

46. Jesus Taught Four Disciples About the Future

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize that there are some religious leaders who are controlled by pride, instead of being led by the Lord. We also saw that we want to help our children learn to store up eternal treasures, instead of earthly treasures. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus taught some of His disciples about the future.

Jesus had silenced the religious leaders, who were questioning Him, by the questions He asked them. Then, Jesus left them. Mark 13:1-2 says, “Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’” Many years earlier, Herod the Great had begun a project to beautify the temple. John 2:20 says, “Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’” That statement was made three years earlier, so work to beautify the temple had now been going on for forty-nine years.

As they went out of the temple, one of the disciples mentioned all of the beautiful stones that had been added to the temple to make it more beautiful. Jesus agreed the temple was very beautiful, but Jesus said it would not remain that way for very long. Instead, Jesus pointed to the buildings and said that not one stone would be left sitting on another. They would all be thrown down. Matthew and Luke also wrote about what Jesus said that day. Luke 21:5-6 says, “Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, ‘These things which you see—the days will come in which not *one* stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.’”

Later, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives which was just across a small valley from the temple. We read, in Mark 13:3-8, “Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?’ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’ and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.’” Here, we see that the four disciples asked Jesus two questions. They thought their two questions were talking about the same time, but the answer to their two questions shows that there will be a large time gap between the two events.

Jesus began by answering the first question, “Tell us, when will these things be?”, because it dealt with the destruction of the temple. The temple was very beautiful, but only forty years later in 70 A.D. the Roman army completely destroyed the temple buildings, along with about a million Jews. The disciples expected Jesus to set up His kingdom immediately so they did not expect a time gap between these two questions. Just before Jesus returned to heaven, forty days after His resurrection, the disciples asked, in Acts 1:6, “‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to

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Israel?” This question shows that the disciples did not expect the entire period of the church to happen between their first and second question as they questioned Jesus on the Mount of Olives that day.

Their second question actually had two parts. Matthew 24:3 says, “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?’” We could split this into two questions since we know that the disciples were looking for the time when Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel. The first question is, “What will be the sign of Your coming?” The second question could be stated, “When will the end of the age be?” They probably expected Jesus to set up the kingdom before the Passover season was over. When He had not yet set up the kingdom forty days later, they asked the question about restoring the kingdom in Acts 1:6. Their lack of knowledge about the period of the church meant that their real desire was to know when Jesus would set up the kingdom.

The answer of Jesus showed that there would be a gap of a longer time before He would set up His Kingdom. Jesus began by warning the disciples not to let anyone deceive them. Jesus knew that, after His return to heaven, there would be many deceivers. Through the years, since Jesus returned to heaven, there have been many deceivers who claimed to be the Christ. We can expect such deceivers to continue to appear both before and after we Christians are taken to heaven.

The ultimate deceiver will be the antichrist who will appear after we, as Christians, are taken to heaven. 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10 says, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will* do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” The One who restrains is the Holy Spirit, because John 16:8 says, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” The Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way when the church is taken to heaven at the Rapture. Then, the antichrist will be revealed.

Jesus went on to describe to the disciples some of the things that will happen on the earth prior to the time that He comes to set up His Kingdom, which will follow the seven-year period known as the Tribulation. These things are increasing as the time gets closer. The disciples heard of wars and rumors of wars, but there are even more wars and rumors of wars today. Jesus told the disciples not to be troubled. Jesus said those things would happen before the time of the end. Throughout the time since the disciples, there have been nations rising against other nations, and kingdoms arising against other kingdoms. There have been earthquakes in various places. There have been famines and shortages of food. There have been other troubles and problems. Jesus said that such things are just the beginning of sorrows. The word translated “sorrows” is used to speak of *the labor pains of birth* in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, where we read: “For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.” That verse is talking about the time after the church is taken to heaven and before the

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period known as the Day of the Lord has begun.

Jesus went on to warn the disciples about future persecution. Jesus then gave the disciples a warning that has applied to Christians throughout the centuries since Jesus returned to heaven. Mark 13:9-13 says, “But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

Jesus warned that His disciples would be delivered up to councils. Peter and John experienced that for the first time in Acts 4, and then again in Acts 5. In Acts 4, they were threatened. Acts 4:21 says, “So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.” Then, in Acts 5, they were beaten. Acts 5:40-41 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Jesus said this would be a testimony to such rulers.

Jesus then said that the Gospel must be preached to all nations before all these things would be fulfilled. That is why the final words of Jesus, before He returned to heaven, in Acts 1:8 say, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This points forward to the fact that there will be continuing persecution until Jesus comes. Christians continue to be arrested and killed. The Lord has given many persecuted Christians the words to speak when they have been arrested and delivered to various courts by those who oppose the Gospel throughout the time since Christ returned to heaven. Family members continue to turn against other family members. Jesus said that the time would come when followers of Jesus would be hated by all, just because of the fact that they are followers of Jesus. So, this opposition will continue to get worse. However, Jesus gave a promise that those who follow Him will be given supernatural strength to endure, even when they suffer. This is a wonderful promise about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the disciples considered it a privilege when they suffered for their ministry for the Lord. That will help our children have strength and also help them to consider it a privilege if they experience suffering in their lives as they serve the Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ.