



theme: End Times #2 – The Temple Goes Down!

materials: Building blocks, bibles

This month the cells will all focus on “End Times”. What does Scripture mean by End Times? Can we know anything about the end of the world for sure? How much of what we think about the End Times come from Scripture, and how much from other popular sources?

welcome

Get some Lego or Jenga or building blocks of some kind (even toilet paper rolls and duct tape would work). Break into teams and see who can build the largest or most impressive structure in an allotted time. Try to make it capable of withstanding attack. Let each team try various ways of knocking the other team’s building down without touching it – blowing, stomping, squirting water, throwing paper balls, etc... Which building is the most durable, and why? What do you think of when you hear the words “End Times”?

interact

Where have you seen Christ present and working this past week? Where or when have you recognized the presence of Christ in your life? Share with each other, and thank God together that Christ is present and active in your lives right now.

read

Read Matthew 24.

Do you think we can have any real sure knowledge about the end of time? What do you think we can know about it?

Is there a danger in thinking we know too much about the end times?

What is Jesus actually predicting in this passage? What event is He warning His listeners about?

When the disciples asked Jesus their question in verse 3, what do you think they are referring to? Do they want to know about the Temple being destroyed, or about the end of Time?

Can this passage refer both to something within the disciple’s lifetime and to some future event as well?

Have Jesus’ predictions in this passage come true?

Why do you think Jesus gives the instructions in verses 45-51? This doesn’t tell us when he is coming back, but how does it tell us to live our lives?

What was the big deal about the Temple being destroyed? What would that have meant to the people of Israel, or to Jesus’ followers?

Read verses 9-13 again. How do these verses make you feel? How should we act in response to them?

Does this whole passage make you feel hopeful, worried, or something else?

think

Verse 14 says: “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.” Consider how to take action on 2 questions:

1. How can your cell group do a better job of proclaiming the gospel in your part of the world?
2. How can you support someone who is proclaiming the gospel in another part of the world?

For the second question, see if you can possibly find a Church in another part of the world to support through letters, prayers, encouragement or even finances.



live & pray

Given the warnings in this passage, is there anything you could be doing to better prepare for the coming of the Lord? Take an inventory of your life – how are you serving Christ, and in what ways are you just serving yourself?

useful resources

Website: www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/a_study_of_matthew_twenty_four

Website: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/prophecy/matt24.htm> - Some excellent discussion of the passage by D.A. Carson

Book: *Matthew For Everyman*, and *Luke For Everyman*, by N.T. Wright

leader's guide

(I highly suggest you take in the two commentaries listed above – they will give you a more detailed explanation of this difficult and often misinterpreted passage).

There are 2 distinct dangers with this passage. One is believing it is all about the second coming of Christ, and the other is believing that it has nothing to do with the end times.

It is clear that Jesus is at first talking about the coming destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. His disciples had pointed out the impressive building to Him, and He quickly points out that not one stone would be left standing. This is both a literal prophecy that the temple would be overthrown (it was in 70 AD when the Romans defeated the Jewish revolt) and that no human structure or organization could withstand the coming of the Lord.

There is a mixture therefore in this passage with Jesus talking at times about the Temple, and at other times about His return. Remember also that this was before Jesus' death – the disciples didn't even know there would need to be a "second coming".

Jesus does seem to be explaining that, contrary to the disciple's expectations, the destruction of the Temple and the final judgment were not going to happen at the same time. They were two distinct events, though most Jews at that time would certainly have thought they would go together. The destruction of the Temple would have been a cataclysmic event for the nation of Israel, a sign that the end was coming, or that God was terribly displeased with them. This was the very centre of their worship.

Jesus is also clear that while certain signs may point to His return, nobody can really know the day or the hour he will come back. He is essentially advising his followers – then and now – to worry less about the timing and more about the condition of their lives. Be good servants of the master, in other words.