

## The Cup is Full – Matthew 24:16-20

"Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:..."

Matthew 24:16-20

As I mentioned in a previous section, the iniquity of the Jews would come to its full before AD 70. Once it reached a certain point, God would carry out the sentence imposed upon that wicked and adulterous generation.

There are many events which took place in the region leading up to the initiation of the judgement of God upon the nation of Israel. Just as Jesus was sent to fulfill the Law of Moses and those prophecies written concerning Himself, the Jews were also busy fulfilling acts of wickedness which were foretold by the prophets of old. Things were about to come to a head. Just as King David spoke of his inability to absorb the blessings of God by stating "*my cup runneth over,*" God has prepared the cup of His fury for Jerusalem.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Matthew 23:31-32

Isaiah says God had prepared a cup for Jerusalem to drink of, desolation and destruction, and the famine and the sword. He also says after this time they will no more drink it again. This is because Christ has now suffered the wrath of God on our behalf. (See Isaiah 51:17-23) Neither was Jeremiah silent on this subject. (See Jeremiah 25:15-18) But God has promised vengeance upon that nation and there would be no escape. The people were thirsty for the blood of all the righteous prophets and for the blood of Jesus. God would give them to drink. The cup of iniquity was now full. Therefore:

When the news was spread abroad of the events which had just taken place in the once sacred temple, it was time for those who understood to head for the hills.

And when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter

thereinto. Wherefore For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Luke 21:2-22

Permit me to take a short rabbit trail.

The main reason that premillennial dispensationalist break off the seventh week of Daniel from the first sixty nine is this. When Jesus began His ministry it was on the Day of Atonement in a Jubilee year and he quoted from the book Isaiah sixty one verses one and two. However He did not complete the second verse and left off saying “and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn.” Because this part was not quoted in Luke four verse sixteen through twenty one it is assumed that the this vengeance was future. Indeed it was, but not two thousand years future. It would be fulfilled as stated in Luke twenty one verse twenty two.

Jesus began His ministry with an open and introduction. He did not open with a threat. He gave opportunity for the Jews to receive His message. When they did not He closed His ministry with the remaining part on Isaiah sixty one. “And the day of vengeance of our God.” (See Isaiah 61:1-3) Rabbit trail ended.

There were instances of persecution upon the Christians before this time, but now it would not be safe for any disciple who remained in the city. Things were about to get much worse. The city was surrounded and eventually the walls of the city would be thrown to the ground. The temple would be no more. Thousands upon thousands who remained in the city would be slain, Christians or Jews.

Let me state here I do not believe anyone whom God desired to judge would have been able to hide in the mountains. The above passages were spoken to Christians so they might find safe haven from the impending doom which was to come upon Jerusalem and the entire region. It is certain one cannot hide from the wrath of The Almighty. The warnings given in verses sixteen through twenty were for the benefit of the faithful Christians who had not left the city under the previous persecutions. At the same time, no doubt, there would be those whom God did desire to judge who would seek refuge in the mountains. Revelation chapter six verses fifteen through seventeen speaks of these people. They would actually hope for the mountains and rocks to fall upon them to hide them from the great day of God’s wrath. In this same chapter we read of the souls of those who were slain for the word of God and the testimony they held. They were awaiting God to avenge their blood upon them that dwell on the earth. (See Revelation 6:9-10) These are the ones mentioned by Jesus in Matthew chapter twenty three verses twenty nine through thirty nine. From Abel to Zacharias, all the righteous blood shed upon the earth. Jesus says this particular generation would have this righteous blood charged against them. One is prone to think this is speaking mostly of the prophets of the Old Covenant. Their testimony cried out against the wickedness of those Jews who had slain them. Once they had taken Jesus and crucified him, their iniquity began to run over the top of the cup. (So to speak) As it is said, this was the straw which broke the camel’s back. God would no longer suffer the Jews. The kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it.

Contrary to what we hear all the time, this text in Matthew twenty-four (verses 16-20) is not speaking about the twentieth century modern Jerusalem. It was referring to the generation alive during Jesus personal ministry on the earth. Why would Christ just warn those in Judea to flee into the mountains? Could it be because this is the region which would experience and receive the wrath of God? If this were speaking of us, then we would first have to go to Judea before we could flee to the mountains. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of reading the scripture in the proper time context. This verse is not speaking about today, but of a time long ago which has since past into the pages of history.

When the Bible speaks of the "end of time" God does not tell anyone to flee into the mountains as He did the Christians in Jerusalem. On the contrary He tells them there will be no place to hide.

And when the modern day preacher speaks of the great tribulation which is to come upon all the world, he tells us the non-believer will find no hiding place from the wrath of God. Yet the verse about fleeing to the mountains is spoken to the disciples so they could find refuge outside the region which God was about to destroy.

How similar is this warning to the one given by the angels to Lot and his family as they were to flee Sodom to escape the wrath of God? There was no time for the packing of worldly goods, and very little time for warning family members. They had to leave in haste. They too were instructed not to look back.

In comparison to what would come to pass upon the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, Sodom and Gomorrah had it easy.

"But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee."

Matthew 12:24

Of course the Day of Judgment is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and its wicked inhabitants. Now Jesus tells the disciples they should pray their flight be not in winter. And pronounces a woe to those who give suck in those days. I can imagine it would be difficult enough when someone is fleeing for their lives. Add to this the difficulty of the mountainous terrain. Now add a young child to the picture. However the phrase "*those who give suck*" may indicate young Christians and not necessarily infants. (Not yet drawn from the breast) There are those who have not yet been weaned and still require the milk of the word. In such distress as is described in this situation these who "*gave suck*" would not be as mature as others. This could possibly lead to many problems when attempting to escape and facing the possibility of death for being discovered a Christian. Either way, whether they were babes in Christ who were being considered by Jesus, or infants, the road ahead would be a hard one to hold. And to top things off, add bitter cold and snow. It is easy to see the escape from Jerusalem as being a trying experience in itself.

The Sabbath day which is mentioned in verse twenty could be the very day in which the city would be sealed off so no one could come and go any longer. Josephus records for us that Titus and his armies pitched camp on the day of Passover. The following day, unleavened

bread, was a special high day or Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:6-8) If this had been the weekly Sabbath, or Saturday, it would probably have been either the last one before or the first one after the Roman armies surrounded the city. Even though God did not recognize the motions of the law any longer, there were plenty of Jews within the city who still did. This being the case, there would be many to oppose anyone fleeing from the city due to Sabbath day restrictions. Scripture speaks of the man who was healed as was condemned for carrying his bed roll on the Sabbath. Even though Christ warned them not to, many probably did turn back to get their stuff from their houses. Carrying household items on the Sabbath surely would have marked them out to the devoted Jews who planned to remain in the city. By turning back, many probably did not escape in time before the city was sealed off.