

Last Days - Part Four

The Temple Thrown Down

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Matthew 24:1,2

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew 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 and His disciples were gathered together at the temple, and He was beginning to bring something into the hearts and minds of the disciples, something concerning the signs of the times that would really intrigue them. This prophetic statement in Matthew 24:2 started them thinking. As they moved out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, the Lord sat down with them, and they began to ask Him some questions:

When?

Matthew 24:3

And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?

As we examine the entire account (looking both in Matthew 24 and Luke 21), it is easy to discover how Jesus answered this question:

Luke 21:20

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

The Lord was saying, This is what you're going to see. The day is coming when Jerusalem will be compassed about with great armies. When this happens, you will know that the prophecy concerning the throwing down of the temple's stones will be fulfilled.

Luke 21:21,22

Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Here the Lord is talking about the day of vengeance. This vengeance was brought upon the children of Israel because of their utter rejection of Jesus, when He came to them and they failed to receive Him. Because of their rejection, God is going to bring vengeance upon them.

Vengeance upon Israel

Luke 21:23

But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

This people refers particularly to Israel. The Lord makes this very clear:

Luke 21:24

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

There is a lot we can learn from these passages. We not only have the Bible to go by but we also have history. The historians record events that have fulfilled Jesus' prophecies in these passages. We can see that the prophetic things which the Bible spoke of have surely come to pass.

The Year AD70

As we look back into history, we find out that in the year AD70 an army led by General Titus came and overthrew the city of Jerusalem. The city was burned, the temple and its buildings were utterly thrown down, and the Jews faced a slaughter by the edge of the sword. Multitudes of Jews were led away captive into the nations of the world.

The Year 1948

From the year AD70 on down to the year 1948, Jews were dispersed among the nations of the world. They didn't have a homeland during that time.

The disciples had asked when it would be, but the Lord didn't answer by telling them it would happen in AD70. He merely told them they would know it was near when they saw the armies gathered around Jerusalem.

This was literally fulfilled in AD70, marking the final rejection of Israel by the Lord, and beginning the day of vengeance. The children of Israel lived under that vengeance for centuries — all the way down to 1948.

In 1948, by decree of the UN, Israel's homeland was restored in Palestine. A new little nation was born: the nation of Israel. Nearly 1900 years had gone by since she was dispersed among the nations.

The End of the Age

When Israel received back her right as a nation in 1948, it marked a particular point in Bible history: the beginning of the end of the age.

Jesus had told His disciples long before this took place: He said they would see Jerusalem compassed about with armies and, thus, know that the desolation was nigh.

Many of them did live to actually see this fulfilled in AD70.

The Time of the Gentiles

Along with this prophecy, Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The time of the Gentiles goes back to the time when Israel lost the kingdom, when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar came in and conquered, and Israel was carried away captive.

With Nebuchadnezzar, we have the beginning of the time of the Gentiles. And from the days of Nebuchadnezzar until the end of the age, it has been Gentile world domination. Israel hasn't controlled the world; the Gentiles have.

So the time of the Gentiles is that period of time which began with Nebuchadnezzar and will certainly end with the coming of Jesus.

The smiting stone, of Daniel chapter two, will smite that old image on the feet; and all Gentile world powers will for ever be crushed, put down, never to rise again.

What we have here is a prophetic view, showing us that we are near the end of the times of the Gentiles. The time is near when Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles until . . .

That *until* comes to light when we see that Jerusalem is no longer trodden down of the Gentiles but is in Israeli hands.

The nation of Israel controls the city of Jerusalem TODAY!

Thus, we can see from this prophecy how near we really are to the end of the age.

A Warning

Matthew 24:4,5

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Let's take particular note to what the Lord has said here:

- Take heed that no man deceive you
- for many shall come in My name
- and preach that I am Christ
- and deceive many

We've got to give heed to this warning!

When we preach Jesus, saying He is the Christ, let's remember that we must teach what He taught:

John 3:3&5

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . .

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

You can't see the kingdom of God, nor can you enter into it, without being born again of the water and of the Spirit.

When someone will declare that it is fanaticism to be born again, that it is just a matter of the mind, that it is merely some brand of religious persuasion: go back to the Word. Don't let anyone deceive you on this issue. Don't let anyone lead you astray: You MUST be born again! Jesus said it was necessary, so it is. Jesus said you must be born again — and He meant what He said.

Have you been born again of the Spirit? Take Jesus' word for it. Don't listen to someone tell you that it's not really necessary or that it's fanaticism. Listen to Jesus.

Deceivers

Jesus said to take heed that no man deceive you. Let's find out who these men are that will come along as agents of the devil to deceive.

Matthew 7:15

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Outwardly, these men come to you in the name of Jesus, preaching that He is Christ. They may even wear a backwards collar or a robe: but the Lord said not to let that deceive you. In other words, look beyond the outward. Take a good look at the life, look at what they are living.

Matthew 7:20

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Listen, if a preacher is not living the life, get as far from them as you possibly can. When a preacher is not living what he is preaching, don't be deceived by him.

Matthew 7:22,23

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.

Jesus makes this very plain: Don't be deceived just because someone runs around prophesying or claiming they can cast out devils. If their life doesn't add up, if they're not bearing the fruits of righteousness, don't let them deceive you. Though they preach Christ, don't be deceived. See if they are living what they preach.

Damnabable Heresies

II Peter 2:1

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnabable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

There are preachers who talk about how they *used to* preach; how they *used to* see people coming to the altar, weeping and crying, seeking after God: but they don't any more!

What happened? Did they deny the power that the blood of Jesus has to bring souls to true repentance?

There are some well-known preachers who *used to* preach you must be born again, but they don't preach that any more. They've denied that. They've turned that aside. They found it wasn't popular, so they sought for a more popular way. And many have been led astray as the result of their watered-down Gospel.

God warns us about damnabable heresies. He says that such men deny the Lord and are going to bring swift destruction upon themselves.

When they turn away, what do they turn unto?

II Peter 2:2

And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

They turn to pernicious (hurtful) ways. And if you follow their ways you'll be hurt.

They speak evil of the way of truth.

We see this today. Some of the large denominations that used to preach you must be born again have denied this experience. Many so-called ministers and theologians brand the born again experience as fanaticism.

Merchandising the Gospel

II Peter 2:3

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

To some, the ministry has become a business. It's no longer a ministry of preaching the Gospel, of getting people saved. It has become a covetous business, making merchandise of the Church of Jesus Christ.

You have to have some common sense. You have to know when something is a hurtful way. One of the things you need to realize about those who are covetous is that they don't really want to help you. They don't want you — they want what you have! Be wise enough to know that.

Take a good look at all the things you're being promised: Every month a new blessing is promised — one that will meet ALL of your needs — then the next month you receive a new promise, because last month's didn't supply all of your needs. It didn't work. This continues month after month, and each time you are promised the

same blessing — a blessing that never materializes. You question, *My, I'm doing all I'm told to do, but I never get the blessing!!!*

God tells you why. He says that some men, through covetous practices and feigned words, are making merchandise of you. God's not going to bless that! How can He give a blessing to you through something He is displeased with, something He's not in to begin with?

More Signs

Matthew 24:6,7

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

The Lord surely hit the nail on the head when He described what the times would be like just prior to the end of the age!

Wars: You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. Hardly a day goes by that you don't hear news of war. Someplace in this world, someone is at war.

I was alive to see World War II; and that wasn't over for long when the Korean War broke out; then the Vietnam War followed; and in more recent years, there have been the Israeli-Arab wars, the Ethiopian-Somali war, the Persian Gulf War, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq . . .

Yes, we certainly live in a time when it's war, war, war, and rumours of yet more war.

The Lord said something about these wars being a sign: He said, *When you hear of these wars and rumours of wars, don't let it bother you. It is something which must come to pass.*

Nation shall rise up against nation: This type of war is very typical, with a nation fighting against another nation.

