LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 24 (Part 1) :1-22

Jesus Predicts Coming Destruction

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Let me ask you a question as we get started. If somebody walked up to you and said, why do you believe the Bible is God's word? What would you say? That's, don't shout it out, obviously, but just think about, you know, how you would respond to that particular question. I think a good many Christians who do believe that the Bible is God's word would probably stumble over themselves a little bit trying to communicate something of their own passion and heart for the word of God, but many times we find it difficult to find explanations for why we believe the Bible is in fact divinely inspired and authoritative and so forth.

And I will tell you that, I mean, if somebody, if somebody, we've actually done classes on this whole thing. We've done several week classes on how you can know the Bible is God's word. So, and I've taught those so many times, if somebody actually asked me that question, they're probably in for an earful, at least as much as I can remember. But I'll tell you right now that one of the main reasons that I see the Bible as inspired and authoritative and just what we would call God's word is because of the presence of prophecy. And prophecy is that element of God's word where God speaks into the future before events take place and speaks with amazing clarity and insight and detail about those things in such a way that you and I are just blown away and we just have to say, you know what, the only way that can happen is if somebody just knows the end from the beginning.

And the reason I bring it up here with you today is because in these chapters, chapter 24 and 25 of Matthew, we're going to be dealing very much with the prophetic element as Jesus speaks about the issues of the last days and the things that we can expect and so we'll get into these things. But before I kind of get into the text itself, what I would like to do, if you would allow me, is to set a bit of a stage, give you a little background information, historical background information about the very events that we're reading about here in Matthew 24 and I'm going to do it by way of just kind of reading for you a little historical summary of this time and so forth. Now if you're having a hard time understanding or remembering what year it would be approximately when the events here in Matthew 24 are taking place, it's right around 30

AD. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. So you can do the math and you can see how many years in the future that is going to take place.

Let me just read a little history for you. In the year AD 66, the Jews of Judea rebelled against their Roman masters. You know that Israel was under Roman occupation at the time of the ministry of Jesus Christ, meaning that they were militarily in control. And it says here, in response, Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the generalship of Vespasian to restore order. By the year 68, resistance in the northern part of the province had been eradicated and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem.

However, that same year Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared emperor and returned to the imperial city. It fell to his son Titus to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem. The Roman legion surrounded the city and began to slowly squeeze the life out of the Jewish stronghold. By the year 70 AD, the attackers had breached Jerusalem's outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city.

The assault culminated in the burning and destruction of the temple, which of course served as the center of Judaism. In victory, the Romans slaughtered thousands of those spared from death. Thousands more were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt. Others were dispersed to arenas throughout the empire to be butchered for the amusement of the public. The temple's sacred relics were taken to Rome, where they were displayed in celebration of the victory.

The rebellion sputtered on for another three years and was finally extinguished in 73 AD with the fall of the various pockets of resistance, including the stronghold at Masada. I read you this historical account here again this morning of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple because Jesus will be speaking of it here approximately 40 years before it takes place. However, as we get into this study and as we learn more about the things that Jesus is saying in this passage, we're going to find that he is also speaking of other events prophetically which have not yet been fulfilled. And I'll show you as we get closer how that all takes place. Let's begin reading.

We're going to start with verses 1 through 14, so grab your Bible and let's look there. Jesus left the temple and was going away when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, you see all these, do you not? Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. 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?

And Jesus answered them, see that no one leads you astray, for many will come in my name saying I am the Christ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that you are not alarmed for this must take place but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of lawlessness, or because lawlessness rather will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved and this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come. Let's stop there for right now anyway and let's pray.

Lord in heaven, as we approach these prophetic and powerful passages here in the book of Matthew, we are so needing your Holy Spirit to bring the illumination, the insight and understanding from these verses that we might lay hold of them here today, that we might appropriate understanding from them and that we might apply to our lives the understanding that we gain. We ask you to be with us, we ask you to minister grace among us here today, we ask you to fill us with your Spirit and teach us and we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. As you noticed, it says that Jesus and his disciples left the temple and the way Matthew says it, you know what just came before this. We had all these parables that Jesus told about how judgment was coming and how they had rejected the coming Messiah and then he spoke in the last chapter all that strong denouncing of the religious leaders and so forth, the Pharisees and scribes saying woe to you and so forth. And then on the heels of that, Jesus now turns and Matthew says he leaves the temple and the fact of the matter is he leaves the temple for the last time here during his earthly ministry and he makes his way up to the Mount of Olives where he can oversee the city and it is there his disciples come to him and they ask their question.

