Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Signs of Christ's Coming, Part 1
Scripture: Matthew 24:1-3
Code: 2366

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 24--25 appears a sermon given by our Lord to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. Appropriately, that sermon is known as the Olivet Discourse. It's theme is the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord talks about His return, the end of the present age, and the establishment of His Kingdom.

The sermon in this portion of Scripture was given in response to a question from the disciples. The answer given by Jesus is the longest answer to any question recorded in the New Testament. The insights given in the answer are essential for any understanding of the future.

A. The Bible's Comments on the Future

The Bible says much about the future. The Old Testament books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah and the New Testament book of Revelation all comment extensively on that subject. In fact, people who want to learn more about the coming of our Lord and the end times sometimes overlook Matthew 24--25 in their pursuit to study the other books. Yet Matthew 24--25 presents Christ's own words regarding the end times; therefore it is worthy of our attention.

Unfortunately, Matthew 24--25 is a much-misunderstood portion of Scripture. There are many different viewpoints and interpretations of what Jesus was saying; you'll learn them as we go through our study. Like many other passages in Scripture, Matthew 24--25 is not as complicated as many people make it out to be. Jesus' teaching is straightforward. It helps to imagine that you knew as much as the disciples did when they were listening to Christ. Matthew 24--25 can be understood, and it can have a far-reaching impact on our lives.

The Current Interest in Future Events

Everyone is curious about the future--we all want to know what will happen in our lives. Some people want to know what will happen to the economy so they can make the right investments. There are many reasons for wanting to understanding the future, and man has always sought to know the unknown.

The preoccupation with future events is not limited to those who study the Bible. Throughout human history, there have been seers, prophets, prognosticators, witch doctors, fortune tellers, and religious leaders who try to take a leap into the future and report back to those in the present so people might have a better understanding of how they should live.

Before we begin studying Matthew 24--25, it's necessary for us to understand the setting of the sermon.

B. The Jews' Curiosity About the Future

The Jewish people of Jesus' day wanted to know what the future held. They were a noble people capable of ruling themselves and forming a meaningful society. However, the Israelites had known oppression for most of their history, and by the time of Jesus, they were anxious for it to cease. The Jewish people longed for the Messiah to come. They knew that when He came, He would make things right and overthrow their oppressors--that He would establish again the kingdom in Israel and fulfill God's promises of peace.

Now we can understand why the Jews were very interested in eschatology. The English word eschatological is translated from the Greek word eschatos, which means "the last thing." Eschatology is the study of the last days or the end times.

1. The oppression

Let's consider the oppression the Jewish people experienced from the time Israel split into two separate kingdoms up to the time of Christ. First the Assyrians took the northern ten tribes into captivity. Then the remaining southern tribes were taken into captivity by Babylon. Then they were successively ruled by the Medes and the Persians, the Greeks, and finally in Christ's time, the Romans. In John 8:33 the Jewish leaders told Jesus that in spirit, they were never in bondage to any man. They were looking forward to the day when they would be ruled by a righteous king and know the blessedness promised to them in the Old Testament.

2. The optimism

The Jewish people knew that the Old Testament talked of a bright and hopeful future. They knew they could anticipate a Messiah who would come and reestablish the reign of David on the earth. They longed for the time when Jerusalem would dwell in prosperity and safety forever. So, the Jewish people were filled with hope for the future. No doubt they relished God's prophetic promises in the Old Testament. I'm sure they looked forward to the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6-7, which says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be

called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever."

Another prophetic statement the Jewish people exulted in appears in Isaiah 11:1-2: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Jeremiah 23:5 speaks of a future time when the Lord will "raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth." Jeremiah 30:9 reiterates that promise. Someday, Israel will become as a flower in full bloom under the blessing of God. Both Zechariah and Daniel spoke of Israel's future. Daniel said there would be a great holocaust someday (Dan. 12:1), but that in the end, a great stone (Christ) will smash the kingdoms of the earth to make way for God's eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:44-45).

