

THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES  
What Lies Before Us?  
Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:3-28  
Message 4

INTRO: In the last message we looked at what life would be like in the closing days of the Church age. As I began to prepare for this message, I realized that I had missed out on one very important event. I must give that event as well and so it will be our message for this morning. This series would not be what I wish it to be without mentioning it here.

In our last message we asked, "What will the spiritual climate be like?" We saw that it would be a time of spiritual decline and doctrinal deception. We asked, "What will be in the news?" And we saw that it would be such things as spiritual instability; it would be a time of national and political instability and we would hear of wars and rumors of wars. We also saw that it would be a time when nature would be behaving in strange and fearful ways. We asked what the major political efforts would be and saw that man would be seeking to restore peace to this earth, and just when man thinks he has achieved it then sudden destruction would come. And then we asked what life would be like in general and we saw that it would be life as usual. People would be going on as if things would never change.

There is one question I want to add to that and I believe it is crucial. It is this question:

e. What will be happening in Israel?

It is of vital importance to understanding our world today to answer this question. I want us to understand that the Bible makes a very clear distinction between Israel, as God's people and the people of the Church age. During the Church age, Jew and Gentile become one body (Eph. 2-3). Saved Jews before the Church age and after, are viewed as the wife of God. This is a very important distinction in Scripture. To err on this causes great confusion.

I will give you a very brief history of Israel, and then what must happen in the end of the

Church age as I see it. Turn to Genesis 12 (read 1-3). This is called the Abrahamic covenant. It is God's agreement with Israel. Abraham was the first Jew. Now if this is new to you, you need to understand as well that Abraham had a son by his concubine Hagar and his name was Ishmael. From Ishmael, with a mixture of others, come what we know as the Arabic people or the Muslims. The cause for all the trouble in the Middle East today stems back to these two sons of Abraham; Ishmael and Isaac.

Let us notice something about Israel, and God's view of Israel from Deuteronomy 32:10, "He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." Now listen to Zechariah 2:8, "For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." That is God's perspective of the Jew.

I wish that somehow I could describe for you how God feels about Israel. If you do not have a soft spot in your heart for the Jew, cultivate your heart and make it soft toward the Jew. If we dislike the Jews, we dislike God. And I must add that the amillennial view of prophecy breeds a dislike for the Jew, and he who touches the Jew, touches the apple of God's eye. That simply means we cannot get away with it.

The Jewish nation began with Abraham some 2000 years after creation. Then about 1000 years later, Saul and then David became kings of this nation. After that David's son Solomon became king and he brought peace and prosperity to this nation but he went astray spiritually and after him, the kingdom was split. Rehoboam, son of Solomon, became king of the nation. And he would not listen to the older people and thus Jeroboam was given the opportunity to split the nation. Rehoboam ruled Judah, the southern kingdom, and Jeroboam ruled the northern kingdom.

Throughout the years of the kings, God sent prophets to warn both kingdoms when they fell into error. The northern kingdom rebelled again and again, until God allowed another nation to overcome them. This happened 722 years before Christ. Then God said to the southern kingdom, "You see what I have done. Now take a lesson and forsake sinful living and follow Me." Well, the southern kingdom obeyed for some time but then they followed the way of the northern kingdom and 586 years before Christ, they went into the Babylonian captivity.

As I was reading in my devotions last week I read these verses in Isaiah 30:8-11 that describe the rebellion of Israel and the prophets words to them, "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, And note it on a scroll, That it may be for time to come, forever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the LORD; who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

Well, they went into captivity and seventy years later the kingdom was restored to some extent, but it never regained its former glory. During these years the prophets of God prophesied what would happen in the future. And so the last 17 books of the OT are the books written by some of those prophets. They foretold with incredible clarity what would happen in the future.

Well, the prophets of Israel fell silent some 400 years before Christ was born. And the NT begins with an account by the Apostle Matthew of the birth of Christ. Then we read of His miracles and the proof that He was the Messiah. And then, toward the close of His ministry, Jesus begins to show the disciples that a new age will take place...

Probably the single most significant OT prophecy with regard to the Jews is made by Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27 (read). Now let me show you what Daniel is saying. He says first, "Seventy weeks are determined..." Now the seventy weeks could be translated, "seventy sevens". And I cannot take a long time explaining other than that these are seventy sevens of years. Now if you calculate that it is 490 years. Second we note that it is, "...for your people..." Who is that? That is the Jew! And then it says, "...for your holy city..." That is none but Jerusalem. Now let me just say this that Jerusalem is God's capital of the world. It will be that in the millennium and it will be that from then on for all eternity!

