

1. My title is the question, "What about the future?" At this point in the book, we find Jesus only a few days away from being crucified. He wants to tell the disciples, in effect, here's what is going to happen in your future. The reason you and I should read this is because there future will be a lot like our future. It's like saying, "You want to be a Christian? Great, here's what can expect in the future, both good and bad." If God created the world, including the concept of time itself, He must exist outside of time. If the bible can state with perfect accuracy hundreds of predictions of how Jesus lived and died before He came into the world, then we can trust the greater number of predictions about the future not only of the world of the disciples, but of our world. If you want to know what to expect as a follower of Jesus, this is the place to read about it.
  - a) Let me give a very short list of Old Testament predictions about Jesus. It says He would be born in the town of Bethlehem. He would be miraculously born of a virgin. It tells He would be rejected by His own people and even predicts the crucifixion. What I even find more interesting is that for every prediction of the all the events of His First Coming, there are twice as many predictions about the events of His Second Coming.
  - b) The classic Jewish response is "Where does it say in the Old Testament that the Messiah is to come twice?" The answer is it doesn't. Yet without two comings how do we reconcile predictions about His suffering and His ruling? The same idea applies to the concept of Jesus returning twice, once to take the church up to heaven and once for judgment. You can't find any references in the New Testament to Jesus returning twice. But just as we can deduct in the Old Testament that the Messiah must come twice, so it is logical to deduct in the New Testament that He returns twice, once to take remaining Christians to heaven as the time of great world upheaval is about to begin and the second time to rule and judge.
  - c) A key point of this lesson is not only what is to happen to the disciples after Jesus is gone, but also what will happen to us in our future. If one says, "We can't possible know what will happen to us in our future?" Your right, however, no matter how long we get to live or no matter what happens to us, the bible has a lot to say about the future of the world in effect to argue against whatever global disaster of the day is being predicted as we watch the news. So with that question asked of "What about our future", let me go over the text:
2. The text opens with a story about a widow giving her last two "pennies" to the Jewish Temple as those who are rich are giving out of their excesses. The story has nothing to do with giving all we own to God. Jesus does comment on how effectively she gave more than the rich, but if that is all to get out of the story, we miss the point. The last part of the previous chapter focused on Jewish leaders who took advantage of widow's in order to grow rich. This little story stays on that topic. That is false religions will continue in the future to take advantage of others and demand we give all we have to their system. Think of the story this way: If you saw a poor widow giving what she had left to a charity, would you consider that wise? Of course not. Jesus feels the same way. That's why the text is here to warn us about false religious systems taking advantage of us in our greatest hour of need. It's a warning for our future to trust in God, and not give away all we own in order to continue that trust.
3. The rest of the chapter is then a speech by Jesus (except the last few verses) to the question asked by the disciples in effect of "What is going to happen to us in our future?" What signs do we look for to know when the eternal kingdom is going to start and what will happen to us in our future as we prepare for that event? Remember that His disciples expected the eternal kingdom to come soon, so even if they believe Jesus predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, they still had to change their views about what that meant for their own future. Know that when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem forty years after this prediction, few Christians died, as most of them traveled east of the Jordan River based on what Jesus said here in this chapter.

4. OK, good for them. I'm glad they avoided that horrible destruction. However, what does any of that have to do with my life? As I like to state every so often, "I have bills to pay and my kids are sick, so why should I care about any of this stuff?" The answer is to understand what it is we are to expect to do in our lives as Christians and how the world will ultimately end despite whatever we're told in the news of the day. With that said, here goes:
- a) First is to understand and accept the idea of Christian persecution. I can't think of another religion that has suffered more for their faith than Christianity. I'm well aware that many Jewish people have been killed throughout history just because they are Jewish, but I can't think of any religion where one has suffered just because they belong to that group. A few years back a statistic was published that more Christians died for being a Christian in the 20th Century than any previous century. I'm willing to bet the 21st Century will even be worse given for example, considering that Christianity does consider homosexuality a sin. The point is not to live in fear, but realizing that trusting in Jesus as complete payment for our sins is going against the "grain" of what most of the world does believe about God. If you don't believe me, read some of the stories about Christians living in Muslim or Hindu dominated countries. My point is suffering is part of the plan, so don't be surprised if we have to suffer just for believing that Jesus alone is the complete payment for our salvation.
  - b) The good news of course, is that we win. Yes we can expect bad things to occur in this life but then one has to figure, how long does this life last versus eternity? As one studies the bible and realizes it is God's word, one realizes that whatever we have to put up with now is still much better than eternally suffering in the next life.
  - c) The chapter ends with ways we can tell if we're around at that time, how the world as we know it, will end. If you respond with as I said earlier, "I've got bills to pay and my kids are sick, why should I worry about this stuff?" The answer is that it doesn't take long to learn what the signs are, and once we know what they are, we can go back to dealing with our lives knowing that "we win in the end". That's the good news of this lesson.