So by the time Jesus came to earth, the Jewish people were looking forward to the eschatological events the prophets spoke of. They had derived their information from Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Much extrabiblical literature written around the time of Christ shows us what the Jewish people believed about the future. Some examples are the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, the Psalms of Solomon, the Assumption of Moses, the Book of Jubilees, the Ascension of Isaiah, 3 and 4 Esdras, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Secrets of Enoch, and the Sibylline Oracles.

3. The outline

In Emil Schurer's A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ are excerpts from some of the extrabiblical Jewish literature on eschatology ([Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1893], pp. 154-87). The following outline is borrowed from it.

a) The expectation of tribulation

The Jewish people believed that before the Messiah came would be a time of terrible tribulation. Just as a woman experiences much pain immediately before she gives birth to a child, so would the nation of Israel suffer before the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah. That viewpoint is biblically supported by Zechariah 14. It is also mentioned in the following passages of extrabiblical literature:

(1) 2 Baruch 27

And honor shall be turned into shame,

And strength humiliated into contempt,

And probity destroyed,

And beauty shall become ugliness ...

And envy shall rise in those who had not thought aught of themselves,

And passion shall seize him that is peaceful,

And many shall be stirred up in anger to injure many,

And they shall rouse up armies in order to shed blood,

And in the end they shall perish together with them.

The Jewish people anticipated a time of moral decay, hatred and war in the world prior to the coming of the Messiah.

(2) 4 Esdras 9:3

Here we read that there will be quakings of places, tumult of peoples, scheming of nations, confusion of leaders, disquietude of princes.

(3) Sibylline Oracles

From heaven shall fall fiery swords down to the earth. Lights shall come, bright and great, flashing into the midst of men; and earth, the universal mother, shall shake in these days at the hand of the Eternal. And the fishes of the sea and the beasts of the earth and the countless tribes of flying things and all the souls of men and every sea shall shudder at the presence of the Eternal and there shall be panic. And the towering mountain peaks and the hills of the giants he shall rend, and the murky abyss shall be visible to all And the high ravines in the lofty mountains shall be full of dead bodies and rocks shall flow with blood and each torrent shall flood the plain.... And God shall judge all with war and sword, and there shall be brimstone from heaven, yea stones and rain and hell incessant and grievous. And death shall be upon the four-footed beasts.... Yea the land itself shall drink of the blood of the perishing and beasts shall eat their fill of flesh (3:363ff).

(4) The Mishna

Arrogance increases, ambition shoots up, that the vine yields fruit yet wine is dear [scarce]. The government turns to heresy. There is no instruction. The synagogue is devoted to lewdness. Galilee

is destroyed, Gablan laid waste. The inhabitants of a district go from city to city without finding compassion. The wisdom of the learned is hated, the godly despised, truth is absent. Boys insult old men, old men stand in the presence of children. The son depreciates the father, the daughter rebels against the mother, the daughter-in-law against the mother- in-law. A man's enemies are his house-fellows (Sota ix.15).

The Jews didn't know it, but their theology was premillennial. They anticipated a time of turmoil around the world prior to the coming of Messiah.

b) The announcer like Elijah

The Jewish people believed that during the tribulation a herald would come announcing the immediate arrival of the Messiah. That herald would be like Elijah. Just as the Messiah is not David, but like David so the herald would be like Elijah. Interestingly, the Jews were drawn toward John the Baptist when he began his ministry because he was much like Elijah. John the Baptist would have been the forerunner to the tribulation if the Jews had received Christ and His kingdom. But because they rejected Him, the kingdom was postponed. Therefore there has to be another like Elijah who comes prior to the return of the King. Despite their rejection of Christ, the Jews recognized there would be a herald announcing Messiah's coming. In fact, Jewish oral law stated that any money or property of disputed ownership had to be kept unclaimed until Elijah came, for he would set everything right.

c) The appearing of the Messiah

The Jews said that after the one like Elijah came, the divine King Himself would come to establish His kingdom in glory and vindicate God's people.

d) The war against the Messiah

According to Schurer, the next event the Jews anticipated was that the nations of the world would ally themselves to fight against the Messiah. In the Sibylline Oracles we read, "The kings of the nations shall throw themselves against this land bringing retribution on themselves. They shall seek to ravage the shrine of the mighty God and of the noblest men whensoever they come to the land. In a ring round the city the accursed kings shall place each one his throne with his infidel people by him. And then with a mighty voice God shall speak unto all the undisciplined, empty-handed people and judgment shall come upon them from the mighty God, and all shall perish at the hand of the Eternal" (3:663ff). The nations would gather in Israel to fight against God, yet God would destroy them all.

