



WEEK ONE: MATTHEW 24 PART 1

WEEK TWO: MATTHEW 24 PART 2

WEEK THREE: 1 THESSALONIANS 4-5

WEEK FOUR: REVELATION 20

## WEEK ONE: MATTHEW 24 PART ONE

Introduction: In the first part of this extended dialogue known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus speaks of the *end of the age*. This is the epoch of time between the events of Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and his final return. Here, he makes predictions about both the end of the Jewish age (c. 70AD) *and* the end of the age of world history.

### WARMING UP:

1. On a scale of 1 – 10, how much does the return of Jesus affect your thoughts and actions in everyday life?
2. The second coming of Jesus is referred to in John 14:1-27, 2 Thess 2, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, 1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 19-21 to name only a few passages! What might this incredible emphasis in the New Testament tell us about the place Jesus' return should have in our lives today?
3. This section of Matthew 24 involves plenty of future prophecy. What do you understand about the function and purpose of prophecy?

### GOING DEEPER:

READ Matthew 24:1-14.

[Note: Most scholars agree that this section of prophetic statements refers mostly to the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the subsequent destruction of the Jewish temple. In fact, Jesus separates these prophecies from the prophecies about the *end of the age* by stating that the events leading up to 70 AD (v3-14) are *birth pains*, and do not mean the end of history has come.]

4. History tells us that between 30-70AD there were many false messianic figures, plenty of earthquakes (Hierapolis and Colossae c. 60AD) and definitely rumours of wars (Rome was constantly threatening to invade!).

What does the accuracy of Jesus' statements here tell us about his authority and power?

5. Jesus' references to persecution (v9) may also extend to believers throughout Church history. What is your current experience of persecution and how does it compare to our brothers and sisters' current experiences in places like Iran and China? What do you think their perspective of the end of history is?

6. V14 signifies the moment when Jesus starts to refer to events about his second coming. What do you think Jesus means by the Gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the *whole* world and to *all* nations? Has this happened yet?

Bringing it home...

7. Next week we'll look at more signs of the end of the age from Matthew 24, but until then, here's a quote from Tim MacBride: "the only clear "sign" we're given of the approaching end is that *the gospel message will go out as a testimony to all the peoples of the world*. So if you're keen for Christ to return and everything to be put right, *get out there and tell people about Jesus*. Get involved in the work of God's kingdom and the announcement of God's rule as king. Particularly to those people groups who are still, as yet, unreached." (from *Coffee With the King*). Discuss this quote together.

8. Hebrews 13:3 says: "Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Take a moment as a group to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters.