

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 24 - PART 1

The teachings of Jesus during the final week before His arrest, crucifixion and resurrection make up some of the best known accounts and parables of his earthly ministry. One of the most discussed accounts was related to the discourse Jesus gave in response to some questions the disciples asked Him as they left the Temple area. This account is found in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 24. Much of what we can find on this chapter is typically related to eschatological teaches about the end time. While some of the ideas may apply to future events, most (if not all) of what Jesus talked about can be shown to have occurred in the period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in about A.D. 70.

The information that follows is not an attempt to change anyone's mind about end time events but is presented as a demonstration that all the events of Matthew 24 have met "some degree" of fulfillment in the generation that heard the words of Jesus that day.

In what follows, I have relied somewhat on the writings of Dr. John Gill (1697 -1771), a prolific and well-respected expositor who was described by one historian as

*"The Doctor was not one who considered any subject superficially, and by halves."*

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*1 ¶ And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

1-2 We are very much as the disciples were when they heard Jesus announce the coming desolation on the temple of the Jews. He told the Jewish leaders "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." It used to be the Temple of God, they had turned it into a den of thieves -- it was now their house. When Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, the religious leaders did not repent but challenged His authority. Had they repented and acknowledged their sin, they could have been changed the course of history. The disciples were impressed with the magnificence of the temple. Did Jesus really want to see that great structure become a object of desolation? We hear the present-day prophets of God warning us that our nation is on the slippery slope and sliding into destruction and we look around and see the many marvelous things that make up this nation from it natural beauty to its cities and factories and we wonder "will God really bring destruction upon this land?" Unless we repent, the answer is "Yes, He will."

*3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

3 The disciples saw no reprieve from the pronounced judgement on the Jews. Naturally, their curiosity was aroused and they had questions. When we see what is happening around us, do we realize the seriousness of the situation, not just in our nation, but throughout the world? The cup of iniquity is nearing its full capacity and something is going to happen. Do we wonder when this will happen? Are we watching for the sign of Jesus' coming and the end of this age? For most, it is "business as usual" just as in the days of Noah.

The disciples were focused on the immediate future. The question "When would the temple be destroyed" was concerned with events that would happen in their lifetime. The

question regarding the sign of Jesus' coming was related (not to the Second Coming, but) to His presence with them at that time. This question was in essence related to Him doing something that would proclaim to all that He was in fact the Messiah. This is clearly seen in Young's Literal Translation of the questions 'Tell us, when shall these be? and what is the sign of thy presence, and of the full end of the age?' They had not comprehended the reality of His death on the cross and the resurrection. The third part of the question (which is coupled with the second part) (in the KJV) is rendered "... end of the world" rather than "... end of the age." This translation has caused many to assume that these questions of the disciples were related to "the appointed time of the end" which is yet to come. The "age" to which they referred was the system under which they lived. This would be replaced by the "kingdom" to which Jesus constantly referred and would happen when He revealed for all to see that He was the Messiah. The events they had imagined were not going to happen as they had envisioned them. Sometime we, as they, don't know enough to ask the right question.

*4 ¶ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

4-5 "Messiah mania" was a problem after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The rise of the church bought out many charlatans who hoped to deliver the Jews from the oppression of the Romans. Many were convinced that the Messiah would lead a revolt that would cast off Roman domination.

[According to Gill: This is the first sign, preceding the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; as there was a general expectation among the Jews of a Messiah; that is, of one that should arise and deliver them from the Roman yoke, which was the common idea tacked to that word; in this period of time, many set up themselves to be deliverers and redeemers of the people of Israel: who had each of them their followers in great numbers, whom they imposed upon, and brought to destruction. Of this sort was Theudas, not he that Gamaliel speaks of, # Ac 5:36 for he was before this time; but one that was in the time of Claudius Caesar, when Cuspius Fadus was governor of Judea; who persuaded a great number to follow him to the river Jordan, which he promised to divide, by a word of command, and give them a passage over; and thereby, as the historian observes "he deceived many"; which is the very thing that is here predicted: but he and his company were routed by Fadus, and his head cut off. There was another called the Egyptian, mentioned in # Ac 21:38 who made an uproar, and led four thousand cut-throats into the wilderness; and this same man persuaded thirty thousand men to follow him to Mount Olivet, promising a free passage into the city; but he being vanquished by Felix, then governor of Judea; fled, and many of his followers were killed and taken {d}: and besides, there were many more magicians and impostors, that pretended to signs and wonders, and promised the people deliverance from their evils, by whom they were imposed upon to their ruin. There were others also besides these, that set up for deliverers, who called themselves by the name of the Messiah. Among these, we may reckon Simon Magus, who gave out that he was some great one; yea, expressly, that he was the word of God, and the Son of God {e}, which were known names of the Messiah; and Dositheus the Samaritan, asserted himself to be Christ {f}; and also Menander affirmed, that no man could be saved, unless he was baptized in his name {g}; these are instances before the destruction of Jerusalem, and confirm the prophecy here delivered.]

