

In the last meeting we covered verses 20-24 of Chap. 21. In that passage, our Lord Jesus foretells the coming Destruction of Jerusalem to His disciples especially to Peter, Andrew, James and John who asked Him for the time and the sign (singular) that precedes the destruction of the Temple. From several prophecies throughout the Bible including this discourse here's the synopsis of what is going to happen. After the 1st advent of Christ, the religious persecution, religious deception and Global disasters will occur and become intense, longer and worse just like the birth pains leading up to the Great Tribulation. That's the period the Antichrist turns against Israel. He'll break his strong covenant that he made with the Jews for 7 years. But at the end of the first 3 ½ years he will put an end to the sacrificial system and offering. As Jesus told in the parallel passage in **Matt. 24:15**, the Antichrist will commit the "Abomination (detestable or disgusting thing) of Desolation (to lay waste)". The city where the Temple will be rebuilt in the future will be captured by the armies of the Gentile nations under the leadership of the **Antichrist**. The houses will be plundered, the women raped, half of the city will be exiled.

The "**man of lawlessness**" will utter haughty and arrogant words. He'll blaspheme or curse the name of God. This "**son of destruction**" will oppose and exalt himself against every so-called god or object of worship. He will enter the Temple in Jerusalem, takes his seat in the Holy place and will proclaim himself to be God. This is the abomination. This will launch the Great tribulation. He'll be given authority over every one who will dwell on the earth, every tribe, people, language, and nation and so almost the entire human race will worship the Antichrist. The remnant Christians living during the Great tribulation will be persecuted and/or killed for their faith and faithfulness. Widespread Persecution of Christians around the globe. The kings of the whole world will be deceived by the demonic spirits sent by the unholy trinity (Satan, Antichrist and the false prophet). They'll be mesmerized by the power, false signs and wonders and they'll join forces with the Antichrist and assemble at Mount Megiddo to fight against the Almighty God. All of these are prophesied in **Dan 9:24-27, Zech. 14:1-3, 2 Thes. 2:1-12, Rev. 13:5-8.**

This is exactly what Jesus is referring to here. He's not referring to the destruction of Jerusalem (and the Temple) that happened in AD 70 under the Roman general Titus Vespasian or the "abomination" of Antiochus Epiphanies in 167 BC when he set up the image of Zeus and the sacrifice of a pig in the Temple. Jesus clearly mentioned "*the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)*" in **Matt 24:15** and in **Mk. 13:14**. For those of you who might think it's about Titus, you should know that he never proclaimed himself to be God but as a Caesar he attributed deity to himself and considered himself to be one among many gods. He never committed any abomination inside the Temple. Even Antiochus Epiphanies didn't make any covenant with the Jews for 7 years and never exalted himself against every god.

Matthew & Mark injected in the middle of the discourse, let those who read understand. It's all in the future. Though Luke doesn't mention the term "abomination of desolation" he uses the word "desolation" in **v.20** and in **v.22** he says "*for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.*" Vengeance is God's (**Deut. 32:35, 41, 43; Isa 61:1, 2**) and Jesus is telling them about God's final vengeance upon the unbelievers who rejected Him and worshipped the Antichrist. The Great Tribulation will be so great that Jesus said in **Mark 13:19**, "*For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.*" It's horrific and in an unprecedented scale. The Jews have faced so many tribulations but this at the hand of the Antichrist will be unmatched and it's not just in Jerusalem but all over the earth. Jesus describes the condition as great distress upon the earth and wrath of God against the wicked in **v.23. Satan acts as God's agent** to destroy them. Martin Luther said, "Even the devil is God's devil".

But even during such a horrible time, **God always cares for His children.** He protects the remnant. **v.21 is a command to the Jewish believers.** It's not just a comment on the response of the people. Jesus said, "*Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it*". From the Gk. Word pheugó (fyoo'-go) which is translated as flee or escape, we get the word "fugitive", one who runs away. This is the same word used by Paul in **1 Cor 6:18** where he says, "*Flee from sexual immorality.*" Don't even think or ponder, just escape, run away. Eusebius, the church historian reported that the Christians fled the city right before the "siege of Jerusalem" in AD 70. But in the future, before the Great Tribulation all the Jewish believers in the region of Judea are commanded to flee as well. The Olivet Discourse is a warning for the

1st century Christians and everyone else who have lived since then.

John also prophecies about this in **Rev 12:5-6** when he says, “*She (the woman representing Israel) gave birth to a male child (Jesus), one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman (Jewish believers) fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days (3 ½ years)*”. God doesn’t abandon His children. God has prepared a secure place for her and He will take care of her physical needs as well. Satan can’t touch any of His children without His permission. God is greater than Him. Satan is one of His creations.

So Jesus here in the Olivet Discourse **v.23**, grieved over the pregnant women and those nursing for they’ll suffer during the Great tribulation. They’ll be the most vulnerable. What is usually considered a blessing (having a child) will be a curse during those days! Jesus in **Matt 24:20** even asked the believers who live during the tribulation to *pray that their flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath* (day of rest - Saturday) because it’ll be too cold or the gates of the city will be shut. The Christians will get trapped inside the city if it’s during that time. Pray that the believers including themselves will be able to escape and flee. **This indeed should motivate all of us to pray for the non-Christians and share the Gospel.** The wrath of God remains on them and they’ll be condemned forever. Jesus has warned us of the Divine Judgment. If you are an unbeliever this applies to you. The wrath of God will be poured out on you but He has provided “the Way” to escape it. Put your faith in Jesus and flee to the New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God. Don’t wait for such signs to happen. When God convicts you, surrender your life to Him. He will be your refuge and fortress.

Jesus concludes the passage by saying in **v.24** that the Gentiles will stomp Jerusalem. As we know, Jerusalem has been trampled by the Gentiles since 586 BC when the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar captured it, for about 2500 years now. It’ll not end till the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled, till the feet of the Messiah Jesus touches the Mount of Olives again. So far, Jesus explained what will happen during the Great Tribulation. It’ll not go on forever. God will end it. Satan was given authority only for 3 ½ years. He can’t exercise it even for 1 second more than what God had determined. Even when everything is chaotic and terrible, even when death was wished upon over the tribulation, even when evil has reached the extreme, even when Christians are martyred, God is still in control. If prophecy is for edification, exhortation and comfort as Paul says in **1 Cor. 14**, this should comfort us. But even in our daily lives, sometimes it seems like God is not in control. It seems God doesn’t care. We wonder if God will do something. How long should we suffer? **It is easy for us to believe that God created the universe but many times it’s hard to believe that He’ll take care of us. Isn’t it?** Like Asaph in Ps. 73, we become bitter towards God. We become envious of the wicked. We ask the age-old question of “Why bad things happen to good people (including ourselves)?” But as Asaph realized, God never makes a mistake. He neither slumbers nor sleeps, never leaves us nor forsakes us. He cares for His own. It’s for His glory and for our good. **Ps 73:28** says, “*But for me it is good to be near God.*” God was his strength and portion forever. God will end the tribulation for the sake of the elect. He’ll preserve them. God will vindicate.

He’s going to do this by sending His son again. **Heb. 9:28** says, “*so Christ...will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*” Jesus now turns our attention to His 2nd coming. He’ll clarify the misconception of the disciples that there was only ONE coming of the Messiah. **Let’s read v.25-28.** **v.25** says, “*And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves*”. Matthew and Mark start this section by saying, “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*” (**Matt. 24:29**) Those are the signs that Luke is referring to. After 1260 days have passed, God will bring about “earth-shattering cosmic events”. **This is not a new revelation but Jesus reiterated what has been already said in the OT many times.** **Isaiah 13:6-11** says, “*Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and*

their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.” Though it's an oracle concerning Babylon's invasion of Judah, it's a preview of what's going to happen in the future, not just to Judah but the whole earth. Partial fulfillment in the near future but a complete, final fulfillment at the end of the age.

The prophet **Joel** said in **Chap. 2:1, 10, 11** “...for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!...The earth quakes... the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?” The term “Day of the LORD” always refers to the Divine Judgment. By the way, darkness over a region on earth has happened before. Darkness is always associated with God's displeasure. The 9th plague against the Pharaoh and the Egyptians was just that. We read in **Ex. 10:21-23**, “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. (land of Goshen)” But this darkness at the end of the age is all over the earth. It'll be similar to what happened from noon till 3pm on the Friday when Jesus was hanging on the cross. It'll be darkness over all the earth and **as Spurgeon said, “Midnight at midday”**. The earth will experience it for the final time at the end of the Great tribulation.

Joel Chap. 3:1-2,14-16 says, “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Yahweh has judged; refers to Kidron Valley in Jerusalem). And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel...Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.” Zephaniah in **Chap. 1** says the day of the LORD is a day of wrath, distress, anguish, ruin, devastation, thick darkness and gloom. Silver or gold will not deliver them from the hand of God. He'll consume the earth and a full and sudden end for all the “sinners”.

