

## THE SIGN OF THE END OF THE AGE

The Jews recognized two ages: This present age which continues from creation until Messiah comes to set up His kingdom; and the age to come which refers to the Messianic Kingdom age. So, in Jewish thinking, the present age is the time prior to when Christ comes to set up His kingdom.

Having said in reference to the Jews that their house is left to them desolate Jesus then left the temple complex (Matt. 23:38-39). This triggered a discussion about the destruction of the temple and the end of the age.

Matthew 24:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Jesus said that not one stone in relation to these buildings would be left upon another. This was fulfilled to the letter in A.D. 70 when the Romans burned and completely destroyed the temple and all its structures.

This is interesting because Titus the Roman general ordered his soldiers to spare the temple, but in fulfillment of Christ's prophetic word, they defied those orders and burned it to the ground. When the fire melted the gold it ran down between the stones. In order to get at the gold the soldiers tore the stones apart to get at it. Thus, Christ's words were fulfilled to the letter in that, not one stone was left upon another.

Sometimes people say, well what about the Western Wall (otherwise known as the "Wailing Wall") that remains intact to this day. Well, this Western Wall was not part of the Temple proper. Rather it was simply a retaining wall built by Herod. Jesus was speaking in reference to the Temple buildings and not in reference to the retaining wall. Therefore, Jesus' words were fulfilled to the letter.

So total was the destruction of the temple complex that the Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundations, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."

Matthew 24:3 (NKJV)

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Jesus made His way to the Mount of Olives which provides a panoramic view of the Temple Mount. And in that context Christ's disciples come to Him privately with some questions.

Some have thought that there are 3 questions here, but grammatically there are only 2 questions.

1. When will these things be?

2. What will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age?

But while there are two questions in essence there is one main thought as the disciples in their minds saw the devastation of the city and its temple, the coming of the Messiah, and the end of the age as all part of one interrelated event (cf. Zech. 14:1-2). So really, they were asking what is going to be the SPECIFIC SIGN that signals your coming and the end of the age when all this will take place.

"It appears that the disciples did not associate the destruction of the temple with the departure of the Lord, but rather with His coming again. Therefore, the two questions involve a single thought rather than two separate ones." – Stanley Toussaint

"The questioners took for granted that all three things went together: destruction of the temple, advent of the Son of Man, end of the current age." – Alexander Bruce

So this was not so much different questions, but essentially ONE main question about the SIGNAL of Christ's coming that would usher in the setting up of His kingdom.

And Jesus proceeded to answer, first, in relation to that aspect of His Second Coming that will have SIGN markers associated with it – namely His Second Coming to the earth that immediately follows the Tribulation Period. This builds on the knowledge they already had from the OT seen in such places as Daniel 9 and 12 and Zechariah 12-14.

It is ONLY the second aspect of Christ's Second Coming that has SIGN indicators attached to it. The first aspect (the Rapture) is SIGNLESS as He comes as a thief in the night. Christ in dealing with "the sign" of His coming is dealing with phenomenon related to His Second Coming to the earth.

The word "sign" (Gk. semeion) here refers to a clear marker or indicator that something remarkable is about to happen.

The word "coming" is the Greek word "parousia" which denotes "coming arrival" emphasizing the personal presence of someone. This word is found 24 times in the NT, four of which are found in Matthew – all here in chapter 24 (v. 3, 27, 37, 39). This word came to be used of an official visit by a king or a high-ranking official.

The word "end" (Gk. sunteleias) in the phrase, "the end of the age" implies the completion of something. "[It] refers to completion, as in the final culmination of a planned series of events." (John MacArthur)

The disciples with the Jewish mindset would have thought through the prism of the pre-Messianic Age which will be followed by the Messianic Age in which the Messiah rules in the kingdom.

In other words, they were asking what will be the SIGN that signals Your coming which will bring to conclusion the pre-kingdom era. In the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13 Jesus spoke of "the end of the age" in reference to judgment that separates the sons of the kingdom who will go into the kingdom from the sons of the wicked one who will not (cf. Mt. 13:36-50) (cf. Mt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Heb. 9:26).

So, the end of the age relates to the time of the Second Coming when Christ comes in judgment and sets up His kingdom. The pre-kingdom age will then be complete. The disciples wanted to know what will SIGNAL the future coming of Christ that will bring to an end this present pre-kingdom age.

Christ proceeded to answer this question in Matthew 24:4-35. In essence, Christ's answer is that THE SIGN that will precede His Second Coming to the earth to set up His kingdom will be the events of the 70th week of Daniel - otherwise known as the Tribulation Period. Before the BEST of times (the kingdom) will come the WORST of times (the Tribulation). It will be obvious and unmistakable! Before the Second Coming of Revelation 19 comes the awful Tribulation Period of Revelation 6-18.

But this (the Tribulation) is essentially Jewish in orientation. Jesus later in the chapter (Matt. 24) will introduce NEW revelation related to an aspect of His coming that was previously unknown that we now know as the Rapture which essentially relates to the Church.

Before the Tribulation Period of Revelation 6-18 comes the Church Age of Revelation 1-3. This is where we live and the next great event on God's prophetic calendar is the removal of His Church. PERHAPS TODAY! LIVE READY!

Rev. 1-3 - The Church Age

Rev. 4-5 - The Scene in Heaven

Rev. 6-18 - The Tribulation Period

Rev. 19- The Second Coming

Rev. 20- The Millennial Kingdom

Rev. 21-22 The Eternal State

Titus 2:13 (NKJV)

13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,