

DOTA 129 TEACHING 33
GOD'S WORK: A DISCIPLE CAN TALK ABOUT
GOD'S WORK AT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST – PART 1

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(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is the fourth day that two teachers explain God's work. We already completed God's work through the law and through our death and resurrection. Today and tomorrow we will explain God's work through the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: **A DISCIPLE KNOWS GOD'S WORK THROUGH THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST – PART 1**. In part 1, we will especially study the signs before the Second Coming of Christ and the suddenness of this Second Coming. In part 2, we will study the resurrection from the dead, the last judgement and the new heaven and earth.

(S) In Matthew 23:37-38 and 24:2 Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem including the temple. The disciples, who were proud of the magnificent buildings of the temple, asked Jesus two questions in Matthew 24:3: *The first question* was, "When will this happen?" And *the second question* was, "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" The disciples interpreted the words of Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as meaning that these events would be the end of the world! They were mistaken. Jesus said that a lengthy period of time would intervene between the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple on the one hand and the end of the age on the other hand. However, the disciples were not entirely mistaken, because Jesus said that there was indeed a connection between the coming judgement on the Jewish nation and the final judgement of the whole world. Before his Second Coming there would be many signs, but only three signs would be definite signs. The first definite sign would be the proclamation of the gospel to all the nations of the world. The second definite sign would be the little season of Satan that consists of the reign of the Antichrist and the great tribulation. The third definite sign would be the sudden and awesome appearance of Jesus Christ himself. But before and during these three definite signs, there would be many signs in the nature and in the history of the world that remind us that the end of this present world is definitely coming.

(T) **POINT 1. THE MANY PRELIMINARY SIGNS THAT SHOULD NOT ALARM THE CHRISTIANS.**

In Matthew 24:4-12 Jesus says that there would be many signs in the nature and in the history of the world that remind us that the end of this present earth and its godlessness and wickedness is definitely coming. Jesus says, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming 'I am the Christ', and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but *see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.* Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are *the beginning of birth pains*. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold."

Jesus warns that not everything that seems to be a sign of the end of the world is in reality such a sign! False teachers and false prophets already existed during the Old Testament days and the New Testament days. All through the centuries or in every nation there has been someone who stood up and proclaimed that he was the prophet of God and that people should listen to him. *The increase of wickedness or lawlessness* will cause divisions in families and churches, with the result that the love of most people will grow cold. *Wars and rumours of wars* already existed throughout history. In 68-69 AD the Roman Caesars fought amongst themselves and the Roman Empire was in turmoil. In 70 AD Titus made war against the Jews and Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. Throughout the centuries nations and kingdoms will continue to make wars. *Famines and earthquakes* already existed throughout the centuries. *Persecution of Christians and defections from the Christian faith* will take place in every century. Christians will be hated by all the nations in the world because of their message and their transformed lives. Only centuries after the first coming of Jesus Christ Christians have spread to all the nations in the world. This shows that Jesus was not thinking solely of events that would happen during the lifetime of the apostles. And Christians have been persecuted since the New Testament time throughout the centuries until today.

With respect to events such as these described above, Jesus says, "See to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. All these things are the beginning of birth pangs." All these events are steppingstones leading to the final end, but these events themselves do not mark the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the end of this world. Therefore, Christians should not get alarmed. God uses these events to carry his plan forward. But, because all these events will happen more extensively and more fearfully simultaneously with the coming of the Antichrist, *the preliminary signs* may also be called *the accompanying signs*.

