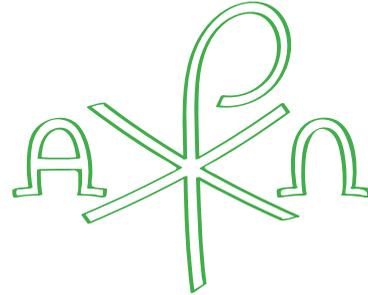


THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER

# TRINITY

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Brandon Ross

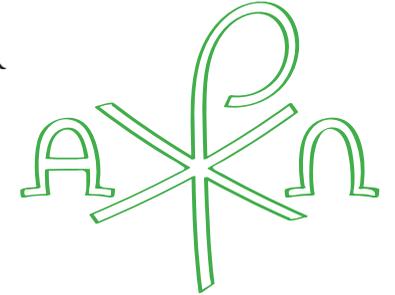


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## MATTHEW 24:15-28 ESV

### Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the apostle around AD 50. This reading comes in the last major discourse of Jesus in Matthew's gospel which describes signs to come in Jerusalem and at the coming judgement.

<sup>15</sup> “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

- Jesus alludes here to a prophecy in the book of Daniel (9:27) which was fulfilled in 167 BC, when the Seleucid king Antiochus profaned the Jerusalem temple by building an altar to Zeus on top of the altar for burnt offerings (1 Maccabees 1:54-59). Jesus uses this allusion to say that again the temple will be defiled. The Romans desecrated and tore down the Temple in 70 AD. Christians living in Jerusalem indeed would flee before the Romans besieged the city.
- “For this reason God announces besides His miracles with clear and plain prophecies that [the Jews'] kingdom shall have an end and that God has abolished the external reign of the law, meats, offerings, etc., as the angel announced to the virgin concerning Christ, as recorded in Luke 1: ‘And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’” (Martin Luther, Sermon for the 25th Sunday after Trinity)

<sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, <sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>19</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

- The fall of Jerusalem was indeed imminent, so those who were able should flee at the first signs of trouble.
- Indeed, the Roman consul Cestius Gallus would lay an unsuccessful siege to Jerusalem in 66 AD. It was then that many heeded the Lord's Word and left all that they had behind. The general Titus would lay successful siege to Jerusalem and destroy it in 70 AD.

<sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

- Jesus exhorts the people to not be lazy with their planning to leave the city. Here we see the compassion of Jesus who cares not only for our eternal salvation but also for our earthly well-being.
- “Therefore Jesus admonishes His disciples that they should not postpone their flight to the Sabbath, when they did not dare journey; nor to the winter, when it would be cold; but that they should depart, the sooner the better; that if they hesitate, an inconvenient time to flee would come. (Martin Luther, Sermon for the 25th Sunday after Trinity)

<sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

- The siege of Jerusalem was an atrocity on a mammoth scale. Josephus reports that the siege of 70 AD took place when tens of thousands of pilgrims were in Jerusalem for Passover. The seven month siege, battle, and subsequent sickness and starvation claimed 1 million lives according to Josephus, not including Roman casualties.

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- “Do not let anyone suppose the he’s merely speaking in hyperbole. All you need to do is study the writings of Josephus [*The Jewish War*] to learn the truth of these predictions. No one who knows the fact of history can say that Christian believers have exaggerated this tragic history or been any part in trying to see that Christ’s words were fulfilled.” (St. John Chrysostom, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Homily 76.1)

<sup>22</sup> **And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.**

- The elect are those who have heard and believe the Gospel. It is for their sake that the tribulation ends, otherwise the atrocity of the siege of Jerusalem would claim every involved human life.
- In the Lutheran Churches of the 16th and 17th century, Josephus’ account of the fall of Jerusalem was read in the Divine Service for the 10th Sunday after Trinity, the Sunday when we hear that Jesus laments over Jerusalem. The tribulation that Jesus describes here is the reason that He weeps over Jerusalem, His people.

<sup>23</sup> **Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. <sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.**

- This same delusion still persists to our day, when churches and cults claim to be representations of Jesus when their doctrine undermines the very Word which Jesus gives to his Church.
- “For also now, what do all the various denominations of our day call to the Christians with one voice other than, ‘Here is Christ, there is Christ?’ Those opposed to organized religion cry, ‘Here is Christ!’...The Papists cry, ‘Here is Christ! For wherever the Pope, his substitute, is, only there you find Christ and his true church. See how many beautiful churches we build’... One joins himself to the crowd of mockers, a second seeks refuge in the great and splendid temple of the papists, a third abandons the old faith of his fathers, becomes a victim of the enthusiasts and now considers only a powerful excitement of his feelings to be true Christianity. Poor casualties of seductive spirits! May God himself look upon this. (C.F.W. Walther, Sermon for Trinity 25, translated by Aaron Jensen)

<sup>25</sup> **See, I have told you beforehand. <sup>26</sup> So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.**

- Jesus predicts all of these things beforehand, showing His divine nature and the truthfulness of his promises.
- The return of Christ will be instantaneous and from the sky (Matthew 24:27; Acts 1:11). He will not be in a place where man will seek Him, but His appearing will be manifest to all.

<sup>27</sup> **For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.**

- The Church is continually watching for the return of Christ, even as Jesus says in this passage. To confess this reality, the Church saw fit whenever possible to orient their church buildings so that the congregation was facing east toward the altar, the direction from whence the Lord will appear. This was to teach the people that they were to continually watch for His coming (Matthew 24:42).
- “Certain signs will announce the coming of Jerusalem’s destruction. But no special signs will announce the judgement of the world...when the world has become a hopeless, polluting carcass, the end will come, without special preceding signs, suddenly, unexpectedly.” (Fred Lindemann, *The Sermon and The Propers*, 176)

<sup>28</sup> **Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”**

- When God’s people face hardships and suffering, false teachers and sectarians try to entice them toward false belief and reliance upon things other than God’s Word and Sacraments. This only ends in despair or a delusional existence. As long as God’s people endure suffering in this world, there will always be false teachers, spurred on by the devil and their own flesh, which descend upon them like vultures, promising them comfort and peace which they can never deliver. God’s people take refuge in what God has revealed us and in no other earthly comfort.



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