

The Mind of Christ

Not one stone shall be left upon another

Part One

INTRODUCTION:

- I. One of the most challenging statements of Jesus was made to His disciples just days before He was taken captive and crucified.
 - A. It's often called "The Olivet Discourse" because Jesus made this statement to His disciples after they departed from the city of Jerusalem late Tuesday afternoon of Passover Week and journeyed the short distance up the nearby Mount of Olives.
 1. The disciples were DEEPLY TROUBLED over a statement Jesus made concerning the fate that awaited the city of Jerusalem:
 - a. **Matthew 23:37-39** – *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"*

- B. Try to imagine the disciples of the Lord hearing this terrible prophecy and looking around them at the beautiful marble covered, gold-crowned Temple, and trying understand why God would destroy all this.
1. The Lord's disciples were still laboring under the misconception that Jesus had come to be the kind of Messiah all the people were expecting:
 - a. A Messiah who would purge Jerusalem of it's religious and political corruption, drive the Roman oppressors from the land, and reestablish a glorious kingdom like it had been in the days of David and Solomon.
 2. And so the disciples began pointing to the temple and all its surrounding buildings and porticos, and began speaking about the temple's grandeur and beauty. **(Luke 21:5)**
 - a. They just couldn't imagine all this being DESTROYED.
 - b. But, so that there would be absolutely NO misunderstanding, Jesus said, *"Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."* **(Matthew 24:2)**

BODY:

- I. When we take a closer look at the questions the disciples asked Jesus in response to his statement we can begin to understanding of what was going through their minds.
 - A. Although the questions asked by the disciples are recorded in all three synoptic gospels, there is a slight difference between them.
 1. For example, in MARK'S ACCOUNT there were TWO QUESTIONS asked. **(Mark 13:4)**
 - a. *"When will these things be?"*
 - b. *"What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"*
 2. In LUKE'S GOSPEL, the two questions are very SIMILAR. **(Luke 21:7)**
 - a. *"When will these things be?"*
 - b. *"What sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"*
 3. However, in MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT, the second question is worded differently. In fact, some see the disciples asking THREE questions here. **(Matthew 24:3)**
 - a. *"When will these things be?"*
 - b. *"What will be the sign of Your coming*
 - c. *. . . and of the end of the age?"*

- B. This obviously raises a question. Why would MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT include a question about *"the end of the age?"*
1. I believe the confusion is cleared up when we understand that Matthew wrote his gospel primarily for a JEWISH AUDIENCE.
 - a. Matthew would have likely included questions asked by the disciples who naturally assumed that the destruction of temple would ALSO mean the END OF THE AGE.
 - b. And the Jewish READERS of Matthew's gospel would have likely had the SAME view regarding the destruction of the temple – namely that destroying the temple would mean the end of the world.
 2. However, since Luke wrote his gospel account primarily to Gentiles, his readers would have never associated the destruction of the temple with the Lord's return.
 - a. GENTILE READERS would simply think of the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem as God's judgment against the Jewish nation.
 - b. All they needed to know was the SIGN that would PRECEDE the destruction of the city.
 3. Therefore, since Matthew's account of the "The Olivet Discourse" simply deals with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and

NOT the second coming of Christ, let's take a closer look at the warning sign Jesus gave to prepare His disciples for this future event.

a. So let's turn to Matthew chapter 24 and study it together.

II. Jesus began by warning His disciples about the SIGNS that would mark the BEGINNING of sorrows.

A. Jesus said these are things that will occur in the years BEFORE the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. Jesus warned that there will be a number of false Christs.

a. **Matthew 24:4-5** – *"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."*

2. He said there would also be wars and natural disasters.

a. **Matthew 24:6-8** – *"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the **beginning** of sorrows."*

- b. The Lord said all these things will come, but the END
(destruction of Jerusalem and its temple) is not yet.
 - c. These are only the BEGINNING of sorrows.
3. In addition to these things, Jesus told His disciples they could anticipate persecution and hard times.
 - a. **Matthew 24:9-13** – *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."*
 - b. When Jesus said *"he who endures to the end will be saved"* Jesus was speaking about those whose faith endures to the END OF THEIR LIFE – they are the only ones who will be saved.
 - (1). **Revelation 2:10** – *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*
4. Furthermore, Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom must FIRST be preached in all the world.

- a. **Matthew 24:14** – *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and **then** the end will come."*
- b. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple will occur because Jewish sacrifices and the other remnants of Old Testament worship – including the Law of Moses itself – will be have been abolished. But NOT before the gospel is preached throughout the world.
- c. In his letter to the church at Colossae, the apostle Paul affirmed that the gospel WAS preached to all nations during the first century – BEFORE the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.
 - (1). **Colossians 1:21-23** – *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight – if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

III. Jesus continued by providing a list of other signs that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

A. One particular sign would be unmistakable.

1. Jesus said the city's destruction would be preceded by the

"abomination of desolation."

a. **Matthew 24:15** – *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand). . ."*

b. **Mark 13:14** – *"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand). . ."*

2. Matthew and Mark's JEWISH readers would IMMEDIATELY understand the connection of this statement to three passages from Daniel – some of which are highly symbolic.

a. **Daniel 9:26-27** – *"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on*

the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."

- b. **Daniel 11:29-31** – *"At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation."*
- b. **Daniel 12:11** – *"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days."*

- 3. Many commentators believe Daniel's prophecies spoke of the infamous Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - a. If you remember from a previous lesson, following the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided up between four of his generals. The Jewish nation fell under the leadership of Seleucus, who ruled from 381 to 321 BCE.

- b. However, in 175 BCE, the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes became ruler, and forced pagan worship among the people of Israel and desecrated the temple in Jerusalem by erecting a statue of the Greek god Jupiter, and sacrificing a pig on the alter of burnt offerings.
 - c. The desecration of the temple prompted a revolt among the Jews led by Judas Maccabeus, the son of Mattathias, a priest of noble rank in Jerusalem – it is known in history as the Maccabaeen Revolt.
4. However, JESUS linked the prophecies of Daniel to the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the desecration of the temple. In fact, LUKE'S ACCOUNT is worded DIFFERENTLY. (Remember, Luke's account was PRIMARILY written to a Gentile audience that would NOT be familiar with Daniel's prophecies).
 - a. **Luke 21:20** – *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near."*
5. Therefore, Jesus answers the question asked by His disciples:
"What sign will there be when these things are about to take place" by saying when his disciples *"see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near."*

6. Jerusalem and the great temple would soon be so COMPLETELY DESTROYED that NOT ONE STONE would be left upon another that would not be torn down.

IV. But Jesus doesn't stop here. He proceeds to tell His disciples what they need to DO when they see this sign.

A. He says that those in Judea need to be prepared to act quickly.

1. **Matthew 24:15-22** – *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."*
2. There are several key things here.

- a. First, Jesus told His disciples that when they see the city surrounded by armies, they need to flee IMMEDIATELY.
 - (1). Don't delay by coming back to your homes and getting your belongings.
 - b. Furthermore, the Lord said it will be an extremely difficult time for pregnant and nursing mothers. *"Therefore pray that your flight be not in winter (when travel is difficult) or on the Sabbath" (when the main gates of the city are closed to travel).*
 - c. But the GOOD news is that even though there will be *"great tribulation"*, it will be SHORTENED for the sake of the elect – for the sake of His disciples.
 - (1). When we take a look at LUKE'S ACCOUNT, the NATURE of this great tribulation is graphically described.
 - (2). **Luke 21:23b-24** – *". . . there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*
- B. ONCE AGAIN, Jesus warned His disciples not to be misled by false Christs and false prophets.

1. **Matthew 24:23-28** – *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."*
2. There are several key statements here as well.
 - a. First, Jesus warned that there WILL BE those who show great signs and wonders in an effort to deceive the elect. But DON'T BE FOOLED!
 - b. Second, Jesus warned His disciples to not to be fooled by those who say the Lord is in the desert or in the inner rooms (or secret chambers).
 - (1). In other words, don't follow these false Christs into the desert hoping for deliverance there, nor expect these false Christs to be secluded away in the safety of some secret chamber – perhaps in one of the thousands of desert caves found in the region.

- c. Furthermore, THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN – the Lord's coming in judgment against Jerusalem – will be like LIGHTNING flashing across the sky. It will come QUICKLY and WITHOUT WARNING, EXCEPT for those who see the approaching storm.
- d. Finally in **Matthew 24:28** Jesus warned, *"For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles ("vultures") will be gathered together."*
 - (1). The word "carcass" ("corpse" - NASB) literally means a fallen body – someone who has fallen down and died where they lay.
 - (a). In the book of Job, God describes the nature of flesh eating and carrion eating birds like eagles and vultures.
 - (b). **Job 39:28-30** – *"On the rock it dwells and resides, on the crag of the rock and the stronghold. From there it spies out the prey; its eyes observe from afar. Its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is."*
 - (2). Albert Barnes, in his commentary on Matthew, wrote, "Vultures and eagles easily ascertain where dead

bodies are, and hasten to devour them. So with the Roman army. Jerusalem is like a dead and putrid corpse. Its life is gone, and it is ready to be devoured. The Roman armies will find it out, as the vultures do a dead carcass, and will come around it to devour it."

(3). Clearly, the Lord paints a HORRIFYING PORTRAIT of the final destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its glorious, ornate temple – a temple that was said to be the eighth wonder of the ancient world.