*6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

6-8 The internal insurrections against Rome were many and may have been the catalyst that prompted the action by Rome to attack Jerusalem and destroy it and the temple. Additionally, there was much infighting among the leadership of the Roman government. Historically, famines and

earthquakes were recorded during the forty year period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.

*9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

9-14 The rise of Christianity was the object of blame for much of the problems of the Roman Empire and the persecution of the Jews against the Christians is well documented. Most of the Apostles were killed during this time; however, it was not before the gospel message had been preached in Judea, Samaria, Asia Minor, and Europe (the Roman world). All these things literally did happen in that generation.

*15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

15-18 Notice that Jesus said, “When **you** shall see . . .” though many of the Apostles would be dead at this time or would be in other areas, this wording would indicate that to which He referred would happen in their generation. The armies of Rome would be the instruments by which the desolation (complete destruction) of the temple would take place. When they arrived, then people could know that the time had come. There is a time to take a stand and a time to leave. The destruction that would come upon the city was ordained by God and those who were wise were to leave and leave at once. No earthly possession would be worth the risk to go and try to retrieve it.

What about the verses from Daniel?

<p>Dan 9:{26} After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.(NIV)</p>	<p>The Anointed One (NIV) or the Messiah (KJV) is generally agreed to be Jesus. Being cut off (but not for Himself) is thought to be a reference to the crucifixion. The reference to the "ruler who will come" is claimed by various groups to apply to (a) the devil who influenced Rome to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, (b) the Roman rulers themselves, or (c) the devil in the latter days of his physical appearance.</p>
<p><i>An alternate reading of verse 26 regarding the end coming, war, etc. is from the KJV: "the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."</i></p>	<p><i>The flood may simply refer to the mass of Roman soldiers who swarmed over the area. The implication I see is that the desolation had already been set to happen or "determined" -- see Deut 28 for the curse that was to come upon the nation for disobedience.</i></p>

<p>{27} He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. "</p>	<p>The interpretation of the "confirmation of the covenant for one week" is controversial. Some think this refers to the devil making a deal with physical Israel in the last days and then disrupting the sacrifices. This interpretation would require that the 70<sup>th</sup> week has been put off until some time in the future. This interpretation would require that the sacrificial system be restarted and the temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt. (This is the commonly held belief among many evangelical Christians.)</p> <p>Others believe that physical Israel is out of the picture in the endtime and they are not a factor. If the "one" confirming the covenant for one week is Jesus, then that week occurred immediately following the 69 weeks and the many would refer to those who put their faith in His completed work. If we assume Jesus is the One confirming the covenant, then the reference to putting an end to sacrifice and offering in the middle of the "seven" is related to His death on the cross and the ending of the sacrificial system, the rending of the veil in the temple, etc. Referring to the Jubilee Calendar, we can see that the middle of that 70th week (the Wednesday year) is the year Jesus died on the cross.</p>
<p><i>An alternate reading for verse 27 (footnote of the NIV Study Bible) is as follows: "And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city."</i></p>	<p>Who causes desolations (Ps 46:8)? Is it not the Lord? Who decreed that "your house is left unto you desolate?" (Matt 23:38)</p>

*19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

19-22 Such times would be difficult on women with small children, the problems would be multiplied if it happened during cold weather or on the day of rest. The siege of Jerusalem was unequalled by anything that had happen before or would happen afterwards. If the city had not capitulated then everyone there and most in the surrounding areas would have died.

