

## Matthew 24

### The Destruction of the Temple

**Mat 24:1** Jesus left the temple and was going away, when His disciples came to point out to Him the buildings of the temple. (*Mk 13:1 adds: "Look Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings".*) 2 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."

- The setting here is in answer to the parable of Mat 22:7 where "the king (*God*) was angry and he sent his troops (*here the Roman army*) and destroyed those murderers (*Jews who killed His prophets*) and burned their city". It concerned the end of the sacrificial system that was continued even after the N.T. was established during Pentecost. This was to happen in 70 AD with the destruction of "Herod's" temple, which was completed only six years before, along with the fall of the city of Jerusalem. During the siege led by Vespasian, Emperor Vitellius (*the 8<sup>th</sup> king in Daniel's vision- 7:7*) was assassinated making Vespasian (*the 9<sup>th</sup> king*) Rome's new ruler (69-79 AD). His oldest son Titus resumed "*the conquering of the land of Israel*"\* (Pg. 9) but when he died Titus became (*the 10<sup>th</sup>*) Emperor. When Titus died of a fatal fever two years into his reign, his brother Domitian (*Daniel's 11<sup>th</sup> king but in John's vision he is "an eighth but it belongs to the seven"- Rev 17:11*) became Emperor (81-96 AD). (*The difference between Daniel's eleven and John's eight is due to the three Emperors not listed in The Revelation whose short but combined reign was only from 68-69 AD.*)

*"There had been two temples prior to the instillation of Herod the Great as King of Israel" who "set out to make the Temple the most impressive building in the world, even eclipsing that of his ancestor, Solomon. In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign in 19 BC he commissioned the Temple to be built."*- \*Ray Murray, Jr./ The Destruction of Jerusalem

- The "souls" that were "under the altar" (*Rev 6:9*) were "told to rest a little longer" (*v. 11*) until the practice of the Law became obsolete, grew old and vanished away (*Heb 8:13*). That happened with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple thus making a final end of the sacrificial system instituted by God through the Mosaic Law, Jesus having become its fulfillment (*Mat 5:17*), "once for all when He offered up Himself" (*Heb 7:27*).

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**Mat 24:3** As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, (*a*) when will these things be, and (*b*) what will be the sign of Your coming and of the (*c*) close of the age?"

- From the vantage point of "the Mount of Olives", His disciple asked Him three questions. The first question they asked had to do with the destruction of Jerusalem and "when" it would happen (*see v. 14*), the second question, what would "be the sign of [His] coming" as a visitation of judgment on Jerusalem (*see v. 27*) and the third question concerned "the close of the age", i.e., the end of the Mosaic age with its sacrificial system (*not the same as vs. 35-36 where Jesus changes His focus to the end of the world*). Jesus answered these three questions but first warned them of those who would try to influence them otherwise.

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**Mat 24:4** And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

- There were, even during Jesus' day, those that rose up "claiming to be somebody" (*Act 5:36-37*). There are many "Jim Jones" (*The People's Temple- Jonestown, Guyana*) that have sprung up as recent as within the last two centuries (*Charles Taze Russell-Watchtower Society; Ellen G. White-Seventh Day Adventists, etc.*). Christ's warning to His disciples exists even in our day since there are many false doctrines (*rapture, literal 1,000 year reign, the tribulation, premillennialism, etc.*) based on misinformation being promoted as prophesy concerning the different "comings" (*visitations*) of Christ. Paul would also warn Timothy of the "teachings of demons" that would become accepted as church doctrine (*1 Tim 4*).

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**Mat 24:6** 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. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

- Jerusalem's occupying oppressor was Rome. The Roman government was in turmoil as was prophesied by Daniel (*2:41-43*) when he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream ("*the feet and toes [ten]... divided kingdom*" equates to *Rev 17:12 "are ten kings"*). Rome had encompassed the then known world which, being comprised of differing cultures ("*iron mixed with soft clay*"), negatively influenced her management as "kingdom against kingdom" was causing her to implode (*earthquake: Gk.4578- commotion*), from "various places". Hence the "rumors". Such would interrupt commerce (*Rev 18:19*) and thus create "famines", especially in Jerusalem which was shut off by the Roman army. It was "in the days of these kings (*Caesars*) [when] the God of Heaven... set up [the] kingdom (*a.k.a., the church*) that shall never be destroyed" (*Dan 2:44*). Attempting to reign in the rebellious nations began to take a negative effect on Rome's struggle to rule the world. It was *necessary* ("*must take place*") that these things happen in order for the O.T. sacrificial system to be completely fulfilled (*Mat 5:17*), finally making room for the N.T. "living [sacrificial]" system to replace it (*Rom 12:1*).
- Things that were bringing the Roman government to her knees were falsely attributed to the church, (*considered a 'sect of Judaism'*) and the supposed association Rome believed that she shared with the rebellious Jews. Christians who didn't participate in 'Emperor worship' were tortured or killed (*Rev 13:15*) for their insubordination, which was deemed insurrection against Rome, Jesus calling them "birth pains". As the church gave birth to "the new and living way" (*Heb 10:20*) that new birth brought about this initial struggle.

