

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### Lesson 81, Chapter 24 Continued 2

The Gospel of Matthew is a delight to teach because it offers such opportunities to provide application to our modern lives, as well as to prepare us for what lay ahead. Chapters 24 and 25 form what is nearly universally known as the Olivet Discourse (Olivet because it's occurring on the Mount of Olives). It is Yeshua's final large block of teaching that is recorded. Unlike some chapters in Matthew, chapter 24 consists nearly exclusively of Christ's words and they are far reaching and have enormous implications for us, theologically and practically, and thus those words need to be carefully fleshed out. Very few words (the statements that are outside of the quotation marks) have been added by Matthew to create background or to express his own conclusions about what Christ's words mean. Mark 13 and Luke 21 do similarly. This means we are immediately faced with a decision: are these words within the quotation marks truly the words of our Messiah? Or are these words at least partly those of the Gospel writers, written to advance a personal agenda? While most of you have probably not even thought of such a possibility, I'd have to say that the preponderance of modern era Bible commentators say that indeed some of what we read are the inventions of the Gospel writers and aren't actually Jesus's recorded words. What is their evidence for this? First, it stems from a belief that prophecy itself is a primitive superstition and is not real. So the evidence mostly amounts to a scholarly consensus of opinion among like-minded academics, based on the various study disciplines of literary and textual criticism. At times it seems to involve a predisposed (perhaps subconscious) viewpoint of the scholar, including when they believe that a Gospel writer actually wrote, and from whom he might have obtained his information. Another influential factor in their determinations has to do with a desire to support certain denominational doctrines or worldviews they openly agree with. I shall go forward believing and teaching that if we are to take

the Gospels as inspired of God, then except for obvious later Christian glosses and simple copyist errors, we have no choice but to take them at face value. And (here is an important point of application) should Yeshua's recorded instruction interfere with our beliefs, then it is our beliefs that are to be held suspect and not Messiah's words.

Open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 24.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 24:9 - 14**

The words "at that time" (or "then" in some Bible versions) immediately tells us that we must find (if we can) the intended connection to something that characterizes or defines when "that time" is. That characterization is found in verse 8 when we're told that certain things will come about that signal the "birth pains" of the End. In the Hebrew sense of it, the birth pains are meant as those earliest twinges that a woman feels before the labor begins in earnest. These birth pains are events of the future that will happen as listed in verses 4-7. They begin with an appearance of a series of false Messiahs, the leading astray of many of God's people, the noise of wars nearby and the news of other wars that are happening far away, of ethnic (racial) strife and hatred, of national governments battling with one another using their armies, and of cataclysmic famines and earthquakes in many places around the world (in other words, not just in the Holy Land). Again: these are the signs we are to watch for that signals the first twinges of End Times birth pains. For those who accept Yeshua's words as actual true divine prophecy we now know what to look for... and also what to dismiss... that reveals whether we have arrived at the dawn of the End Times.

As verse 9 says, at that same time when certain perilous conditions begin (the first birth pains appear), then Believers in Jesus will start to be arrested and turned over to authorities for punishment, and the distrust and hatred of Christ followers will start to rise into what will in time become a deafening and murderous crescendo. I would be dishonest if I didn't at this point express my opinion (and I want to stress, this is my personal view and nothing that I could confidently frame as "the Lord told me"). While I do see indications that we may be living at the time of those first twinges of the birth pains, I am unable to say with certainty that this is the case. For instance, we can look historically back to the time of the Inquisition of the 12th century and discover something that looks very much like what Yeshua is describing. For those of you who aren't history buffs, the Inquisition was a period in the history of the Catholic Church of the 12th

century when the leadership wanted to root out so-called heretics. Heretics were usually whatever local Church authorities defined them as. If we read a synopsis about the Inquisition usually it will say that it was Muslims and Jews that were singled out for examination and worse. The problem is that this is a bit misleading as it sounds like Muslims hid themselves among Christians in order to subvert the faith; and that Jews hid themselves among Christians in order to destroy their belief in Christ. What is actually meant is that **former** Muslims who now professed Christ, and Jews that had legitimately turned to Yeshua as Lord and Savior, were under suspicion as liars. Christianity as it was practiced by the Catholic Church had become so Romanized and prejudiced that they could not accept the idea of Semitic people... Arab or Hebrew... in their fold. Thus if one was an Arab or a Jew (a non-European ethnicity) then it was nearly inconceivable to the 12<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Church that they could REALLY be Christians. So in Christ's name these people were murdered by the thousands. And by the way, this included many non-Jews and non-Arabs who merely LOOKED Jewish or Arab to some Church authority. There is no verifiable evidence of which I am aware that the alleged Arab and Jewish subversives were actually anything but innocent and devoted Christ followers.