  - d) Now I can focus on the details as I go through this chapter:
5. Verse 1: As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. <sup>2</sup> He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. <sup>3</sup> "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. <sup>4</sup> All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."
- a) As I read commentaries on this little four-verse story, I'm amazed how many of them read it out of context of the surrounding text. There's an old joke that a pastor's favorite topic is giving, so they preach on giving, based on any bible text and this story is included. The poor widow here who only gave two pennies did give more of what she had than those who were rich who gave out of their excess. However, that does not mean Jesus wants us to give every last dollar we owe to Him. That isn't Jesus point here in this story.
  - b) Think of the story this way: Does the text say God then blesses this woman for giving all she had to God? No it doesn't. If anything, we feel sorry for this woman as she's putting her faith in a religious system instead of taking care of herself. To understand the context, let us remember where we left off in Luke. The last part of the last chapter was about the religious leaders making a big show of their religious acts thinking they were pleasing to God by doing their religious acts publicly. The Jewish temple had a bunch of gold boxes for giving. Each was marked with its specific cause.
  - c) The point here is that innocent suffering people trusted in a "religious system" in order to make their lives better. Think of all the people who give to religious con men hoping that their lives will improve by their giving what they can't afford to give. One of the largest fake Christian movements is the "health, wealth and prosperity" movement that essentially teaches the reason we aren't wealthy is because we don't have enough faith or that we're not giving enough to God. I know of such organizations that prey on poor people saying their poverty will end by giving.

- d) Believe it or not, that is Jesus' point here. A reason I call this lesson, what about the future is that the Christian church has had a history of corruption where people who say they're priests are primarily concerned with their wealth over and above actually helping others. I remember years ago overhearing a conversation in a booth next to me in a restaurant. It was two preachers taking about the importance of emphasizing "tithing" at every service. I never once heard these two men praying or mentioning God once. They only said that if they were to survive and grow as pastors, there has to be a heavy emphasis on tithing. As much as I wanted to punch them both out, I just focused on what I was doing and left. My point is that we as Christians have to be constantly aware of those in it for the money and don't really care about people's lives.
  - e) Let me also state that the New Testament never once mentions "tithing" as a requirement for Christians. There are lots of references to giving, but never "tithing". If we believe we have to tithe our income, then we're now "under the law" and not under grace. Of course I believe Christians should give and give generously. That's the idea of putting others as a priority over ourselves. However, I don't believe God wants us to give the last of what we have to the church like the widow in this story so that she has no money to live upon.
  - f) Stop and consider that we don't read of the Jewish religious leaders stopping to help this poor widow. If anything they just take it and effectively say, "OK, we got another one". In summary, this little story should be read as a warning against those who take advantage of others and not someone "godly" for giving all that she had. That's why this story is just an example of a warning as we live out a life for Jesus in a world focused on money.
  - g) With that said, time to move on to the next story.
6. Verse 5: Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, <sup>6</sup> "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."
- a) The key to understanding the transition between Verse 4 and Verse 5 is to remember the "where" of this verse: Jesus is teaching in the Jewish temple through the last chapter and in the first part of this chapter. Here, Jesus is now on a hillside opposite that temple, and that hillside has a nice view of the whole temple structure. The disciples are sitting there staring at temple complex and commenting on how beautiful it is. Jesus response to their comment about its beauty is that a day will come when not one stone of that structure will be left standing on top of the other.
  - b) To explain all of this, I need to give a quick history lesson, which is mostly future events as far as the disciples were concerned. The temple as it stood in Jerusalem at that time, is a great remodeling and addition project completed by King Herod. As negative a history as he had, his one claim to fame is that he spent a fortune rebuilding and adding onto the existing temple structure. If you've ever been to Jerusalem or seen pictures of the location of the Temple Mount it's up on a hill. It's a series of buildings with the temple itself being the main structure. It was built with giant white stones that looked like marble when seen from the distance. Part of it was covered in gold plates so it shined in the light for every one to see. There were also precious jewels mixed in those giant white stones so that they glistened when people stared at it.
  - c) When the Romans destroyed it in 70AD, someone accidentally started a fire there. Many Jewish people died in that fire as they took refuge in the temple. The Romans wanted the gold and jewels that were part of that structure, so they literally took the temple apart stone by stone to collect their "booty". That is why Jesus was accurately predicting the future of the temple when Jesus said not one stone would be left upon the other.
  - d) OK, how do we know this story wasn't written after 70AD? We have historical records of the disciples dying before that time. We have writings of early church leaders who were taught by the first disciples, who wrote how these predictions were literally fulfilled as written. Let me also share one more story about this before coming back to the text.