And that is by the way why we call these two chapters, Matthew 24 and 25, the Olivet Discourse because he gave this discourse sitting on the Mount of Olives to his disciples. Jesus gave them a very shocking statement when they were simply probably trying to lighten the mood a little bit by pointing out the grand and magnificent structure that the temple was at that time and Jesus responded again in verse 2, if you look with me in your Bible by saying, you see all these things, do you not? He says, truly I say to you, there is not going to be one stone left upon another that will not be thrown down. And when he says thrown down, he means thrown off the temple mount. You have to understand in your mind's eye, you

need to understand that the temple was built on a large mount or platform which raised it high off the ground.

And so he is basically saying that all of these magnificent stones will be thrown down off the mount down into the surrounding area. What's interesting about that is you can go to Israel today and you can see those stones. You can see those stones that were thrown down. with exactly what Jesus said. You can even walk along the path and sit on those stones and see the mark that they made when they came down and impacted the ground.

When you and I read things in the Bible, we're not reading some kind of historical vapor that nobody can look at and prove. You can go there and see this stuff that Jesus is referring to in this particular passage, but He's referring to it prophetically. You can go back and see it now. You know, when Jesus made this statement and said the temple is going to be completely demolished, taken down stone by stone, so that not even one stands upon another, it's hard for you and I to even fathom how that statement would be perceived and understood by a Jew living in that time. I imagine that they couldn't even entertain the thought of the destruction of the temple without also embracing some kind of an end of the world scenario.

Because it was that big. The temple that stood during this time was what we call the Second Temple or the Temple of Herod, because Herod the Great began a renovation project of incredible size. He wanted to curry favor with the religious leaders and the Jewish people. He was involved in building lots of other temples too, but most of them were pagan temples, various locations around the Roman Empire. But here in Jerusalem, he helped them build their Jewish temple.

And as I'm talking a little bit about it, I will have a couple of images here that we'll put on the screen for you so that your mind's eye can kind of try to see maybe. But these pictures, I'll tell you, will fall far short of the magnificence of the temple. We didn't have, obviously, photography back then, and so we have to depend on just an artist's rendering here. But before work even began on the temple, Herod took eight years just to stockpile the materials, and then finally when they began working, there was a workforce of over 10,000 men who began, including 1,500 specially trained priests, because only the priests were allowed to go in the inside of the temple and do the work on those holy places and so forth. And it was massive.

The length of the temple grounds took up about five football fields, or what would be today, and about four football fields wide, if you will. The Jewish historian Josephus writes that the temple was covered in gold plates to the degree that when the sun shone upon it, it was blinding to the eye. And he said where

there wasn't gold on the outside, there was a polished white marble that was so white that from a distance it actually looked like there was snow on the temple. It was absolutely beautiful. This reconstruction project that Herod the Great started went far beyond his own lifetime.

It lasted a total of 80 years that they were reconstructing this thing. What's interesting, and quite sad too, is that it had only been completed. It was still under construction when Jesus walked through it. And it was only finished for about six or seven years before the Romans came in AD 70 and demolished it. But hearing that the temple was going to be destroyed in this way, the most natural question that the disciples would want to ask Jesus is, when?

And that is exactly what they do. Verse 3 once again says that as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately saying, tell us when this is going to happen. When are these things going to take place? And they went on to kind of form a compound question saying, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? And we can see from this that as they talked about and thought about the destruction of the temple, they saw it as, or they assumed that it would be.

In keeping with the end of all things because it was such a grand thing for them. So Jesus is going to answer their question about the destruction of the temple, but He's going to talk about more than that. He's going to give them more than they even asked for because He's going to make it clear to them that while there are signs related to the destruction of the temple, there are not specific signs given about His coming because that is something that could happen at any time. And so He begins to speak to them here in verse 4, and He begins by describing general world conditions during this period of time that we call the church age. Before we read it, let me just have your attention just one more time for a moment if I may.

