

What did Jesus say about Jerusalem, His second coming and the end of the world?



What can we learn from the “Mini Judgement Day” in 70 A.D.?

Dear Andrew,

The subject matter of my letter today is crucial and contains very important counsel.

What significance does Jerusalem’s fate have for us?

The disciples asked Jesus: “**Tell us, when will these things be? (the destruction of the temple) And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**” Matt. 24:3 NKJV

In a single question the disciples asked about two events—on one hand, about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and on the other hand, about the Jesus’ second coming and the resulting end of the world. The disciples assumed that these events would take place simultaneously. They could only imagine the destruction of their magnificent temple in connection with Jesus’ second coming and the end of the world. Today, we naturally know that many years lay in between these two

events. It is astonishing that Jesus nonetheless answered the question in detail. His answer is recorded in Matthew 24 and 25 as well as in the parallel chapters Mark 13 and Luke 21.

When reading, we notice that Jesus doesn’t even refer to the separation in time between these events. One reason was definitely Jesus’ intention not to trouble the disciples. If He had told them that He wouldn’t come again for a long time, then this would have completely discouraged them. But there is another reason: Jesus saw the parallels between these two events, which led to the end of the Jewish nation as God’s chosen nation and the events now just before His second coming, which lead to the end of the world and the establishment of God’s kingdom. **Jesus connected the description of both events.** When He indicated to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words also applied to the last world fire. His explanation wasn’t only for His disciples’ sake, but rather at the same time He was thinking of all those, who would live in the last days of the world’s history. What our Lord Jesus said has

meaning for back then and today. And exactly this makes a nearer look at His answer interesting for us. We can say that in the picture Jesus painted, Jerusalem is in the foreground and the second coming and end of the world are in the background. The destruction of Jerusalem is in a manner of speaking a “mini-judgementday” example for those of us, who live at the end of time just before the second coming and the end of the world. We can draw extremely valuable conclusions for ourselves.

Overview

- How were all of Jesus’ disciples able to get to safety in time?
- Why did the other very religious people suffer such a dreadful fate?
- How did the daring Jews fare, who survived three years in the invulnerable fortress Masada after the destruction of Jerusalem?
- What does the Bible say about the greatest day in the world’s history—the day Jesus comes again?
- What promises do we have from God for this coming crisis?

Jesus’ Prophecy

What references did Jesus make about Jerusalem’s future?

We can read it in Luke 19:41-44: *“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you **had known**, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an **embankment around you**, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; **and they will not leave in you one stone upon another**, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”* NKJV

We read further in Luke 21:20-24: *“But when you see Jerusalem **surrounded** by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”* NKJV

What were the circumstances?

About 30 years after Jesus' death, what was it like in Jerusalem?

We know from the Bible and from history—especially from Flavius Josephus and his work “The Jewish War”—what the developments were like back then. Josephus was an eye-witness. At first, he was head of the Jewish forces in Galilee. After his capture and pardon he was a Roman war reporter.

Voices continued to get louder against detested Rome. Fanatics and rebels rallied together in the Jewish zealot party. They relentlessly demanded the abolishment of the foreign rule. Each one of them carried a dagger under their clothing. They also tyrannized their own countrymen. High-handed attacks against the Roman procurators only aggravated the situation. In May 66 A.D. the rebellion broke out. The Roman cohorts in Jerusalem were killed. Riots broke out in the whole country and Cestius Gallus, the Roman governor in Syria, was called in for help. By the end of September 66 A.D., he and his legion were advancing on Jerusalem. Soon the new part of Jerusalem was occupied and the fighting around the temple became more violent. The Jews fought with grim resistance.

Jesus' sign appeared

Jerusalem was now surrounded by enemy armies. Those who lived in the country could easily flee. But how could you flee from a besieged city together with many women and children? **Did Jesus give them an impossible sign? Did He say something wrong?**

Josephus reported: “Cestius (Gallus), who neither seemed to know about the desperation of the besieged nor about their morale (a significant number of people were already willing to surrender the city), suddenly had his soldiers retreat, gave up all hope even though no mishap had taken place and incomprehensibly left the city.” The Romans left. The zealots pursued them and caused heavy losses amongst the Romans. During these eight days the disciples had the opportunity to leave Jerusalem without any hindrance from Romans or zealots. The Romans and zealots went West. **Where should the disciples flee? What did Jesus say? To the mountains! They are in the East past the Jordan.** All the disciples were able to escape unhindered to the city of Pella in the mountains on the other side of the Jordan. There they were in safety. When the Romans returned, they first occupied the country areas. But they left the region beyond the Jordan untouched.

Would I have fled with them?

For a moment, we want to think back to the disciples at that time and ask ourselves: Would I have fled with them? To flee a besieged city, if at all, would be very dangerous. When the Romans retreated, the Christians fled. Is it even necessary to flee when the enemies are gone? The threat was gone. After the Roman's retreat there weren't any military reasons to flee. The Romans didn't come back to Jerusalem until four years later. They left in October 66 A.D. and didn't besiege Jerusalem again until the spring of 70 A.D.

Why did the disciples flee anyhow?

They fled because they obeyed Jesus' word. They obeyed the seemingly illogical word of Jesus, even though there didn't seem to be any more danger. To flee meant to escape with nothing but the clothes on your back and a few belongings. You left behind your home and all your worldly possessions.

How could they make just a drastic decision, although there was no apparent danger anymore? I am convinced that the Christians at that time lived in consistent obedience by faith. It wasn't a difficult decision for them. **They simply obeyed Jesus' word, because they were accustomed to essentially trust Him in everything.** The fleeing disciples only saved *their lives*. They lost their homes and

possessions. Many of them had given their assets to the church. The "intelligent" people, who remained, kept their homes and possessions for four years. Then they lost everything *including their lives*.

Would you have fled? I mean, would you have fled only at Jesus' word. You can personally determine this by answering the following questions:

If yes, out of trust in Him and His love, do I obey everything that I already know from His word?

Anyone today who doesn't obey God's word in a certain point or suppresses something, wouldn't have fled with them. If you don't develop the good habit of obeying Jesus in everything today, then you are in great danger when it comes to a time of crisis. But when we learn to trust and obey Jesus today in times of peace, then we will certainly make good decisions in the coming crisis.

Some loving advice...

What did Jesus advise them concerning the moment of flight: ***“And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.”***
Matthew 24:20 NKJV

I wonder if the Christians prayed this prayer back then? With certainty! How did the Lord answer their prayer? The flight of the Christians took place, according to our calendar, on October 19, 66 A.D.—just before the rainy season began. Rain is disastrous for unsurfaced paths. Thus, the disciples could flee until the middle of October. At this time of year, it isn't hot anymore and the fall rains haven't begun yet. If a person has to flee, then this time of year was favorable for it.

Not having to flee on Sabbath

How did the other part of the prayer request turn out? The Romans retreated from Jerusalem on Thursday, October 16, 66 A.D. Jesus had urgently emphasized an immediate flight. Why didn't they flee immediately? Friday was too short to get away, since Sabbath started around 6p.m. They didn't flee on Sabbath, but rather hallowed the day according to Christ's command. They fled on Sunday, October 19. This shows clearly that they knew nothing about shifting Sabbath to the first day of the week in honor of the resurrection. Furthermore, since Jesus himself had given this order, it shows that this wasn't His intention either.

At this time the Jews weren't keeping the Sabbath. They conducted raids and big attacks against the Romans on Sabbath. The Christians kept the Sabbath, even under extraordinary circumstances.

Why was it so important to Jesus, that the flight not happen on Sabbath?

The Sabbath was instituted at creation by Christ. That is why He calls himself Lord of the Sabbath. He gave it to us as a gift and protected it in the ten commandments (John 1:1-3,14; Mark 2:27-28; Genesis 2:1-4; Exodus 20:8-11). God rested on this day. The Bible doesn't say that He recuperated. God doesn't get tired. God rested and rests in order to have special time of fellowship with us every week. And human beings should rest from their work in order to have fellowship with their Creator and Redeemer, **because fellowship with Christ is the anchor of our life.** The Sabbath is an island in the ocean of time, on which we have freedom, hope and encounter God's humanity. Jesus considered it so important that this fellowship with Him on Sabbath should be had even during dramatic times. During times of great distress, it is so important to know that my life is in the hand of the Almighty, who shows me goodness and I have a covenant with Him. Because of time constraints we will have to leave out further valuable reasons for the Sabbath.

How were all the disciples saved?

How did it come about that all of Jesus' followers were able to get to safety on time?

Because they trusted Jesus and acted according to His words. God's promise for the end time also came true for them: *"Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations..."* 2 Peter 2:9 NKJV

Can you rely on Jesus' advice? It is more likely that heaven and earth will pass away than Jesus' word not being fulfilled. Matthew 24:35

What happened to the others?

Now we want to see what happened to the people, who didn't follow Jesus' instructions. Naturally, the Romans had no intention of putting up with Jews' insurrection. They came back a year later and started by clearing the rural areas in Galilee in 67 A.D. In the process the population of whole cities perished in a single blow. 6000 young men were taken as slaves for building the canal in Corinth. In 68 A.D. the Romans reconquered the region north of the Dead Sea. At the same time, they destroyed Qumran. Until this time the Jewish Essenes lived here. They had been able to hide the library in the caves by the Dead Sea just before the Romans came. The Bible scrolls remained undiscovered there until 1946.

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These Bible scroll discoveries at the Dead Sea were a great sensation.

What was unique about this find was that the manuscripts were almost a thousand years older than the Bible scripts, which were used to translate our Bibles. The experts held their breath. Is our Bible still correct? The conclusion was reassuring. It was determined that our Bible is correct. We can be thankful that we still have the original handbook of divine faith. Today we can still know and ascertain for ourselves, what the true will of God is without being dependent on human changes or explanations.

Religious and lost—why?

In the spring of 70 A.D. Titus, the Roman General, the later Emperor, along with 80,000 men advanced on Jerusalem. Jesus had said: *"...and let not those who are in the country enter her (Jerusalem)."* Luke 21:21 NKJV The disciples followed this advice. They stayed away from Jerusalem for four years. Probably, they would have been in danger from the Zealots. The Jews didn't comply with the instructions. They stayed there and the people in the country went to the city as well. Jerusalem was full to overflowing with pilgrims, who had come for the Passover Feast, when the city was

surrounded. Whoever doesn't follow Jesus' advice, will end up in great trouble. Many of the trapped people were religious. After all they had come for the Passover Feast. This feast had originally been instituted by God. But through Jesus' death it lost its divine purpose.

The Jewish church then had substituted God's will with many human teachings and institutions. Decades before Jesus had told them: "... *This people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men....*" Mark 7:6-8 NKJV

Jesus made it very clear on the Sermon on the Mount that it avails nothing to be religious without obedience of faith.

He said: "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to the, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*" Matthew 7:22-23 NKJV

The true believers had been called by Jesus and the apostles out of the Jewish church, which wasn't doing God's will anymore. This realization is so important in order for us to comprehend that **religious** people won't be saved, but rather those who have **trusted and followed** Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

God had drawn back His protecting hand from Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the Jews hadn't taken advantage of the centuries of God's grace. (Daniel 9:25; 70 year-weeks = 490 years). Eventually there was an end of grace. God in His love wants to save. Jesus had cried over Jerusalem and told them: "...*How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*" Matthew 23:37 NKJV

No religiosity helps, when a person doesn't do the will of God. In general, that is also the tragedy of our time.

The loss of God's grace and the consequences

What happened in Jerusalem after God's protecting grace had been withdrawn?

Dreadful things took place. Month by month the battle against Jerusalem grew wilder. Several times Titus urged the Jews to surrender, since he wanted to spare the city and the temple. But they refused. As a result, Titus commanded his forces to severely clamp down on them. Anyone, who escaped Jerusalem under the cover of darkness and was captured, was crucified. About 500 people were crucified daily. A forest of crosses grew around Jerusalem. Only when they ran out of wood, did the Romans cease with the crucifixions.

To prevent any escape from Jerusalem or the delivery of supplies, Titus built an earth rampart with a line of guards around the city.

What had Jesus prophesied: *“For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”* Luke 19:43-44 NKJV

Starvation ravaged the city. Scores of people starved to death. During three months the Jews disposed of 115,800 corpses from only one city gate. But they didn't want to surrender. As soon as something slightly edible turned up, a big fight ensued. They chewed on their belts, shoes, old hay and ... babies. Jesus had predicted: *“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!”* Luke 21:23 NKJV

It is horrible what people do when God's Spirit withdraws from them. An adage says: 'Humanity without divinity leads to bestiality.' That means acts without divine influence lead to beastliness. A person is left to their own devices and is capable of anything. In addition, he is very susceptible to superstition and the influence of demons. The “wrath of God” is when God withdraws from a person after they have repeatedly spurned His grace.

