

**Beginning of Birth Pangs**  
**Matthew 24:3—8**

Matthew 24:2 recounts a prophecy concerning the temple, that not one stone would remain upon another. This was said by Jesus three days or so before His death on a cross. A parallel passage can be found in Luke 21. He also said something similar in Luke 19:41—44 about a week before His death. This time He wept over the city of Jerusalem knowing that the days shall come when enemies will surround the city and tear it down and that they shall not leave one stone upon another. So it appears that not only will the temple be torn down but that the whole city of Jerusalem will experience the same thing. This has yet to happen. I believe the prophecy of the temple being torn down and the prophecy of the city being torn down are from the same event totally unrelated to 70 A.D. when Titus came in and decimated the city. Although he caused a lot of damage, there were still many stones left upon another.

Zechariah 14:1—5 tells of a time when Jerusalem will be surrounded followed by a great earthquake when Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives at His Second Coming. When this happens there will be a great earthquake that slices through the city of Jerusalem. It seems plausible that between Israel's enemies and the earthquake of the Second Coming that Jerusalem, as we know it, will be destroyed.

**The Disciple's questions**

Having just heard Jesus say that the temple and Jerusalem will be destroyed (Luke 19:41—44) they ask two logical questions, "When will this happen?" and "What will be the sign of His Second Coming and of the end of the age?" They ask this having been with Jesus the past three years or so and immersed in His teachings of Israel's end-time events, specifically the Kingdom. We know that the Kingdom was foremost on their minds because that is one of the last things they ask about just before Jesus ascends into heaven (Acts 1:6). They were taught that they would be ruling with Jesus sitting on 12 thrones in the temple at Jerusalem in the regeneration (Matthew 19:28) and were wondering if it was now the time for this to happen. They didn't yet understand that Jesus Christ would first need to go to heaven to receive the Kingdom and that the seven-year Tribulation would need to transpire before He would return (Luke 19:11—27). When Jesus tells them that the temple will be destroyed I'm sure the Disciples were mystified since they were expecting to rule with Christ from that temple. You can see the high expectations they had in Luke 19:11. They were fully expecting to go into Jerusalem and have the Kingdom set up as Christ made His way to the temple on the colt.

Jesus answers them by expanding upon what was already written in the Old Testament by giving them some details about what will happen before, during and after the Tribulation and what signs to look for to know when the Second Coming was going to happen. This was all given to them so that during the Tribulation they would be encouraged that God was still in control and watching over them during this great darkness. They would need to be faithful servants who would endure to the end without taking the mark of the beast.

**Prophetic timeline (verses 4—8)**

Jesus gives them an overall picture of events that would happen before, during and after the Tribulation. Although these things were scheduled to happen within a few short months, according to Daniel's prophetic timeline, God put Israel's Prophetic program on hold and introduced the Mystery program through the Apostle Paul.

There are other recorded times when God stopped dealing with Israel as a covenant people. This puts God and man on two different timetables. When God declares Israel as being "Not My people" (lo-ammi; Hosea 1:9; 2:23), He stops dealing with her and that time is not counted prophetically. Israel is currently in the state of being lo-ammi and the prophetic clock has stopped.

It was during these times of *lo-ammi* that the Israel's prophetic clock stopped. These five occasions can be found in the book of Judges:

Judges 3:8	Mesopotamia	8 years Lo-ammi
Judges 3:14	Moab	18 years Lo-ammi
Judges 4:3	Canaan	20 years Lo-ammi
Judges 6:1	Midian	7 years Lo-ammi
Judges 13:1	Philistine	40 years Lo-ammi
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93 years</b>

The time period from the exodus to the beginning of the temple is recorded as 480 years in 1 Kings 6:1 while Acts 13:17—22 says it was 573 years. The difference between the two is 93 years. Acts gives us the actual span of years while 1 Kings shows the time that Israel was considered *My people*. Keeping this principle in mind as we discuss Israel's future as laid out in Scripture should help in understanding prophetic literature.

### **Before the Tribulation** (verses 4—8)

Jesus points to a number of events that will happen before the Tribulation. These are things that will happen while Israel is still considered a covenant people under the Dispensation of Law and while the Gospel of the Kingdom is being preached. While most people place these events in this Dispensation of Grace, I would disagree since this current dispensation was not in view when Jesus spoke these words. All these events listed within verses 4—8 are things that happened or will happen outside this Dispensation of Grace.

#### **False Christs**

Jesus first warns the Disciples of people who will claim to be the Messiah. John saw this happening and warned Israel not to be fooled by those claiming to be from God but actually are from Satan. He makes a distinction between the many antichrists and the antichrist of the Tribulation (1 John 2:18). It's possible that John had Judas in mind when he wrote verse 19. First, second and third John are written so that the remnant believers going through the Tribulation will have assurance that they have eternal life and will be able to discern between those who are believers and unbelievers. Many unbelievers will be deceived in believing that the Messiah has come even before the Tribulation has begun.

#### **Wars and rumors of wars**

Almost everyone looks at the world situation and sees an increase in wars. Most who are into prophecy see this as a sign of the end times. However, when viewing this from Jesus' perspective, our Dispensation of Grace is not in view. Therefore, the wars Jesus was speaking of were all just prior to the Tribulation that would prophetically begin in a few months. These wars, I believe, will be between the Muslim world and Israel and eventually lead to a world leader coming to the forefront (the antichrist) with a "covenant with many," usually understood to be a peace treaty marking the beginning of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:26b—27). There will be no need of a peace treaty if there were no wars around Israel.

#### **Nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom**

This literally can be interpreted as race against race and is sometimes interpreted to mean that there will be conflict between the races. Some view race riots as being fulfillment of this prediction. However, I believe this has to do with end time events in the Middle East and revolve around Israel. Israel is never referred to with this particular Greek word (G1484 ethnos) and so the reference is to the nations surrounding Israel. The word kingdom can refer to an authority or a rule and goes along with the word nation. Nations and powerful countries will be fighting with each other, not only with Israel. We can actually see some of this going in right now but will intensify after the Rapture.

#### **Famines and earthquakes**

Again, we experience these things right now but as a precursor to the Tribulation these things will increase in intensity. This is why they are compared to labor pains and seem to be related to God's wrath, which will intensify beyond anything experienced to date on this earth (Matthew 24:21).

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