- e) Most of what we know of the destruction of this temple comes from Josephus, who was a pro-Roman Jewish writer who lived at that time. He said that many Jewish people lived in Jerusalem when the Roman armies surrounded that city. There was a night in the siege when someone accidentally left one gate open. Josephus wrote how the Christians among the Jewish people of that city, managed to escape through that open gate as they knew of Jesus' prediction of the temple destruction. While most of the Jewish people stayed in the city and prayed for God to rescue them, the Christians there miraculously escaped out of that siege and were not caught by the Roman army surrounding that city.
    - i) To finish my little history lesson, the destruction of Jerusalem was so complete, for centuries the Romans would not let any Jewish people live there. They could only go there one day per year to weep over its destruction on the anniversary of the day it was destroyed.
  - f) Now that I've given you that grim history, let's return to Verse 6. We find Jesus with His disciples and He's describing how this amazing structure would be destroyed. While the temple was not one of the "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World", it probably would still make the top 10 in terms of the amount of work needed to build it and complete it. Jesus was staring at that temple and said "Not one stone would be left upon the other". Because He made that prediction and it was recorded in three of the four Gospels, the Christians at that time did not suffer in its destruction. Does that mean we Christians won't suffer if we know our bible? Not based on history. However, it does mean we can avoid the fate that most of the world suffers if we're willing to trust Him with our future.
7. Verse 7: "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"
- a) Here Jesus gets asked two questions. His answer is the rest of the chapter. If you read the same story in Matthew, it is two chapters and also covers the question of Jesus' return that is also discussed in this speech. So if Matthew spent two chapters on this topic, why did Luke only take one? Did Luke miss stuff? No, each Gospel has its own emphasis and its own purpose. Luke states back in Chapter 1 that he wrote it for a government official so that official could have an accurate account of what Jesus said. Remember that Luke was a "historian". He was one of Paul's traveling companions and not one of the 12 disciples as Matthew was. Luke got his information from interviewing witnesses who knew Jesus at that time. The point is Luke wrote this prior to the Jerusalem destruction but after the time that Jesus rose from the dead. My point is that the destruction of that city was still a future event when Luke wrote it here.
  - b) Remember why Jesus is taking on these questions. He knows He's only days away from the events of the crucifixion. Therefore He wants the disciples to know the key events of their future and what will happen. Remember that the disciples still expected Jesus to go reign over the world from Jerusalem. It's if they were thinking, "OK, so the place is going to be destroyed, but don't You come back right after that?" Jesus needed to dispel the idea that He was going to start the eternal kingdom here and now, and that's another reason why we have this speech here in Chapter 21.
  - c) Before I start on Jesus answer, what about the question of how does any of this affect us? Yes we know the Romans destroyed Jerusalem a long time ago, but why should we 2,000 years later care about any of this stuff? Yes it's for us to understand how that 2,000 year and still going time frame is necessary in order for Jesus to gather a large group of people together. Think of it this way: If Jesus returned say 100 years ago, nobody alive today in the world would be saved. Yes there is more to learn about our own future from studying the rest of this chapter, but start with the idea that all of this was necessary including a lot of horrible deaths, not only to prove that Jesus knows all things but that we can trust Him with our future. Start with the concept that if Jesus didn't wait as long as He did to return (still waiting), none of us would be saved as we're reading this text.

8. Verse 8: He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. <sup>9</sup> When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."
- a) Remember that those who believed in Jesus as God were most likely a small number at this point. Yet Jesus is saying that many will claim they are Him returning after He was resurrected. Coming back to Josephus writing, he said there were so many people who claimed they were Jesus, at one time the Romans were arresting one per day before the destruction of the Temple. If you'd like proof that all this destruction talk was written before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, consider Josephus who wrote about Christians in Jerusalem at that time and even mentioned many who were arrested claiming to be Him.
  - b) Those of us, who know our history, know that there have been lots of people who claimed to be Him, who've lead lots of people to both poverty and their own death. He'll teach us later in this chapter how to recognize the real thing when it does occur. In the meantime, Jesus is warning us about "fakes" as they've existed throughout the last 2,000 years. Many of them have used Jesus name and others have just promised to lead their followers into eternal life if they just trust in them. To use a modern cliché, "don't drink their Kool-aid" which refers to one fake leader a generation ago that made his followers drink a drink that killed all of them as that leader claimed to be the "Messiah".
  - c) OK, so how do we know when the real Jesus appears? Glad you asked. Verse 10:
9. Verse 10: Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup> There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.
- a) To understand this, one has to read it from the perspective of the disciples and what they knew of the world at that time. The Jehovah Witnesses were famous for predicting that Jesus would return right after World War 1 as they saw it as kingdom fighting kingdom and they even set the exact date of Jesus return a number of times. They will respond that they know more now then they did then. The Old Testament says that any prophet who is not 100% accurate in their predictions are not to be trusted as a prophet and are to be put to death. (See Deuteronomy 18:20 as a reference.)