Kingdom against kingdom: We find kingdom warfare where nations that are aligned fight against other aligned nations. How about this one: the allies and the axis? Are you too young for that to mean anything? Well, World War II certainly was a kingdom war:

The allies (our side in the battle, including the U.S., Great Britain and others) were allied together to fight a war against the axis (the Germans and all who were allied together with them). It was kingdom fighting against kingdom, where both sides wanted to control the world.

Later, the world was aligned into two other great kingdoms. The free world could have been considered a kingdom: treated together, tied together, dependent upon one another for mutual defense. And the communist bloc could have been considered another kingdom.

With all of the armaments that are available today — great missiles; nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and so forth — we can't fathom what another great kingdom war would do to the earth! It would be the war of wars!

Famines: Think of the great famines that sweep across the lower end of the Sahara Desert in Africa. Millions of people have perished there for lack of food. Animals and people are yet losing their lives because the desert is slowly moving south.

Famines are common in many parts of the world today. If you went to India, you'd find the poor suffering famine. The rich can afford to buy their way. If there is anything available, they get it, while the poor suffer and starve.

Pestilence: We've never seen a time when there was so much in the realm of pestilence. Just think of the realm of sickness and disease. They are building more and more hospitals every day, and they keep filling up! Some have estimated that one out of five people — or more — are suffering with cancer. There's no end to it. We just nicely get down to curing one disease when a new one comes along that's never been heard of. It goes from one virus to another, from one epidemic to another.

The Lord said it would be this way. It's predicted right here in the Word of God.

And we find pestilence in the crops. There are bugs today that nothing is able to kill.

Earthquakes in divers places: There's an earthquake nearly every day some place in the world, a rumbling going on some where. Look at how many times in recent years you've heard of some tragic, grievous earthquake that took countless lives. There have been severe earthquakes in China, Italy, Japan, and the United States — among countless other places — even places in the world where they're not common. Yes, earthquakes are occurring in divers places. Jesus told us it would be like this.

Now, what does all of this say to you and me? Understand that it's the Lord's way of saying that this is the beginning of the end of the age. The beginning of the end is already here; it's already in progress! These things are already being fulfilled right before our very eyes. And we have to conclude from all of this that it spells out just how near we are to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Beginning of Sorrows

Matthew 24:8

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

This brings us right to the point: Prophetically, the Lord said there was going to be a time of sorrows. These signs we just looked at (wars, rumours of wars, etc.) He said are the beginning of sorrows. Then He goes on to relate some of this time of sorrows which will come upon the earth:

Matthew 24:9,10

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

We have to look beyond the borders of America and look out into the world at what is taking place. As we do, we'll surely get our eyes opened to what Jesus means.

Take into account what happened in nations such as China and Russia, right within the lifetime of many of us. Communism rose up, with its ugly head, and took over. They persecuted and put Christianity right under their

heel. We look and see how they tortured, persecuted, and drove underground those who had faith in God. What a great time of sorrow.

My, if we could realize all that has befallen believers in recent history. Since World War II, what a time of suffering it has been. It is estimated that some 35 million Chinese Christians were martyred when communism began its purge of Christianity to set up its rule of China.

We heard of imprisonments, such as the Siberian war camps, where believers were put in exile because of their faith in God and because they wanted to teach their children to believe in God.

All of this has taken place throughout the communist world and truly has been a time of sorrows.

Today, severe persecution is taking place in other parts of the world as well.

Sometimes, because we don't see it happening in America, we don't realize this sort of thing can happen right here in these modern times.

False Prophets

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets shall rise, and deceive many.

This is brought into focus again.

At the beginning of His warning to us concerning the last days, Jesus said to take heed that no man deceive us. He said that many would come in His Name and deceive many. And now He is putting a special emphasis at the end of the age. There will be a great time of false prophets rising to deceive many.

Do you remember Jim Jones? There's an example of a false prophet rising to deceive many. We saw a picture there of how a man can rise up, get led away into some kind of a craze, and, the next thing you know, wind up like he did, taking with him those who followed him.

