

Jesus the Prophet III

(slide) When and how is the end of times?

What an intriguing and conflicting question. This question is so countercultural that it makes us question why we do what we do with our lives, time, families, jobs, etc.

Why should we care about this question? If there is an end to things, why should I work so hard to accomplish whatever I feel I need to accomplish in this life?

This is why we need to understand why Jesus came to us as The Prophet.

Jesus as The Prophet was a powerful teacher and miracle maker. And as a teacher one of his most powerful teachings that we need to understand well is in relation to the end of times. This teaching happened at the end of his ministry on earth. Let's read from Matthew 24:

(slides) Matthew 24

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.”

³As 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?”

⁴Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶You 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. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹²Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

This happens during Jesus' last week. Jesus and the disciples were in Jerusalem as thousands and thousands of Jews from every part of the world would come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover once a year.

It was traditional for teachers to take this opportunity to teach. And we see in Matthew 21-23 that Jesus is in a prophetic mode. He turned the tables, taught, and challenged and rebuked the religious leaders.

It says that Jesus was walking away from the temple when the disciples pointed out to the building. Jesus had just finished admonishing the pharisees and teachers of the law and continuing in a prophetic tone he says that,

(slide) v.2 “no one stone of the temple will be left on another.” In other words, he was prophesizing that the temple was going to be destroyed. The temple was the center of faith and certainty that God was in the midst of them. As long as there was a temple, there was hope. The temple was the center of spirituality, tradition, culture, and faith for the Jews. It was *a sign of God’s presence among them*. A possible destruction of the temple would mean that God had abandoned them, like it happened with the first temple.

So, Jesus is saying something like “don’t be too marveled about this building, it’ll be destroyed.” You can figure the impact of those words.

I can picture the disciples trying to make sense of Jesus’ statements as they continue walking towards the Mount of Olives. They went there because that’s where they were probably camping during their visit to Jerusalem.

The temple was destroyed about 40 years later by the romans.

(images of the temple)

The disciples came and asked three questions:

(slide) v. 3 when is this going to happen? What is the sign of your coming? And what is the sign of the end?

It gives the impression that the disciples had some kind of understanding about Jesus’ coming like what we do. So, they asked, what is the sign of your coming? They weren’t asking when is your second coming because they didn’t understand this yet. They were still soaking in Jesus as the Messiah, connecting the dots. The questions were more like,

“ok Jesus, we are very curious to know when you are going to make the glorious, powerful, appearance as the Messiah. You have convinced us about it, but you know that there is supposed to be final and definitive appearance, so you can be publicly proclaimed as the Messiah, the liberator and savior of Israel.”

Their questions were not in relation to the second coming because in their minds there was only one. For them, the coming of the Messiah was definitive. Jewish people had a type of timeline of events:

- 1- Crisis, turmoil – Roman Empire
- 2- Forerunner in the power of Elijah- John the Baptist
- 3- Appearance of the messiah
- 4- Return of Jewish that had been scattered around the world.

Jesus used the image of giving birth to answer their questions. Jesus breaks the signs in 3 stages similar to the stages of birth pain.

(slide) First stage: early labor, begin to feel ongoing contractions. Verses 4-8

- False messiahs and deceiving
- Wars
- Famines
- Earthquakes

(slide) Second stage: active labor and dilating, stronger and closer contractions. Verses 9-14

- Intense persecution of the church. The persecution of Christians has intensified in the last century compared to any time before.
- People will fall away from the faith
- Betrayal and hate
- False prophets and more deception
- Increase of evil
- Love of many will grow cold
- Preaching the gospel everywhere. Technology is making this possible, but Jesus' emphasis is more of "despite" the challenges the gospel will be preached.

(slide) Third stage: time to push, most pain, joy. Verses 15-31

Matthew 24:15-31

¹⁵ "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,'^[a] 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, unequalled 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. ²⁴For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹“Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”^[b]

³⁰“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^[c] will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.^[d] ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

- Abomination that causes desolation: Antichrist
- Most intense tribulation and persecution (the Great Tribulation).
- More false messiahs and false prophets
- Cosmic events
- Jesus' second coming with power and great glory.

Abomination that causes desolation: it refers to how God's temple became a desolation because of the desecration of it. This happened in 167 before Christ. The Greeks erected a pagan altar for Zeus in the temple and sacrificed pigs there. Daniel prophesied about this. In order for it to be fulfilled we need a new temple, and a world leader.

- New Temple (**slide**)
- Antichrist

(slides) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

³Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness^[a] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

What phase are we in? It looks like we are in phase II. This is a good question because it's necessary to know the signs so we can discern them. But the most important question is: are we ready? **(slide) Matthew 24:44.**

Jesus ends his prophecy saying that he is coming back. We don't when, but what we know is that it will be different. He will come not in humility or meekness, but in glorious power to judge the world and rule over. He will defeat all evil, save his church, and reign forever.

(slide) Revelation 6:15-17

¹⁵Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us^[1] from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the great day of their^[2] wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

Application:

Jesus' second coming requires that we continue proclaiming his kingdom while we prepare ourselves for that day.

This is what we proclaim with communion when we say,

(slide) 1 Corinthians 11:26

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."