

Aim of lesson

To show the class the reality of Christ's coming and its nearness.

Bible background

Matthew 24; Luke 21

Outline of lesson

On the Mount of Olives

Get the class to search through Matthew 24:1-31 and Luke 21 to identify each of the sketches in their workbooks. Have them write in each box the number of the verse which is illustrated.

Read verses 4-8 of Matthew 24 together. Draw attention to verses 6 and 8 which show that these are things which do not signify his coming. The disciples must not think it is the time of the end every time that there is a war or an earthquake! Jesus was warning them that it would be a long time and all these things would happen during that time. Get the class to work through the next section of the workbook. There are a series of titles and references to look at together. Discuss each set of references briefly with the class to help them gain understanding.

The fall of Jerusalem

Discuss the details of the sign of Jerusalem which Jesus gives.

- It would be destroyed (Matthew 24:2).
- The armies would surround it (Luke 21:20).
- The disciples should flee (Matthew 24:16-17).
- The desolating sacrilege; the destruction of the temple would occur and something unholy would stand in the holy place (Matthew 24:15).

All this happened in A.D. 70. The Roman general besieging the city withdrew for a time, which allowed the Christians who remembered their Lord's words the opportunity to escape. He then forced his way in and destroyed the temple and much of the city. Years later, the Romans set up an 'abomination' on the temple site: a temple to Jupiter. In 691 the Muslims erected on the site of the temple the present building called the 'Dome of the Rock'.

The times of the Gentiles

The Jews would return to Jerusalem (Luke 21:24). There would be an end to the time when the Gentiles ruled Jerusalem. This happened in 1967, some 2555 years after Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem and the Jews lost their capital city.

The class may like to discuss how the last signs in the sun, moon and stars will be fulfilled. You may like to refer to John 16:4 to show that prophecy is given so that we can know that God is in control when it is fulfilled. We will not always know in advance how it will be fulfilled.

Digging deeper

The last week

This is a study of the likely sequence of the events of the last week of Jesus' mortal life.

Relevance to our lives

The class may like to ask a brother or sister who had to testify to their beliefs before tribunals, about their experiences. Discuss with them next week how they would stand up to being put on trial for their beliefs.

Prayer

Dear Father, please help us to watch and pray and to be ready to stand up for you and your Son, even if we have to suffer for it.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could make a poster using newspaper cuttings to illustrate Jesus' prophecy about his coming.
- The parables of the fig tree, the days of Noah and the faithful servant could be illustrated and discussed.