

Greater Works Christian Church

Robert A. Enos
Founder and Lead Apostle

The End of the World? Part 4

Recap: This is not only a recap of earlier studies, but something we must always remember.

Matthew 24:3-4

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?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

There are 3 Questions asked of Jesus by His disciples (after Jesus describes the destruction of the Temple):

1. When will these things be?
2. What will be the sign of Your coming?
3. What will be the sign... of the end of the age?

Jesus begins to answer these questions by saying, "Take heed that no one deceives you."

From v.5-33 Jesus describes the things that take place in regard to the destruction of the Temple.

In v.34, Jesus says this:

Matthew 24:34

Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

The generation Jesus was speaking to was the generation that would witness all these things (keep in mind a generation is 40 years). Jesus said these things about 30AD, and the Temple was destroyed in 70AD (40 years later).

In our previous study we took a look at Matthew 24:1-8. V.8, states, "All these are the beginning of sorrows." V.5-7 outline merely the beginning of sorrows.

After the Beginning of Sorrows

Matthew 24:9-14

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.

Notice, v.9 begins with, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation...." The key word is Then. After the Beginning of Sorrows, you will be delivered to tribulation.

Jesus said this to give His disciple a sign to look for. When the Beginning of Sorrows has started these will set of a chain of events even worse.

v.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.

The Persecution of the Early Church

Acts 7:58-8:1

Acts 7:58-60

- 58 and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
- 59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
- 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 8:1

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

The Bible records how the early Church was being persecuted. This persecution led to the death of many of the early believers in Christ. Most all of the early church at this time were Jewish, the persecution of Christians led to the persecution of the Jews as well.

The persecution grew so that even Herod got involved.

Acts 12:1-5

- 1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church.
- 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.
- 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread.

4 So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

Herod begins to “harass some from the church”. Herod kills James, the brother of John. He goes on to arrest Peter to turn over to the Jews that hated him. Persecution of the Church was already taking place at this time in and around Jerusalem. This Persecution spread quickly throughout the Roman Empire.

History tells us of several events that led up to the destruction of the Temple, and the fulfillment of the Prophecies given by Jesus in Matthew 24.

Questions and Discussion: Here can see the Bible explains the Bible. Jesus prophesied and the word of God tells of its fulfillment.

Why is it important to look to scripture for the fulfillment of biblical prophecy (a hint is found in Matthew 24:4)?

What does this for our understanding of scripture today?

Nero’s Rome Burns

By: History.com editors

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/neros-rome-burns>

The great fire of Rome breaks out and destroys much of the city on this day in the year 64. Despite the well-known stories, there is no evidence that the Roman emperor, Nero, either started the fire or played the fiddle while it burned. Still, he did use the disaster to further his political agenda.

The fire began in the slums of a district south of the legendary Palatine Hill. The area’s homes burned very quickly and the fire spread north, fueled by high winds. During the chaos of the fire, there were reports of heavy looting. The fire ended up raging out of control for nearly three days. Three of Rome’s 14 districts were completely wiped out; only four were untouched by the tremendous conflagration. Hundreds of people died in the fire and many thousands were left homeless.

Although popular legend holds that Emperor Nero fiddled while the city burned, this account is wrong on several accounts. First, the fiddle did not even exist at the time. Instead, Nero was well known for his talent on the lyre; he often composed his own music. More importantly, Nero was actually 35 miles away in Antium when the fire broke out. In fact, he let his palace be used as a shelter.

Legend has long blamed Nero for a couple of reasons. Nero did not like the aesthetics of the city and used the devastation of the fire in order to change much of it and institute new building codes throughout the city. Nero also used the fire to clamp down on the growing influence of Christians in Rome. He arrested, tortured and executed hundreds of Christians on the pretext that they had something to do with the fire.

The Annals of Imperial Rome

By: Tacitus

Book XV (15)

Paragraphs 54-55

<http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.11.xv.html>

Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but

to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

Questions and Discussions: Not only does the word of God show the fulfilment of Jesus' words, but history tells of its fulfilment.

