

Sunday June 21st 2015
Matthew Chapters 24-25
Part Two

1). Mt 24:4 ¶ *And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 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. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes [shaking] in various places. 8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

a). We have seen then, how in response to His disciples' question about the timing of the desolation of the house of Israel and the destruction of the Temple, our Lord sets out for them an overview of the time that we know as the Tribulation, the final 7 years yet to be completed from the previous dispensation, Daniel's 70th 'week'.

b). And we had then seen in the verses we have just read how the first 3 ½ years of the final 7 are a time marked by the appearance of false Christs and conflict between nations, presumably as Antichrist seeks to achieve his desire for world power - Re 6:2 *And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.*

c). These things though, as we had seen last time, are not the 'end' of the age, but are rather 'the beginning of sorrows' – these are events that mark the beginning of the pain that the nation of Israel will experience as it is brought forth in the metaphor of physical birth.

d). And we had finished last time by pointing out that Israel gives birth, before she experiences the pain that brings about her own birth, something that we find prophetically recorded in - Isa 66:7 *"Before she [the nation of Israel] was in labor [before the events of the second half of the Tribulation], she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child. 8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor [experiencing the pain of the final 3 ½ years], She gave birth to her children [at the end of the Tribulation]. 9 Shall I bring to the time of birth, and*

not cause delivery?" says the LORD. "Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?" says your God.

e). So then, before Israel's birth pains begin – which happens at the midpoint in the Tribulation and intensify through the next 3 ½ years – 'she is delivered of a male child'.

2). *Re 12:1 ¶ Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

a). The symbolism used in these verses leaves us in no doubt that the 'woman' is the nation of Israel and the pain she is seen experiencing here is the pain associated with giving birth to the male child and is the beginning of, but not the fullness of the pain that she will experience that will lead to her own birth.

b). The 'male child' is 'conceived' through the ministry of the 2 witnesses within the streets of Jerusalem during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation against the backdrop of false Christs and wars and rumors of wars *Re 11:3 ¶ "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. 6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.*

c). The 2 witnesses 'prophesying' is presumably based in calling the nation of Israel to national repentance one more time, hence the witnesses being clothed in sackcloth, repentance not only from the centuries of unbelief that led to the crucifixion of her Messiah, but also repentance from the covenant relationship the nation has entered into with the one who is the sworn enemy of the God they profess to serve.

d). And given the nature of the events surrounding the 2 witnesses seen in these verses we can assume that the 'labor' and 'pain' experienced by Israel in bringing forth this male child will be that of inner turmoil as a result of the conflict that will exist between those receiving the witnesses' message and those who seek to kill them.

e). Now this 'male child' has already been identified for us in Revelation Chapter 7 - Re 7:2 *Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: 5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed.....*

The events seen in these verses take us to a point in time immediately before the mid-point in the Tribulation, before harm is done to the earth, the sea and the trees because of the actions of Antichrist from that time forward. And we see that these, 'servants of our God', are sealed on their foreheads and are taken from the 12 tribes of Israel, 12000 from each tribe.

f). This same group then re-appear in Revelation Chapter 14 just beyond the mid-point in the Tribulation in a heavenly scene having been 'caught up to God and His throne' to escape the wrath of Antichrist, an event which we saw in Revelation Chapter 12 - Re 14:1 ¶ *Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.....4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. 6 ¶ Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—*

g). So, the 144000 are seen in these verses in connection with the preaching of 'the everlasting gospel' 'to those who dwell on the earth'. These are the ones then who will return to the earth to fulfill that seen in Matthew 24:14 prior to the conclusion of the Tribulation - Mt 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.*

h). And we have spent some time on this group at this point as their ministry during the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation has a direct impact on the event we see at the conclusion of Matthew Chapter 25.

3). As we continue with the verses from Matthew Chapter 24, those that continue from verse 8 add to the complete over view of the 7 years of the Tribulation by taking us from the mid-point of the Tribulation to its conclusion - Mt 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. 10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 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.*

a). This then is now the time of Jacob's trouble, and we see the 'trouble' described through the nation being delivered 'up to tribulation' and being killed, as the Jews will now be 'hated by all nations', by many Jews themselves betraying one another and hating one another – something shockingly detailed in the parallel account in Luke where it appears that Jews will even be responsible for killing Jews - Lu 21:16 *"You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.*

b). And we see that this 'lawlessness' amongst the Jewish people will cause the love of many to grow cold – but the promise is given that whichever Jews endure [Lit. survive] to the end of the Tribulation, they will be delivered from this time of unparalleled persecution; the same promise that we find in – Jer 30:7 *Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it.*

c). And so, having laid out the complete overview of the years of the Tribulation in order to provide His disciples with the correct context, the Lord then provides the direct answer to their question, 'When will these things be?'