C. So, this is THE "SIGN" Jesus gave to warn His disciples – a warning to IMMEDIATELY flee Jerusalem and Judea!

1. Matthew described it as the *"abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place."* **(Matthew 24:15)**
2. However, Luke's account written PRIMARILY to a Gentile audience who would NOT be familiar with Daniel's prophecy, simply reads: *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near."* **(Luke 21:20)**
3. THAT is the sign that the desolation of the city of Jerusalem is NEAR and the disciples of the Lord need to flee from the city.

CONCLUSION:

- I. In the summer of 66 A.D., Jewish insurrectionists launched a major rebellion against the Romans in Judea. The fighting quickly escalated.
 - A. The ROMANS retaliated by slaying hundreds of Jews living in Caesarea.
 1. When news of the slaughter at Caesarea reached the towns and villages of Israel, the WHOLE JEWISH NATION rose up in outrage.
 2. Jewish rebels launched a retaliatory strike against the Roman garrison in the Fortress Antonia in Jerusalem, slaughtering over a thousand Roman soldiers.
 3. Jewish rebels were soon sacking villages as far away as Syria, declaring war against Rome.
 - B. Nero and the Roman Senate knew the WHOLE WORLD was watching this uprising in Judea, and unless the rebellion could be crushed, the victorious Jews might inspire OTHER peoples throughout the Roman Empire to throw off THEIR YOKE of Roman imperialism.
 1. Therefore, in response to this uprising, Nero ordered a Syrian Roman general by the name of Cestius to launch a counterattack by bringing his contingent of 23,000 troops from Syria into the region of Galilee and move toward coastal town of Caesarea.

2. The army of Cestius destroyed city after city as the army swept toward Caesarea.
 3. After taking Caesarea, his army advanced along the coastline of Israel to Joppa. Destroying that city, Cestius then turned his army toward Jerusalem itself.
- C. In the fall of 67 A.D. a massive army of battle-hardened troops surrounded the city of Jerusalem and began a siege of the city.
1. As the legions approached Jerusalem, Jews from the surrounding villages quickly retreated into the city to find protection.
 2. Although the siege went on month after month, the Jews inside the city of Jerusalem had no real worries.
 - a. They were protected by the city's massive walls that could easily be defended by only a handful of Jewish soldiers.
 - b. They also had ample supplies of food (some estimate it was enough food to feed the entire city for a period of well over a year).
 - c. And they also had a constant supply of fresh water from a number of wells and springs within the city.
- D. Week after week, month after month the Roman army of Cestius surrounded the city – preventing any possible escape.

1. But then to everyone's surprise, after a siege of only six months, Cestius mysteriously ordered a full withdrawal of his Roman forces!
 - a. To this day, no one fully understands why.
 - b. The historian Josephus explains the unexpected action in this way. "It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world."

- II. When the Roman army led by Cestius withdrew and returned to Syria, the people of Jerusalem celebrated their victory.
 - A. The Jews believed they had defeated the Romans, and discouraged them to the point of simply giving up all hope of continuing to rule over the Jewish nation.
 1. But the Christians in the city saw the withdrawal of the Romans completely different.
 - a. To them, there was NO cause to celebrate ANY victory.

b. The Christians who had fled to Jerusalem for safety remembered the prophetic statements of the Lord Who said, *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near."* (**Luke 21:20**)

2. Historians of the time say the Christians in the city of Jerusalem took this opportunity to quickly flee the city and settled in the area of Perea across the Jordan River.

III. Tragically, the reprieve for the city of Jerusalem was only temporary.

A. When Nero heard that Cestius had withdrawn his forces from the city of Jerusalem, he dismissed Cestius and placed the army in the hands of Rome's most capable general – Vespasian.

1. General Vespasian launched a second offensive into Galilee, and after a year of fighting the Galilean forces, managed to take control of the entire northern region.

2. However, before the rebellion in Israel could be put down, Nero died, and Vespasian was ordered by the Senate to return to Rome where he would become the next emperor.

3. Therefore, Vespasian sent for his son Titus, a successful military commander in his own right, to assume the job of defeating the rebels in Jerusalem.

4. Titus came with an army of 80,000 Roman troops, plus thousands of battering rams and siege engines.

IV. Next week we'll look at the REST of what Jesus told His disciples in Matthew chapter 24 regarding the destruction of Jerusalem.

A. But one thing is clear from what we've seen so far – Jesus was clearly speaking of the impending destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its glorious temple.

1. This would be the coming of the Lord in judgment against a city that had turned its back on Jehovah, and that had rejected Jesus as the Christ the Son of the Living God, and crucified the Savior.
2. Because of this, the city's judgment and eventual destruction was INESCAPABLE.

B. But there's ANOTHER inescapable judgment coming – this time it will be when the Lord returns to bring judgment against the whole world.

1. **2 Peter 3:9-13** – *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it*

will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

2. **1 Thessalonians 5:2-10** – *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*

3. Are YOU ready for that day? Are you looking forward to the Lord's return with great joy and confidence, or with fear and dread?
3. There is no reason why ANYONE should leave here this morning NOT prepared to face the day of the Lord's return.