

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

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

Week 5 –WHY the Tribulation?

October 11, 2022

If anyone has wondered about Jesus’ cry to Jerusalem in Matt. 23:37, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, it is clear that He was speaking to Israel...the children of Israel – the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Focus more on Jesus’ words...*how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.*

I’m suggesting that Jesus, in His crying out, expressing how often He wanted to gather Jerusalem’s children together, Jesus was referring to the fulfillment of so much prophecy in the OT! We’re talking “Big Picture” – connecting the dots between the OT and the NT! Much prophecy in the OT speaks of the Jewish people being regathered into their own land. In this context as Jesus’ is lovingly offering to gather them, it would be a gathering to receive the blessings of God (Lev. 26; Deut. 28) in the Millennial Kingdom/the Kingdom of God.

NOTE: How crucial it is for us to observe God’s promises in our study of Scripture, understand them literally, and discover how they are repeated throughout Scripture. Not understanding the Bible literally makes God’s actual words unimportant...it makes the Bible irrelevant...and inhibits our understanding the truth of God.

During Jesus’ first coming, He offered Himself to Israel as their King. He offered the Kingdom to them! He had offered to gather them into the Kingdom of God which was promised to King David (II Sam. 7:12-16). But now, because they were unwilling to be gathered, because of the nation’s rejection of Him as their Messiah and King, the giving of the kingdom Israel was postponed. Notice that I did not say that the giving of the kingdom was cancelled! God promised restoration. God promised that the kingdom will indeed be delivered. (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2; Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:31-33....) Rom. 11:29 - ...*the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*. God does NOT take back His promises! God does NOT transfer the promises He has made to a certain people – to another people!

IN FACT, in Matthew 24:29, 31 after the Tribulation, after the purging/refining of Israel and the judgment of wickedness on the earth, Jesus speaks of gathering Israel/the REMNANT of Jews who come to faith in Jesus! *And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect* (Isa. 45:4; Isa. 65:9; Zech. 2:6-12).

Deut. 7:6-8 - God chose the nation of Israel to accomplish His will for the world! Israel has been elected by God to do so! At the end of the Tribulation, God will pour out His Spirit upon the Jewish people who are alive. They will mourn for Jesus and He will

return to the earth and establish His kingdom on earth so “that the world may know that I am God.”

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During this kingdom postponement which is occurring at this time, today, God is using the Church as His redemptive tool to spread the Gospel. And God has been and will continue to gather Israel into the land to prepare them for Jesus’ physical Second Coming. And, God has been and will continue to use Israel to affect stage setting! Israel is more than that, however. Israel is the prophetic timeclock as noted in Daniel’s 70 Weeks prophecy.

The book of Ezekiel gives us more insight into the end times.

Eze. 20:33-44 - As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. ³⁴ I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. ³⁵ And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead (to act as a law-giver, judge, governor) My case with you face to face. ³⁶ Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you, says the Lord GOD. ³⁷ I will make you pass under the rod (a shepherd’s rod. God is their great Shepherd (Eze. 34:11-13; Jer. 33:13) and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant (New Covenant - Eze. 36:24-27; Eze. 37:14) (This is Israel’s salvation – their restoration!) ³⁸ I will purge the rebels (the rebellious against God) from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

³⁹ As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: “Go, serve every one of you his idols—and hereafter—if you will not obey Me; but profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols. ⁴⁰ For on My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel,” says the Lord GOD, **there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them, and there I will require your offerings and the firstfruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things** (Eze. 43:18-27).

⁴¹ I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. ⁴² Then you shall know that I am the LORD. (God is vindicated!) when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. ⁴³ And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. ⁴⁴ Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have dealt with you for My name’s sake, not according to your wicked ways (but mercifully and graciously) nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel,” says the Lord GOD.

Hosea 3:4-5 supports this postponement time - *For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.*

When Jesus cried out *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem* and referred to “your house will be left unto you desolate,” He seemed to directly speak about the Temple...leaving and

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departing the Temple (Matt. 24:1), retreating to the Mount of Olives, and telling the disciples of the Temple’s destruction in 70 AD. Yet, the “house” about which we read in Eze. 20:39-44 appears to refer to the promise of the Kingdom that God gave King David for His people.

One third of the Jewish people in the Tribulation will be refined, they will return (Dt. 30:1-6), and will enter into the Kingdom of God, the Millennial Kingdom, that Jesus will establish at His physical Second Coming (Matt. 25) - where they will serve God. AND, the redeemed from the Church – Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus since Pentecost, who have already been raptured, will return with Jesus to the earth (Rev. 19). Jesus will establish His Kingdom, and both Jews and Gentiles who are born again (John 3:3) will enter the Kingdom.

Jesus’ teaching while He sat on the Mount of Olives was delivered two days prior to His crucifixion (Matt. 26:1-2 - *When Jesus had finished all these words (and spoke of His coming in glory [Matt. 31:29-30]), He said to His disciples, ² ‘You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.’*

As Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, four of the disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew [Mark 13:3]) followed and asked when will the Temple be destroyed, as Jesus had just proclaimed, and, the disciples asked, “When will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?” Jesus then spoke to the disciples of signs that would forewarn the nation of Israel, not the Church, of His physical Second Coming.

