

## What Does Yeshua Say About the End Times - Part 1

In this post, we will begin to explore the last two chapters of the Christian Torah according to Matthew. We have been on a long journey in his Gospel, but we still have quite a way to go. According to my records, we began this journey back on December 9, 2015.

We have sat at His feet and listened to His instructions to His talmidim from the Sermon on the Mount; to the various parables that He told to those around Him; and, privately explained to His trusted, inner-circle. We now will explore what Yeshua has to say about the End Times.

Matthew 24 begins with what has become known as the Olivet Discourse - since He was teaching on the Mount of Olives. To set the scene, let's start our study back in Chapter 23. After a series of seven **"Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim"** statements and calling them snakes and sons of snakes, Yeshua says in Matthew 23:37-39: **"Yerushalayim! Yerushalayim! You kill the prophets! You stone those who are sent to you! How often I wanted to gather your children, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you refused! Look! God is abandoning your house to you, leaving it desolate. For I tell you, from now on, you will not see me again until you say, [Baruch haba b'shem Adonai] "Blessed is he who comes in the name of Adonai."**

The Olivet Discourse grew out of some questions the talmidim asked when Yeshua told them that the temple would one day be destroyed. First, they wanted to know **when**. This answer is not recorded in Matthew but is given in Luke 21:20-24.<sup>1</sup> Second, they asked about the sign of Yeshua's return. This is answered in Matthew 24:29-44 which we will get to in a later post. In their final question, they asked about the sign of the end of the age. Yeshua's reply is in Matthew 24:4-8.

We must keep in mind that the **"atmosphere"** of this discourse is **Jewish**. Yeshua talked about Judea (Matthew 24:16), the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20), and the prophecies of Daniel concerning the Jewish people (Matthew 24:15). The full truth about the Rapture of the church (1 Corinthians 15:51ff; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) had not yet been revealed by Rabbi Sha'ul, so at this time it was still a mystery (Ephesians 3:1-12). It is this period of **"Tribulation"** that Yeshua described in the Olivet Discourse. At the end of that period, Yeshua will return to the earth, defeat His foes, and establish the promised kingdom during His millennial rule.

[As a side note, I will not be teaching on the topic of when the rapture of the church will occur. Personally, I'm a pre-trib Believer, but can find sufficient arguments for a mid-trib rapture as well.]

**"As Yeshua left the Temple and was going away, his talmidim came and called his attention to its buildings. But he answered them, 'You see all these? Yes! I tell you, they will be totally destroyed — not a single stone will be left standing!' When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the talmidim came to him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that you are coming, and that the 'olam hazeh is ending?'"** Matthew 24:1-3

Chapter 24 contains a conversation between Yeshua and his talmidim as they left the temple and began their walk back to Bethany where they were spending their nights. A casual remark by a disciple led Yeshua to make a startling prophetic statement about the fate of the magnificent Temple. This was Yeshua's last visit to

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>20</sup> **"However, when you see Yerushalayim surrounded by armies, then you are to understand that she is about to be destroyed. <sup>21</sup> Those in Y'hudah must escape to the hills, those inside the city must get out, and those in the country must not enter it. <sup>22</sup> For these are the days of vengeance, when everything that has been written in the Tanakh will come true. <sup>23</sup> What a terrible time it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers! For there will be great distress in the Land and judgment on the people. <sup>24</sup> Some will fall by the edge of the sword, others will be carried into all the countries of the Goyim, and Yerushalayim will be trampled down by the Goyim until the age of the Goyim has run its course.**

the Temple area. He would do no more preaching or public teaching. Mark records that one of the talmidim pointed out to Yeshua the Temple buildings, remarking on their incredible beauty (Mark 13:1). Although no one knows exactly what the Temple looked like, it must have been magnificent, for in its time it was considered one of the architectural wonders of the world. This was not Solomon's Temple, for that had been destroyed by the Babylonians in the seventh century BCE (2 Kings 25:8-10). This Temple had been built by Ezra after the return from exile in the sixth century BCE (Ezra 6:14-15). Then it had been desecrated by the Seleucids in the second century BCE, re-consecrated by the Maccabees soon afterward, and enormously expanded by Herod the Great after that.

The talmidim were awed by the Temple complex - so gleaming, so expansive, such a tribute to architecture, construction skills, and engineering talent. But Yeshua saw the complex as a symbol of the emptiness of religion without God. We stand in awe of certain structures: The Eiffel Tower, our nation's Capital and national monuments, and ancient Greek monuments. They speak of perseverance, ingenuity, and endurance. But Yeshua sees our edifices as a passing glimmer. The real truth to history and life lies in God's revelation of His Kingdom. Yeshua's greatest desire is that we know and believe that truth.

Yeshua acknowledged the great buildings but then made a startling statement: The Temple ***will be totally destroyed — not a single stone will be left standing!*** As in the days of the prophet Jeremiah, the destruction of the Jews' beloved Temple would be God's punishment for turning away from Him. Jeremiah had spoken God's words to the rebellious nation, "***I will make Yerushalayim a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals***" (Jeremiah 9:11 <sup>NIV</sup>). Yerushalayim had been attacked and leveled before. Here Yeshua prophesied that Yerushalayim and the beautiful Temple would again be completely destroyed.

This happened only a few years later when the Romans sacked Yerushalayim in 70 CE. The Romans fulfilled Yeshua's words to the letter. After fire raged through the temple, Emperor Titus ordered the leveling of the whole area, so no part of the original walls or buildings remained. Titus considered this as punishment for the Jewish rebellion in 66 CE. Gazing at the massive stones, the talmidim surely found it difficult to believe that not one of the stones would be left on top of another. Because the temple symbolized God's presence among them, the Jews would be horrified to see it destroyed. The purpose of Yeshua's words was both theological and prophetic. The sovereign judgment of God was to fall upon his unbelieving people; and just as Yeshua as Lord of the Temple had proclaimed its purification, here he predicted its destruction.

With this as background, in my next post, we will begin to examine what Yeshua says about the **END TIMES**.