The point is that long ago Christians were arrested and turned over by other Christians to Church leadership for punishments and even executions. Therefore might not some Believers living through that horrific time have thought that this must be the foretold beginning of the birth pains of the End that Jesus spoke about? Those Arab and Jewish Christians that were arrested, tortured mercilessly, and executed by a zealous Church surely must have. But as horrific as it was, it was not the sign of the birth pains of the End, was it? Therefore it is very difficult to say with too much confidence that we have arrived at the time of these birth pains, even with rising persecution within the Church... except for one key thing: the rebirth of Israel as a nation. This astonishing event MUST happen first in order for us to know that the End Times are at least on the horizon. There are several prophetic Scriptures that speak of this event, but here is one of the most profound.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Isaiah 66:8-11** <sup>8</sup> *Who ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Is a country born in one day? Is a nation brought forth all at once? For as soon as Tziyon went into labor, she brought forth her children.* <sup>9</sup> *"Would I let the baby break through and not be born?" asks ADONAI. "Would I, who cause the birth, shut the womb?" asks your God.* <sup>10</sup> *Rejoice with Yerushalayim! Be glad with her, all you who love her!*

***Rejoice, rejoice with her, all of you who mourned for her; <sup>11</sup> so that you nurse and are satisfied by her comforting breast, drinking deeply and delighting in the overflow of her glory.***

So do I think we are experiencing the earliest birth pangs that doesn't signal that we have entered into the End Times, but rather that it is about to erupt? Yes I do. But the only way to know for sure requires that we patiently wait and see what happens next. Just as the expectant mother that feels those twinges knows that whatever preparation time remains for her to be ready for the actual labor and birth is short, so that is what every vigilant Believer ought to be doing right now: preparing. Preparing our minds and our lives for the return of Messiah and what comes with it. Soon, Yeshua will give some illustrations and pronounce some Parables to emphasize this point.

Verse 10 continues by saying that many will be trapped into betraying and hating each other. The KJV says that many will be offended and this will cause people to hate each other. The NAS says that many will fall away and betray others. First, we must understand that this is not talking about the world in general; this is only talking about those who profess to be followers of Jesus... what we could loosely call "The Church". It is Believers being trapped, or offended, or falling away and then hating or betraying other Believers. The Greek word that is being variously translated as trapped, offended or falling away is ***skandalizo***. The CJB saying "trapped" is pretty good; although the terms offended and falling away are not as good. The idea is to picture a snare used to catch small animals. A trap is being set by the enemy using Church insiders and many members will be captured by it. We need to remember the context for what Yeshua is saying and all that has led up to what He is prophesying. He has just removed Himself from within the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount to the Mount of Olives, and from His ongoing verbal battles over Scriptural truth with the Scribes and the Pharisees to prophetic pronouncements of the future to His inner circle. He had been accusing the Jewish leadership of being the ones who are setting the snares with their lies; snares that those Jews who seek God and want to worship Him properly and to participate in the Kingdom of Heaven, are going to fall into. This will prevent many from ever becoming members of God's Kingdom. So it's not outside forces (pagans and tyrants), but rather inner forces of Church and Synagogue leadership that will be the culprits; it is they who will set the traps.

Somehow... as shocking as it is to hear and painful as it may be to contemplate... we must wrap our minds around the Jesus-spoken reality that it is not going to be

the forces of national governments that set the snares for Believers. From a spiritual perspective, it doesn't matter whether one lives under Communism, or a monarchy, or a Socialist or a Capitalist Democracy. It also doesn't matter whether one regards their civil and national government as evil or good. While some may indeed be immoral and wicked oppressors, that is not what Yeshua is warning about here. It is the leadership authority of the Believing community that is the subject. It is they that He prophesies will be the persecutors just as in 1100 more years it would be the Catholic Church during the Inquisition. Look like I do, or be punished. Believe as I do, or be banished. Behave as I do, or be turned over for discipline or death.

