

The Gospel of Matthew
Lesson 15
Matthew 23:29 – Matthew 25:46

Seventh Woe

Matthew 23: ²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, 'If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.' ³¹ "So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² "Fill up, then, the measure of *the guilt* of your fathers. ³³ "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? ³⁴ "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵ so that upon you may fall *the guilt* of all the righteous bloodshed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ¹⁰⁹ ³⁶ "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. ¹¹⁰ ³⁷ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! ³⁹ "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE Lord!'" ¹¹¹

In the last woe, Jesus condemns the Sanhedrin for admitting to the atrocities their predecessors committed. At the bottom of the Mount of Olives are monuments called the Tombs of the Prophets. In these tombs are the bodies of Zechariah, one of the prophets of the Old Testament, Absalom, the son of King David and Jehoshaphat, a king of Israel. The time of the erection of these monuments is not known, but they have probably been there for hundreds of years since the deaths of these men. ¹¹² All of these tombs must have been erected by the Sanhedrin because Jesus says to them, "For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous." The Sanhedrin condemns its predecessors, yet Jesus accuses them of the same infraction and warns them that they will continue to follow their reign of terror against the prophets and righteous men in the days ahead. By the end of the week they will kill Jesus. Their wrath vented on the Lord will be the crowning misdeed of the Sanhedrin. Within ten years they will kill James, the son of Zebedee and bury him in the Tombs of the Prophets along with Zechariah, Jehoshaphat and Absalom.

Jesus ends His ministry in the Temple that Tuesday by comparing His desire to protect and care for Jerusalem to the care of a mother hen who spreads her wings and gathers her chicks under her in time of danger. But Jerusalem will not let Jesus gather her under His wings so she will be left without hope for now. She has fulfilled the prophecy about Him two days before and she will not repeat her words about Him again until His Second Coming.

¹⁰⁹ Genesis 4:8; 2 Chronicles 24:21

¹¹⁰ 2 Chronicles 36:15-16

¹¹¹ 1 Kings 9:7; Jeremiah 22:5

¹¹² 2 Chronicles 24:20 and following

Stones of the Temple

Matthew 24: ¹ Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ² And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

As He leaves the temple Tuesday evening, the Lord's final lessons are far from over. Just outside the temple, some of the disciples mention the temple buildings. In Mark and Luke they mention the glow of stones as the setting sun reflects off them. In both cases, the focus of the passage is on the temple itself. His response is a prophecy that will come true 40 years later, on Sunday, August 5th, AD 70. On that day, Caesar's son, accompanied by his army, will totally destroy the temple and scatter the stones on the site; however, the Lord's response is overheard by many and will be used against Him when He stands before Caiaphas and the council.

Sign of His Coming and End of Age

Matthew 24: ³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

On the Mount of Olives, the Apostles are concerned about Jesus' comment about the temple. They want to know when it will be torn down. They also include two more questions, the first one about the sign of the Lord's coming and the second concerning the end of the age. Most likely the apostles believe that all three are combined and will occur at the same time. They do not know that they are different and the Lord is about to explain each one.

Do Not Be Mislead

Matthew 24: ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

Jesus begins His answer with a set of warnings. In the future many imitators will come intentionally attempting to defraud the people. Throughout the centuries since Jesus spoke these words, hundreds of men have falsely claimed to be the Messiah.

Just the Beginning

Matthew 24: ⁶ "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. ⁷ "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸ "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

Wars and national conflicts comprise the Lord's second warning. He makes the point that the world will be filled with such troubling events but His coming is not near. Each decade since these words were spoken by the Lord, a war or a rumor of war has plagued the world.

Famines and earthquakes will also occur. History has documented a time of famine every seven years since this prediction. Each famine lasts from 12 to 18 months before the economy begins a slow recovery. Throughout the centuries earthquakes have devastated communities throughout the world, yet they, as well as famines and wars, are not the signs of His coming; they are just regular occurrences in the cycles on earth that will continue to transpire.

Tribulation

Matthew 24:⁹ "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

Many listening to the Lord's voice that night will hear the call of false Christs as well as live through wars, famines and earthquakes, but Jesus gives them an even more troubling warning. As Christians of a Jewish heritage, they will experience a tribulation that will lead to their cruel deaths. Hatred for them will increase throughout the world. They cannot hide from it even if they try. They will die because they claim Jesus as their Lord.

Many Fall Away

Matthew 24:¹⁰ "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.¹¹ "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.¹² "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.¹³ "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

When the tribulation begins for these early Christians, those who have not truly put their entire trust in the Lord will leave the fold and turn on their Christian friends. Those who do so were never part of the true church. They still need salvation. The salvation of those who remain true when all the laws of the land are formed to abuse them is absolute.

Gospel Preached to all Nations

Matthew 24:¹⁴ "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

So when will the temple fall? It will occur after the gospel of the kingdom is preached to the whole world. Has that happened? Yes! According to Paul, it had already occurred by the time he was in prison in Rome the first time between AD 61-63. His letter to the Colossians is his testimony of its fulfillment.¹¹³ The temple was destroyed in AD 70.

Daniel's Abomination of Desolation and Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (~~let the reader understand~~),¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.¹¹⁴ ¹⁷ "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.¹⁸ "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.¹⁹ "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!²⁰ "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.²¹ "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.²² "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.¹¹⁵

When will the Second Coming of the Lord occur? For that answer, the Lord uses the prophecy of Daniel. The abomination of desolation must occur first. With the help of several of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Revelation, we know this abomination refers to the time when the beast, the leaders of the revived Roman Empire, invades Israel, conquering her foes and establishing his throne in the temple in Jerusalem. But that is not the time of the Lord's coming; it is just the sign. Following the beast's move to Jerusalem, Israel will be plagued for three and a half years in what is called the Great

¹¹³ Colossians 1:3-6, 21-23

¹¹⁴ Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11

¹¹⁵ Daniel 12:1; Joel 2:2

Tribulation. Its destruction is so terrible, that if the Lord does not arrive to stop it, all life on earth will be destroyed. However, He will come because of His love for the elect, those He has chosen to be His people – the Jews.