Still many tried to flee by night from the starvation in Jerusalem. They were seized by Roman volunteer troops, who had heard that escapees had swallowed gold and gems so that no one could take them away. So, they slashed open their bellies—in one night 2000 people. Titus was enraged. He had all the guilty people put to death as well. But the gruesome acts continued.

The Romans stormed Jerusalem constantly and took it piece by piece. Titus made the Jews an offer to fight the Romans elsewhere in order to save the temple. They refused. Titus ordered that the temple should be spared. But soldiers in their rage threw a firebrand inside. Titus ordered that the fire be put out, but no one listened to him.

They murdered and plundered. Finally, Titus ordered the burned temple to be leveled. The soldiers did a thorough job. The heat of the fire had caused the melted gold to seep into the ground, so they even dug through the dirt. Hence, afterwards the Edomite Turnus Rufus was able to plow over the temple plaza.

What did Jesus say about the temple building: *“See! Your house is left to you desolate. . . .”* „Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” *Matthew 23:38 and 24:2 NKJV*

Many people today don't care what God has said. But everything God's prophets have predicted will come to pass.

During this horrible Jewish war over one million people died. 97,000 were taken as slaves into captivity. Of these, 11,000 died from hunger within a short time, because they weren't given food right away. Some of the males older than 17 years were sent to the goldmines in Egypt. The rest were scattered across the provinces of the Roman Empire to die in theatrical performances by sword or wild animals. Up to 2000 Jewish slaves died during each “performance”. **No other city suffered such a terrible fate as Jerusalem did. In truth, it is an example for the end of the world.** What did Jesus prophecy: *“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles. . . .”* *Luke 21:24 NKJV*

Why did so many other religious people suffer such a terrible fate?

Because they didn't trust Jesus and didn't follow His words. They died by the sword, starvation, crucifixion, suicide and slavery. Jesus named the reason: “But you were not willing.” *Matthew 23:37 NKJV*

What happened to the daring ones?

The war wasn't over when Jerusalem was destroyed. Some of the most daring Zealots were able to escape to the impregnable fortress Masada, which they had taken in a surprise attack from the Romans in 66 A.D. It was only rediscovered in the last century and excavated for the most part in 1963.

What happened to the daring ones, who relied on their audacity and strength?

What happened to the impregnable fortress? The Roman commander Flavius Silva besieged Masada with 10,000 men. This fortress is on a giant rock, whose walls rise up vertically. It is shaped like a huge ship. On the top it is flat and gardens could be planted. They had enough supplies for many years.

The Romans built a rampart 3.5 km long around the whole fortress so that no one could enter or exit. On the west side of the rock, where it was lowest, it took them two years to make an earthen ramp. About 200 meters wide. They were able to get a battering ram up this assault ramp. With this they were able to ram a breach in the wall. At the beginning of May 73 A.D., they were ready to storm the fortress. On the morning of May 2, 73 A.D. the Roman attack was supposed to begin. The Romans had ten times more man-power than the Jews in the fortress.

The besieged people realized that their situation was hopeless.

During the night the fortress leader held a speech: the basic tone was better death than slavery. God has forsaken us! Let us take our own lives. After a second speech they were ready. It was if they had gone mad. First, the men killed their wives and children. Then they chose ten men, who were to kill the rest of the men. These ten drew lots to see who would kill the other nine. The last man would set the buildings on fire and then fall on his own sword.

When the Romans assaulted the fortress, they found burning buildings and 960 dead bodies. Today, Masada is the place, where the Israeli recruits are sworn in. The Israelis see the 960 defenders of Masada as their role models.

Those 960 people were definitely unhappy people, who had gotten themselves into a horrible dilemma, in which they were seized by panic. They were victims of their own ideas and of the trust in their own strength.

What happened to the daring ones?

They were seized by panic and ended their own lives.

Who is responsible for this misery?

