrew Scriptures re: harvest time when the barley and the wheat that were harvested would be threshed. The grain was separated from the straw and husks by beating it manually on a flat surface that was smooth and hard. That flat surface was the threshing floor. Following the beating, winnowing forks were used to throw what was beaten into the air so that the wind could blow away the chaff, leaving only the good grain on the threshing floor. The threshing floor was a level place on a hill or on the side of a hill where they could take advantage of the winds.

Scripture refers to the threshing floor as a symbol of judgment. Hosea prophesied that, because Israel had repeatedly turned from God to false idols, His judgment upon them would scatter them to the winds as the chaff from the threshing floor. Jeremiah pronounced judgment on the Babylonians who persecuted Israel, likening their fate to the trampled sheaves on the threshing floor (Jeremiah 51:33).

Threshing is indicative of the Tribulation. WHY? One of the threshing practices used oxen to trample the grain. The threshing roller was a rectangular wooden frame with rows of small wheels. Oxen would be hooked up to the threshing roller. And, there was a seat on top on which someone sat to give it weight. The Latin for this threshing roller is *tribulum*. Threshing separated what is worthless, the chaff, from what is fruitful, the good grain. Threshing can be understood as a purging.

The primary purpose of the Tribulation in Scripture is the purging of Israel as a nation. Malachi 3:3 - *He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.*

The most well-known threshing floor in Scripture is Jerusalem!

When archaeologists first began excavating in the city, they were surprised to discover layer after layer of rubble, indicating that parts of Jerusalem had been destroyed at least 40 times.

When do we read about Jerusalem? God had put his prophetic mark on the spot which He chose to put His name. In Genesis 22, God directed Abraham to take his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved to the place where God would show him in the land of Moriah. Moriah means “chosen by Jehovah.”

II Chron. 3:1 - *Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah,*

Let’s look at Jerusalem as a threshing floor...literally!

King David decided to number Israel. The number serving in the military was important to David. He was relying more on Israel’s strength. He was not depending upon God! God’s chastised David.

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II Sam. 24:15-16 - *...the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. ¹⁶ And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented (moved to compassion) from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “It is enough; now restrain your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.*

II Sam. 24:24-25 - *David bought the threshing floor.... ²⁵ And David built there an altar to the LORD, AND offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.*

King David purchased that land under the instruction of God.

Jerusalem, as a threshing floor, has eternal significance for it was in Jerusalem that Jesus was beaten and nailed to a cross. He was seen as cursed – for us. He offered Himself as a guilt offering to God the Father from eternity past (Isa. 53:10; Rev. 13:8).

We, as believers in Jesus, have been rescued from God's judgment because of Jesus' death on the cross on that threshing floor. On that day in Jerusalem, the glory of God in salvation through judgment was carried out on the cross.

And, it was on that site the first temple was built. And then after that, the second temple. And today, the Dome of the Rock stands in its place. And, the Temple Mount remains the Epicenter of Jerusalem.

The Temple Mount is a 37-acre tract of land where the Jewish temple once stood. Today the top of Mount Moriah, it is thought, lies somewhere beneath the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. The Temple Mount is one of the most hotly contested pieces of real estate on earth.

What of the Temple Mount today?

In 1967, during the "Six Day" war in Israel, at the taking of Jerusalem, the cry over a field radio "The Temple Mount is in our hands!" Moshe Dayan was the commander at the Jerusalem front in 1967. Dayan's first act on the Temple Mount, was to immediately remove the Israeli flag that the paratroopers had raised on the mount/the Temple Mount. "We have returned to the holiest of our places, never to be parted from them again...We did not come to conquer the sacred sites of others or to restrict their religious rights, but rather to ensure the integrity of the city and to live in it with others in fraternity."

When Dayan relinquished the Temple Mount to the Muslim Wakf (an Islamic religious organization which manages sacred Islamic sites), this action became known as "the status quo on the Temple Mount." Keeping the "status quo" equates to...don't ruffle feathers of the Palestinians. And, the building of the Third Temple is forbidden!

1. The view that building the Temple will be allowed only with the coming of the Messiah.
2. Many believe that the Third Temple will not be built in human times but will descend, complete, from the heavens.

3. A good many more view the contemporary generation as lacking a sufficient level of spirituality, purity, and maturity to be worthy of the Temple.
4. The limitations of Jews allowed on the Temple Mount is due to the absence of the ashes of the “red heifer” (Num. 11), whose ash, according to Jewish sources, served in ancient times to purify Jews defiled by death.
5. The fear of an interreligious clash between Islam and Judaism involving harm to Jews and Jewish religious targets all over the world.

BUT today, there is more awareness re: the significance of the Temple Mount on the part of the Jewish people...not only the Orthodox but also the secular Jewish people!

NOTE: When the antichrist is revealed after the rapture of the church (II Thess. 2:6-8), he will sign a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27). Perhaps at that time the Third Temple will be constructed in which sacrifices can be offered.

And in His glory, ALL Who God is, we see His mercy and grace. God is the One who, though Israel rebelled against Him, God promises to RESTORE Israel!

Isa. 62:6-7 - I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, ⁷ And give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Can we better understand why God tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psa. 122:6)?

Let's marvel as we ponder about the threshing and the earth quaking in the epicenter which is Israel/Jerusalem. When Jesus was beaten and crucified for us, when He cried out, “It is finished!”, ...*the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’ (Matt. 27:51-54). Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid (John 19:41). Resurrection – NEW LIFE!*

QUESTIONS

Any V8 moments?

How did Jerusalem as a threshing floor impact you?

How do you understand Israel as the Epicenter of the world?

How does this all fit into the Big Picture of the Bible?

What are you going to do with this lesson?!

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Reread Week 3's handout with references.

Share what you're learning with at least one person.

Continue to note observations and questions. Begin to find answers in Scripture for the questions you've asked.

Read Week 4's handout when it arrives.