*"The Romans looked upon deification of the emperor as necessary to the existence of the state... Any opposition to this idea was counted as conspiracy against the government."*  
(Pg. 93)

*"From the beginning Christianity had no legal status. It was an illegal religion... until it could be licensed by the Senate... [It] had its background in the law and the prophets. Jesus was a Jew, the gospel was first preached among the Jews and the synagogues were first used as places of worship. It is to be expected that under these circumstances the Christians would share the suspicions and contempt held by Romans for the Jews."*  
(Pg. 88)

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**Mat 24:9** "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. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one

another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

- (See Act 12:1-3 where James was martyred by Herod.) Because Christians didn't participate in the Roman cult religions or temple worship (*which included prostitution*) their refusal opened them to suspicion and persecution accusing them of contempt toward the Emperor, their god. To the Christian, Christ's authority took precedence over the Caesar's. But there were those who did not endure. Even though God "On that day (*after the "perfect" came- 1 Cor 13:10*)... [removed] from the land the prophets" (*Zec 13:2*), Jesus here stated that any who did prophesy after that would "arise and lead many astray". These were, in part, the Judaizers that Paul dealt with in Galatians 1:6-7.

*"During this persecution informers began to accuse Christians in order to obtain their property. This became so common that Melito, bishop of Sardis, wrote to Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) asking for an investigation of the murders and robberies being carried out in the name of loyalty."* (Pg. 95)

The Eternal Kingdom; A History of the Church- F. W. Mattox

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**Mat 24:13** But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 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.

- Opposed to those who "fall away and betray one another" are those who *undergo*, that is, *bear* (trials) and *have fortitude and persevere*, who "will be" *protected* from loss of their eternal "reward [which] is great in Heaven" (*Mat 5:12*). Physical death resulting from faithful service brings victory since "precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints" (*Psa 116:15*). Verse 14 is in answer to the disciples' first question as to "when" the destruction of Jerusalem would occur. Once the Gospel's message had been proclaimed throughout the then known world the siege of Jerusalem would accomplish "the end".

Rom 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. 18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed **they have**, for "Their voice **has gone** out to **all the earth**, and their words to the ends of the world."

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**Mat 24:15** "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel (9:27), standing in the Holy Place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

*"Titus now began to attack the city from the north. Three walls were used here to defend the city, but the first was breached within 15 days. Some soldiers during this early breakthrough were able to go all the way to the Temple and put up the Roman Eagle and their battle standards in the Temple (\*abomination... standing in the Holy Place). The Romans were repulsed. At about this time, Titus sent Josephus as an emissary to try and get the Jews to peacefully surrender the city and save further loss of life. He also withdrew the siege. It was at this point that all the Christians in the city fled to Pella. They did this because of the warning given by Jesus to flee when they saw the city surrounded by the armies. As far as we know all Christian were able to flee. The Jews rejected the offer of Titus and the siege began again for the last time.*

*By July of 70 AD the fortress of Antonia had been captured. Yet the gates of the Temple held for one more week. Even after breaching the walls of the Temple grounds, the inner court held out for one more day. The Temple finally fell on the anniversary day of the capture of the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BC.” (\*mine) (Pg. 15)*

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**Mat 24:17** Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

- The disciples were to pass this urgent message on to any who would hear them, but only the Christians living in Jerusalem heeded that prophetic message (*Heb 10:36-39*), the Jews denouncing Jesus' Messiahship. It was to be heeded long before Titus would later call a brief respite during the siege. Even personal belongings were to be disregarded since their very lives would be at stake. It would be especially difficult on women who were pregnant or who had newborns because of the arduous journey to Pella. (*Concerning being married under "the present distress" Paul commented in 1 Cor 7:26.*) Winter and the Sabbath also were factors that could hinder their flight. Those who heeded were prepared.

*"The early training of many Christians led them to have scruples about breaking the Sabbath. It is possible that Jesus had these scruples in view, but by no means conclusive, for in fleeing they would need the support and friendship of their Jewish brethren, who would be apt, not only to hinder, but even in those troublous and turbulent days, to show violence to any who openly disregarded the Sabbath."*

McGarvey

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**Mat 24:21** For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

- Referring to verse 7 and "famines"; even though there were many persecutions where the Jews were taken off into captivity (*this isn't the first time the Temple was destroyed*) at this point nothing in the past, or even the future, could compare to what went on inside the city during the siege (*as was prophesied in Eze 5*). Even the Romans under Titus were so repulsed at the sight that Titus withdrew for a season while they buried their dead. But the remaining Jews weren't willing to surrender, just as Zedekiah wasn't willing to heed Jeremiah's warning to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar (*Jer 32*).