Matt. 24:4-8 - *And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you (to be led away from the truth into error). ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows (beginning of birth pangs).*

WHY the Tribulation? Fulfillment of prophecy (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1-2; Micah 2:12-13; Isa. 34:6; Isa. 63 – cross reference); unparalleled judgment...God’s wrath being poured out on the earth; unparalleled evangelism (Rev. 7:9-10...cross reference); the purging/

refining of Israel in preparation for their restoration at the Messiah's physical Second Coming; picking up where He left off with Israel – using them as His servants/evangelists (144,000; the 2 witnesses).

Jesus described the judgments that will fall within the seven years of what the prophet Jeremiah called “the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble” (Jer. 30:7)

What Scripture teaches that the Tribulation will last for seven years? What begins the Tribulation?

Many believe that the rapture of the Church is the event that begins the seven-year Tribulation. CONSIDER: the main purpose of the rapture is to end the Church Age. Where in Scripture is that taught?

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Rom. 11:25 - *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery (a truth that was hidden in the OT, i.e. the Church [Eph. 3:3]), lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

“mystery” – a truth that was hidden/not revealed in the OT, i.e. the Church (Eph. 3:3)

“Blindness” – to cover with a thick skin; to harden by covering with a callus; to make the heart dull.

“in part” – not all of the ethnic people group, Israel, have been blinded. There are many Jewish people who have come to faith in Jesus. AND, “in part” also speaks of a temporary condition.

“has happened” – the action comes from the outside – coming upon Israel. To cause to be.

“until” – timeframe; speaks to a change in the condition of blindness.

Until what?

“the fullness” – something specific (noted by “the”) “fullness” – that which has been filled, i.e. a ship as it is filled with sailors, rowers, and soldiers; “the fullness” speaks of completeness.

“has come in” – to come into; to go out; to enter in.

The “fullness of the Gentiles” – when God will have completed the work that He has empowered the Church to do in this world...and, at the fullness, the completion of the work, God catches the Church up by seizing them, by force in the harpazo (rapture) to go out of this world and enter into Jesus' presence.

When the Church is removed from the earth, God will once again turn the attention of His plan specifically on Israel again.

Why is the Church referred to as Gentiles – when there are also Jewish people/ born again in the Church? I'm suggesting that it is to make the distinction. The “fullness

of the Gentiles,” seems to emphasize the distinction between the Gentiles and the Jewish people. WHY? Because it will be more evident that God will return to addressing Israel after the harpazo/the rapture.

Does the Tribulation begin directly after the rapture? Where do we look in Scripture to find out the beginning of the Tribulation? The “backbone of prophecy” – Daniel’s 70 Weeks Prophecy, Dan. 9:24-27.

The Tribulation begins when the antichrist, “the prince who is to come” (Dan. 9:27), brokers a peace agreement with Israel for one week which equals 7 years in the timeframe specified in Daniel’s 70 Weeks Prophecy.

The antichrist promises that for **one week – 7 years** sacrifices and offerings will be allowed. Then the antichrist puts an end to the sacrifices in the middle of the week – after 3.5 years.

There are two parts of 3.5 years each – to the Tribulation. Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27 – the abomination of desolations begins the second half of the Tribulation 1260 days; time, times, and half a time (3.5 years); 42 mos.

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This peace agreement could be signed very soon after the rapture. There could be several days, weeks, months, or even years between the rapture and the signing of this treaty. The Bible never tells us how much time passes between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation.

Between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation, however long, there will be further stage setting for the events of the end times. Once the stage is set and the players are in place, the treaty will be enacted.

*Matt. 24:4-8 - And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. (Rev. 12:9 - the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and **Satan**, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.) ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows (beginning of birth pangs).*

Jesus described the sorrows of the Tribulation as birth pangs. They will be the sufferings that precede the birth of the new age.

The signs in Matt. 24:4-8 coincide with what the Apostle John recorded in Revelation 6.

False messiahs will appear (Rev. 6:5). There will be reports of war (Rev. 6:6-7). There will be natural catastrophes – famines and earthquakes (Rev. 7).

The first rider of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in Rev. 6 is a rider on a white horse (Rev. 6:2) who is a false Messiah – the antichrist. Peace will be taken from the earth and war will ensue (v. 4). As a result of war there will be widespread famine (v. 6) that will result in widespread death (v. 8).

As dramatic as these events will be, the end is not yet; they will be the beginning of the birth pangs.

Jesus explained the very beginning of the Tribulation.

It appears that the “birth pangs” explain the entire Tribulation period: beginning labor and full labor with the events intensifying. As a woman must endure the entire period of labor before giving birth, so Israel must endure the entire seven-year Tribulation.

Rabbinic literature: *If you shall see kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah.* Bereshit Rabbah XLII:4 – Midrash on Genesis.

Jer. 30:6-7 - Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? 7 Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

QUESTIONS

What was new to you? Has this helped you understand the end times better? WHY?

What questions do you have?

What is most difficult to understand about end times?

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What will you do with this Biblical information?

Has God placed someone on your heart w/ whom you can share this information?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Reread the Week 5 handout with the Bible references.

Jot down observations. Ask questions.

Continue to find answers from Scripture.

Share with at least one person.

Read the Week 6 handout when you receive it.