

## Unit II: Jesus and the Temple

# The Harder They Fall

DEVOTIONAL READING: Matthew 23:1-12, 37-39

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 23:37-24:35; Mark 13:1-23; Luke 21:5-24

PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 24:1-8, 15-24

### KEY VERSE

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. (Matthew 24:2, KJV)

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“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” (Matthew 24:2, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Become familiar with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70.
- Experience peace amid alarming world circumstances.
- Create hopeful communities of worship that center around sound, Jesus-centered worship experiences.

### \*Key Terms

**Alarmed (verse 6)**—Greek: *throeó* (thro-eh'-o): to be “troubled” (KJV); disturbed; agitated; unsettled.

**Answered (verse 4)**—Greek: *apokrinomai* (ap-ok-ree'-nom-ahee): replied; took up the conversation; responded.

**Believe (verse 23)**—Greek: *pisteuó* (pist-yoo'-o): to believe; entrust; have faith.

**Cloak (verse 18)**—Greek: *himation* (him-at'-ee-on): an outer garment; a robe, tunic; “clothes” (KJV).

**Deceive (verse 5)**—Greek: *planaó* (plan-ah'-o): to cause to wander; lead astray; mislead; seduce.



## The Biblical Context

The immediate biblical setting of this lesson is what is identified as the Olivet Discourse. The content of this significant teaching to Jesus' disciples is His response to their question regarding the Temple's destruction, the end of the age, and His second coming. The title "Olivet Discourse" is derived from the location of this teaching—the Mount of Olives—situated in Jerusalem east of the Old City. In this context, the central theme of Jesus' teaching is the end times. Following His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23, as He and the disciples were leaving the Temple, the disciples called His attention to the Temple's magnificent buildings. Their observation prompted Jesus to tell them that no stone would be left on another and every stone would be thrown down, a prediction fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple. While Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives viewing the Temple, His response prompted them to ask when this event would occur and what the signs of His return and end of the age would be. Jesus' reply forms the content of Matthew 24–25, where He describes a series of signs preceding His return, a period of unprecedented tribulation, His glorious return, and two parables emphasizing the importance of vigilant preparation for His return.

**Holy (verse 15)**—Greek: *hagios* (hag'-ee-os): sacred; set apart by (or for) God.

**Sign (verse 3)**—Greek: *sêmeion* (say-mi'-on): a miracle, indication, mark, token.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

## Introduction

For centuries and across diverse cultures, interest in the end of the world as we know it has abounded. Hundreds (if not thousands) of unfulfilled predictions have surfaced, including the 2012 Phenomenon, in which a range of eschatological beliefs predicted that Earth's population would experience positive physical or spiritual transformations on December 12, 2012, marking the beginning of a new era. Still, another 2012 Phenomenon view held that this date marked the world's end. Like this one, unfulfilled predictions have also been associated with significant dates related to interpretations of various calendars, the beginning of a new century, changes in celestial bodies, or unusual signs. However, according to God's Word, one certainty is that there will be an end time for the present age and the world when Jesus Christ returns, but the uncertainty is when. Among God's chosen people, Israel, the end time or eschatology refers to the Messianic age, the resurrection of the righteous, the world to come, and a tribulation period before the Lord's return and the establishment of God's kingdom. Israel's prophets and Jesus Christ described the signs preceding the end time but set no definite date. Therefore, the most essential consideration for believers is not about setting dates and times but focusing on how

this event should shape and direct our lifestyles and hopes for the future. Consequently, the certainty of the end of this present age and human history, the glorious eternal state to follow its reality, should help shape the faith community's doctrinal instruction regarding it, communal worship, fervency in ministry and service to others, assurance amid life's uncertainties, and the desire to commit to a lifestyle that glorifies God and attracts others to Him for salvation.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### The Temple Will Fall (*Matthew 24:1-3*)

KJV

AND JESUS went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 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.

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?

NIV

JESUS LEFT the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.

2 “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Matthew 24:1-14 describes a segment of what is known as the Olivet Discourse, a profound block of Jesus’ teaching that grew out of His response to His disciples’ questions about the timing of the Temple’s destruction and the signs of the end of the age and His second coming (**verses 1-3**). Despite the magnificent grandeur of the Temple’s buildings, Jesus declared that it would fall and be destroyed stone by stone. Their concern aroused by Jesus’ prediction is significant for several reasons. The Temple represented God’s presence in Israel, serving as their national worship center and a symbol of their cultural identity. Its destruction would devastate their religious, cultural, and social life. As devout Jews, Jesus’ disciples knew prophecies predicting the Temple’s destruction and restoration. This knowledge likely produced concerns about how this event would affect the nation’s future and the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises. Like their fellow Jews, the disciples also possessed eschatological expectations regarding establishing God’s kingdom during the future messianic age. Consequently, they were concerned about how the Temple’s destruction would impact this future hope and their lives and mission as Christ’s disciples.