Our term for that period of time between the ascension of Jesus and His second coming is the church age. That's what we call it. That's not necessarily a biblical term per se, but it describes in the Bible that time period between when Christ ascended into heaven in the sight of all of His disciples on the Mount of Olives to the time when He will return. We call it the church age. The age period of the church.

And it is the age that you and I are living in obviously right now since Jesus hasn't returned yet. So when Jesus talks here now in verses 4 and following about the conditions of the world during this time, this for you and I should be a piece of cake. This should be like our lives. This should be what we experience, what we witness on a regular basis. And what frankly has been going on in every century since the time Christ ascended into heaven.

He says in verse 4, and Jesus answered them, see that no one leads you astray. For many will come in My name saying I am the Christ and they will lead many astray. I think a lot of people believe that the statement that people are going to say is I am the Christ, meaning I am the Christ, saying that they are. But it's very, very possible and I think even very probable that Jesus is saying many are going to come claiming that He is the Christ. And they're still going to lead people astray.

And that is what we have seen throughout the course of history. Yes, there have been a few people who have stood up and said I am the Messiah. But there have been far more who have pointed to Jesus as the Messiah and yet have still pulled people astray. In the middle 1800s, there was a man by the name of William Miller, a Baptist minister here in the United States who believed according to his prophetic interpretations that Jesus would return in 1844. And hundreds of thousands of American citizens believed him so much that they sold off all their worldly wealth and goods and waited for the Lord to return.

And when He did not, there was a huge disappointment. Many of those people stopped serving the Lord, fell away from the faith completely. They were led astray. And from the Millerite movement, which is what we call it, other groups, non-biblical groups, sprang up from that. More recently we've had the dealings of like Harold Camping who not that terribly long ago passed away who made a prediction of when he believed Christ would return.

And again, many people were led astray. Many people sold all their worldly goods in preparation for this coming of the Lord which did not take place. And my heart broke, you know, as I watched these television interviews with these people who'd been sucked into this even though Jesus told us no man knows the day or the hour. And yet, you know, people just want to believe. He predicted all of this.

Jesus predicted that this would take place. And are we seeing it? Yes, we are. In our lifetime we are seeing it. And other things like it.

And he goes on in verse six, he says, and you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. But he says, see that you're not alarmed for this must take place but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. But look what he says in verse eight. All these are but the beginning of birth pains.

Just the beginning. I would relate that to Braxton Hicks contractions. Most of the ladies probably know what I'm talking about. With all four of our babies, Sue had Braxton Hicks contractions. And sometimes months before the baby came.

And so, you know, we'd be just kind of hanging out. She'd go, oh, here we go, you know. And it was just amazing. But this would go on for a while. And it didn't mean the baby was coming.

I personally think it meant her body was preparing itself for the baby coming. But this wasn't like labor that we were in. Had we gone to the hospital, they would have sent us home. And Jesus is essentially saying when you see rumors of wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines and Luke will mention pestilence and so forth. He says, this is just the beginning.

This is just the Braxton Hicks contractions and there's a long time yet. So this is not a sign. It's a non-sign, if you will. Okay? This is life.

This is just what happens in this time period called the church age. It's not a sign. When you hear an earthquake, people go, oh, there's an earthquake. This is the earthquake, this is the Lord's coming... No, it's just a sign that we're in this time period.

That's all. So, he basically is telling us here, that don't be alarmed by these things. They don't give us any insight into the coming of the Lord. All these wars and rumors of wars and all this other junk, all it really does is just kind of underscore how badly we need a real ruler in place. But Jesus is going to take care of that.

Anyway, in the next few verses now, verses 9 and following, having now made the statement of what the condition of the world is going to be like during this time period, he then describes what the disciples can expect in terms of how they are treated during this time. It says then, verse 9, they will deliver you up to tribulation. Your Bible may say persecution, which honestly I like a little better. I'm reading out of the ESV this morning, and frankly, most of the literal translations do use the word tribulation. But please don't mistake this word for the great tribulation.

The word tribulation just means hardship, difficulty, trials, and that sort of thing. And so, don't confuse the language. Jesus is talking about that time period, again, during the church age, and he's simply saying it will be a time marked by persecution. Well, do we see that born out in reality? Well, we see it.

