

In Matthew 24:1-14, the Lord prophesied the destruction of the Temple and events leading up to it. He spoke of mass deception by false messiahs and false prophets preaching false gospels (24:5,11). He spoke of troublesome times in the world (24:6-7). He also spoke of great persecution of the church (24:9) that will result in two things: (1) Many professing Christians will be “offended” and apostatize from the faith revealing that they never had been truly converted (24:9-10,12; cf. 1 John 2:18-19); (2) God’s true children will be revealed as they persevere in the faith by the grace of God in Christ (24:13). This will mark “the beginning of sorrows” (24:8). This is the image of a woman going through birth pains waiting to deliver her child. These are signs that mark both the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as well as the entire time of the New Testament leading up to the second coming of Christ. As the time of His second coming draws closer, these things will intensify.

Another work that must be accomplished according to the sovereign will of God is *“THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM SHALL BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD FOR A WITNESS UNTO ALL NATIONS.”* This goes back to the promise God made to Abraham that in him “shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). This is in line with the fact that God’s elect are found among “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 14:6). As connected with God divorcing Himself from the nation Israel in that Old Covenant relationship, we saw the Gospel going out to the Gentile nations according to the great commission given by the Lord to His disciples (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 8:4; Col. 1:23). This was God’s final judgment upon the nation Israel for their rejection of the Gospel. It was also the means God used to bring the Gospel outside of the confines of Judaism and spread it throughout the world. So the meaning of this is the salvation of God’s elect as they are found throughout the world. God will bring them all to faith in Christ and repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

(Matt. 24:15) - Christ confirmed all this by the testimony of the prophet Daniel and his prophecy of *“THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION”* (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). “Abomination” refers to profanity, corruption, and idolatry. “Desolation” describes the ruination and destruction that comes as the result of abomination. The abomination of the unbelieving Jews had left the Temple and the whole city of Jerusalem desolate (ruined). Although it was impressive to unregenerate men, it was an abomination to the Lord (Luke 16:15). So, Christ spoke of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 which would be a providential and historical proof of three things: (1) that no sinner could be saved by their works and efforts in religious dedication and exercise; (2) that the Old Covenant was finished by the fulfillment of all things in the Person and work of Christ and the New Testament age had begun when the Gospel would go out into the world and be preached to the Gentiles; and (3) that God is faithful both to His promises and to His threats - God saves sinners based on the righteousness of Christ alone, and He condemns sinners based on anything else.

He told the disciples that they must not be too strongly attached to the temple and the ceremonies of the Law of Moses. First of all these things were always meant to be temporary. God had long ago declared that when the Messiah would come, the Jewish priesthood and the sacrifices would cease. They would be abolished by way of fulfillment (Dan. 9:24-27). Here He quotes from Daniel 12:11-12. These things would cease because all righteousness would be fulfilled in the Person and work of the Messiah. These things typified

and pictured Him and salvation conditioned on Him alone. Secondly, there was no eternal salvation in the laws and elements of the Old Covenant. These things pointed to Christ and salvation based on His righteousness alone. But the Jews who sought righteousness and life based on their participation in these things paid little attention to any prophecy that foretold the abolishment of them.

(Matt. 24:16-21; cf. Luke 21:20-24) - Christ now describes the terrible calamities and tribulations that would overtake Jerusalem by the Roman legions. It would be so terrible that there would be no safe place in Jerusalem. Their only hope of survival would be to leave without packing. This certainly marks the end of the Old Covenant and God's covenant relationship with Israel as a nation. It is also an historical testimony that there never has been (or ever will be) salvation in that law covenant. Salvation has always been by God's free, sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed alone (Hebrews 8). It is also clear from verse 13 on that Christ's purpose is to inspire His disciples to faithful perseverance amidst all of this destruction and persecution (cf. John 8:30-32). All these signs are given NOT to cause us to speculate on WHEN Christ is coming, but to give us assurance that He IS coming so that we will cling to Him according to His truth revealed in His Word and be faithful to preach the Gospel in a cursed and dying world (2 Cor. 13:5-6). He reveals here that it is absolutely certain that all who truly believe in Him shall be saved and cannot be separated from Him no matter what our circumstances here on earth (cf. Rom. 8:31-39).

In verse 20 His point was that their flight out of Judea in winter would be hindered by short days and rough weather, and that the unbelieving Jews who hold strictly to the Old Covenant Sabbath would be hindered by their legal restrictions and be destroyed along with the city. And how bad is it going to be in Jerusalem? In verse 21 He describes the greatness of the tribulation. God totally destroyed that nation over their rejection of the Gospel (Matt. 23:37-39). There is no greater sin than to reject God's promise of salvation based on the righteousness of Christ and continue to seek salvation based on the works and/or will of man. This denies every attribute of God's redemptive character and casts shame and reproach upon both the Person and the righteousness of Christ. Though all who reject the Gospel unto death will receive the just wrath of God, God determined to make a very extraordinary demonstration of it in the case of the Jews.

(Matt. 24:22) - Christ told them that if it were not for God's elect, not one individual Jew would have been spared. This is similar to the words of *Isaiah 1:9* - "*Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*" So, unless God had put an end to those awful days, the Jews would have utterly perished so that not a single individual would have been left. This does not mean that every Jew who survived this destruction was saved eternally, no more than we could assume that every Jew who was killed was lost eternally. But here we see another example of God restraining His providential wrath on account of His elect. The reason that this world exists at all, and that this destruction did not go out into all the world, is that God will accomplish His purpose of saving His elect out of this fallen race (2 Pet. 3:9,15). So, a part of this nation was preserved, not so that the temple could be rebuilt and the Old Covenant reestablished at some later time, but that out of them God might bring His elect to faith in Christ and true repentance from idolatry and dead works.