The result of being ensnared will be the falling away from God and the loss of salvation or its opportunity for many. But, what exactly, **is** the trap... the snare... which is a metaphor to illustrate something else? It can be nothing other than what Jesus has been accusing the Pharisees of for some time: teaching false doctrines as though they are the commands of God. What a Believer believes is everything. Faith is only faithfulness to God when the beliefs we hold have a basis in divine truth. Any old faith is not a saving faith. Faith in your Pastor or Rabbi, or even in what they say, is not how God determines your faithfulness to Him. While Yeshua was brutally combative and condemning regarding the teaching of the Scribes and the Pharisees... the Jewish religious leadership... it is because the common people suffered (usually unknowingly) since they had little to no choice but to get their religious instruction from those leaders. If a Scribe said "thus saith the Lord", the common man didn't have a ready means to fact check him, he just accepted it as the truth. Today, however, it is very different. Bibles are cheap and easily obtainable. Most countries have a pretty good level of literacy so that the Bibles can be read by their owners, and Bibles are now published in literally hundreds of languages. So what excuse is there for a modern Christian who goes to Church, or for a Jew who goes to Synagogue, not to take a few minutes to fact check what his or her Pastor or Minister or Rabbi says is "thus saith the Lord"? In my book, none. It is pure laziness or disinterest on the part of the congregation. I know this is case because at one time in my life that was an apt description of me and my Christian friends. The point is that while in ancient times the religious leadership bore nearly all the guilt for wrong doctrine, it was due to the lack of accessible biblical material for the people; but today that guilt for wrong doctrine must be equally shared between the religious leadership and the individual members of a congregation. So an ancient Jew might have been able to plead "but my Rabbi told me" thus and so and receive some level of mercy from God; but can a modern Christian expect the same

when their excuse for not obeying God is "but my Pastor told me"? Yes, I am highly accountable to God for what I teach you; but you are also highly accountable to Him for verifying in your Bibles if what I'm teaching you is accurate and true.

Verse 11 says that many false prophets will appear. The issue is not so much that they come, but rather that what they say will fool many Believers. What are these false prophets going to fool people about? Since the subject is the Believing communities' leaders and teachers, then again it can only be what these leaders and teachers (here characterized as prophets) advocate about God, His Word, and His Son. In another sense, it must also include what these leaders prophesy in the sense of professing what the future holds; that is, prophets as claiming to be seers. I can't imagine the number of God worshippers over the ages that have fallen away because they placed their trust in what a person that held themselves up as God's prophet told them, but it never came to pass. A little speculation here and there by a Christian leader or teacher is normal and OK as long as it is identified as such. But when that leader declares that God has given him personal knowledge of something about the future that He's told no one else? Be very wary and do not put your faith in that. The likelihood that it will happen or that God truly told him, is not impossible but it is remote.

Verse 12 is an example of what we've just been talking about. It says that many people's love will grow cold (this, again, is talking about Believers). But what is the cause of this lack of love among Christ followers? The CJB says it will be "because of increased distance from Torah". The KJV says "because iniquity will abound". The NAB says "because of the increase of evil doing". The NAS says "because lawlessness will increase". Quite the range of translations and meanings isn't it? So what's the reason for this variation? The word that is at the heart of the issue is the Greek *anomia*. Interestingly, it's not a complex word with many meanings; it's pretty straightforward. *Nomia* means "law". *Anomia* is the opposite; it means the lack of or no law. Lawlessness is a very good English translation; iniquity and increase of evil doing is off the mark so why phrase it this way? Because the translators were likely more concerned about upholding a doctrine from their Church sponsors. And the doctrine they wish to uphold is that the Law (the Law of Moses) is dead, gone, altogether irrelevant, and has no place in the lives of Believers. Because they perfectly understood that the only law that any Jew would have given any credence was the Law of Moses and certainly not Roman law, then the meaning had to be obscured and sent in a

different direction. In other words Yeshua of course isn't saying that breaking the local Roman laws or of whatever society you're part of, amounts to God's determination of lawlessness; otherwise the standard of sin and righteousness would be infinitely variable. Instead it is meant in an entirely religious sense, so it is God's laws that are the issue and not human laws. Believers breaking the speed limit or not filing a tax return will not lead to their love growing cold.

