

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #269

Tuesday of Passion Week... Day of Testing and Teaching Jesus' Private Teaching to His Disciples: The "Olivet Discourse"

Part III: Four of the Conditions Preceding Jesus' Final Coming MT 24.6-14 (Parallel Texts: MK 13.7-13; LK 21.9-19)

"Birth Pains"

6 "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed, ^Lor frightened. ^{MT}Such things must happen ^Lfirst, ^{MT}but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

"There will be famines and ^Lgreat ^{MT}earthquakes ^Land pestilences ^{MT}in various places, ^Land fearful events and great signs from heaven. 8 ^{MT}All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Universal, World-wide Persecution

9 ^L"But before all of this, they will lay hands on you, ^{MT}and you will be delivered over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ^MYou will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. ^LThey will put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of me. This will result in your being witnesses to them.

"But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist, ^Mfor it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Apostasy, False Prophets and Deception

10 ^{MT}"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. ^LYou will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a head of your hair will perish. By standing firm you will gain life.

11 ^{MT}"Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Gospel Will First Reach All Nations

14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will ^Mfirst ^{MT}be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	On Mount Olivet, Just Outside Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	C. Tuesday: Day of Testing and Teaching

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	Jesus' Private Teaching to His Disciples: "The Olivet Discourse"
Title	Part III: Four of the Conditions Preceding Jesus' Final Coming

COMMENT:

In today's reading Jesus described two phases of events leading up to his final coming. He called the first phase the "birth pains." After the "pains" have come, he described four general conditions that will prevail immediately prior to the "great tribulation" described in the book of Revelation.

Jesus included one section that described the persecution and hardship that the apostles, and their generation would experience at the hands of fellow Jews (the two paragraphs beginning with MT 14.9) in the immediate future. This section was not related to the final coming. Why then did Jesus include it?

First, it was related to the destruction of Jerusalem that he had just talked about. By the latter part of the first century the church was made up by predominantly Gentile believers, and the separation between Christianity and Judaism was obvious. The destruction of Jerusalem, as Jesus had prophesied in this discourse, was the major turning point in the shift in the church, and the kingdom to the "times of the Gentiles" in which we still live today. Therefore, Jesus included this information about Jewish persecution in his discourse.

In addition, the persecution that the apostolic age experienced from fellow Jews would be typical of the persecution that all believers will receive from all nations at the end of the Gentile age (MT 14.10 and following).

Jesus repeated the same special promise regarding the power of the Holy Spirit that strengthens believers in times of persecution, that he had first given at the training of the twelve, before the third tour of Galilee (MT 10.16-23).

The natural disasters that he described as the "birth pains" in MT 24. 6-8 are still the prelude to the true "end times," for he said, "the end is still to come." Many believers miss this point. Birth pains are the beginning of the end of pregnancy, but they are not the end itself. Ask any mother about that!

Jesus gave four characteristics of the true end of the age, that follows the "birth pains." These things will happen just prior to the "great tribulation." There are:

- (1) universal persecution of Christians (24.10)
- (2) great increase in the number and influence of deceptive false prophets (24.11)
- (3) increase of wickedness, making typical love grow cold in relationships (24.12)
- (4) the gospel effectively proclaimed to all nations, people-groups (24.14)

When we consider these four descriptions, we can see that they are in the process of developing, but they are not yet complete. Take one example. There are still thousands of people-groups in the world that have never heard the gospel. The task of "making disciples of all the nations" that Jesus said would happen before his final coming is far from complete. This is true of all four descriptions. We see the possibility of all four factors being fulfilled in our lifetimes, but it is not certain.

APPLICATION:

The increase in the number of natural disasters in our world may well indicate that the "birth pains" have started. The Olivet Discourse is a teaching of Jesus that we need to pay close attention to in our days, and carefully obey.

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Jesus gave this teaching to encourage his disciples not to get side-tracked from the most important task he has given us: to **"make disciples of all nations."** Though it remains a daunting task, the fact that Jesus said that it **MUST** happen before the end comes means that we can be sure that our labors toward that end are not in vain.

More progress in being made toward world evangelization in our day than ever before. For the first time in history, the goal is within reach in our lifetime, if we will stay focused on the task.

Do you pray for specific missionaries and their work regularly? If you do not do, please begin. If you do not have missionaries associated with your church or fellowship of churches, ask your pastor for information.

The "Operation World" prayer guide (ISBN 1-85078-357-8) is the single best resource for praying for world missions. It provides missions and prayer information for every day of the year, covering every country in the world. We highly recommend it. You can access daily prayer information on-line at this link:

<http://www.operationworld.org/prayer-calendar>

How will you begin, or increase your prayer support for world missions? The first step to increasing your personal involvement is prayer.