*"As the siege began to take a toll on the people inside the city, some tried to escape. Those Jews who were caught trying to flee were crucified outside the walls so that those inside could see the fate that awaited them. At one time so many Jews were being crucified that the Romans ran out of wood to make crosses. Soon the supplies in the city began to run out. A famine arose that was unbelievable. Women were even eating their own children. At other times zealots, who were breaking into people's homes, were fed human meat. With civil war and famine as well as disease, 116,000 bodies were thrown over the walls of Jerusalem BEFORE the battle even began... To make matters worse the Romans began cutting off the hands of escaping Jews so they could not fight, but sent them back into the city so that they would have to be fed."* (Pg. 15)

Ray Murray, Jr./ The Destruction of Jerusalem

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**Mat 24:22** And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

- The span of time between the beginning and end of this ordeal depended on the response of the Jews. The “days [being] cut short” had to do with the brief span of time between when Titus first withdrew the siege so the dead could be buried (*when “for the sake of the elect” the remaining Christians fled Jerusalem*) and when he resumed it because of those Jews who continued to rebel and not surrender. Remember, God was always in control of His servant who, at that time, was Titus in order to allow His people ample time to respond to the warning. Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh were other kings whose armies God used to accomplish His will, in punishing His own disobedient people.

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**Mat 24:23** Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

- Some, “who [Paul said] seemed to be influential” (*Gal 2:6*), will go to great lengths to seduce others into believing their misrepresentation of the truth. Some would even trick people through ‘slight-of-hand’ as though performing a miracle (*Act 8:9-11*). Whether “false christs [or] false prophets” they somehow are able “to lead astray, if possible, even the elect”. These are “those who justify themselves before men, but God knows [their] hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (*Lk 16:15*). This was so imperative to their election that Christ repeated here what He had said earlier (*v. 4*) since at the time it would have been easy for the persecuted Jewish saints to believe anything told them about Christ’s presence. Such is true even today where “from among [our] own selves will men arise speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (*Act 20:30*) were it not for “the sword of the Spirit” (*Eph 6:17*) we possess that is able to “[discern] the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (*Heb 4:12*).

2Co 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

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**Mat 24:27** For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. 29 "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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

- This was a visitation of judgment on Jerusalem that came speedily, especially for the unprepared Jews who disregarded Jesus as the Christ. The “vultures” gathering here is descriptive of the loss of life within the city. After all was accomplished by the Roman army, the Mosaic economy and government would be abolished as “sun... moon... [and] stars [fell] from heaven”. These are the same metaphors that Joseph used in describing his dreams as they pertained to his father, mother and brothers (*Gen 37:9-10*). Here they represent the higher authorities (*priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.*) within the Jewish society as “the powers of the heavens [that were] shaken” (*Gk.4531- topple*).

At that point the “sign” (*Gk.4592- indication*) would have been clear. Jerusalem’s ultimate fall came, not by Rome’s invasion (*Rome was only the avenue*) but, by the visitation of Christ’s judgment on those who ruled her. His “coming on the clouds of heaven” shows His divine authority “to execute [such] judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (*Jn 5:27*), i.e., He inhabited the body prepared for Him so He could “[do] away with the first [*Covenant*] in order to establish the second” (*Heb 10:5*). When asked in *Mat 26:64* by the high priest if He was “the Christ, the Son of God”, Jesus’ response was a rehearsal of what He said here.

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**Mat 24:31** And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

- The language denotes something the Jews understood as a global event, a gathering from the four corners of the earth. Albert Barnes states “God shall send forth His messengers- whatever He may choose to employ for that purpose: signs, wonders, human messengers, or the angels themselves- and gather Christians into a place of safety, so that they will not be destroyed with the Jews”. The “loud trumpet call” the Jews understood as being a severe warning as it was when Moses approached the Israelites at the base of Mt. Sinai (*Ex 19:9-13*).

Rom 10:18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

- Here it refers to deliverance via Divine intervention. These “elect” were Christians (*Jew and especially Gentile*) who were experiencing persecution, at the time, from every direction, who were still concerned about the suffering of the saints in Jerusalem, giving beyond what they could have afforded to (*2 Cor 8:2-3*). Since their conversions they were considered heretics by their fellow Jew and were shunned from participating, or even being hired, in the market place, thus the need for outside help. Those in Jerusalem were being supported by the benevolence of the Gentile churches (*Rom 15:27; 2 Cor 8:3-4*) through the messengers that were delivering those funds (*2 Cor 16:3*). They were heeding Christ’s warning about Jerusalem by either leaving the moment they could or for the missionaries to not even come near the city when they saw the signs.