  - b) To say all of this, another way, no one knows the exact day or hour of Jesus' return but we do know a bunch of things will occur just prior to it occurring. Among those things are nations and kingdoms fighting against each other not to mention such horrible things as earthquakes, famines and pestilences. Remember that when Jesus said all of this, Romans controlled most of the known world at that time including every place that bordered the Mediterranean Sea, so there were no nations fighting nations at that time.
  - c) OK John, history has been full of wars between nations, plus there have been great tragic events such as earthquakes famines and pestilences all throughout that world for the last two thousand years, not to mention much longer. What makes these predictions special? Can't anyone just say the world will suffer horrible things in the future as it has? Think of it this way: The disciples were expecting the Messianic age to begin now or soon as Jesus is on the scene. They didn't expect another 2,000 years and counting of great suffering as the world has before a Messianic age begins of "peace and prosperity" and Jesus ruling the world from Jerusalem. So now that the Jewish people control Jerusalem again, will it now occur soon? Like Jesus said, no one knows the day or hour. I hope so, but I don't have an ability to predict the future, just repeat what Jesus said, and believe it as Gospel truth.
  - d) To put all of this another way, the bible has had a perfect record in its predictions to date. There are hundreds of predictions of Jesus' first coming that were accurately predicted a long time before it came true. There are also very accurate predictions about the nation of Israel that have come true. If I can trust all of those predictions as being historically true, then I can also trust the twice as many predictions about the events of the Second Coming.

- e) To sum up the last few verses, Jesus is essentially teaching that His return is not eminent from the time frame of 2,000 years ago. There is still a lot of history to cover in the future, as Jesus is predicting in these verses. OK, so Jesus accurately says the last few thousand years have been full of tragedies of wars and other bad things. Those types of events have occurred throughout all of history, what makes this prediction so special? It is the idea that His return is not eminent, but will occur after all of these bad things occur. With that said, it's important to read the last few verses in context with the next few:
10. Verse 12: "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.<sup>13</sup> This will result in your being witnesses to them.<sup>14</sup> But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves.<sup>15</sup> For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.
- a) Jesus is saying before great wars and before you hear of earthquakes and other bad things that happen, first, get the idea that you will be put on trial in synagogues (religious trials) and prison's (civil courts) for believing that Jesus is God. If these trials are prior to all the wars and other bad stuff of the previous verses, it can mean that such things as the world wars and pestilences that we're read of in history is not relevant to what Jesus' point.
- b) Let me try to explain this a different way: We know for sure that Jesus hasn't come back yet. Therefore He's saying many Christians will face real trials before any of the wars and other bad stuff of the previous few verses will take place. My point is I don't think Jesus is describing the last two thousand years of history in the sense of world wars, pestilences and earthquakes that have taken place so far since He hasn't returned yet. What I believe He is saying is that Christians will be persecuted for their faith as they have been for the last 2,000 years and right before Jesus comes, there will be a horrible period of time where the whole world will be at war, and other bad things will occur at that time such as world wide famines, earthquakes and pestilences.
- i) If Jesus is just describing the last 2,000 years of history, we've had real persecution of Christians mixed in with big wars and those other bad things. My point is for a sign of God to occur, I suspect there has to be specific set of wars and those other bad things to occur because Jesus said in these verses that Christians will be put on trials BEFORE all of those other things occur. In the Old Testament book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, they both speak of a literal seven-year time period of really bad things occurring just prior to Jesus' return. Therefore, I see Jesus saying in these verses that Christians will be persecuted before whenever that seven-year period of time actually does begin.
- ii) If all of this is confusing, just remember that Jesus is promising believers that they will be persecuted prior to when all of the other "bad stuff" begins.
- iii) There is a famous Christian book called "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". It is considered an English classic book and can be read for free on the Internet. It was written a few hundred years ago and is still widely read today. It chronicles the killing of Christian believers from the Roman persecutions through the middle ages up to the time when the American colonies began. The point is it shows how more than any other religion how Jesus prediction about Christian persecution has been true for the better part of the last two thousand years.
- c) Now for the positive news of all of this. Jesus promised in Verse 15 that when (not if, but when) we are put on such trials, He will give us the right words to say so that we give a good testimony for Him at those trials. That doesn't mean we can ignore our bibles as Jesus will tell us what to say. It just means if we get in situations where we are tested for our faith, we don't have to prepare, as God will tell us what to say on the spot. I've heard many pastors say that when their on the spot on television, it's amazing how God gave to them the right things to say when they had to say something.

- i) Coming back to the Book of Martyrs, it is full of stories of testimonies that people gave as they were about to be killed for believing that Jesus is God. Notice Jesus is not saying we get rescued from those trials. He's just saying those trials become an opportunity for us to be a witness for Him and at those trials, Jesus will guide our words as to what we say. I'm not saying every Christian will die a martyr. What Jesus is saying is that martyrdom will become a common sign among Christians as it has been for the last 2,000 years.
