



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 24:1-14

Topic

Jesus sends a shockwave through His disciples when He informs them that the Jewish Temple is doomed to be destroyed

Title

"Informative Jesus & the Temple that's Doomed"

Introduction

Do you see the glass as half empty, or as half full?

The optimist says the glass is half full, while the pessimist says it's half empty.

Some other unique approaches:

- A person with phobias says "Yuck, someone drank out of it and left germs on the glass."

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Matthew 22:1-14

"Informative Jesus & the Temple that's Doomed"

- A worrier frets that the remaining half will evaporate by next morning.
- A philosophy student declares, "What glass?"

Bill Cosby said, " It depends on whether you're pouring, or drinking."

George Carlin had the best answer when he said, "I see a glass twice as big as it needs to be."

The disciples saw the Temple. It was a magnificent structure. Begun by Herod about 20BC, it would not be completed until 64AD.

Jesus' disciples couldn't help but think that the Temple was being built and nearing completion just in time for Jesus to set Himself up as King and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

To use our glass analogy, they saw the Temple as being more than half full.

Imagine their shock when 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."

Was Jesus a Temple half-empty pessimist?

He was not a pessimist. Turns out, He was a realist, because just six years after the Temple was completed, it would be utterly destroyed.

Jesus was more than a realist; He was a prophet who would reveal to His followers - including us - the course of the age from His comments until His Second Coming.

After listening to Jesus, Peter would put things about the Temple into perspective. In his first letter he wrote,

1Pe 2:4 [Jesus is] a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

1Pe 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Jesus wasn't interested in finishing and occupying the Temple that King Herod had built. He was going to build and occupy a very different kind of temple on the earth, comprised of living stones - believers in Him, including you (if you are saved).

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Living Stone Exposes The Course Of This Age, and #2 The Living Stones Endure The Course Of This Age.

#1 The Living Stone Exposes The Course Of This Age (v1-2)

Because Jesus was on the Mount of Olives when He spoke these words, His talk is called the Olivet Discourse.

We see His words as being a literal prediction of the course of future history, from the time He spoke right through to the end of the age at His Second Coming to the earth. Most of what Jesus said remains to be fulfilled in the future.

Mat 24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

It's not going too far to speculate that these guys were excited, thinking that Jesus would rule the Kingdom on earth from this magnificent structure. They were constantly thinking about the Kingdom, and wondering who among them would have the best positions. Even after Jesus rose from the dead, on His way to ascend into Heaven, they were still thinking the Kingdom was about to be established.

Mat 24:2 And Jesus said to them, "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."

For Jews, the Temple was everything. One commentator wrote,

The Temple was the sacred heart of Jewish life and faith. It was... the only place where one could truly experience God. Its stones, walls, courts and furniture were themselves sacred. The Temple guided their way of life; it was at the center of the cycle of feasts, fasts and sacrifices. To pronounce its destruction meant to pronounce the end of a way of life.

This statement by Jesus would put them in a state of shock. I was trying to think of something that would be the symbolic equivalent for us, not as Christians, but as Americans. It would have to be the destruction of the White House.

Remember the film, *Independence Day*? It got blown to smithereens. According to reports, test audiences were so unsettled by early footage of the White House being turned to dust by an alien laser that director Roland Emmerich added the scene in which a helicopter carrying the first lady and a handful of other dignitaries narrowly escapes.

Adding to the shock of the disciples was their history. When their previous temple, Solomon's Temple, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews were sent into exile, in Babylon.

This wasn't just going to be damage to the building that insurance would cover. No, this meant suffering on a grand, national, scale.

Jesus' prediction was remarkable in its specificity. He said the stones would be "thrown down." No natural disaster would destroy the Temple; it would be done by men, throwing down one massive stone at a time.

On the 10th of August, in 70AD - the 9th of Av in Jewish reckoning, **the very same calendar day** when the King of Babylon burned the Temple in 586BC - General Titus took the city and put it to the torch, burning the Temple.

When the Temple was set on fire the Roman soldiers tore apart the stones to get the melted gold. Stone after stone was thrown down until none were left standing.

The Kingdom promised to the Jews, announced by John the Baptist, and offered by Jesus, would have been Heaven on earth. The descriptions of it that can be found throughout the Jewish Scriptures are wonderful:

- It will be a time of health and prosperity.
- It will be a time of peace and security.
- Nature will be restored, and the curse removed, so that streams break out in the desert, and the lion shall lie down with the lamb.
- It will be a time of holiness in which righteousness will reign.

All of that was forfeited when the leaders of the Jews rejected Jesus. He was the Living Stone, Who alone could offer Jews and Gentiles sanctuary.