Matthew does not answer the question about when the Temple would be destroyed, but Jesus’ prediction was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed it and Jerusalem. For the disciples and the Jewish nation, the Temple represented permanency and their hopes for the future, and they could not imagine its being torn down. Yet, they learned a vital lesson regarding

a relationship with Jesus Christ: nothing physical stands or remains forever, nor can it replace the significance of trusting God alone by faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, Jesus' prediction underscores the truth that earthly structures and human life are transient and that there is a need to develop endurance in faith in God. The declaration that the Temple, a symbol of permanence and hope, would fall reminds us that our only security and hope are in God alone. Therefore, today, believers are challenged to focus on their relationship with Jesus Christ, acknowledging that physical things are not eternal, no matter how significant they appear or are assumed to be.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**What are some things hindering believers' total commitment to God that need to be torn down?**

## **Signs of the End Time** (*Matthew 24:4-8, 15-24*)

### **KJV**

**4** And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

**5** For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

**6** 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.

**7** For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

**8** All these are the beginning of sorrows.

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**15** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

**16** Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

**17** Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

**18** Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

**19** And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

**20** But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

**21** For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

**22** And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

**23** Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

**24** For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

### **NIV**

**4** Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you.

5 “For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.  
6 “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.  
7 “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.  
8 “All these are the beginning of birth pains.”

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15 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—  
16 “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.  
17 “Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house.  
18 “Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.  
19 “How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!  
20 “Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.  
21 “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.  
22 “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.  
23 “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.  
24 “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

In Matthew’s account, Jesus did not tell the disciples when the Temple would be destroyed. However, He answered their second question descriptively. First, Jesus warned of false messiahs claiming to come in His name (**verses 4-5**). He then proceeded to list “signs” that would precede the end of the age: wars, rumors of wars, and nations rising against nations (**verses 6-7a**), natural disasters (**verses 7b-8**), martyrdom, persecution and betrayal of believers (see verses 9-10), and increased appearances of false prophets and lawlessness—causing many to depart from the faith and love to wane (see verses 11-12). Jesus described these things as “birth pangs,” meaning they signified the beginning of the tribulation to come before the end and His victorious return. Jesus concludes His response to the first half of their question in verses 13 and 14. Here, He provides a ray of hope by stating that it is possible to endure this time of trouble and that the end will not come until the whole world has the opportunity to hear the Gospel, signifying the depths of God’s patience and desire that none should perish. Although Jesus explained explicitly what the nation of Israel was to expect in this context, the expression “forewarned is forearmed” applies to His teaching regarding the end times and His second coming for the church (**verses 15-24**). Generally, this expression means that if one is aware of a potential problem or danger ahead of time, then he or she is in a better position to deal with it to avoid adverse outcomes. We should acknowledge and heed Jesus’ warnings to expect

deceivers to arise and test them with God's Word, interpret current conditions mirroring those in this discourse as only signs of the end's coming, and live in a state of spiritual readiness for His return with active anticipation, faithful service, and producing fruits of righteousness.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**What does Jesus teach in these verses that can help us remain spiritually optimistic, given conditions similar to those He describes?**

## A Closing Thought

This is Jesus' response to His disciples regarding their desire to know when the Temple would be destroyed, the signs of the end times, and His return; He launched the Olivet Discourse shortly before His crucifixion (see Matthew 24–25). In this significant eschatological teaching, Jesus provided a series of signs to precede His return: wars, rumors of wars, inter-nation conflict, natural disasters, persecution of believers, and the rise of false prophets and messiahs. Jesus climaxed this segment of His teaching with the promise that those who stand firm during this time of trouble “shall be saved.” In this context, Jesus' words promise perseverance for those genuinely saved by grace. This promise challenges believers to deepen their relationship with God to stand firm and remain faithful amid persecution, hardship, and trials targeting them because they are identified with Christ.

## Your Life

Jesus predicted tough times ahead in the immediate and future times for His followers. Since you have this knowledge and His word that it will come to pass, how can you use it to inform how you should live, worship, and serve Him daily?

## Your World!

Jesus' prediction regarding the Temple's destruction was fulfilled in AD 70, thus confirming the future fulfillment of His predictions about the end times and His return. Consequently, along with focusing on readiness for these events as believers, the church should prioritize evangelism to reach the unsaved with the Gospel's message so that they can receive salvation and avoid the wrath of God's future judgment after Christ's return.

## Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank You for providing warnings designed to help us prepare for Your Son's return in the end times. We rejoice in the good news that we can persevere and stand firm by our faith in Him despite persecution, suffering, and hardships now and in the future. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



## Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores Paul's teaching regarding the importance of recognizing our bodies as temples of God's Spirit.

# Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, July 28	“The River of Life”	(Ezekiel 47)
TUESDAY, July 29	“A Holy Temple”	(2 Corinthians 6:1-18)
WEDNESDAY, July 30	“Christ Will Build His Church”	(Matthew 16:13-20)
THURSDAY, July 31	“Seeking God’s Face”	(Psalm 24)
FRIDAY, August 1	“Behold God’s Glory in the Sanctuary”	(Psalm 63)
SATURDAY, August 2	“God Grows Us”	(1 Corinthians 3:1-9)
SUNDAY, August 3	“Building on a Sure Foundation”	(1 Corinthians 3:10-23)

## Notes

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