  - ii) As one person put it, the relatively easy thing to do is to be a martyr for Jesus as it is over fairly quickly. The hard part is to live daily for Jesus if we're not called to be a martyr for Him. (Chuck Missler on this topic) I'm not saying that we have to look for opportunities to be a martyr. I'm not saying we have to live with a chance that it may happen. Jesus warns His disciples that a cost of following Him means that we can be called to be a martyr for Him.
  - iii) I have to admit, that since I became a Christian, I don't fear death. I do have a big fear of pain, and like any person, I do what I can to avoid it. My point is if I was tortured, I'd probably confess to just about anything to make it stop except to deny that Jesus is God knowing my eternal life depends upon being a good witness for Him. Therefore, if such a thing ever occurs, I have faith as Jesus said in Verse 15, I will say the right words if I'm ever on trial for believing Jesus is God.
  - iv) If these verses don't scare you away from Christianity, look at the next two:
11. Verse 16: You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup> All men will hate you because of me.
- a) To explain these verses, consider the first word in each verse: The word "you" in Verse 16 and "all" in Verse 17. Does this mean every Christian will be betrayed by family members or friends? Does this mean all people will hate us? To state the obvious, not all Christians for the last 2,000 years have fallen in this category. We don't have to be paranoid around our relatives or friends. The word "You" in Verse 16 refers to many Christians including all the apostles who did die for their faith in Jesus. Until the Romans destroyed Israel in 70 AD, to be a Christian was a death sentence in Israel. There were 10 Roman emperor's who persecuted Christians to death. The most famous of them was Nero who said, "You Christians say you are the light of the world", great I'll dip you in wax and use your dead bodies to light my gardens", which he did.
  - b) Jesus point is during periods of persecution, enemies of Christianity would offer rewards to anyone who would turn them in to the authorities. That's how their family members and friends would betray Christians for the earthly rewards. That leads me to the word "All" in Verse 17. It doesn't refer to all people, but at times in human history and even in places of the world today, to be a Christian means "all" refers to those who don't believe in Jesus as God and have the potential to turn them over to be arrested.
  - c) If these verses are making your paranoid, that's not the idea. Jesus is just warning us how history has unfolded for the last 2,000 years. It is not in every country and at every time, but it has existed throughout this time span. Like I said a few pages back, more believers have died in the 20th Century for their faith than any time in human history. Therefore, I don't think the 21st Century will be any safer for believers. Now for the good news:
12. Verse 18: But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By standing firm you will gain life.
- a) At this point one has to be wondering, why go through all of this? Why should I bother to believe in Jesus if this is my future? Remember the disciples thought that Jesus would set up the eternal peaceful kingdom right after Rome destroyed Israel. However Jesus is telling them just the opposite, to expect bad things until He returns. Verse 18 and 19 are the good news: "Not a hair on our heads will perish and we'll have eternal life". Yes, but what about all those Christians who were lit on fire for Nero or sentenced to die because they believed in Jesus, how did not one hair on their head parish? Glad you asked!

- b) In the last chapter, we had a "Question and Answer" session. One of those questions was about life in heaven. My point is Jesus confirmed that heaven is real and people live there for eternity. Therefore Jesus is confirming that whatever suffering we have to put up with in this lifetime is worth it as we'll gain eternal life in heaven. Therefore, a good summary of the lesson so far is that, Jesus said to be a Christian will be a difficult life to live here on earth, but it is worth it as our eternal life makes up for it in far greater ways that whatever we have to suffer in this lifetime.
- c) With that said, it's time to get historical for us, and futuristic for Jesus' disciples again:
13. Verse 20: When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.<sup>21</sup> Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.<sup>22</sup> For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.<sup>23</sup> How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.<sup>24</sup> They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
- a) To understand these verses, remember back in Verse 5 Jesus described the destruction of the Jewish Temple that took over half a century to complete. It wasn't completed until after the resurrection and was finished less than a decade prior to its destruction. When we think of Jesus we just focus on Him as God or a miracle worker. We tend to forget that Jesus also predicted the future like an Old Testament prophet every now and then. At the least, these verses teach us that Jesus as God did know the future and knew it accurately.
- b) So how do we know this wasn't written after Jerusalem's destruction? Evidence. History tells us Luke was killed before its destruction. Josephus describes Jewish Christians who lived in Jerusalem when this event took place and how they fled the city based on Jesus' words here in these verses. Josephus wrote about Jesus and Christianity prior to all the events as described in these verses. My point is historical evidence supports the accuracy of what is written here in these verses. (Jewish War 5:10:1, 5:13:4 and 6:2:2 by Josephus.)