(S) **POINT 2. THE FIRST DEFINITE SIGN: THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE NATIONS.** In Matthew 24:14 Jesus says, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” **First. There is only one gospel.** The word ‘gospel’ means ‘good news’ and this message is called ‘the gospel of grace’ in Acts 20:24, because, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God graciously brings forgiveness of all sins and eternal salvation to every person who believes. This message is also called ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ in Matthew 3:2-3 and Acts 8:12, because, through the ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ, God made Jesus Christ the King of the whole universe, who reigns in the hearts and lives of Christians and who will return to judge all living and dead people. **Second. The gospel is a testimony to the nations.** Jesus does not promise that every individual would receive a chance to hear the gospel and be saved. He says that at different times in history *all the nations* in the world will hear the gospel and then the people of that nation must respond to the gospel. The gospel will be a *testimony* in the sense that, whoever accepts it, will be saved and whoever rejects it, will be condemned. The proclamation of the gospel is a *definite and decisive sign*, because whoever accepts Jesus Christ will definitely be saved and whoever rejects Jesus Christ will definitely be condemned.

(T) **POINT 3. THE SECOND DEFINITE SIGN: THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANTICHRIST, HIS SACRILEGE AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION.** In Matthew 24:15-28 Jesus says, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation’, spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.... For then there will be *great distress, unequalled* from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equalled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.... False Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible.... As lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.”

First. The time of the appearance of the Antichrist. In accordance to the prophecy in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11, the armed forces of a certain man will desecrate the temple and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then he will set up “the abomination that causes desolation”. The answer of Jesus fits more than one event in history. **The first time** this prediction was fulfilled was in 167 BC when the soldiers of Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar over the altar of burnt offering in the temple and sacrificed swine on it, thus polluting the house of God. That had happened long ago. However, by saying that when people would “see this happen” again (Mt 24:15), Jesus shows that this prophecy may apply to more than one historical situation! The sacrilege that results in the desolation of city and temple takes place more than once in history! Let the person who reads Daniel’s prophecy understand this! **The second time** this prediction was fulfilled was in 70 AD when the Roman soldiers under Titus entered the temple with their idolatrous standards that had the image of their emperor, whom they worshipped, on it and burnt the temple and Jerusalem (Lk 21:20). Hereby Jesus answers the first question of his disciples, “When will the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple take place?” **The third time** this will be fulfilled will be when the last Antichrist appears. Just as the pagan altar and the swine offered on it in the second century BC pointed forward to the idolatrous legions of Rome, so these in turn point forward to *the final violation of everything sacred by the Antichrist*. He will infiltrate the Christian Community and erect his abominations in it. For this reason Jesus describes his Second Coming as taking place “immediately after the distress of those days” (Mt 24:29-31). Hereby Jesus answers the second question of his disciples, “What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” The final Antichrist will therefore appear just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

(S) **Second. The characteristics of the Antichrist.** In 2 Thessalonians 2:4-12, Paul describes the coming of the Antichrist. He is called *the man of lawlessness* (or *man of sin*). Paul describes him in terms derived from the book of Daniel. **One. The Antichrist will be lawless,** that is, embody the opposition against God’s law and the rebellion against God’s teachings in the Bible (vs 3). He will be engaged in *all kinds of God-defying activities* (vs 4). He will oppose God, God’s Word, God’s people and even every law in every country. He will set himself up in *God’s temple*, which according to Ephesians 2:21 is the Christian Church, and arrogantly usurp authority over all Christians. He will demand divine adoration for himself alone. The refusal of the true Christians to worship him will result in the great tribulation for them (Mt 24:15-29). **Two. The final Antichrist is presently concealed,** but will in the future be revealed (vs 6-8). Already now there are many *antichrists* at work (1 John 4:3). But the final personal Antichrist has not yet been revealed, because *something* and *somebody* is holding him back (vs 6-7). The Bible does not reveal *what* and *who* this is, but the best interpretation is that *lawlessness is held back or restrained by the reign of law*. As long as the law and the enforcers of the law function, he is held back. As long as justice reigns and the judges judge justly and fairly, then the final Antichrist is held back. In Romans 13:4, Paul regards government and its administrators as a restraint upon evil. However, when the basic structure of justice disappears and fake trials and fake confessions become the order of the day, the stage is set for the revelation of the man of lawlessness. **Three. The Antichrist will be the instrument of Satan** and display all

kinds of counterfeit miracles and signs. He will not be able to deceive the genuine Christians, but he will be able to mislead those who have rejected the gospel (vs 9-10). When people continually harden themselves against the God of the Bible and his words in the Bible, God finally hardens them, so that they will believe in the lies of the Antichrist. Their final judgement will be just and fair.