One could ask at this point whether this coldness is speaking about love for God, or love for our fellow man. I don't think the two can, at this point, be separated. To love God is to obey God; that is one of the first biblical principles taught. Therefore should our God commanded love towards our fellow man grow cold, we are disobeying God and thus through our disobedience we are not showing love towards Him. This leads us to a matter so critical to Christianity in general that it has formed perhaps the primary faith principle (after salvation in Christ) that Seed of Abraham Ministry is founded upon, and at the same time it creates (sadly) such a division between us and the institutional Church. It is our faith principle that the Law of Moses remains in effect, for gentiles and Jews, and we are to follow it the best we can in the circumstances we find ourselves in that are not under our control. The Law of Moses does not save us and never has; but it does define what sin is, what righteousness is, and what love is. This can directly oppose a rather widespread doctrine that implies that we are to go by what our hearts tell us, because that's where the Holy Spirit dwells in Believers. Thus, out of this logic, the definitions of sin and righteousness are customized for each individual Believer. What is sin for me might not be sin for you or for anyone else. If the Holy Spirit hasn't told me that something is wrong or a sin, then I hold no obligation to it. If my heart tells me I don't have to tithe, then I am exempt. If my heart tells me that gay marriage is OK, then it's OK. If my heart tells me that it's OK to declare anything I desire as proper food, that's my prerogative. This leads to the final result that God's commands in the Bible can disagree with what my heart tells me, and I'm in the right to disregard God's laws and instead do what my heart says to do. And this is because Jesus has made it thus.

I could easily spend the remainder of our time together today debating this doctrine, but I don't want to turn this lesson on Matthew 24 into an apology for the Law of Moses. I'll only say this: the earliest Christians... including the earliest gentile Christians... certainly did not think this way. Such an erroneous mindset only took hold once the number of gentiles overwhelmed the number of Jews who trusted in Yeshua, and the new gentile leadership wanted to reorient the practice of faith in the God of Israel and His Son Yeshua into a new religion that

was more appealing to gentiles. Two things were needed to do this: a Christian Bible had to be created (as apart from the Hebrew Bible... the Old Testament), and the Law of Moses had to be set aside. Thus early in the 3rd century the first was accomplished and a few decades later the second. It was a critical turning point in the history of the Church. Therefore we should grasp that the term lawlessness (*anomia*) has no discernable biblical meaning if it isn't referring to the Law of Moses. So the CJB saying "many people's love will grow cold because of increased distance from Torah" while not fully literal, does indeed capture the meaning and intent of Yeshua's thought. And since the Torah commands love of our fellow man as second only to love for God... and since the Law of Moses describes in some detail what love towards God and love towards our fellow man looks like in practice... then when that standard is abolished by humans, it becomes impossible to please God. Without the Law of Moses as our standard, we are wanderers without map or compass.

Verse 13 sums up what Jesus has been saying. It is that those who persevere in their love and obedience until the End during times of trials and tribulations and temptations will be delivered... they will be saved. Let me say this another way: within the Church body only a portion (which could amount to millions) will maintain a saving faith as pressures increase to condone and embrace the newest doctrinal trends. The additive effects of centuries of manmade doctrines and traditions, and of the teaching of false prophets, will (as part of the birth pains) finally take their full toll. Many who fill our Churches and Synagogues today will, according to Jesus, lose their faith and fall away from God. The confusion of volumes of conflicting manmade faith principles will finally overwhelm and actually encourage rebellion among God-worshippers. This verse is another that is sometimes disavowed by Bible scholars as an improper addition by Matthew because it directly contradicts the popular (and historically recent) doctrine of "once saved, always saved". Some Evangelical denominations, understanding that contradiction, have worked towards a middle ground that doesn't so much disavow this verse as it does interpret it to say that the Believers Jesus has been speaking about were never actually Believers... they were pretenders. The doctrine of pretenders... or anything like it... simply doesn't exist in the New Testament so far as I have observed, and certainly it never shows up in the mouth of Yeshua. In so many places in Old Testament prophecy, and in Christ's words, and later in other New Testament writers' words, there are regular warnings to God worshippers to beware and not to fall away from God. Or as Yeshua's brother James (Jacob, actually) says it:



CJB **James 5:19-20** <sup>19</sup> *My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return, <sup>20</sup> you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.*