Why is it important for us to find the confirmation of prophecy in history?

How does the fulfilment of Jesus' word effect you today?

As we can see, history shows us the Persecutions and Tribulation the Jews and early Church had to endure.

Back to Mathew 24

Matthew 24:10-13

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.

Keep in Mind, Jesus continues to share with His disciples what will soon take place. We don't have to look further than the words of Scripture to see these warnings fulfilled.

The Judaizers

Peter was warning of the Judaizers. The Judaizers taught that the believers in Jesus had to become Jews by their standards to be a Christian.

2 Peter 2:1-2

1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

The Gnostics

Gnosticism was of Greek origin and taught that all matter was evil and that freedom (salvation) came through special knowledge of certain spiritual things. In other words, the belief that salvation could be gained other than Christ alone.

Note: Several Christian sects have a form Gnosticism woven through its doctrine (*i.e. Catholicism*).

1 John 4:1-3

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

In his letters John is battling Gnosticism that had infiltrated the Church. Notice how John equates Gnosticism with antichrist. The antichrist spirit seeks to remove the finished work of Jesus from the salvation equation.

It is unfortunate but this is alive and well today. Many claiming to be Christians have embraced universalism (all paths lead to God). This is a type of Gnosticism still alive today, and it began in the early church.

Questions and Discussion: What problems and/or false doctrines have you seen in the Christian world? How can we avoid these present problems? What can we do to help those caught up in these issues?

The Gospel of the Kingdom will be Preached in all the Whole World

Matthew 24:14 (with Strong's reference number)

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world (3625) as a witness to all the nations (1484), and then the end will come.

This verse trips up many Christians. Many claim this has not yet taken place, BUT what does the Bible actually say about this?

Romans 1:8

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world (3625).

Romans 10:18

But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "THEIR SOUND HAS GONE OUT TO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD (3625)."

Romans 16:25-26

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began

26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations (1484), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—

Using the same words as Jesus for World and Nations, Paul’s writings show that the Prophecy from Jesus of the Gospel being preached in all the world and as a witness to all the nations has been fulfilled.

<p>World (3625) <i>oikoumene</i> The inhabited earth -the Roman Empire -the as it was known at the time</p>	<p>Nations (1484) <i>ethnos</i> Ethnic groups -races -people groups <i>Note: this is where we get the English words, ethnic; ethnicity, etc.</i></p>
---	---

Paul uses another word that clarifies the above

Colossians 1:5-6

5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

6 which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world (2889), and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

Paul explains this phenomenon by using the word “Kosmos” (2889).

World (2889) *kosmos*

- A harmonious arrangement; government
- The world, universe
- The inhabitants of the earth

To understand this reality that Jesus spoke of, we must use the same measurement for Matthew 24:14 and these words of Paul. When Jesus prophesied that the Gospel of the Kingdom would be preached in all the world (in that generation), we MUST understand that this prophecy was completely fulfilled just as He said.

In Case that’s not Enough

Colossians 1:23

if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

I am not sure it could get any clearer. Paul makes this very plain for us. The Gospel that brought the Colossians to Christ was preached to every creature under heaven in that generation.

“the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven”

We may not fully understand how, but to argue this point is to say the Bible is untrue.

We should not look to somehow change the words of the Bible to fit our modern doctrines, but we must change our doctrines to line up with the word of God.

Questions and Discussion: The Bible clearly shows how the Gospel was preach throughout the world, fulfilling the words of Jesus.

Is it important to Preach the Gospel throughout the world today? If yes, why? If no, why?

What should be the main drive of the church today (to impact the nations)?

Conclusion: So far everything we have studied can be easily verified by the words of the bible and the facts of history. The words of Jesus came alive and were fulfilled just as He said they would be.

Matthew 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.

Questions and Discussion: How have these studies helped you in your understanding of End Times?

Have these studies helped changed your outlook on the present time? The future? If yes, how?