Now let us note what these seventy weeks will accomplish (read 24). Now let us note when these 490 years were to begin in verse 25, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty two weeks..." So the time clock of this prophecy began to tick the day the command was given to restore and build Jerusalem. We know that date, and it is 444 or 445 BC. We read about this in Nehemiah 2. The first seven weeks are the 49 years it took to restore and build Jerusalem after the 70 year captivity. From the seven weeks to the end of the 62 week, which is a total of 69 weeks, we come to the time of the crucifixion of Christ.

So we read on in Daniel 9:26 which says, "And after the sixty two weeks (seven and sixty two), Messiah shall be cut off..." It was at precisely that time that Jesus was crucified. Now turn to Matthew 21. Jesus has just given a parable that shows how the Jews would reject Him when He came. From Matthew 16 until His crucifixion, 11 times Jesus told His disciples that He would die. And now in Matthew 21:43 Jesus says this, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."

Now here is a very important thing to understand. When the sixty ninth week was completed and Jesus was crucified, the kingdom was given to another people. It is here that the Church began. And now, for almost 2000 years the Church has existed and the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy has never been fulfilled yet. The seventieth week is the seven year tribulation that still lies before us.

So we go back to Daniel to see what happens after the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks (read 9:26). It says that the people of the prince who is to come (the antichrist), will destroy the city and the sanctuary. That happened in 70 AD. That was about 40 years after the death of Christ.

Now notice verse 27, "Then he (the antichrist) shall confirm a covenant with many for one week, or one seven..." There is the seven year tribulation. We read in another message from 1 Thessalonians 5 that when they say, "We have achieved peace and safety..." That is right here. That is when the covenant is confirmed for 7 years. The antichrist will make a peace pact for seven years.

But our passage goes on to say, "But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate." Now turn to Matthew 24 (read 14-16). You see, in the middle of the tribulation the antichrist will break his covenant and the abomination of desolation will take place. And this stands in the holy place. That is in the temple.

From this Scripture and others we learn that in the seven year tribulation the Jewish temple will be in service. Today the Jews cannot even go to the place the temple stood. It is a Moslem holy place. This site is the holiest site on earth for God and it is in the hands of the Moslems. I might say this that to God, Israel is the holy land of earth. To God, Jerusalem, which is in Israel, is the chief city on earth. To God, the temple mount, which is in Jerusalem, is

the holiest spot in all the universe! There are thousands of stories to be told about this site. But somehow, in the peace deal the antichrist will make, the Jews will be allowed to rebuild their temple.

I might just add this that some of the most holy sites in Israel are in the hands of the Muslims. That is true for the site where Abraham is buried and that is true for the site where the temple once stood. Turn with me to an prophecy on this (read Ez. 36:1-3a, encourage them to read the rest).

Now I want to draw you a picture. When the tribulation begins, the Jewish nation must be in place and the temple vessels need to be ready or almost ready. That is, all of this cannot happen during the seven year tribulation. And so I gather this, that during the Church age, and especially in the latter end, Israel has to become a nation again. And preparations must be made for the temple and the temple vessels before the tribulation because otherwise it would seem that there would not be enough time to prepare all this before the middle of the tribulation otherwise.

Now let me take you back to the beginning of the Jewish nation in the Scriptures. In Deuteronomy 28 God set out the blessings Israel was to experience if they obeyed and the curses they would experience if they disobeyed. I do not have the time, but let us read a few verses that describe the curses for disobedience (read 15-18, 64-68).

I was just reading Isaiah the other day and noted these words in Isaiah 30:8-11 (read). Well Israel rebelled and ultimately lost their privilege of possessing the kingdom as we read from the words of Jesus earlier. But I want to read for us several Scriptures where God promises to some day regather Israel, just as we have seen in the 1900's. You might wish to jot these down as I read them.

Isaiah 43:6-7 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth— Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

Jer 16: 14 -16 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' "but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the LORD, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Jer 31:8-9 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth, *Among* them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.

Ezekiel 11:17 "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."

Ezekiel 34:12-13, "As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their

own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.

Ezekiel 37:21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

Well, these prophecies have been largely fulfilled and are still being fulfilled in our day. And as I see Scripture, this restoration would have to take place during the closing days of the Church age. Are we there?