They preferred to live in their small, legalistic, self-righteous world, oppressed from within and without, rather than receive the forgiveness of their sins offered by Jesus.

Why stay in that state? Because they refused to repent.

Jesus still offers forgiveness of sins that would bring salvation, eternal life, peace with God, and the empowering of God the Holy Spirit.

And men and women still refuse to repent, preferring their selfishness and sin. It's mind-boggling, really.

It's still coming, the promised earthly Kingdom. It has to, or God is a liar. But there is a delay. Jesus describes the delay as He begins to give us the course of future history in the remaining verses.

#2 The Living Stones Endure The Course Of This Age

(v3-14)

Back to our glass half-full or half-empty analogy, after we read this section, and these two chapters, we're gonna say that the glass is filling-up with the wrath of God.

Things on earth will get worse and worse, leading up to the Great Tribulation where, especially in the last three and one-half years, it will be positively awful on the earth

Recovering from their initial shock, but still stunned, the disciples ask Jesus to clarify a few things for them.

Mat 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

If the Kingdom was going to be delayed, and the Temple was going to be destroyed, what would follow? That is what Jesus addresses.

There are at least three possible ways to understand verses four through fourteen:

1. The first is to see verses four through eight as general characteristics of our age, and verses nine through fourteen as particular signs of the end of the age. H.A. Ironside thought that way.
2. The second way to understand these verses is to see them describing the first three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation. William MacDonald, author of the *Believer's Bible Commentary*, sees them that way.
3. The third way to understand these verses is to see all of them as general characteristics of the age in which we live, intensifying as the world moves in to the Great Tribulation. John Walvoord saw them that way.

It makes sense to see the things Jesus describes as characteristics of the age in which we live, right into, and intensifying, in the opening years of the Great Tribulation.

Then, in verse fifteen, He describes the pivotal event of the Tribulation, which takes place exactly half-way into it.

One thing we won't find in these verses, or in this chapter, is the rapture of the church. Jesus doesn't reveal that mystery until the night before His crucifixion when, in the upper room, He tells us, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

The resurrection and rapture of the church will occur *before* the specific end times events mentioned in these verses. The church will have been taken to the place Jesus has been preparing for us, to be kept out of the Great Tribulation.

Regardless how you time these things, here is what Jesus wanted to get across to His disciples, and to us. **Bible prophecy will be fulfilled to the letter as history unfolds.**

You might not think that is saying much, but it is. For one thing, the general public has the idea that Bible prophecy is like the Mayan calendar. They think that it predicts apocalyptic events, but that they may or may not occur, depending on what we do about them.

In other words, people think that Bible prophecies are warnings to get it together or we might destroy ourselves, or be destroyed.

That's the plot of the movie, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* - **not** the teaching of the Bible.

For another thing, a lot of Christians don't think these things are going to occur - not literally, at least.

The most popular belief among the majority of Christians is that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. They see no prophetic significance in the rebirth of Israel as a nation. As to the Kingdom, they think we are in it now, spiritually speaking, or that we must work to establish it, so that The Lord can return to a world-wide utopia.

So, yes, this short section is crucial, and it's imperative we understand that The Lord was saying, "Things are going to literally unfold just as prophesied, no matter what you see happening that might seem contrary and tend to confuse you."

Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Deceives us about what? Well, as I just indicated, about the end times timeline. In other words, things **will** get worse-and-worse; there **is** going to be a seven-year Great Tribulation; Jesus **will** return in His Second Coming; He **will** establish a one-thousand year Kingdom of Heaven on the earth; and He **will** create a new earth and new heavens for us to enjoy for eternity.

None of the following nine things Jesus mentions ought to fool you into thinking the end will be different from the one you read about in God's Word.

Mat 24:5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

There have been counterfeit Christ's, false Messiah's, and cults galore, seeking to deceive believers.

A few of you sent me an article titled, *Could Scientology be the thing that turns Flint, Michigan, around?* Flint's city council is seriously considering embracing L. Ron Hubbard's, "The Way to Happiness" program.

Jim Jones... David Koresh... Charles Manson, for that matter. No one should be deceived into thinking they were some sort of messiah.

Jesus - the *same* Jesus Who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven - is coming back, in that *same* body. Nothing can change that fact.

Mat 24:6 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.

Mat 24:7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...

No matter how many wars threaten us, nuclear or biological or World War Z, humanity will continue through the Great Tribulation and to a war at the end of those seven years, the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus will return, and He will destroy His enemies.

Mat 24:7 ... And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

When the missionaries from Samaritan's Purse contracted ebola, it sent a panic through people around the world. Could this be the end?