Jesus speaks of false prophets rising up, leading men and women away from the truth of God's Word, and leading them off into error. There are many cunningly devised things coming forth today that are deceiving many.

Iniquity Shall Abound

Matthew 24:12

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

This verse really points down here to the end of the age: *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

Now, let's compare this to some things we've talked about thus far:

The days of Noah: a time when iniquity abounded upon the earth. The love of the sons of God grew cold, as they became more and more involved with the world. Because iniquity abounded, their love for God grew cold. They became apostate, falling away from God.

The days of Lot: A time, also, when iniquity abounded. It abounded in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their wickedness was great upon the earth. Because of the iniquity of those cities, we see where Lot's love grew cold. He vexed his righteous soul in hearing and seeing the deeds of those wicked people day after day.

Now, in the last days, this is the dangerous thing that will take place: Many believers will just want to give up and not follow on because of the overspreading iniquity in the world. Troubles will come; many will be offended; many will be betrayed; many will be hated. And because of it all, the love of many will wax cold.

The Apostle Paul Predicted This

II Thessalonians 2:3

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

Paul spoke seriously about a time when there would be a falling away. Understand that this falling away is going to take place before Jesus comes to take the church, before the end of the age. He is talking about a time of falling away before these events.

This is what the end of the age is going to be like: iniquity will abound, the love of many will wax cold, and there will be a falling away.

This falling away is not necessarily in numbers from church. It is a falling away from the strong principles of God's Word: a falling away from sound doctrine, a falling away from the truth.

Revelation 3:14-16

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.

In looking towards the end of the age, it is noteworthy to compare words and phrases:

Matthew 24 — Jesus said that at the end of the age the love of many would wax cold.

Revelation 3 — Here He speaks directly to the church of a time when men would be lukewarm in their soul and in their experience. They would neither be hot nor cold, but right in between. Thus, if you are not on fire for God, you are backslid! Did you hear me? If you are not on fire for God, you are backslid! You are in the middle somewhere, and you don't know it.

Now, if you're not on fire for God, then get on fire for God! Surrender up your life to God. Yield your life to the Lord. Seek to go all the way with Him. Put your faith to work, and let your love reach out to Jesus. Yes, take hold of this thing with all that you have. Don't walk around any longer in a backslid state. Don't allow yourself to become lukewarm. Get some revival going on in your soul.

How can you tell when a church is becoming lukewarm? Well, here is a testimony of a lukewarm church:

Revelation 3:17a

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing . . .

This is the testimony that the lukewarm church has and will have. They feel they are increased with goods, rich and in need of nothing. That's affluency, and it is going to get hold of the church to the point where the church will actually become lukewarm.

Revelations 3:17b

. . . and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked

According to the Lord, this was the real condition of the Laodicean church. Their lukewarmness made them wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked — and they didn't know it!

And this is what the church will head right up to here in the end of the age. This is why it is given to us in the Word, that we might compare it to the church of today. And this is why I warn you to get on fire for God. Don't allow yourself to become lukewarm. Don't pull back. Don't let the rich affluency of this society get hold on your life. Get in there with Jesus, and go all the way. Let Him have His way in your life.

We have seen the Laodicean church and the lukewarm state it got into. Note the blindness that was in their hearts. They couldn't spiritually see nor discern. They didn't fully realize the pathway they were taking. They were lukewarm and didn't realize that they were about to be spued right out of the Lord's mouth.

The Ten Virgins

As we look into Matthew 25, we find another picture of what it will be like at the end of the age and just prior to the coming of Jesus, right up to the very moment when He comes in the clouds to receive us unto Himself.

Matthew 25:1

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

He is talking about a particular period of time — THEN. And as we look into what He has to say about this period of time, we see that the story centers around virgins, lamps, and the bridegroom.

Matthew 25:2

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

The Lord gives us a number and then divides it in half: as much as to say that half of these will be waiting, in a sense, for the coming of the Lord, while the other half will be going through the motions, only to be found as foolish.