4). Mt 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), 16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 "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. 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

a). So, when will the house of Israel experience its ultimate desolation and when will the Temple be destroyed? Answer: *'when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' [literally, 'the abomination that makes desolate'] spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)*

b). And here the Lord takes us straight back to the Book of Daniel – Da 9:26 *"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. 27 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."*

Da 11:31 *"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.*

c). 'The people of the prince who is to come' is a Hebrew idiom that talks of the prince rather than the people and so we see that the prince who is to come, the Antichrist is the one who will destroy the city and the sanctuary and this destruction begins 'in the middle of the week', at the mid-point in the Tribulation when he breaks his covenant with Israel, bringing an end to sacrifice and offering. Antichrist is the one then 'who makes desolate', who brings the ultimate desolation to the house of Israel – and he does this by firstly entering the Jewish Temple and declaring himself to be God – 2Th 2:3 ¶ *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

d). This is the 'abomination of desolation [literally the abomination that makes desolate] standing in the holy place'.

e). Luke, in the parallel account, gives us extra detail on this same event in - Lu 21:20 ¶ *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.*

And this detail references the beginning of v31 from Daniel Chapter 11.

f). And it is when these things are seen that those in Judea should flee to the mountains, not stopping to take anything with them as it is from this time forward that Antichrist will attempt to exterminate the Jewish people - Lu 21:21 *"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.....24 "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.*

g). Mt 24:21 *"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. 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.*

So intense is the destruction that follows, and so intense is the persecution of the Jews that the Lord tells us that unless those days will be shortened 'no flesh would be saved' - unless God literally shortens the days, presumably by causing the earth to spin more quickly, all human life would be extinguished - Am 8:9 *"And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;*

h). However, even though the days are shortened, 2/3rds of all Jews will be killed and 1/2 of the rest of the earth's population will be killed during these final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

i). Here then is not only the timing for Israel's utter desolation and the destruction of their Temple, but also detail, in an encapsulated form, of the extent of the nation's desolation.

5). But as we will remember the disciples questions covered not only the timing of Israel's desolation but also the 'sign' of the Lord's coming and the end of the age and in the same way that the Lord gave them an overview to provide the context for His answer about Israel's desolation so He provides them with an overview with regards to the sign of His coming.

a). Mt 24:23 *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 "See, I*

have told you beforehand. 26 "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.

b). The overview the Lord provides here shows a time preceding His coming, when from the Jewish people there will arise apostate Jews who are 'false christs and false prophets' for the purpose of deceiving 'the elect', the Jewish people as a whole.

c). And these false christs and false prophets will show great signs and wonders – supernatural manifestations.

d). The groundwork for this is already being laid within the context of the 'Church' in these Laodicean days and will be further compounded and prepared by Antichrist's false prophet, who himself will be a Jew and the whole purpose will be to try to lead Israel away from the true Messiah to worshiping that which is false - 2Th 2:9 *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,*

e). Christ warns them about this before ever it happens and also warns them concerning the claims that will be made concerning His return – He is in the desert, or, He is in the inner rooms – whereas Christ's return will be nothing like this and the Jewish people are warned in advance not to believe these claims.

f). Having given the overview showing multiple deceptions the verses that follow provide the direct answer to the disciples' question - Mt 24:27 *"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

g). During the great tribulation claims will be made that Christ, Israel's Messiah, has come and that He can be found 'in the desert' or 'in the inner rooms'; claims that suggest that the return of the Lord happens in obscurity, almost in secret, whereas the reality of the Lord's return will be far from obscure.

h). We first see it likened to 'the lightning' that 'comes from the east and flashes to the west' – this imagery taken from the natural world shows us both the nature of the Lord's return and the timing of it.

i). As to its nature we understand it to be sudden and without warning, in the same way that lightning in the natural world cannot be predicted.

j). And with regards to its timing we must understand that the geographical location of the land of Israel means that in the natural storm systems move from the west to the east and so to picture the lightning coming from the east to the west shows that the storm is now past – and as we shall see in a moment, this is the passing of the storm as it relates to Israel with the days having been shortened, but not completed with respect to the Gentile nations – something we can see from the imagery of the eagles being gathered together over the carcass. A carcass is already in a state of corruption and the purpose of the eagles would be to consume the carcass thereby doing away with its corruption.

k). So, if we see the carcass as the Gentile nations, the nations who, under Antichrist, have corrupted the earth, then the image becomes clear. The eagles are Christ and His angels and upon His return Gentile world power will be utterly destroyed for all time – its corruption being eradicated. The detail of this is not given in Matthew Chapter 24, therefore we would have to go to other scriptures to fill in this detail.

l). V29 of Matthew Chapter 24 provides the direct answer to the disciples' question, 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days...' – this is when Christ's return will take place and His return is connected with a great shaking of Gentile and angelic governmental powers – the imagery seen in this verse of the sun, moon and stars, should not be taken literally but metaphorically, as representing different levels of Gentile governmental authority under Satan and his angels.

m). Attention is drawn to this same shaking in - Heb 12:26b.....*but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

n). And the writer of Hebrews is quoting from - Hag 2:6 *"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 'and I will shake all nations,*

o). This same metaphorical imagery is also seen in the parallel verses from Luke - Lu 21:25 *"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.*

6). Mt 24:30 *"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

a). The sign of the coming of the Son of Man then does not refer to a single supernatural manifestation but rather the sign is the great shaking of governmental powers, both Gentile and angelic, and would also include that seen in – Zec 12:10 *"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

It will be at this time then, following this sign, having looked on the One whom they pierced that the nation of Israel will at last say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'

b). And none of this can be separated from the end of the age, which is the other part of the disciples' question concerning the sign of the Lord's coming, because the end of the Tribulation marks the completion of the redemption of the inheritance and fully completes the 6000 years of Man's Day; bringing this age to an end in anticipation of the age to come, the 7th Day.

c). And beyond the end of the age comes the promise of the re-gathering of Israel as seen in Matthew 24:31. A re-gathering that promises the healing and restoration of Israel, portending the complete change in governmental authority during the Millennial Kingdom with Israel occupying her rightful place at the head of the nations on the earth within the Theocracy, fulfilling God's purpose for the old creation in Jacob.

d). Isa 2:2 *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*