How many recent movies have there been about pandemics that threaten to, or actually, wipe-out the human race?

Not gonna happen; not on a universal scale, anyway. The human race will continue, and thrive, on into the Great Tribulation.

Mat 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The Amplified Version says these are "the early pains" of "the intolerable anguish." This whole section wants to remind us that no matter how bad things seem, or actually get, things will end exactly the way God said they would - after the time of "intolerable anguish," the Great Tribulation.

Mat 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Mat 24:10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

Ten of Jesus' faithful followers on that mountain would be cruelly martyred. John may have been martyred, or he may have died of natural causes; we're not sure.

There have been Christian martyrs throughout the centuries. The twentieth century, by some estimates, may have been the greatest era for killing Christians in all of history. In one ten year period, it was estimated that 500,000 Christians were killed in North Africa.

But it isn't the end; the Tribulation is coming, and it will make all the previous centuries of martyrdom seem peaceful by comparison.

Mat 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

Mormonism is the fastest growing faith group in American history according to *U.S. News & World Report*, which reports that if present trends continue there could be 265 million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints worldwide by 2080.

But, wait: Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. We read everyday about some city in Europe that is now predominately Muslim.

Still, the end will come, just as Jesus predicted it will, and just as we read in the Revelation.

Mat 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

What kind of "lawlessness" was Jesus talking about? Maybe it is the general decay of society. For sure, we see more-and-more senseless violence and the almost wanton disregard for life.

I think Jesus had a different kind of lawlessness in mind, the kind that leads to "the love of many" *believers* growing cold.

He was talking about Christians leaving their first love on account of lawlessness - meaning, they no longer look to the Bible in order to rule their lives. They sin openly, declaring God nevertheless loves them just as they are.

While many will fall away from the faith... God's plan for the church cannot fail, and the church - the bride of Christ - will return with Him in His Second Coming, just as anticipated by Jesus and as predicted by John in the Revelation.

Bible prophecy isn't what *might* happen, or what *could* happen. It is what **will** happen.

It's why those who took the Bible literally were predicting, for example, that Israel would be a nation again in her ancient homeland way before it happened. They were ridiculed and criticized. Then, guess what? On May 14, 1948, God fulfilled His prophecies to regather the Jews.

Sadly, those who had allegorized or spiritualized those prophecies still will not admit that end times prophecies should be taken literally. It makes no sense - except that they'd have to rethink their entire theology, since it was wrong.

[Mat 24:13](#) But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

"Endure" means *to remain under*, or *to continue*, no matter the distress. It is stressing that believers persevere, despite these nine factors, and anything else that would seek to undermine our faith in Jesus.

I like what J. Vernon McGee said:

When someone says to me, "So-and-so... has gone into sin. Is he saved?" I can only reply that I do not know. We will have to wait to see what happens. I tell people that the pigs will eventually end up in the pigpen, and the prodigal sons will all find their way back to the Father's house.

Peter says, "... the sow that was washed [has returned] to her wallowing in the mire" (2Pe 2:22).

It's not a time to be messing around with sin; to be wallowing in the mud and mire of this world.

If you're a prodigal, get back to where you once belonged. Persevere to the end and finish well. Think about facing Jesus.

Mat 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.

Here the Gospel is specifically called the "Gospel of the Kingdom." I take that to mean that the Second Coming of Jesus to establish the Kingdom will be preached to the entire world during the Great Tribulation, so that no one on the planet is ignorant of the Lord's intentions.

There **is** a present spiritual kingdom. The King is absent but He does reign in the hearts of those who trust Him. We are His living stones, His building on the earth.

But the Scriptures also speak of the future Kingdom which will be a kingdom on earth, a political kingdom, a kingdom where Christ will reign.

While we should push forward with the Gospel throughout the world, reaching everyone we can, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be delivered to everyone on the planet during the Great Tribulation, and millions - perhaps billions - will be saved.

There is no requirement in God's Word that we preach the Gospel to every person on the earth before Jesus can return. It's not a cop-out so we can slack-off. Who would want to slack-off?

It is yet another reminder that God's program is right on-track and will be right on time.

The glass is filling-up with the wrath of God against sin that will be poured-out upon the earth and its inhabitants during the seven years of the Great Tribulation.

Jesus will return at the end of those years, in His Second Coming, and He will establish the thousand-year Kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

The church will be resurrected and raptured prior to that great and terrible Day.

Let no one deceive you.

If you are not a believer... You **are** being deceived; you are allowing yourself to ignore the warnings.

God's grace is working to free your will, so that you can repent, and receive the forgiveness of your sins.

Jesus, the Savior of all men, desires to save you; believe on The Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.