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## Betrayal Matthew 24:10

By Elder Keith Ellis

"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."

Matthew 24:10

In Acts chapter seven we read the sermon of Stephen. In his conclusion he reminds those unbelieving Jews what Jesus had told them before in Matthew chapter twenty three verses thirty four and thirty five;

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it."

Acts 7:52-53

The reaction to this statement by Stephen is his death by stoning. But this statement was made under the unction of the Holy Spirit, and was truth. Yet these Jews still did not want to hear it. This message cut those unbelieving Jews to the heart.

Now we have no reason to believe the persecution of the Christian church ceased when Saul was converted on the road to Damascus. In fact this was a period of great persecution against the church at Jerusalem. (See Acts 8:1) The story of Stephen was just one incident of multiplied thousands which saw similar results for the early church of Jesus Christ. Not only did the Christians suffer persecution, but the unbelieving Jews were given over to hardened hearts. This created serious conditions for people on both sides of the religious community.

Keep in mind as the dispensation of grace was being established in the world, the Law of Moses was undergoing a slow lingering death. It took approximately forty years from the beginning of the ministry of Jesus until the law service and its temple were done completely away with. The rapidly growing movement of Christianity was a threat to the Jews, and their way of life and worship. This created an air of contention between the two factions. Even though the Christians were under a mandate to love their enemies, their former Jewish brethren had different ideas. Households were divided when one or more members were converted to the Christian faith. Some family members converted to Christianity while some remained faithful to the Law of Moses. The stage was set for the fulfillment of the prophecy which Jesus had spoken in Matthew chapter twenty-four verse ten. Offense, betrayal, and hatred were common place in the religious community and in personal lives.

What about being offended? One aspect of this is considered in the parable of the sower.

"But he received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet he hath no root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Matthew 13:20-21

Back in chapter twenty-four verses nine and ten Jesus says many shall be offended. The controversy between the Jews and Christians over the word of God and Christ has caused more than just the Apostles to be delivered up under a great persecution.

In the day of the Apostles the pressures were much greater than what we may ever experience in regards to persecution. These Christians often testified to their faith in Christ with their blood. And we can see the picture begin to come together. Jesus testifies;

"Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Matthew 10:34-36

The teachings of Christ divided the nation of Israel. Remember, He came not to send peace on earth, but a sword. Zechariah speaks of the feet of The Lord standing upon the Mount of Olives in the "*day of The Lord.*" Let me state at this point that it is not the second coming. This 'day' which he mentions will be addressed in a later chapter. He also mentions the Mount of Olives dividing or removing to the north and the south. This speaks of division. He also makes mention of a "*very great valley*" which results from The Lords presence upon the Mount of Olives. This valley or low place is where many found themselves during this very trying period in Israel's history.

Pre-millennialist believe this is Jesus standing upon the Mount of Olives at His second coming, or consummation of all things. Where Jesus' return is mentioned in the second Thessalonian letter, Paul specifically states we shall be caught up to meet The Lord "*in the air*" and "*so shall we ever be with The Lord.*" I do not think He will ever set foot upon the earth again. We know He literally taught the multitudes from the Mount of Olives during His earthly ministry. We also know the controversy which arose from the truth which He spoke. Jerusalem was divided over the teachings of Christ. This I believe is the sword which Jesus refers to. The Apostle John describes the vision he had of Christ in this manner;

"And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth."

Revelation 1:16

That which proceeds from the mouth of Christ is truth. It divides believers from unbelievers. We are reminded of the text which says, "*never spake man like this.*" Though the Jews tried many times, they were never able to trip up The Lord in His speech? His speech always stopped the mouths of the ignorant. The context of Zechariah fourteen seems to be pointing to

the destruction of Jerusalem and the travail, trials and tribulation, which would accompany this era of time, not the end of time. After this judgment is carried out upon Jerusalem we read of the continuance of time, the seasons, nations, and the New Jerusalem, or the church. There is mention of turmoil, fighting, and sin. We know that in eternity there will be no time, seasons, or separate nations. Nor do we expect to encounter turmoil, fighting, or sin in eternity. The presence of these elements in the context forces us to seek a view other than the 'eternal' in reading of Zechariah chapter fourteen. So we see Zechariah is speaking of the division which would follow the teachings of our Lord among the Jews. These are the conditions which set the stage for the betrayal among flesh and blood. Family members were at odds with one another. Some would even be delivered up by their family members to be condemned to death. (See Luke 21:16)

Believers were pitted against unbelievers everywhere. In the midst of a persecution of this magnitude, a Jew would have sought to save his standing in the synagogue by revealing the hiding place of even his own flesh and blood. Even some who professed Christianity would, under the threat of stoning or other punishments, seek to save their own lives, not caring for the safety of their Christian brethren. There was betrayal on every hand.

It is no wonder the Jews would suffer from hardness of heart as they would seek to destroy what God had ordained.