- c) Speaking of history, let me tell a little about why all of this happened. The Romans were tired of the Jewish people rebelling against them. Therefore the Roman General Titus and a large army worked it's way through Israel with the intent of destroying it. By 70AD, the army got to Jerusalem and surrounded the city with the intent of starving it out. It is said over 1,000,000 Jewish people died in that campaign and many survivors were taken back to Rome to be killed in the Coliseum. If you visit Rome today, there is still a large arch in that city that commemorates the Romans victory of Israel. My point here is Jerusalem did fall exactly as Jesus stated in this paragraph.
- d) I mentioned earlier about Jewish Christians escaping this event. Those Christians knew what Jesus said and looked for a way to escape. Josephus records that one night during this time frame, the eastern gate to Jerusalem was accidentally left open, and Christians managed to get out without the surrounding army catching them. My point is most if not all Christians managed to escape all of this destruction based on Jesus' prediction here.
- e) So why does Jesus mention pregnant woman and those nursing babies? It's a colorful way of saying everyone will suffer not just those guarding the city. It's implying this is a time to run away, and it's hard to run if a woman was in that condition. So if Jesus is God why didn't He prevent this horrible thing from happening? A big part of the answer is it is the price the Jewish nation had to pay for their rejection of Him. I can't explain why all evil occurs in this world. I just know evil exists and life would only be fair if a God exists and there is an eternity far greater than our lifespan here and now.
- f) Now reread Verse 22 as it effectively says, "this is a time of punishment". If we need more motivation to be a Christian and deal with whatever suffering we may have to face in this lifetime, Verse 22 is a good reminder of the price we have to pay to turn from Jesus in the first place. With that said, it's time for more "good news" which is Verse 24.



- g) Verse 24 is translated here, "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." In world history, there's never been a nation that's defeated in war, conquered, scattered, and then came back together again to be a nation. With one great exception: The Jewish people. They did it after the Babylonians conquered them in about 600 BC and once again in 1948 when they became a nation. In fact, even after the Romans conquered them, no Jewish person lived in Jerusalem for centuries. The Romans said that Jewish people could only come there once a year to memorialize its downfall. It wasn't until centuries later some Jewish people started living there again.
- i) When people ask me did anything good come out of the holocaust when Germany wiped out most of the Jewish people? Yes, Israel became an independent nation again for the first time since the Romans conquered them.
  - ii) So does that mean the "times of the Gentiles are fulfilled today"? One view is yes, as Israel is now an independent country again. Another view is the ground where the temple stood, is still not controlled by the Jewish nation. Today, if Christians go to the Temple Mount there are Islamic guards there who will not permit any Christian to stop and pray there. A pastor I know almost got his bible taken away from him as he wasn't supposed to bring it up to that temple mount.
  - iii) In Matthew's account of this story, he said in effect the generation who sees all of these things, will see the "end time" events. As of the day I'm writing this, it's now been over 60 years since Israel became a nation again. If a generation as described in the bible is typically 40 years, I don't think that generation will see it. My point here is simply that I believe the idea of non-Jews controlling Jerusalem specifically refers to the time period where they can't have an official temple on that location.
  - iv) If you ask religious Jews today how will they recognize the Messiah, they'll say he will lead them to rebuild the Temple. They are setting themselves up for the great time of trouble that is described in most of Revelation as the anti-Christ will allow a temple to be built there. After three and one half years, whoever that person is, he will double-cross the Jews and demand to be worshipped as God. That's when all the "bad stuff" of Revelation occurs in the second half of that seven-year period.
- h) I'm describing all of these predictions as to understand that Jesus isn't just talking about the events of "70AD". He's also describing the future to us. Let me put it this way: When I read about global warming or global cooling, when I hear of the threats of being killed by nuclear bombs or a great plague, I don't fear for the world's destruction. That's because I know the bible has a 100% accuracy records in its predictions to date. God's reputation is at stake here and I trust His predictions as to how the world we know it will end than I do over whatever is in the news. Yes, I believe other tragedies could kill lots of people just as it has throughout history. Yet, as far as world destruction is concerned, it will only occur on God's timing. Just as Genesis teaches us how our world began, so Revelation teaches us how our world will end, no matter what else one hears about in the news. The reason I'm stating all of this is so we know what is the world's future as well as the future for the Jewish nation. Israel has to exist when Jesus returns as God's promise to that nation isn't conditional upon accepting Him as the Messiah. However, I do believe that when he does return there will be lots of people accepting Him as such as we'll read in upcoming verses.
- i) In Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, Jesus clearly states that no one knows the day or hour of His return. I believe that's in the bible so no one can study the bible and say they know when Jesus will return. It's as if God the Father limited what Jesus could do or say when He was man, but now that Jesus is resurrected, I'll argue that Jesus does know when He'll return, but that knowledge is kept between God the Father and God the Son.
    - i) With that said, Jesus does explain, what signs to look when that event is about to occur. In other words, we don't know the day or hour, but when certain "stuff" happens as described in this chapter, we can know when it's about to happen.