We have the record of the book of Acts, which is post-ascension of Jesus. In fact, Acts chapter 1 gives us the ascension of Jesus. And then from that point on, we read about all the incredible persecutions that took place for the body of Christ, and they're going on today. And Jesus predicted it all, from the book of Acts to the present work that God is doing through Said, who is in a prison in Iran right now, and many, many other Christians who are, even today, behind bars for their faith and being persecuted because of Jesus. Jesus predicted it, and he said, this would simply be the way it is.

And that doesn't mean that you and I are to like it or to sit back and do nothing, necessarily. He's just simply saying, this is the character of how things will be during the church age, and so forth. He goes on in verse 9 to say, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. And that basically tells us that this life is going to be hard. It's going to be a difficult existence, but we need to persevere and stay on course and so forth.

This life is about enduring and persevering. And then we skip down in verse 14, he said, and this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end is going to come. That's a summary statement. And he says, but the gospel will first be declared to all nations.

You know, we're living in a time today when this is possible now. A hundred years ago, it must have seemed like an absolutely just daunting sort of a task to bring the gospel to all nations. We can do it today. We have the technology. We have the ability through satellite, through internet, and the many, many ways that we can get the word out there.

We can do it. I have a friend from high school who wrote me recently, and he's part of this massive project to pray for these unreached people's groups in the world that have yet to hear the gospel. There's this massive prayer effort that is being brought to force here. And I believe this is the work of the Holy Spirit, just closing things up, because we know that the gospel is going to be preached to all nations prior to the coming of the Lord and so forth. Verse 15 goes on to say, So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days. Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath, for then there will be great tribulations such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved.

For the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Stop there. Here's the question that we have to ask ourselves as we're reading through these verses. The question is, what event is Jesus referring to here and to whom is he speaking? A very, very important question.

Is he talking about the destruction of the Jewish temple and is he speaking to the Jews specifically? Well, the answer to that, I believe, is yes, but it is not all he is talking about and it is not everyone to whom

he is speaking. There are others. I believe he is also speaking of the coming period of trouble, which the Bible refers to as the Great Tribulation. And this is a common feature of biblical prophecy and it's something we see in the Old Testament.

It's something we see in the New Testament. And what it is, is the Word presents a prophetic picture of coming events in parallel. And what I mean by that is, while God is speaking of a single prophetic event, he is at the same time speaking of another coming event, which usually the first event is in the closer future and will foreshadow the second event, which will be larger and further down the road. The fact of the matter is, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is a foreshadowing of the Great Tribulation. And Jesus speaks of these two biblical events simultaneously in a parallel fashion.

And he speaks of one in the near future and one in the distant future. How do we know that? We know it because there are things, first of all, in this passage that didn't and couldn't find their fulfillment in A.D. 70. Now let me just say, as I'm explaining these things, that there are Christians who believe that all of the prophecies of which Jesus spoke here in Matthew 24, they have all been fulfilled by A.D.

70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Many, many people believe that. I don't happen to be one of them. And I'll show you here why. First of all, if you look with me again in verse 15 in your Bible, I want to point out two things that couldn't happen and didn't happen, or in a way of being fulfilled in A.D.

70. He says in verse 15, so when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place, let the reader understand. What is he talking about? He's referring to something that Daniel makes reference to four times in his book, Old Testament book. In the 8th, 9th, 11th, and 12th chapters of Daniel, there is reference made to an abomination that causes desolation or that brings desolation.

And Jesus is telling us here in Matthew that this is still a future event. All right? But some have, as I said, have attempted to say, yeah, but it was fulfilled 40 years later when the Romans came in and destroyed the temple. But there's a problem with that. And the problem is there's no evidence at all that the Roman army under General Titus came in and did anything to the holy place of the temple.

There's no evidence that they established any kind of a pagan altar there, that they desecrated it with any kind of abomination. They simply destroyed it. They simply burned it. They simply set it on fire and then proceeded to dismantle it stone by stone. That's really all they did.