And then there is this even stronger warning in the Book of Hebrews:

CJB **Hebrews 10:26-29** <sup>26</sup> *For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies. <sup>28</sup> Someone who disregards the Torah of Moshe is put to death without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> Think how much worse will be the punishment deserved by someone who has trampled underfoot the Son of God; who has treated as something common the blood of the covenant which made him holy; and who has insulted the Spirit, giver of God's grace!*

It's not enough to believe for awhile and then fall away later when things get difficult and say "but Lord; I used to believe a long time ago, so that ought to count permanently as my salvation". And what is at the heart of "not falling away from God"? Obedience and perseverance, according to Christ.

After Yeshua has pronounced some pretty unpleasant things that none of His disciples would prefer to hear, He counters with a word of encouragement. Verse 14 says:

CJB **Matthew 24:14** *And this Good News about the Kingdom will be announced throughout the whole world as a witness to all the Goyim. It is then that the end will come.*

So there it is: a very general roadmap from the time of Christ to the End Times has been laid out, with the final mile marker being that the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven has been proclaimed to the entire world. The term **Goyim** in verse 14 means gentiles; gentile individuals and gentile nations (the sole non-gentile nation on earth is Israel). So even though to this point Yeshua has told His disciples to NOT take the Good News of the Kingdom to gentiles, but only to Jews, that was only meant to be the case for a short time. Once it changed the mission became to take it to all people everywhere as it said it would in this verse. While Jews soon after Yeshua's death and resurrection started on their

own to take the message of the Gospel to a few gentiles, the sort of official kick-off moment that Yeshua set Jewish Believers on a mission to evangelize gentiles was when He confronted Paul on the road to Damascus. Upon God's determination that this process of evangelizing has been fully accomplished, then not only the End Times arrives, so does the end of history as we know it. So has this already been accomplished in our time?

Depending on whose data you believe, it seems that while this mission hasn't been fully accomplished, we are close to it. Clearly it hasn't been completed in God's eyes or Christ would have returned by now. I want to say, however, that the point of Yeshua's statement was not that every last individual on earth must have personally heard the Good News as the condition of His return and the End of history. "All" isn't a precise term in the Bible and it doesn't mean 100.00%. "All" is a general term that means the vast majority or the preponderance of something. We must never think that God is so rigid as to make some person who for some nearly indefinable set of circumstances has not personally heard the Gospel in his own language, as being automatically doomed.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Exodus 33:19** *He replied, "I will cause all my goodness to pass before you, and in your presence I will pronounce the name of ADONAI. Moreover, I show favor to whomever I will, and I display mercy to whomever I will.*

And, by the way, Paul employs this passage to explain one of God's attributes in Romans 9:15. The only explanation for the adulterer and murderer King David to be called "after My own heart" by God, and to guarantee that David's line would produce a royal and eternal king, is God's mercy that He bestows upon whomever He decides. So it isn't necessary that every last individual living on earth before the last trumpet sounds must personally hear the Gospel before the End arrives or in order for them to necessarily be shown such divine mercy. But for those who have heard it and made a choice against, such mercy is not available.

Open your Bibles again as we read a few more verses.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 24:15 - 22**

Now we enter the realm of the mysterious and contentious. Yeshua sort of combines the quotes of 3 places in the Book of Daniel when He says that when you see the abomination that causes desolation... the Jews of Judah are to run

for the hill country. Here's those 3 places in Daniel:

**CJB Daniel 9:27 *He will make a strong covenant with leaders for one week [of years]. For half of the week he will put a stop to the sacrifice and the grain offering. On the wing of detestable things the desolator will come and continue until the already decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator.***"

**CJB Daniel 11:31 *Armed forces will come at his order and profane the sanctuary and fortress. They will abolish the daily burnt offering and set up the abomination that causes desolation.***

**CJB Daniel 12:11 *From the time the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.***

The mysterious nature of this passage is self-evident: what is the abomination that causes desolation? The contentious element of this is a little less self evident to Bible students. A contention that few Christians are aware of is that some of the most influential among modern Bible scholars do not believe that the Book of Daniel is authentic (nor written by Daniel) and therefore the all-important prophecies in it aren't credible. The most prevalent belief among them is that Daniel was written in the Holy Land (not in Babylon) about 150 to 160 B.C. (and not in the 6th century B.C.) The reason those dates are important is that 160 B.C. is not long after the Syrian dictator Antiochus Epiphanies desecrated the Holy Temple by setting up the image of a Greek god (Zeus) in its sanctuary, and then sacrificing a pig to it on the Temple altar (the record of this can be found in 1Maccabees chapters 1 and 6). So the thought is that the writer of Daniel essentially forged a prophecy by prophesying something that had already happened by his day (similar to the belief among many Bible scholars that Yeshua's prophecies about the destruction of the Temple had already happened and so Matthew was writing about it in hindsight while pretending it was an event yet to come).

