

Episode #913 Matthew 24 Part 2-The Beginning of Sorrows

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The disciples had asked the Lord two important questions: what will be the sign of His parousia, and what will be the sign of the consummation of the eon? The Lord begins to answer their questions in this portion.

III. Two Important Questions. Matthew 24:3-8.

- A. Verse 4. To understand His answers and the signs He gives, we must understand that the world will be free of the things He mentions for the many centuries of the manifest kingdom of God on earth. False Christs would be no sign today, for there have been false christs since our Lord returned to heaven. Earthquakes would be no sign; wars would be no sign; etc. These things can only be considered a sign in light of the fact that the constant, unceasing flow of these things is halted for centuries during the manifest kingdom of God on earth. Then, when God stops restraining these things for a time and they start up again, they will be the most positive signs. He warns them to let no man deceive you or “lead you astray.” The Lord is speaking to men who, when this time comes, will be in positions of authority, Matthew 19:28. When times of trouble occur, much depends on the leaders of a people. It is those related to government who hopefully have the knowledge and skill to handle these things. The twelve disciples will be the twelve most important men in the nation of Israel. The other disciples will also be rulers at that time. So it is to these men that He gives this warning.
- B. Verse 5. It is the most positive history that there were false christs before the Lord ever came to earth in Bethlehem. It is believed that Barabbas was one of these. *Bar* means “son of,” and *abbas* means “the father,” and many believe this man was a false christ. There has been a constant stream of false christs ever since. To say that false christs would be a sign today would make no sense.
 1. Some have tried to explain this chapter by saying it reveals the course of this age. Yet the fact remains that they asked for signs, and the Lord gave signs that point to the object of their question. If He gave a sign that there would be men who claim to be christs, this would be a sign of no significance if we apply it to today, since the flow of false messiahs has been so steady that there has been no break. The only way a thing can be a sign is if it is different than what came before.
 2. In giving this sign, our Lord anticipates the kingdom of God, and that under the kingdom of God no man will ever dare to make a false claim of such magnitude. If anyone would be bold enough to try it, he would immediately feel the Divine wrath. Yet after God removes the restraints and allows men to walk in their own ways, then men will be able to say that “I am Christ.” The world will have experienced a long period of freedom from such deceivers, yet when God allows this again and it begins to happen, this will be the most positive sign that the first period of the kingdom has reached its final chapter, and the Parousia of Christ and the consummation of the eon are near indeed.

3. "Will come" is the actual Greek word for "coming," *erchomai*, and not the technical term *Parousia*, which means "personal presence."
 4. "In My name" is upon the name of me. Many will seek to ride into influence falsely using the Lord's name.
 5. Saying, "I am Christ" is *ego eimi*, I am most emphatically. I am the Christ, meaning the long-expected Messiah. These liars will lead many astray.
- C. Verse 6. Wars or battles, clashes of governments and nations. We are seeing these things today, and they have been seen for thousands of years. People will say, "There are more of these things," but the Lord did not give these things increasing as a sign, but the fact that these things are happening at all as signs. "Rumors" are a hearing, related to "you will hear" earlier in the verse. We could say hearsay of wars. "Troubled" could be frightened. The end is *telos*, a true end, for these troubles are ending, but the eon is consummating.
- D. Verse 7. Nation will go into action against nation, and government against government. When nations fight nations there is open warfare, and when government fights government there is cold war. Bullinger suggests this is a reference to Isaiah 19:2.
1. These words indicate that these things will not be for a period, and then they will take place once again. This return of these ills takes place during the time of testing, the failure of some men, and the revolt of some men that concludes the kingdom of the heavens. It is impossible to believe that the Lord gave as signs of His coming things that have always been present and that will always be present. A traveler going across the country might be told, "When you start seeing palm trees, you have reached southern California." A traveler coming from New York is not going to see palm trees until southern California, and so this is a sign. And yet to say "you will see roads" would not and could not be a sign, for he would see those the entire way. In the same way, the Lord would not give as a sign things that have always been present.
 2. The word "famines" is used elsewhere for the great famine in Egypt that brought about Joseph's fame. There have always been famines and hunger, yet in the kingdom of God, He will control the crops, so that the earth will bring forth in abundance to the extent that the plowman will overtake the reaper, Amos 9:13. When the time of testing comes, however, there will be famines once again.
 3. Pestilences are diseases, often following with famines. In Greek, famines and pestilences is *limoi* and *loimoi*. Bullinger suggests "deaths and deaths."
 4. Earthquakes are *seismos*, from which we get seismic (related to earthquakes). The storm at sea back in Matthew 8:24 was an earthquake. There was also an earthquake at His death, Matthew 27:54, and at His resurrection, Matthew 28:2.
 - a. People try to use earthquakes today as a sign of his coming. They say that earthquakes are increasing and getting stronger, and that shows we are nearing the end. Yet the Richter scale used to measure earthquakes was only developed by Mr. Richter in 1935, and so we have not even been measuring earthquakes for a hundred years yet. Records of earthquakes before we had measuring instruments are very incomplete.

Yet with the information we do have, still the idea that earthquakes are increasing seems questionable. Christians have been trying hard to push this idea, but it seems less than clear.

- b. The Lord did not say earthquakes increasing was a sign, but there being earthquakes at all. There will be no earthquakes throughout the premillennial kingdom of God. Then, when they start up again, they will be most significant.
- E. Verse 8. Notice that these things are not given as the course of this age, but as the beginning of sorrows. "Sorrows" could also be or birth-pains. If these are the beginning of sorrows, then they must have a most definite start. These things will not have been happening for a long period of time, so that when they start again they will be most significant. Those who do not know the power of God have great difficulty believing that the earth will experience a time when wars, unrest, famines, diseases, and earthquakes will be unknown. However believe it or not, these are the benefits we are to enjoy under God's government.

IV. Conclusion: The Lord gave His disciples the signs they were looking for: false christs deceiving many, wars and rumors of wars, famines, diseases, and earthquakes. However, these things had been going on long before the Lord said this, and have been going on ever since. The Lord did not mean these things will increase, for that is not what He said; just that they will exist. This shows us that these things will be ended for a long period of the premillennial kingdom of God. May that day come soon!