And so you see that there is a problem here with saying that the abomination that causes desolation was fulfilled in AD 70. Now furthermore, the Apostle Paul speaks of this abomination as being yet future and fulfilled by the Antichrist. And that is something that we need to look at. 2 Thessalonians, I'll put it up on the screen here for you. Chapter 2, verses 1-4 says, Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word or a letter seeming to be from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first. And the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Listen, that never happened in A.D. 70. But we know that Paul is referring here to the Antichrist, and it will happen during the Tribulation period.

There's one other thing that couldn't have been fulfilled in A.D. 70, but could and will in the Great Tribulation, and that's found in verse 21. Look with me in your Bible there. It says, For then there will be great tribulations such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now. No, and never will be.

And then Jesus goes on to say that if those days had not been cut short, that nobody would survive. Nobody would have survived. Now listen, the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem back in A.D. 70 was a terrible thing. And there was a horrific loss of life.

But there is no way that it can accurately be called the worst event of Tribulation in the history of man. There's just no way. It just isn't. There have already been other things that have happened in history that have been worse in terms of the loss of life and so forth. So, but there is coming a time in the history of mankind, which the Bible refers to as the Great Tribulation, when these words will be true.

And it will be a Tribulation that will come upon the whole world. And the magnitude will be of such that, as it says, if God did not stop the events, no one would survive. It'll be cataclysmic and so forth. So, we hear Jesus in these verses talking about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. But we also, in parallel fashion, see him leapfrogging over that near fulfillment, which would take place in about 40 years, onto the Great Tribulation period, which has not yet taken place.

And we see him talking about this at the very same time. I want to end this morning by reading with you a companion passage to this Olivet Discourse here in Luke's Gospel. So if I could, please, would you join me over in Luke 21? Luke chapter 21, and we're going to read Luke's account, because Luke, in his

usual love of detail, gives some further insight into Jesus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. But you can also see the long-distance prophetic element to Luke's words as they are recorded.

Actually, they're Jesus' words, recorded by Luke, about the coming Tribulation. And I think you'll see them here. Verse 5, Luke 21, verse 5. It says, And while some were speaking of the Temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. And they asked him, Teacher, when will these things be?

And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place? And he said, See that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name, saying, I am he, and the time is at hand. Well, do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once. Then he said to them, Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors, and look at this, and great signs from heaven. But before all this, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. And you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

Settle it, therefore, in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake, but not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance, you will gain your lives. But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written. Alas for women who are pregnant, and for those who are nursing in those days, for there will be great distress upon the earth." Look at that, see the global element of it. "...and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles," look at this, "...until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." That's another biblical name for the church age, the times of the Gentiles.

Verse 25, "...and there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations." All nations on the earth, it says here, "...will be distressed in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. People fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." Let's stop there. I share that with you because you can see a little more clearly how the connecting point is between these parallel prophecies, one of speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and then moving on to the cataclysmic cosmic signs that will happen in the heavens, which we're told about in the book of Revelation.

Things like huge ice boulders falling out of the sky, and earthquakes and massive destruction of the globe and loss of life, which of course will take place during the tribulation. And you can see these things, these prophecies, sitting side by side in this parallel fashion. And in Luke, I think it's even a little clearer. So, I hope that all this reading of prophecy does more for you than just give you a thrill or allow you to kind of say, oh, that's cool. I hope there's something more to it than that for you.

I hope that from this study and reading of these biblical prophecies that you come to see the God of whom you serve as one who knows and who is sovereignly in control of all of these events, who knows exactly what's going to be happening on the stage of the world, and if so, people, you and I can take heart that He knows exactly what's going on in your life as well. He knows what's happening in your heart, in your family, in your body, in your relationships, in your business, in your mind, in your heart and everywhere else. And He is sovereignly able to oversee and direct the course of your life just as He sovereignly oversees and directs the events of this world. And I hope that that's something you and I can all take hold of here, that we can trust God completely. We can trust Him with all of our heart, leaning not upon our own understanding, but in all of our ways, acknowledging His Lordship, His power, His majesty, His greatness.

And we can trust in Him and say, Lord, You are my Lord. You are the God who not only oversees all these things, but You oversee my life as well, and I give You that Lordship. I crown You King in my life. I ask You to rule and reign on the throne of my heart. I ask You to rule and reign on the throne of my heart.