

July 27, 2025

“Jesus Predicts the Temple’s Destruction”
Lesson 5

Matt. 24:1-14

Intro

The temple in Jerusalem played a central role in Israel’s history. King David wanted to build it, but God chose his son Solomon as the builder. But Solomon proved unfaithful, and the nation split into two after he died. Instead of being a place for all God’s people to come to, the location of God’s sanctuary became a source of conflict and jealousy between the kings of Israel and Judah. The unfaithfulness of Judah’s rulers contributed to the temple being stripped of its glory, with Babylon eventually destroying it in 586 BC.

When the exiles of Judah returned from captivity in 536 BC, the faithful set to work rebuilding the temple. It was far from the glorious structure Solomon had built. Hundreds of years later, Herod the Great made the second temple magnificent. But Herod had an unworthy purpose in doing this; the project was to show his family’s right to rule. This temple’s glory is shown by Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian. He records that 10,000 workers and masons had worked on this temple, and that it had required 1000 carts to bring all the stones needed for the work.

Jesus walks into this temple, and doesn’t praise it. Instead, he turns over tables and kicks the money changers out of the temple courtyard. The temple leaders questioned his right to do this, and he silenced them with a question of His own (Matt. 21:25-27) and parables (21:28-44). He stayed in the temple in the next two chapters, facing down a hostile audience and continuing his criticisms. Today’s passage is known as the “Olivet Discourse”, the fifth of Jesus’s “discourses” in Matthew.

Read Matthew 24:1-14

1. vs. 1: Before leaving the temple, Jesus had criticized the religious leaders for their hypocrisy
He had pronounced seven woes on them
This harsh interaction seems to have unsettled His disciples
They seem to be trying to lighten the mood by noting the glory of the buildings
Maybe they are thinking that one day Jesus will rule over these very buildings
2. vs. 2: Jesus’ answer to the disciples is stark and direct
“Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down”
He is obviously saying the temple will be destroyed (“thrown down”)
The destroyers will be the Romans, who in 70 AD do destroy the temple
3. vs. 3: The disciples come to Jesus a little later with some deep questions
“When will this happen?” (The destruction of the temple)
“What will be the sign of Your coming?”
The big question is the second one about Jesus’ coming
He is already there
We know the disciples didn’t understand that He would die and rise again
So they aren’t referring to His second coming, the way we might think now

They are thinking of Jesus coming into power as a king
They want to know when He will be taking power

4. vs. 4-5: Jesus' answer to them isn't what they expect

He doesn't tell them, "this is how you'll know I'm the Messiah"
He says, "This is how you'll know these others aren't the Messiah"
There were many working against the Romans who people saw as liberators
Jesus says that many would be deceived
He says this because He doesn't want His disciples to be among the deceived

5. vs. 6: Jesus is here talking to His disciples

He says there will be talk of wars, and rumors that wars are coming
This was what Jews of Jesus' day were seeking, a rebellion against Rome
Jesus tells them, even if there is a war, that's not the sign of the end
He says to them, "the end is still to come".
Disciples were to be prepared to endure conflicts while carrying out their missions
Is this a prophecy of the end times when Jesus will return?
It's possible, and has been interpreted that way for a long time
Many prophecies have both an immediate and a long-term fulfillment

6. vs. 7: Jesus then gives three more "signs", one political and two natural disasters

He says that "nation will rise against nation"—there will be conflict and war
This has been an unfortunate reality for most of mankind's history
Besides the wars (or maybe because of them), there will be famines
In addition, there will be earthquakes—natural disasters that we can't control
All of these remind us that man is mortal and life is short and fleeting

7. vs. 8: The disciples wanted to know about the "end of the age" (vs. 3)

Jesus has been telling them about the beginning—here "birth pains"
Birth pains occur before the child is born—they must happen first
Jesus uses this analogy to make the same point about life events
Difficult things must happen before the end comes
The events that occur are not the sign that the end has come

8. vs. 9: Jesus switches here from global problems to personal ones for His disciples

They will be persecuted and put to death because of their connection to Jesus
All the disciples except John died as martyrs
They were hated and persecuted because they stood by and for Jesus

9. vs. 10: The effect of all this hate and persecution will be to fragment the church

The people will "turn away from the faith"
The persecution will be too much for some; they will give up the faith
They will "betray and hate each other"

10. vs. 11-12: Another "birth pain" will be the rise of false prophets

They will be successful for a time, because they will "deceive many"
The "love of many will grow cold", which will result in "wickedness"

11. vs. 13: Finally, a bright spot in the midst of evil

“the one who stands firm to the end will be saved”

These negative actions will occur long before the “end” arrives

Jesus warns His disciples of what is coming so they can prepare themselves

Yes, the suffering will continue, and persecution will divide God’s church

This statement allows believers to remain strong and dedicated in spite of troubles

There is a reward coming for those who remain faithful to Christ

12. vs. 14: This verse especially lets us know that these verses apply to us as well as the disciples

The gospel must be preached in “the whole world”

That is still being done today

There were certainly large portions of the world “ungospeled” in the 1st century

Gospel also means “good news”

Through Abraham and his descendants, the whole world would be blessed

This happened in Jesus Christ, who came to save humanity by sacrificing Himself

His death, burial, and resurrection is the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom coming to earth

This is the good news that we are blessed by today

After this good news message reaches all, then at some point “the end will come”

Application: The message Jesus gave the disciples regarding the signs to look for is the same for us. The signs aren’t for the future; they are for us now. We must remain faithful and be willing to endure hardship and suffering. We can do this because we have our hope in Jesus’ blood and authority. As we wait for Him to return, we represent Him on earth. Whatever the challenges or difficulties we encounter, we are called to live faithfully in the here and now.

Prayer: Father God, we know that You have a complete understanding and knowledge of time. Help us not to be focused more on the end than on the beginning, the “right now”. Help us to be lights for Jesus in times of suffering, both our own and others’. Strengthen us by Your Spirit to endure, to grow, to serve, and to proclaim Jesus, all while anticipating His return. In Jesus’ name, Amen.