In the latter 1800's Mark Twain, writer of the book "Tom Sawyer" went to Israel. When he came back he said something like this, "This is one God forsaken, arid, no good for nothing piece of land." The land lay there in waste and ruins. The trees had all been removed and it was hot and dry and useless, along with malaria infested swamps. Well, Isaiah said in 35:1, "The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Is that true today? If Tom Sawyer would go to Israel today, he would die again, this time of shock.

Well, during those days the Jews began to suffer persecution as never before, all over the world. They suffered so incredibly that the only hope they could see for themselves was to reestablish Israel as a homeland for the Jews. Well, Israel was in the hands of the unspeakable Turk. Let me just recommend a series I have done on the Jews that are available by tape. I cover this in some detail. I cannot recount here how in the darkest of the dark of the night of their experience, the nation of Israel was reborn in May of 1948. It is the greatest miracle since Christ was on earth.

Now there are those who say, "The Jewish nation of today is not a miracle of God. They are a bunch of rebels and not believers in the Lord."

Here is my whole point of this morning's message: In order for the tribulation to be able to begin and temple practices to resume, the nation must be in place before the tribulation and the temple materials as well. The only time this could happen is in the closing days of the Church age.

Now I want to take you to a most significant prophecy in Ezekiel 37 (read 1-14 and comment). Now what is significant is that these dead bones come bone to his bone. That is God drawing his people from the valley of the world. And then flesh came upon them. And then skin covered them. And only then were they given breath, or life. You see, Israel is to be regathered in unbelief. It is later that they are given life and that happens during the tribulation.

Today in Israel, there is an organization called "Temple Mount Institute." What is very significant is that most of the furniture and materials used in the temple are already completed. All of this in faith that the temple will be built and these will be used. This is very, very significant because as yet it looks impossible for Israel to ever get possession of this site.

So, what will happen during the closing days of the Church age with regard to Israel? God will regather them from among the nations and prepare them to rebuild the temple. Turn with me to one more passage in Acts 15. When the Gospel first went to the Gentiles and the Church was just barely begun, a counsel was held in Jerusalem to see what God requires of the Gentiles during the Church age. Peter had told them how the Gospel was accepted by Cornelius' household. Paul had spread the word throughout Asia. Then the Apostle James spoke to the issue (read 15:13-18).

What will happen in the latter days of the Church age. Well first, in the Church age God is taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. Second, when He has done that the

temple will be rebuilt. Well, in order for the temple to be rebuilt, many things will need to be in place as soon as the Church age closes.

CONCL: We could not be living in more significant days. But would we not agree, that rather than living with outstretched necks to see what God is doing, in general it is life as usual? I cannot exaggerate how significant the days in which we are living right now are.

So what will the closing days of the Church age be like? It will be a time of doctrinal deception. It will be a time of selfish living. Evil men and seducers (spiritually) will grow worse and worse. Christians will seek for preachers who will tickle their ears. That is, they will preach what the people want to hear. That is nothing but the seeker friendly approach so prominent today. People will scoff at the near return of Christ. The doctrine of the return of Christ will be mocked. The political will seek to bring peace to a war ravished world. The news will report much spiritual unrest; it will report of political unrest; wars and rumors of wars. It will about the unrest in nature; deadly diseases, famine and earthquakes will be common.

And what will life be like for most of the world when the Lord returns? It will be a time of life as usual. It will be a time when people eat and drink; get married and are given in marriage. It will be life as usual. For the most part, the world will be totally oblivious to the ominous clouds of blackness already visible above the horizon. For the most part they will live as if life will be like this forever, never suspecting that at any moment the most incredible event of all history is about to take place and that the world will be plunged into its darkest hour ever to occur in all of time this side of eternity.

And what about Israel. What will be happening to the Jews at the close of the Church age? God will regather the Jews to Israel and reestablished the nation of Israel. Preparation is being made right now to do temple sacrifices again in Jerusalem in the holiest place on earth, the temple mount. If the Jews would try to rebuild the temple today in Israel, we would have world war 3. How could one tiny building on one acre of land be that significant?

Well let me tell you how significant it is. I believe that the peace pact that the antichrist will make when man says,

"We have achieved peace and safety" will have in it an agreement to let Israel rebuild the temple. I believe that all of this must be ready to happen before the end of the Church age.