In 4 Esdras is written, "It shall be that when all the nations hear his (The Messiah's) voice, every man shall leave his own land and the warfare they have one against the other, and an innumerable

multitude shall be gathered together desiring to fight against him" (13:33-35). There is coming a time when all other wars will be stopped to begin the war against Messiah. The Bible confirms that the nations of the world will gather to fight the Messiah (Rev. 19:19).

e) The destruction of the nations

When all the nations of the earth gather to war against Christ, He will destroy them. Schurer quotes Philo as saying that Christ will "take the field and make war and destroy great and populous nations." In 4 Ezra we read, "He shall reprove them for their ungodliness, rebuke them for their unrighteousness, reproach them to their faces with their treacheries--and when he has rebuked them he shall destroy them" (12:32-33). Enoch 52:7-9 says, "It shall come to pass in those days that none shall be saved, either by gold or by silver, and none shall be able to escape, and there shall be no iron for war, nor shall one clothe oneself with a breastplate. Bronze shall be of no service, and tin shall not be esteemed, and lead shall not be desired. And all things shall be destroyed from the surface of the earth." The Lord will destroy all the hostile nations; He will render their armor useless.

Remember that Schurer is not talking about a premillennial viewpoint that contemporary dispensationalists adhere to; he's talking about what the Jewish people believed at the time of Christ.

f) The renovation of Jerusalem

The Jewish people believed that after the Messiah came, the city of Jerusalem would be purified and renovated. The book of Enoch says of the city, "All the pillars were new and the ornaments larger than those of the first" (90:28-29).

g) The regathering of the Jewish people

Once the city of Jerusalem was renovated, the Jews said there would be a mass exodus of Jews to the city. In fact, there is a daily prayer the Jews have in which they say, "Lift up a banner to gather our dispersed and assemble us from the four ends of the earth."

In the eleventh psalm of Solomon is written, "Blow ye in Zion on the trumpet to summon the saints, cause ye to be heard in Jerusalem the voice of him that bringeth good tidings; for God hath had pity on Israel in visiting them. Stand on the height, O Jerusalem, and behold thy children, from the East and the West, gathered together by the Lord; from the North they come in the gladness of their God, from the isles afar off God hath gathered them. High mountains hath he abased into a plain for them; the hills fled at their entrance. The woods gave them shelter as they passed by; every sweet-smelling tree God caused to spring up for them, that Israel might pass by in the visitation of the glory of their God. Put on, O Jerusalem, thy glorious garments; make ready thy holy robe; for God hath spoken good for Israel forever and ever, let the Lord do what he hath spoken concerning Israel and

Jerusalem; let the Lord raise up Israel by His glorious name. The mercy of the Lord by upon Israel forever and ever."

The Jewish people correctly understood the Old Testament prophets regarding the end times. Many people think that the belief in Christ's return after the Tribulation to set up the millennial kingdom was expressed only by the Christians in the church age. But the Jewish people of Christ's time adhered to the same viewpoint.

h) The significance of Palestine

The Jews believed that after the regathering, Palestine would become the center of the world, and the nations would become subject to it. They said that the people of the nations would come to Jerusalem to worship the King. The Sibylline Oracles say, "All the isles and the cities shall say, How doth the Eternal love those men! For all things work in sympathy with them and help them.... Come let us all fall upon the earth and supplicate the eternal King, to His Temple, for He is the sole Potentate" (3:690ff).

i) The new age

The Jewish people said that when the Messiah reigned, He would usher in a new age of peace, goodness, and glory that would last forever.