Matthew 25:3-5

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Here the Lord introduces something else into the story: oil. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps, but the foolish took no oil.

Anyone who has cared for an oil lamp surely knows that you need to keep oil on hand to refill it with, because the lamp will soon burn out of oil.

All who claim to be children of God are in the realm where they can say they are virgins. They are getting ready for the coming of Jesus, getting prepared for the end of the age. But some are wise virgins and some are foolish virgins.

We each have to stop and take note for ourselves. Ask yourself, What am I? Am I wise? Or am I foolish?

Matthew 25:6

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.

One day, suddenly, in a moment, Jesus is really going to come! He will come unannounced, as the bridegroom here comes for his bride.

Matthew 25:7,8

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

Here, at the very final moment, we find the foolish virgins discovered that their lamps went out and they had no more oil! This is where they were foolish.

The wise took their lamps and took oil in their vessels. At the end, they are prepared for the wedding. They are ready to go in to the bridegroom. They have their lamps trimmed, burning brightly.

But the foolish are not ready. Their lamps have gone out, and they have no more oil!

A lamp speaks to us of the light of Christ in our life, and the oil represents the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 25:9

But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

The foolish thought they could just borrow some oil. They thought they could just go ahead and take from the wise, and everything would be all right. But the wise had nothing to share. At this crucial moment, they couldn't give out any more. They just couldn't take of what they had to share with the foolish.

And so the foolish are instructed what they must do: go to them that sell and buy for yourselves.

Matthew 25:10

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

While they went to buy; while they went to try and get their lives straightened out; while they went back and tried to get filled with the Holy Ghost, tried to get prepared for heaven — while they went back, looking and searching — those who were ready went in, and the door was shut!

And so, these foolish virgins are out there scurrying around, trying to get ready. While they are in the process of getting ready, they don't realize they have already lost out. They don't realize they are already left behind. They don't realize that they didn't make it!!

Matthew 25:11

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Can you imagine the scurry and the weeping that will take place when the foolish virgins realize they have missed the rapture? They will finally see that what they mocked and scoffed, what they didn't think was necessary, was suddenly so necessary.

But it will be too late!

We live in an hour when the foolish virgins are saying, *I don't need the Baptism in the Holy Ghost. I don't need the speaking in other tongues. I don't need this and I don't need that.* Many are making excuses. They say they don't need it, or they say it was done away with in the early church: that God doesn't fill with the Holy Ghost any more, that He doesn't anoint any more, that He doesn't work miracles any more!

Where is God? To many, He is dead! Yes, today, some of the leading theologians come right out and say that God is dead. They don't experience anything. They don't see anything happen.

Why? Because they are foolish! They have said that God doesn't do these things any more. They have put Him on a shelf. What they are saying is, *Lord, in the last 2,000 years You have done absolutely nothing!*

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

I tell you, God is up and at His work. Yes, He is working in these last days, filling men and women with the Holy Ghost, and getting those wise virgins prepared.

They have a lamp and they have oil in their vessels. They are ready and prepared for the coming of the Lord. They are walking on with Jesus: full of faith, full of the Holy Ghost, full of the good things of God!

Others half-heartedly go along, taking it easy as they go. They take everything nonchalantly, as though it didn't matter.

Today, you have to discern for yourself where you stand. Are you being wise, or are you being foolish? If you're being wise, then you'll take your lamp and put oil in your vessel.

Know this: Oil in the Scriptures represents the Holy Spirit. You have to take the Holy Spirit into your life. You don't want to just have a lamp. As you wait for the coming of Jesus, you want your lamp to be trimmed and burning.

Seek God to fill your vessel. Seek Him for the oil of the Holy Spirit in your life. As you seek this out, He will give it to you.

Acts 2:39

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

What God has promised, He will fulfill.

Now, consider the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Consider the need for this in your life in being ready for the coming of the Lord. Have your lamps full and burning brightly at all times.