Jesus said: "...because you did not know the time of your visitation." *Luke 19:44 NKJV* and "...How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate." *Matthew 23:37-38 NKJV*

God did everything He could in His great love and omnipotence to safeguard them from this terrible fate. **But they weren't willing.** Our great and gracious God, who is a God of love, respects our decisions, even when these wrong decisions make Him sad, because He knows the outcome of these false paths beforehand. When God withdraws from us due to our decisions and leaves us completely to our own devices, then we are in great danger.

Since the destruction of the temple, many visitors to Jerusalem ask a question. Already thousands of years ago God asked this question and gave the answer to Solomon: "...Why has the Lord done thus to this land and this house? ...Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers." *2 Chronicles 7:21-22 NKJV*

What is the crucial sign for us today? In those days it was siege by an enemy army. The signal for us is the Sunday law, which will be passed in the USA.

What effect will the second coming have?

What does the Bible say about the greatest day in the world's history—the day of Jesus' second coming?

There will only be two groups of people (we belong to one or the other). *"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left."* *Matthew 24:40-41 NKJV* "

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" *Matthew 25:34 NKJV*

What will happen to the others? *"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men...."*

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." *2 Peter 3:7,10-11 NKJV*

The second coming of Jesus separates all people into two groups: those that have trusted Jesus in everything and have followed Him, receive the kingdom of God; for the others it is the end of the world.

A Promise for the Crisis

What promises do we have from God for the coming crisis?

“Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations....” 2 Peter 2:9 NKJV

Back then He delivered the disciples, who honored Him with their trust and obedience.

Why are we faced with such an alternative?

Why are we faced with this decision?

The Bible says: *“Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:12-13 NKJV*

The second coming of Jesus and the coinciding end of the world will come so that **all the misery on earth**—sickness, pain, suffering, death—**will end**. Revelation 21:3-4

After this point the whole universe will again be solely governed by God’s love. God will create a new heaven and a new earth.

What conclusion do I want to draw for myself?

For many it will be the same as a murdered king: A letter was found in his pocket. It was neither opened nor read. The author of the letter wanted to warn the king about a planned assassination. The letter could have saved the king, but he didn’t even read it.

God has also written us a letter. Have we read it and paid heed to its contents? God has always warned people of coming judgement. Those who trusted His message of warning and obeyed His commandments according to His will, were protected from the visitation that befell the disobedient and unbelievers.

An American ordered a barometer from a mail-order business. It was delivered on September 21, 1938. When he took it out of the box, the needle pointed at “storm”. He immediately realized that something had to be wrong with the barometer. Straightaway, he repackaged it and sent it back by mail. Do we know what happened next? On the same day a hurricane blew his house away. Will we

trust the Lord Jesus' predictions about the end times? Will we obey and be saved or do we believe that this instrument, the Bible, isn't reliable and thus suffer eternal loss?

Jesus has given us sufficient warnings, so that we don't suffer the great catastrophe at the end of the world, but rather receive eternal life in splendor in God's kingdom. Those who heed Jesus' warnings, doesn't need to worry about the future.

What conclusion should I make? What decision will I make?

I can say that I made my decision when I was 36 years old. The week before I made this decision, I suffered great internal conflicts. Then it dawned on me, that it isn't a risk to entrust my life to the God of eternal love. I am so thankful that I made a decision for Him back then. I have never regretted this decision, but rather I am glad to this day. I thank the Lord that He has given me such a blessed life as His follower. **We only have today at our disposal.** We should take advantage of it.

Not long ago I read about the following incident: An airplane was making its final descent. A course deviation of only three degrees caused a disaster, in which 95 people died a few seconds before landing. Three degrees deviation—hardly enough worth mentioning, but it was enough to destroy the lives of many people.

We are also on a journey. Our most important goal is God and His kingdom. We will only reach it, if we stay “on course” or, if necessary, correct our course. This is why we need daily and weekly fellowship with our Lord. Only this way will our lives be protected from ending in disaster. **Are we prepared for the final descent?** In the next letter to Andrew, you will learn more about the signs of the times then and today. Jesus said: *“So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!” Matthew 24:33 NKJV*

I hope that you can face God's great day with joy and confidence. And may you make the request in the Lord's prayer your own: “Thy kingdom come”.

What will the future bring? With Jesus—eternal life. Without Him—the greatest misery.

Dear Andrew, I hope you make the right decision concerning Jesus and the Word of God.

Warm regards,

Helmut