Taking into consideration Jewish beliefs regarding the last times, you can understand the perspective they must have had by Christ's time. They had been under tribulation from the Medes and the Persians, the Greeks, and now the Romans. There was also the Maccabean period, when Antiochus Epiphanes of Greece desecrated the Temple. The treatment they received from the Romans made them feel as if they were in the tribulation period. Then when John the Baptist came, they thought he was the one like Elijah. Next they saw Jesus, who healed people, raised the dead, fed multitudes. Later on He rode into the city of Jerusalem on Passover week, and people threw palm branches and garments before Him, declaring He was the Messiah (Matt. 21:8-9).

What was the first thing that was supposed to happen after Messiah came, according to the Jews? The nations of the earth were to gather against Him, and He would destroy them. So the Jews thought that if Jesus was indeed the Messiah, He would start a war, and naturally the Romans would be the first people attacked. Once the holocaust was over with, He would purify Jerusalem and do away with false religion and hypocrites. Then true worship would take place in the glorious Temple described in Ezekiel 40--48, the Jews would be regathered, and the eternal kingdom would be established. That's what the disciples were thinking.

4. The oversight

You may wonder why the disciples didn't consider the Lord's statement that He would soon die. In John 12:24 He said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." However, the disciples couldn't see how Christ's death fit into the eschatological scenario in their minds. All they could see was coming glory. They didn't understand that the Messiah had to die and that He would return again after a long period of time. That time period is known as a mystery because it was not revealed in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:1-9). The Old Testament prophets and Christ's disciples had visualized all the end-time events happening at once after Christ's first coming. The disciples thought everything was right on schedule: the Jewish people were experiencing tribulation, John the Baptist was like Elijah, and the Messiah had come.

Judas probably thought everything was on schedule. That's why he remained a disciple for as long as He did. He never really believed in all that Christ was, but He wanted to remain long enough to play an important role in the coming kingdom. He was motivated by greed. But after the sermon about the end times in Matthew 24--25, the first thing Jesus said in chapter 26 was this: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (v. 2). Judas's hopes were smashed. He expected the grandeur of the coming kingdom, but Jesus said He was going to die. Thus He decided to betray Christ for whatever money he could get (Matt. 26:14-16).

To see what started the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24--25, let's look at what happened at the end of Matthew 23. Jesus had been teaching all day at the Temple on the Wednesday of Passover week. The Jewish religious leaders asked Him some questions, and He answered them by condemning them. He pronounced judgment upon them, saying, "Your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (vv. 38-39). Judgment would soon come upon the nation of Israel, and they would not be redeemed until the nation recognized Him as the Messiah.

When the Lord stated what He did in Matthew 23:38-39, the disciples thought it was time for Him to destroy the nations. With that in mind, they asked the Lord a question in Matthew 24:3: "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" Implied in the word when is the thought that the second coming would be very soon-- as soon as tomorrow or next week. The disciples thought they had reached the end of the age.

C. The Disciples' Comprehension of the Future

1. Their awe at the Lord's prediction

In Matthew 24:1-2 we read, "Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things?

Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Jesus walked out of the Temple with His disciples right after He said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). He was referring to the Temple, and interestingly, didn't call it the Father's house as He had in John 2:16. That's because God had already left. It was Ichabod, which means "the glory is departed" (1 Sam. 4:21; cf. Ezek. 9:3, 10:4, 11:23). The word desolate (Gk., eremos) means "abandoned to ruin."

a) An inconceivable consummation

After Jesus said that one stone wouldn't be left one top of another, the disciples were confused. They couldn't figure out how that could happen. The Temple was massive, and it was more than one building. It was surrounded by a huge wall, and it was on a big flat area on the top of a mountain. Enclosed within the wall were other buildings that were a part of the Temple area. All that was supported by a retaining wall to the south and the west--a wall that supported the mountain. To the west was a natural slope and to the north a flat area. If you stood at the top of the Temple wall on the south side and looked down, it was a long distance down from the Temple wall all the way to the bottom of the retaining wall. The top of the Temple's south wall may be where Satan asked Jesus to jump when he tried to tempt the Lord, because it's such a tremendous drop (Matt. 4:5).