14. Verse 25: "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. <sup>26</sup> Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."
- a) Before I explain what these verses mean, let me address those who are thinking, "I have enough to worry about in life. Jesus will come when Jesus' comes in the meantime I'll just focus on my own life, thank you much." The good news is you don't have to spend every day studying all of this stuff. However, to just spend a little time understanding how it'll occur is all we need so we can recognize the event when it occurs.
  - b) I heard of a pastor who keeps a sign on his desk saying, "Today could be the day Jesus is coming to get me" as a reminder to keep God in focus as the center of our lives. That's all in effect I ask that you be aware of. Studying these details helps us to recognize all these events when they do occur. I'll also add that taking a little time to study these events will help us when a group claims Jesus secretly returned back on this date, or claim Jesus isn't going to return at all. In other words, once you know what to look for, you won't panic over false claims about His return.
  - c) All of that leads me to Verse 25. Jesus says that right before He returns, there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. I'm not positive what that means, but whatever it means, it'll be obvious to the whole world as we can look up and see it. I suspect this refers to either an angel or an eagle (translated both ways, depending upon your bible version) that flies over the earth in Revelation 8:13 warning the earth of the destruction to come. My point is whatever signs do occur prior to Jesus return, it will be obvious to the whole world.
  - d) Let me pause and ask, "Why a big show? Why not Jesus just return and that's that? The answer is that God wants as many as possible to repent and believe the Gospel before all of the destruction begins. If God created our world in the first place, then He has every right do with it as He pleases, including having a "wrap up" session one day as we read about here in these verses.
  - e) All of that leads back to the signs in the sky and the "tossing of the sea" in Verse 25. There have been hurricanes and tidal waves throughout history. I suspect we're now reading of something much more "significant" here. This is some sort of global catastrophe designed to get the world's attention on God. No I don't believe it's the melting of the polar ice caps or anything man made. This is some sort of "planet killer" that is God ordained and there is nothing we can do to stop it when it occurs. The good news of whatever this bad thing is, is that it precedes Jesus return. As bad as whatever this is, it is not a complete planet killer, because somebody has to be left on earth if Jesus is going to rule. In other words, if Jesus is going to rule the world, He'll need people to rule over. If the Christian church is taken to heaven before all this bad stuff begins, some people have to survive so Jesus can rule who over them.
  - f) OK John, what if I believe all of this is a fairy tale, and life goes on just as it has? The real issue is God's reputation is at stake here. It's kind of like saying, "I know I'll never die as I haven't died so far." If Jesus spoke accurately about what happened in 70AD, then we can trust Him to speak accurately about what will happen when He returns for judgment as it is being described here in these verses. That's another reason why I believe Christians are raptured before all this begins. In all the references to the Christian church being "out of here", there is never any reference to judgment. All this bad stuff is about judgment.
  - g) That leads to Verse 27. Jesus refers to Himself as the "Son of Man", which is a title for the Messiah that goes back to the book of Daniel. The key point here is that when all this bad stuff takes place, the good news is that it is the literal time of Jesus' return to earth. It's not those who see the birth of the nation of Israel who see this. It is again those who see all of this bad stuff (that generation) will see Jesus in His return for judgment.

- h) OK, all of this is scary stuff and as you like to say, we have enough to worry about in life than to focus on when Jesus returns. So why should we care about this? One reason is so we don't get fooled by groups who claim Jesus already returned or by those who say it'll never happen as life goes on as it always does. If you don't understand all of the details, then welcome to the club. The way I view it is simply that if the world has a beginning, then it must have an ending one-day as well. As the bible explains from God's perspective how the world began in Genesis, so the bible also tells us how it will end and this is one of those passages that explains how it ends. Once we know what signs to look for we can go back to our lives while keeping in mind today can always be the day when Jesus returns for His church. The rest is details. Speaking of details, back to the text.
15. Verse 29: He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees.<sup>30</sup> When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.<sup>31</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.
- a) One has to remember that Jesus was speaking to common people and He's using simple stories that anyone could understand. The point here is simply that when we see leaves growing on any tree, we know that summer is coming. Just as when we can tell summer is coming, so we can tell when Jesus returns by looking for worldwide signs as stated in this chapter as well as described in much of Revelation.
- b) Before I move on, notice Jesus mentions "all the trees". In the last chapter, I talked about how the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. Jesus is not saying the people who see the birth of the nation of Israel is the generation that sees all these things. My proof is the text here says "all the trees" not just fig trees. My point here is simply that this parable is about we can recognize summer is coming by new leaves on trees, and we can recognize when Jesus does return by all (big emphasis on all) the signs in this chapter and not just the fact that Israel is a country again.
16. Verse 32: "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.<sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
- a) Let me discuss "this generation". The reason some people think the generation who saw Israel reborn as a nation is the same generation who sees Jesus return based on Verse 32. My counterargument is Jesus said "all the trees" in Verse 29. My point is simply that Jesus is referring to the generation that sees all the signs as described in this chapter is the same generation that sees His return, not the generation that saw Israel reborn as a nation.