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**Mat 24:32** "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that [it] is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

- Using a “fig tree” as prop for this lesson, Jesus said they knew its buds showed them how “summer is near”. The same thing went for the signs they were shown concerning the fall of Jerusalem, “all these things” having to do with the total combination of the things He had just told them. Which helps in determining if they are prophecies that have yet to occur or have already happened. If they have happened (*v. 34*) then their meaning must come from a proper exegesis of the context. That being the case and the fact that “all these things” have happened (*past tense*), the answers to the first two questions are now history to us unless of course those of Jesus’ “generation” have been living for almost two millennia along with those who were waiting for the kingdom to come (*Mat 16:28*). The last of the three questions Jesus dealt with in the following verses.

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

- In answer to their last question here, He switched course from their present state of affairs to discuss a "day and hour", that He affirmed was imminent, and which is a mystery as to when it will be accomplished. Not even those "around the Throne... [including] many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" (*Rev 5:11*), as close as they are to God Who is seated there, know that date. And, as being above the angels (*Heb 1:6*), Jesus stated that He didn't even know, which poses another question; "As close as He and the Father are (*Jn 10:38; 17:5, 24*), how could He not know, since God is omniscient and Jesus is God?" Something Paul wrote to the Philippians may give a clue. When Jesus left Heaven He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, having become in the likeness of men" (*2:7 -LTHB*). Whatever He "emptied Himself" of, knowledge of certain dates must have been one of them. And even though He didn't know the date then (*before His return to "the right hand of God" - Mk 16:19*), He must know it now according to what He revealed to John in *Rev 20:7* concerning the end of "the thousand years" reign (*along with His receiving "all authority" before He returned to Heaven - Mat 28:18*).
- Speaking of the destruction of all things physical at the conclusion of time on earth, His "words" would last beyond that, expressing their eternal and trustworthy nature. His "words", relayed through His apostles via "the Holy Spirit" (*Jn 14:26*), have been written to prepare "those who are called (*through the Gospel - 2 Thes 2:14*) according to His purpose" (*Rom 8:28*) for whenever that time will come.

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**Mat 24:37** For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

- Noah was "a herald of righteousness" (*2 Pet 2:5*) which shows that he must have been preaching, through inspiration (*1 Pet 3:19*), about the flood that was soon to come then. During his time "the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose" (*Gen 6:2*). So "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (*v. 5*). Jesus equates those days of old with those which will exist right before His return. As soon as "the wickedness of man" reaches a certain height (*which no one knows when that will be*) it will signal "the heavens [passing] away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies [being] burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it [to] be exposed" (*2 Pet 3:10*). His "coming" in the context of this verse will be the last visitation of judgment on everything that has been created by Him (*Jn 1:3*).

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**Mat 24:40** Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. 42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

- The idea here is not that half "will be taken" while the other half "left" since Jesus said "the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many" and in contrast "the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and

those who find it are few” (*Mat 7:13-14*). It’s not a 50/50 proposition concerning the saved and the lost nor does it agree with the false doctrine of a future “rapture” as though those left behind will have to endure another millennia on earth before Jesus once again makes His supposed ‘last’ return. Paul’s words expose that false assumption in 1 Thes 4:16-17. This is speaking of Jesus coming on a day when people will be about their normal business and the faithful Christian (“*only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life*”- *Rev 21:27*) will be separated from anyone whose “name [is] **not** found written in the book of life [and who will be] thrown into the lake of fire” (*Rev 20:15*).

1Th 5:1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

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**Mat 24:43** But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

- Another example of the unexpected manner in which His return will be was of something they were familiar with; thieves who were breaking into their houses. Today we have home systems that detect when someone might be illegally forcing their way into our homes. So, according to the discussion here, there is no need to spend sleepless nights in expectation of His return if we are as ready as a burglar or fire alarm because...

2Pe 3:10 ...the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

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**Mat 24:45** "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- When Mary and Joseph found the young Jesus after frantically searching for Him for three days His response was to them what ours need to be to Him when He returns; we need to be “busy in the affairs of [our] Father” (*Lk 2:46-49/LTHB*). Otherwise, as those who profess the faith “but did not go” (*to work in the Father’s vineyard*), Jesus said will suffer; unlike “the tax collectors and the prostitutes [who would go] into the kingdom of God before [them]” (*Mat 21:28-31*). We cannot become so apathetic about His return to think “[our] Master is delayed” because He will finally arrive when we least expect it and if we’re not found doing His will “on earth as it is in Heaven” (*i.e., doing righteousness according to the disciples model prayer- Mat 6:10*) we **will** suffer with the majority who weren’t ready where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”.



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