The Temple and its surrounding structure were like a fort. No doubt the disciples were in awe of it; they were country men used to little houses on rolling hills. The Temple was so massive, and it was inconceivable to think it could be torn down. Mark 13:2 mentions the greatness of the Temple buildings, and Luke 21:5 says the Temple was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts. First century Roman historian Tacitus said the Temple was of immense wealth, and that it was an excellent fortress (Histories V.viii). The Talmud, the codification of Jewish law, states there was no finer building (Baba Bathra 4a). It was Herod the Great who had the Temple built. However, Herod was not a Jew, so the Jewish people wondered if the final Temple might be built by someone who was.

The Temple was a formidable place. Some of the stones used in constructing the Temple were forty feet long, twelve feet high, and twelve feet wide. How the builders lifted and carried stones weighing up to one hundred tons is hard to figure out. Some of the large stones had to be lifted two or three hundred feet from the bottom of the south retaining wall to the top of the wall around the Temple. It was a massive undertaking. Some individual stones are as long as eighty-five feet. Thus you can understand the disciples' amazement when Jesus said their house would be left desolate. How could such a busy place that was the hub of Jewish life be abandoned to ruin? Even though the Jewish people expected the Temple to be replaced with the glorious Temple in Ezekiel 40--48, the disciples still couldn't imagine the complete destruction of the Herodian Temple.

b) An immediate confirmation

Jesus knew what the disciples were thinking, so He said, "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2). The Lord reaffirmed that the Temple would be left desolate. I've stood at the foot of the western wall that was a part of the Herodian Temple, as well as at the cornerstones in the southeast and southwest corners. They've been their since the time of Christ, and they don't look like anything could move them. They give a small idea of what the Temple must have been like.

If the western wall is still standing, does that contradict Jesus' statement that not one stone would be left on top of another? No, because the western wall and the cornerstones were stones that held up the retaining wall. They weren't a part of the Temple or Temple wall itself; the retaining wall was there to help hold the mountain in place. Therefore, Jesus was correct when He said that not one stone of the Temple would be left on another. First century Jewish historian Josephus said the city was so leveled that future visitors had no reason to believe the city had ever been inhabited (Wars VII.i). The Romans completely tore apart the Temple in A.D. 70. Jesus said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another" (emphasis added). The phrase "not be left" is a double negative in the Greek text. The Temple would be completely destroyed.

Once the Lord spoke of the destruction of the Temple, the disciples probably thought Jerusalem was about to be renovated, and that the tribulation was over. They were filled with hope.

2. Their anticipation of the Lord's presence

Matthew 24:3 begins by saying that the Lord and the disciples were on the Mount of Olives. That means they would have gone down the back side of the Temple mount, crossed the Kidron Valley over a brook, and gone up to the top of the Mount of Olives. The view from there was breathtaking, and by that time the sun was setting over the white limestone buildings of Jerusalem. Even today you can see the same spectacular view, the major difference being the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar glistening in the setting sun instead of the massive Temple. The disciples were probably thinking that everything would now come to a great climax in the most glorious moment of Israel's history.

a) The statement

In that setting, the disciples came to Jesus privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" (v. 4). They asked Him when the desolation of Jerusalem would take place, referring to what Jesus said in Matthew 23:38-39. They didn't know there would be a long period of time between the destruction of Jerusalem and Christ's return in full glory.

The disciples wanted to know what would indicate the coming of the end of the age. Would there be darkness? A brilliant light? An angel from heaven? A trumpet blast? The disciples were excited and anxious. Even after the Lord's resurrection the disciples still expected the kingdom to come right away. In Acts 1:6 they asked Christ, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" When Christ died the disciples were despondent, but the resurrection heightened their hopes even more than before. When they saw Him out of the grave, they thought the time had come for the kingdom to be set up. Luke 19:11 says that Jesus "spoke a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they [the Jewish people] thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