This brings us back to the opening of today's lesson. Here we have words of Jesus clearly SAYING that this is a prophecy of Daniel that He is personally validating as true. And more, since Antiochus Epiphanies' desecration of the Temple had happened going on 2 centuries prior to Yeshua's prophetic statement, obviously that cannot be what Christ is prophesying about; it had to be something future to Him in order to be a prophecy. It also confronts us with the

issue that according to much of modern Bible scholarship, Christ may not have known that the author of Daniel had faked his prophecies and wrote them after the fact; or as an alternative Matthew inserted fake prophetic words into Christ's mouth in his Gospel account so that Matthew's Jewish agenda could be fulfilled. If any of these contentions are accurate, then not only must the Book of Daniel be removed from our Bibles, but so should the Gospel accounts.

Then of course we have the matter that Paul in 2 Thessalonians also wrote about the abomination of desolation.

<sup>CJB</sup> **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4** *But in connection with the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to meet him, we ask you, brothers, <sup>2</sup> not to be easily shaken in your thinking or anxious because of a spirit or a spoken message or a letter supposedly from us claiming that the Day of the Lord has already come. <sup>3</sup> Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until after the Apostasy has come and the man who separates himself from Torah has been revealed, the one destined for doom. <sup>4</sup> He will oppose himself to everything that people call a god or make an object of worship; he will put himself above them all, so that he will sit in the Temple of God and proclaim that he himself is God.*

Since we have Paul saying these words many years after Christ's death, then the scholarly response is that Paul must have believed the tradition of what Jesus said about Daniel's prophecy. Meaning (for them), that Matthew was accurately writing down what Yeshua is said to have prophesied, however Yeshua was in error because He had been fooled like everyone else by the Daniel forgery. I remind you: this entire line of thought has at it's core the disbelief that there is such a thing as true prophecy.

Let's see if we can tie this together. Yeshua has been cautioning in chapter 24 that these sorts of false teachings from what He labels as false prophets, which in our time may be reflected by some of the Christian leadership advising their students to not trust Holy Scripture, will eventually lead to Believers falling away from their faith. When we have modern Bible scholars and teachers whose teachings overtly throw doubt on the authenticity of God's Word, and that forms the basis of what our Seminaries and Christian Theological Schools lean on to instruct their students, what do you suppose is the result? And then when the graduates of those particular schools (certainly not all) move on to become Pastors of Churches and for others the leaders of their denominational

governments... well, now you can see how Christianity has arrived at a time not unlike the condition of the Hebrew faith of Yeshua's era. If we are taught to not believe parts of our Holy Book then what is it that we **are** to believe? This new trend in Christianity is another good reason for us all to at least be alert that we just might be experiencing some of those early birth pains that Yeshua told us to look for; time will tell.

There's also another aspect to this that can easily escape us. Since we know that Yeshua can only be talking about the future, then either this desolation of the Temple he's talking about must happen within the 35 or so years following His death (because by then the Temple will have been destroyed by the Romans), or He is referring to a far later time. We have no record of the Romans desecrating the Temple like Antiochus Epiphanies did. Therefore this can only be the prophecy of an event far into the future after Yeshua's time, and well after Herod's Temple is destroyed in 70 A.D. So in order for the desolation to occur, yet another Temple has to be constructed and operating... a 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple... because you can't desecrate a Temple that doesn't exist. It is generally believed that this desecration will be perpetrated by the dreaded Anti-Christ that is to come prior to the End; likely having a statue or image of himself as god placed within the Temple sanctuary; something that more or less repeats what Epiphanies did. As of now, from my perspective, this is the most likely explanation for what we're reading.

We'll pause here for today and continue next time with more of Matthew chapter 24.