False Christs

Matthew 24: ²³ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is,*' do not believe *him.* ²⁴ "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ "Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶ "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, *or,* 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them.*

Jesus returns to His warning about false Christs. Even during the Great Tribulation, people will lie about the coming of the Lord. He warns his followers not to believe any such announcements with good reason as seen in the next passage.

In a Flash Like Lightning

Matthew 24: ²⁷ "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.¹¹⁶ ²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.¹¹⁷ ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.¹¹⁸

Everyone in the world will see and recognize the Lord's Second Coming. It will not be bathed in secrecy. Rumors will not be needed. No one will need to hear the story. Every eye will see and every person will know. Prior to His coming, in fact, just hours before the whole world will experience climatic changes never known before. Then He will break through the eastern skies on that cloudy, dark, gloomy day.

Gathering of the Elect

Matthew 24: ³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.¹¹⁹

When Jesus returns, He will move the Jews from all over the world to Israel. They will inhabit the entire land promised to Abraham and his true descendants.

Parable of the Fig Tree

Matthew 24: ³² "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁴ "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

How do we know when the Lord's Second Coming will occur? Just as everyone knows summer is near when the fig tree puts forth its leaves, we will know the time has arrived for all the world to see His appearance when the abomination occurs, followed by 3 ½ years of

¹¹⁶ Job 39:30

¹¹⁷ Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10-11; Zephaniah 1:15

¹¹⁸ Daniel 7:13

¹¹⁹ Isaiah 27:13; Zechariah 9:14

Great Tribulation climaxing in a dreadful, dark and gloomy day. The generation that sees all His prophecies fulfilled will see His Coming.

My Word Will Not Pass Away

Matthew 24: ³⁵ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

When will it happen? When will His Second Coming occur? Only the Father knows the exact time; however, Jesus has revealed the signs of the times and those who remember His words can know with full assurance that He will return when His words fulfilled.

Coming of the Son of Man

Matthew 24: ³⁷ "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴² "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.

Jesus warns them of the danger of living without the expectancy of His coming. Almost 1980 years have passed since the Lord left the earth the first time, and it is easy to become complacent and doubt His return. From the creation to the flood, 1,657 years transpired and all that time the Lord held back His wrath from the world. He is capable of withholding His wrath again until everything is ready, but His word to everyone is to live each moment as if His coming might occur that very day.

Faithful and Sensible Slave

Matthew 24: ⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; ⁵⁰ the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Lord always follows His instructions with stories that illustrate to His teaching. Jesus has just answered His apostles' questions which deal with the destruction of the temples, His Second Coming and the end of the age. To further clarify His point, He tells four parables. The first parable tells of the faithful and sensible slave and it deals with the importance of obeying the Lord's commands and being ready for His coming. He can come at any time and He must find us properly caring for His possessions, His church.

¹²⁰ Genesis 6:5-8; 7:6-24

Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25: ¹ "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³ "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. ⁶ "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.' ⁷ "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' ¹⁰ "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' ¹² "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

The second parable deals with His true followers being prepared and ready for all circumstances that may come before they are called to physically enter the kingdom of God. Their lives must be orderly, conservative, and prudent. Proper arrangements must be made and provisions must be prepared in light of the uncertainty of the time of His coming. Those who do not know Him or belong to Him will not be ready or prepared; neither will they enter into His Kingdom.

Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25: ¹⁴ "For *it is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ "In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. ¹⁸ "But he who received the one *talent* went away, and dug *a hole* in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²² "Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' ²³ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴ "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no *seed*. ²⁵ 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' ²⁶ "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no *seed*. ²⁷ 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest. ²⁸ 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' ²⁹ "For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰ "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The third parable emphasizes the trust Jesus is leaving in His followers. Each person is given an allotment to oversee and will one day be accountable to the Lord when He comes for it. When He returns, He expects each of His followers to return the allotment to Him with a sizeable increase not in gold, silver, grain or produce. He expects an increase of souls for His kingdom.

His Glorious Throne

Matthew 25: ³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Before Jesus tells His fourth parable in this series, He makes two points clear. He will return to earth one day and He will sit on His glorious throne as King of Kings to rule His world.

Gathering of Nations – Sheep From Goats

Matthew 25: ³² "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. ¹²¹ ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. ¹²² ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? ³⁸ 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me. ¹²³ ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵ "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶ "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."¹²⁴

In the fourth parable, Jesus explains the proceedings at the time He ascends to His glorious throne in Jerusalem. His first act will be to assemble all the nations of the world, both Jew and Gentile and separate them all by their hearts for Him. Those Jews and Gentiles who have cared for the Lord's work and followed His commands will enter into the kingdom with Him as their King on His glorious throne. Those who have failed to see the need to obey Him and follow His commands will be gathered up and sent to eternal punishment. All people from all the nations will be scrutinized and no one alive at that time will escape His assessment that day. It will be too late to change His verdict when it occurs. Some will find favor because of their decision to follow Him and some will find doom because of their decision to ignore Him.

¹²¹ Ezekiel 34:17

¹²² Isaiah 58:7

¹²³ Proverbs 19:17

¹²⁴ Daniel 12:2