b) The specifics

(1) About the Lord's coming

The word coming in Matthew 24:3 is translated from the Greek word parousia. It means "to be around" or "to be present." The best way to translate the verse might be, "What shall be the sign of Your full presence?" The disciples were referring more to the Lord's permanent presence, not His coming. Parousia was also used in verses 27, 37, and 39. Because the Lord used it frequently to refer to His return, the New Testament writers did the same (James 5:8, 2 Peter 3:4, 1 John 2:28). Parousia became synonymous with Christ's arrival to set up His kingdom. However, when the disciples asked about the Lord's coming in Matthew 24:3, they were saying, "When are You going to arrive in Your full Messianic revelation? When will You become all that we anticipate You to be?" They didn't think in terms of His leaving and returning; they simply thought the Lord would soon make a transition to setting up His kingdom.

(2) About the end of the age

At the end of Matthew 24:3 the disciples asked the Lord, "What shall be the sign ... of the end of the age?" The phrase "the end of the age" is translated from the Greek phrase sunteleias tou aionos. It appears five times in Matthew's gospel. Sunteleias means "the complete end." So the disciples were asking, "When is the final end of man's age?"

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus said to the disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." He will be with us until the final end. In the parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus said, "The harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age" (Matt. 13:39-40). The phrase is used twice in those verses. The end of the age is when God separates the wheat from the tares and sends the tares to hell. Verses 42-43 say He "shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The

phrase is used again in Matthew 13:49-50: "So shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and separate the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." "The end of the age" then refers to the time when God comes in ultimate, final judgment and sends unbelievers to hell and takes believers into His presence.

What sign were the disciples to look for that would indicate the end of the age? When would they know that ultimate judgment was about to take place? When will that happen? Those questions prompted the Lord's sermon in Matthew 24--25.

The Lord's answer begins in verse 4. He answered the question the disciples asked, but said nothing more about the destruction of Jerusalem. That's because He knew the destruction would have nothing to do with His return. The judgment enacted on Israel in A.D. 70 was for the unregenerate, Christ-rejecting Jews of that time. It was only a small taste of the judgment to come at the end of the age when the Messiah returns in full glory. That is the theme of the sermon known as the Olivet Discourse. The Lord took His disciples from their moment in history all the way into the far future, when He returns to set up His kingdom in glory.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why is Matthew 24--25 worthy of our attention?

2.Why were the Jewish people of Jesus' day especially curious about the future?

3. What Scriptures gave the Jewish people optimism about the future?

4.According to extrabiblical Jewish literature, what did the Jewish people believe would happen in the coming tribulation?

5.What is supposed to happen before Christ comes, according to Jewish eschatological beliefs?

6.What did the Jewish people believe would happen to Jerusalem after the Messiah came? What remaining three things were supposed to happen, according to their eschatological viewpoint?

7.What oversight did the disciples make in their anticipation of the coming kingdom?

8.When the Lord said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38), what did the disciples think was going to happen?

9.Why was Christ's declaration in Matthew 24:2 regarding the Temple so hard for the disciples to believe?

10.What did the disciples ask Jesus after He said what He did in Matthew 24:2? Why?

11.Explain the significance of the phrase "the end of the age."

Pondering the Principles

1.God keeps His promises. When Christ said, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17), the Jewish people rejected Him. Thus the kingdom God promised to Israel was postponed. God could have eliminated the kingdom altogether because of Israel's rejection, but He didn't do that. According to Zechariah 13:1, there is coming a day when the fountain of salvation will be opened up to the line of Israel, and the nation will be regenerated. Christ's eternal kingdom will come; God's promise will come true. That applies to all the other promises God made in the Bible. Think of some promises that are especially meaningful to you, and praise God for how He has made or will make them a reality in your life.

2.God's sovereignty is evident in Matthew 24:2. Jesus said the Temple in Jerusalem would be completely destroyed. Sure enough, the Romans completely destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70. God is in full control of everything that happens--even to the point of leading the Romans against Jerusalem. If God can control major events like that, surely He control the circumstances in your life! However, you won't always understand the purpose for every situation in your life. The key is trusting in God's sovereignty and His promise that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). In every situation, yield yourself to God, and ask Him to work out His sovereign will, knowing that it will be carried out to His greater glory and your greatest good.

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