

# "And pray that your flight may not be... on the Sabbath."

by Bob Pulliam

In Matthew 24:20, we read that a prayer is to be made that flight not be on the Sabbath. The time of the events prophesied in this chapter are commonly attributed to the second coming of Jesus. That is true of the last half of this chapter, but not of the first half (for a more detailed explanation, see Matthew 24). As we begin this chapter, we find Jesus being asked questions by His disciples (v3). What prompted these questions. We must know the answer to this before we can understand the reference to "these things" in the first question. "When will these things be?" What things?!...

Verse one has Jesus and the disciples coming out of the temple, and as they do, the disciples are pointing out the buildings of the temple. They are obviously awestruck. But Jesus then tells them that it will all be destroyed. That must have made quite an impression. When would something like that happen? And that is precisely what they ask in verse three. They ask two questions here, although I imagine they thought the answer to all would actually be the same. After all, how could the temple be destroyed before the end? But it would be, and it was destroyed in AD 70. The Romans came in and essentially leveled the place (with much burning and looting as well).

So the events being spoken of at verse twenty are to be placed in the year AD 67. Many would flee the city at the approach of the Romans. But at this point, the Christian was not under the law of Moses! Remember, it was nailed to the cross. So why would they pray that their flight not be on the Sabbath if they were not bound by the law of the Sabbath. The answer is as simple as reading the verse:

"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath." (Mt 24:20)

They were to pray that their flight (escape) not be on a Sabbath for the same reason that they should pray that it not be in the winter. Both conditions would make escape difficult. Just as the condition of the preceding verse would make flight difficult:

"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" (Mt 24:19)

You want to be able to flee without hindrance. How would the Sabbath hinder someone who was not bound by that law? Keep in mind that they would be trying to escape from a city that closed its gates on the Sabbath. You don't want to wait until Sunset to be able to use the city gate! You don't want to be finding another way out of the city! So you don't want it to be on a Sabbath.

## **Conclusion...**

There is nothing in the text of Matthew twenty-four to indicate that Sabbath observance was still binding after the cross of Christ.