Ezekiel (Chap. 30, 38), **Haggai** (Chap. 2), **Amos** (Chap. 8) have prophesied about the “Day of LORD” with similar descriptions. It's the day of the wrath of God poured out on the earth and its inhabitants. **Malachi** (Chap. 4) says it's the great and awesome day of the LORD. The disciples have been familiar with the OT prophecies. Jesus is reminding His disciples of that final Day of Judgment before His return. Peter and John repeat that for us. **Peter** knew it so well that he quoted **Joel 2:30-32** in his Pentecostal sermon in **Acts 2:19-21**, “And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Jesus said in **v.26**, “people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” People will faint because of the expectations of what is coming. In Isaiah's language, “all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt”. The events will be unparalleled, never like this before and never will be. **John** saw this in his vision in **Revelation 6:12-17**. The 6th seal of the scroll is about the cosmic events. *When he (the Lamb) opened the sixth seal, I (John) looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”*

There will be pitch darkness, earth quakes, tsunamis, meteors, complete devastation of this planet as the tribulation comes to an end. People would want to die rather than facing Jesus. There won't be repentance but people will

curse the name of God even after such cosmic disturbances. They will fear the events but not the God who is behind those events. They will beg the creation (mountains and rocks) but not beg God for mercy. No evangelism, no conviction of the Holy Spirit – just depraved people. We have all of them today but won't be there during the Great tribulation. If you are an unbeliever, you have heard so much on the wrath of God but there's hope. Call on the name of the LORD and be saved today! So what happens next? The glorious coming of our Lord Jesus!

Jesus said in **v.27**, *"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* The Son of Man is a Messianic Title and coming in the clouds is mentioned in Dan. 7:13-14, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, **with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." In the NT, Jesus is referred to as "the Son of Man" 88 times. "Son of God" refers to His deity. "Son of Man" refers to His humanity. He is God manifested in flesh, in human form. Jesus refers to Himself with this title more than any other title. In the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas Iscariot was going to betray Him, "Jesus said to him, *"Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"* (**Luke 22:48**) and in **John 8:28**, "Jesus said to them, *"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he"*.

So Jesus is telling His disciples that after the all the cosmic signs have taken place, He will return. He's indirectly telling them that when He came the 1st time He didn't come to establish the Messianic kingdom which the Jews were eagerly anticipating. It's not the end of the age yet. Those things will happen at His 2nd coming. When He came for the first time only a few saw Him but when He returns, everyone will see. It'll not be secretive. He came as the Savior to save sinners before but in the future He'll come as the Righteous Judge to judge the world. He came as a humble, suffering servant but later as the glorious King.

The whole earth is in chaos and pitch dark and in the midst of it Jesus will come in a cloud, the same way He went to Heaven. **Acts 1:9-11** says, *"And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."* He was taken up physically, literally and bodily. He'll come back to earth in the same way, not figuratively. John says in **Rev. 1:7**, *"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him (those who have rejected Him), and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."* And in **Rev 14:14-16**, *"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."* So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped." Jesus came as the Gospel sower the first time but He'll come as the Gospel reaper when He returns. He'll come in a cloud, surrounded by clouds. Darkness turns to light forever. Paradise lost is paradise regained.

Matthew (24:31) and **Mark (13:27)** also say Jesus will send out His angels to gather His children those who are in earth and who are in Heaven, the elect and Paul in **2 Thes 1:7-10** focuses on what happens to the wicked at His return, *"...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed."* **In which category do you belong? Will you reign with Christ or will you be punished forever.** You have now listened to the Gospel. If you do not obey by putting your faith in Jesus then you'll be away from the presence of God forever. That's the warning.

For a believer here's the comfort, **Rev. 19:11-16** says, *"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse (symbol of power, authority, and war – Roman military procession)! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True,*

and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire (associated with judgment), and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven (saints who have died already) arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations (wicked, rebellious), and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

v.28 – "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." **What things?** All of the signs from v.8-26 happening, world infested with false prophets and Christs, people killing each other, catastrophes, persecution of Christians and martyrdom, rejection by own family members and friends, destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, when these things "begin" to take place, as much as they are disappointing and terrible and will only become worse, if you are a believer, watch out, be attentive and lift up your heads in hope and rejoice. **Why?** Because the return of Jesus is nearing. He'll come to redeem us from these tribulations and sufferings. Don't become discouraged. God will help us endure and will release us from troubles. Watch for the signs. Hope in God. Rejoice in Him always for our Redeemer is strong.

Until He comes, **live a holy and godly life**. **Titus 2:11-13** says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ". And do you know that...

- There are over 1500 passages that refer to Jesus' 2nd coming
- 1 out of 25 NT verses directly relates to the 2nd coming of Christ
- For every time the Bible mentions the 1st coming, 8 times it refers to 2nd coming.
- Jesus speaks 21 times of His 2nd coming and over 50 times we are told to be ready for His return.

Be ready for His return. Let's be like the wise virgins who were expecting and ready to meet the Bridegroom Jesus.

Watch Out and Be Ready!