*23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

[According to John Gill's Expositor: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, etc" ] Such as the above mentioned: these false Christs had their false prophets, who endeavored to persuade the people to believe them to be the Messiah, as Barcochab had Akiba, who applied many prophecies to him. This man was called Barcochab, which signifies the son of a star, in allusion to # Nu 24:17 he was crowned by the Jews, and proclaimed the Messiah by Akiba; upon which a Roman army was sent against him, and a place called Bitter was besieged, and taken, and he, and a prodigious number of Jews were destroyed. This deceiver was afterwards, by them, called Barcoziba, the son of a lie:

“and shall show great signs and wonders” make an appearance of doing them, though they really did them not: so that Jonathan, before mentioned, pretended to show signs and sights; and Barcochab made as if flame came out of his mouth; and many of the Jewish doctors in these times, and following, gave themselves up to sorcery, and the magic art; and are, many of them, often said to be “expert in wonders”, or miracles: ]

*25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

In reference to the claim that the Messiah was somewhere in the secret place, the fact of the matter would be that the “revealing” that would take place that would confirm that Jesus was the Messiah Who had come and had confirmed the covenant and that having been rejected by the Jews had pronounced “desolation on the House of Israel” was not something that would be hidden. It would be like the lightning that occurs in the sky – it would be seen by all. According to Gill: “which must be understood **not** of his last coming to judgment, **nor** of his spiritual coming in the more sudden, and clear, and powerful preaching of the Gospel all over the Gentile world but of his coming in his wrath and vengeance to destroy that people, their nation, city, and temple: so that after this to look for the Messiah in a desert, or secret chamber, must argue great stupidity and blindness; when his coming was as sudden, visible, powerful, and general, to the destruction of that nation, as the lightning that comes from the east, and, in a moment, shines to the west.”

*28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

An alternative reference of “eagles or vultures gathering with the carcass or body” could be related to the fact that Israel was essentially dead because they had been cut off from its life source. God had given them up to their own devices. The eagle was the symbol of Rome and they sensed that this people was totally defenseless (as a dead body would be) and came to devastate it.

*29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

29-30 The entire set of events described can be related to the time immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans. The “sun” refers to the Shekinah, or the divine presence in the temple. For the Jews, it was gone. The “moon” refers to the light of God reflected in the ceremonial law and commandments the Jews followed in their observance of “new moons” and other times. The “stars” were the doctor of the law and Rabbis who departed from the purity of God’s commandments. The legal dispensation was shaken and would be replaced by the church age.

Both Mark and Luke do not mention the “sign” appearing in heaven but write only of the Son appearing. If this is related only to the events of the desolation by the Romans then the appearing would be symbolic or as Gill writes “and he shall appear, not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come.”

*31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

31 Those who apply this passage to the end time (end of the world rather than end of the age) and believe that the “elect” are the Jews rather and those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior, see this verse as a call to the Jews to return to their homeland. However, if we read this simply as it is stated and accept the chronology as being immediately after the desolation of the temple by

the Romans, then this verse refer to the messengers (translation of the word angels) who proclaimed the gospel (the loud trumpet call) to bring those who responded to God's invitation to salvation.

*32 ¶ Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. 34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

32-35 These verses confirm the immediacy of the prophecy. Jesus said (in addressing the disciples) "when **you** see all these things, **you** know it is near." If we take His words to mean what they said that "this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened," then we are forced to agree that this prophecy is for that time and not necessarily (only) for the end time. Since the Lord had spoken it, it would happen.

*36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*

36-41 The truth of the message can be applied to any situation where preparedness is important. Though it can be argued that these events were fulfilled in the time of the Lord's judgment on Jerusalem, it is a sobering message for anyone at anytime. Notice that Jesus said specifically that no one would know the "day and hour." The precise time would not be known, but the season would be known. The happening would occur in one generation after the Jews had rejected the Messiah.

Recent traditional interpretation of "two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left" has almost universally been related to the rapture of the church. Listen to what John Gill's commentary says about this:

the one shall be taken; not by the preaching of the Gospel, into the kingdom of God, or Gospel dispensation; though such a distinction God makes, by the ministry of the word, accompanied by his Spirit and power; nor by angels, to meet Christ in the air, and to be introduced into his kingdom and glory; but by the eagles, the Roman army, and either killed or carried captive by them:

*42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

The warning to watch was clearly given to the followers of Christ so that they would not get caught up in the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem but would be ready to flee into the mountains and to get away from what would follow.

It has certainly been the case that many have applied this passage to our present day situation in which being ready would involve having the right spiritual condition in our lives.

The passage that follows is related in Luke's Gospel in chapter 12 rather than in chapter 21 which is the parallel passage to the "end of the age" discourse. It is generally thought that Luke is better in the chronology of events and stories than the other gospel writers. So, verses 45 through 51 may not be part of the "end of the age" discourse and are not treated here.