(T) Third. The great tribulation. The coming of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC resulted in a great tribulation for the Jews. Likewise the coming of the Roman legions under Titus in AD 70 resulted in the destruction of the Jewish people as a nation. With regard to this event, Jesus warns his own followers that when they see the Roman legions coming, they should flee without delay out of Jerusalem and all of Judea to the mountains. In verse 21 Jesus makes the transition from the second to the third application of Daniel's prophecy as easy as that from the first to the second application in verses 15-16. In verses 15-20 he describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman armies. In verses 21-29 he describes *the final great tribulation in connection to the Antichrist at the end of history*. One. The time of the Antichrist will be a time of great tribulation. The appearance of the Antichrist together with all the accompanying signs will cause a great distress, unequalled in history. It will be a period of terrible deception, war, famine and earthquakes, persecution of Christians and mass defection from the Christian faith. Two. The time of the Antichrist will be a time of great apostasy. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 describes the great tribulation as a time of great *apostasy* (rebellion) from the Christian faith. It will be *a time of lawlessness*, that is, opposition to the commands and teachings of the Bible. Only people who persist in their faith in Christ and their obedience to the Bible will remain standing. Luke 17:26-29 describes this time as *a time of false security and gross materialism*. People will be eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building up to the very end. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describes this time as *a time of social degeneration*. People will "be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." And 1 Timothy 4:1-2 describes this time as *a time of spiritual corruption*. People will abandon the Christian faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Three. The time of the Antichrist will be a very short time. The Antichrist will do terrible things and perform great signs and miracles. These astonishing performances will deceive the majority of people in the world, but not the true Christians. God, who began a good work in Christians, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ's Second Coming (Phil 1:6). For the sake of *God's elect*, that is, the true Christians from both the Jews and the Gentiles, the great tribulation will only be for a very short period. When the world has morally and spiritually become degenerate to the extent that it resembles "a carcass" on which vultures swoop down, then Christ will come to condemn the world.

(S) POINT 4. THE THIRD DEFINITE SIGN: THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST. First. The time of Christ's Second Coming cannot be known or predicted by anybody. In Matthew 24:36 Jesus himself says that according to his human nature even he does not know that time. And in Acts 1:7 he teaches his disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." Christians who speculate about the time of the Second Coming disobey Jesus Christ. Second. Christ's Second Coming will be sudden and unexpected. In Matthew 24:43-44, Jesus says, "You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come *at an hour when you do not expect him*." Because non-Christians occupy themselves with the things of this world, the Second Coming will catch them unprepared! Therefore, Christians should not follow the example and life-style of non-Christians. Third. Christ's Second Coming will be the final separation between Christians and non-Christians. According to Matthew 24:40-41, people will still be busy with their daily occupation, when the Second Coming will overtake them. They will be working in the field or at home. Suddenly and unexpectedly, one person will be *taken*, that is, gathered by the angels to be with Christ forever. The other is *left behind*, that is, assigned to everlasting perdition. Once this final day arrives, there will be no more opportunity to be saved. Fourth. Christ's Second Coming should make all Christians alert, faithful and holy. In Matthew 24:42 Christ warns that, because the Second Coming will be sudden and unexpected, Christians should be alert, that is, watchful and ready for what is going to happen. In Matthew 24:45-51 Christ warns that Christians should be diligent and faithful in doing the tasks that Christ has assigned for them to do. And 2 Peter 3:9-11 and 14 says that Christians should live holy and godly lives. They should be ready at all times to meet their Creator and Saviour!

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. What do you believe about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world? Make sure that what you believe is based on the Bible and not on fanciful speculation. Listen tomorrow to part 2 about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We will learn about the resurrection from the dead, the last judgement and the new heaven and earth.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".