**Week One**

* **Play** **a “Get to Know You” game. What is your favorite movie and why? Have fun! God created us relationally so let’s relate!**
* **Pass around the tablet** for people to write their prayer requests on and ask if anyone would like to share openly for immediate prayer. Then, pray.
* **Start with the Worksheet on page 15**, even if you did Day One last week.
  + **What initiated Christ teaching on end times?** *Disciples pointing out the temple buildings to Him*
  + **Four of the disciples pursued Jesus privately with questions regarding His statement about the temple. Who were they?** *James, John, Peter, Andrew*
  + **What 2 questions did the disciples ask?** *(1) When will these things happen and (2) What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?*
  + **What 2 commands did Jesus answer with?** *(1)* *See to it that o one misleads you and (2) See that you are not frightened*
* **Ask if anyone noticed the repetition of certain words.** From repeated words and phrases, we can make lists that help us with our observations. For instance, “the end” is mentioned four times (vs. 3, 6, 12, and 14). This is what a list might look like:
  + Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will the sign of Your coming, and of **the end** of the age? (v. 3)
  + You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet **the end**. (v. 6)
  + But the one who endures to **the end**, he will be saved. (v. 13)
  + This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then **the end** shall come. (v. 14)

What do we learn from this list? The disciples were asking Jesus to tell them what sign would signal **the end of the age**. Jesus described a climate of worldwide doctrinal error and national conflict. It will be unsettling and causing many to be misled and fearful. *See to it that no one misleads you. See that you are not frightened* for those things must take place before **the end**. Clearly, we are to fortify ourselves in the truth and peace of Christ in order to avoid deception and fear. The one who **endures to the end** will be saved. There are many verses throughout Scripture that speak to our endurance and perseverance in the faith (we cover a few on Day Three) but we tend to avoid them in the Church because of controversial differences around the doctrine of “eternal security.” Avoiding the topic of “endurance” is a mistake because then we are side-stepping an important Biblical teaching. Perseverance and endurance are evidences of salvation. Finally, Jesus tells us that the whole world will hear the gospel before **the end** shall come. Only God Himself knows when that has been accomplished but the teaching is that “all nations” shall first hear the gospel.

The word “many” is repeated numerous times. **Many** false Christ mislead **many**. **Many** fall away, betray and hate one another. **Many** false prophets mislead **many**. What is Christ trying to tell us? *That this will be an extremely confusing time with few rather than many following Jesus Christ.*  (Mt. 7:13-14)

* **Since Jesus described the “beginning of birth pangs,” what can we expect subsequent events to be like, based on our own experiences of childbirth?** *Escalating in intensity*
* **What are some of the signs of early birth pangs?** *Many claim to be the Christ (savior) and many are misled; wars and rumors of wars; nations rise against nations; kingdoms against kingdoms; famines in various places and earthquakes*

*Note:* Wars, famine and earthquakes have been going on for a long time. So, how does the beginning of birth pangs differ? Well, either the” birth pangs” began thousands of years ago or we can expect to see an alarming escalation (3 ½ years) that propagates deception and fear before the Abomination of Desolation occurs. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” If the beginning of “birth pangs” has been going on for thousands of years, then the patience of God is being prominently displayed.

We are studying Matthew 24 to keep from being misled and frightened. Persecution and tribulation might catch some off guard but you won’t be one of those because you are studying what Christ said to watch for. You will know exactly what is happening and why.

* **Who leads us through the tribulations that we face? Who tells us what to say when persecuted? (Luke 21:12-15)** *The Holy Spirit*
* **Ask if anyone would share an example of persecution** that they are familiar with, either a personal experience or one they know of. Too many of us have insolated ourselves against persecution for our faith, especially in America where we can. All we have to do is live holy, godly lives, faithful to Christ and we will be persecuted – not only by friends and family but primarily by the host of principalities that oppose God and us. We shouldn’t seek to be persecuted but we must not run from these situations either. These smaller fires of testing now will strengthen our faith in preparation for the tribulation later.
* **How did God warn Israel about the destruction of Jerusalem?** *through Jesus and the prophets* **Did it happen?** *Yes, “*Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).”
* **Has God warned us about the wrath that is coming upon the earth?** *Yes, but we tend to avoid His message because few want to believe it and/or refuse to accept that God will allow such persecution and tribulation to come upon the earth. If we have this mindset, then perhaps we have been deceived by today’s false prophets and teachings.*
* **What is the purpose of persecution according to Mark 13:9 and Luke 21:13?** *For Christ’s sake and to share our testimony*
* **Ask, “Are you willing to suffer for your faith?”** Stop and think about it because to answer “yes” requires more of a commitment to the cross of Christ than what is being required or explained in churches across America today.
* **Spend time going over the Scriptures at the end of Day Three.** You could have them each take turns reading a verse and interacting with it by explaining what the verse is emphasizing. What does the verse teach regarding endurance and perseverance? Are any hindrances mentioned? If so, what are they? The point of moving through these Scriptures is to make us more aware of the importance of enduring.

*Note:* Someone in your class may want to discuss eternal security because “the one who endures to the end, will be saved,” sounds like we could lose our salvation if we don’t endure. Losing our salvation is not what Christ is alluding to in this passage. Look again at Matthew 24. Jesus is trying to prepare us for the coming chaos that precedes His return, warning of the **many** false messiahs, false prophets, deceptive signs, and turbulence. **Many** are misled and **many** will fall away. The statement about endurance is made AFTER Jesus refers to error and deception as a plague upon the earth. It is important to keep our interpretation in context. Since **many** are **misled**, then **many** will have beliefs rooted in error, not truth. Thus, **many** will fall away because they are not truly saved. The saints of God will persevere because the Spirit of God within empowers us to endure. If we are born again, we have God’s Spirit. We are sealed and set apart for His glory. God never leaves or forsakes us and nothing can separate us from His love.

Be sure to allow time for your class to share any pertinent cross references that they found, adding insight to their study. Cross referencing is where true Bible study is implemented and anyone can do it!

* You could close by going back to the Worksheet on page 15. Note the timeline at the bottom of the page and the event that is coming up next…the Abomination of Desolation. That is the sign that Jesus points to as the obvious sign of His coming. In Week Two, we observe the next section of Matthew, verses 15-28. Then, in Weeks 3-4, we look more closely at what the Abomination of Desolation entails.

May God bless you for your courage to embark on this voyage of prophetic study with others. You may be a seasoned sailor (salty dog) or you may be an adventurous new seaman. Either way, you are helping to prepare the body of Christ for the days prior to His return by sharing the timeline Jesus Himself laid out for us. It is simple and easy to follow. God bless you!