- b) That leads to Verse 33. "Heaven and earth will pass away". First, understand that heaven has more than one meaning in the bible. It can refer to the sky, it can refer to outer space and it can refer to where God rules. My point is when Jesus refers to heaven here He's not referring to where God rules from. He's referring to the sky as we can see it and probably the stars in the sky. Once in awhile I get asked, do I believe there is life in outer space? I like to answer if there is, their salvation depends upon their belief in Jesus on the cross.
- c) Let me describe these verses another way: Jesus is saying what He says is "Gospel truth" much more than the basic idea that the world as we know has to end one day. Coming back to the idea that it can be difficult to live as a Christian as we can suffer for it, in effect, what choice do we have? Either we believe Jesus words to be true and inherit eternal life, or we believe the bible is not the word of God despite all of the evidence as I presented in this lesson (history as we know it) and suffer the consequences. Either we believe Jesus is God and honor Him as such, or we suffer for not believing it.
- d) Let me wrap all this up by asking, "Why did God bother?" If all of this is true, what's in it for Him? Is there something in life that you love to do so much, you'd do it even if no one paid you to do it? God is so full of love, He needs someone to express that love upon and He choose us to be the recipients of that love. At the same time, God can't force us to love Him back, so He gave us free will as to choose to love Him. That's why God entered the world He created so that He can tell us how much He loves us and wants to be with us.

17. Verse 34: "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."
- a) There was a movie scene I saw fairly recently where a person described someone who had a successful life as a "trap". That "someone" lived comfortably and would be considered a success in life. However that someone didn't realize having financial success is like a trap that one can get stuck in, if we only care about fame, power or financial success. That in effect is what Jesus is warning about in this last set of verses. We can get so caught up in our own world, we can forget that God created this world and whenever He chooses to, He can end it as well. That's why we have to care about life from God's perspective and not just focus on whatever the issues are at the moment in our lives.
  - b) With that said, I want you to notice the word "you" in Verse 36. Who is the you? To state the obvious, Jesus didn't wrap up the world as we know it during the life of the disciples. Yes Jerusalem was destroyed 40 years after this speech, but all the other things described in this chapter have not all happened exactly as it is described here. So who is the "you"?
    - i) In effect it is everyone who lives with the idea that Jesus can return at anytime. I believe Paul wrote based on the idea that the rapture of the church can occur any time. That's what 2nd Thessalonians is all about. God designed us (the Christian church) to live with the idea that He could return at any time. It's been true for the last 2,000 years and it's still true today. God's word is at stake here. Just because it has not happened yet, doesn't mean it won't happen. Like the idea that we haven't died yet, doesn't mean we're not going to die one day. So we as Christians should live with the idea that today could always be the day that Jesus could return.
  - c) All of that leads to Verse 36: So if we believe Jesus died for our sins why should we pray that we escape all of this bad stuff to happen? Does that mean we can lose our salvation?
    - i) No. This isn't about salvation itself. This is about living a life based on what God calls us to do as believers. We pray about this to remind ourselves that today could always be the day of His return. We pray about this to remind ourselves not just to focus on problem of the day, but to remember why we were created in the first place, to bring God glory in our lives by using it to make a difference for Him.
    - ii) The reason we are to pray about it, is that if we say we are Christians, but then fail to live accordingly, as we're judged based on how we live our lives. God expects us to produce "fruit" by believing Jesus is God. That's why God calls on us to pray about this. It's the reminder that He's called us to live a life for Him and use our time for His glory. My goal isn't to scare us to do more, but just to realize that the evidence of our salvation is based on what we've done about it. Jesus is warning us to pray about being worthy to stand before Him one day.
18. Verse 37: Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, <sup>38</sup> and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.
- a) OK, why are these verses here and what does it have to do with our future? The answer is they are a transition to the next chapter that focuses on the events of Jesus' trial before the Jewish courts and the Roman courts. It shows that Jesus could not spend the night in Jerusalem as the Jewish leaders were looking for a chance to secretly arrest Him. Still, He wanted to teach as many as we're willing to listen to Him who were in that city for the big holiday celebration of Passover. The point for us is that Jesus cares so much about living for eternity with us, that He's willing to risk being arrested in order to draw us closer to Him in the first place. On that positive note, it's the end of the chapter and time to wrap it up in my closing prayer.

19. Heavenly Father, as we read about the future of the Christian church and things we may face as believers in You, help us to keep our focus upon You and do what is Your will for our lives at this time. Help us to use our time and our assets to do Your will, as our eternal destiny depends on whether or not we acted on the faith that we have in who You are and what You have done for us in our lives. Guide us and make it obvious to us how it is You want to guide us for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen