

Matthew 24:1-35: Jesus left the temple & was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." ³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, & what will be the sign of your coming & of the close of the age?" ⁴ And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' & they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars & rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, & kingdom against kingdom, & there will be famines & earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ Then they will deliver you up to tribulation & put you to death, & you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away & betray one another & hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise & lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, & then the end will come. ¹⁵ So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ & let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant & for those who are nursing infants in those days! ²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, & never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs & false prophets will arise & perform great signs & wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east & shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, & the moon will not give its light, & the stars will fall from heaven, & the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, & then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, & they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power & great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, & they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. ³² From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender & puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Intro: Last Sunday, we saw Jesus began to lovingly warn His sheep of future judgment & the destruction of God's temple, & as God's true temple, Jesus always tells the truth & died & rose again so that we might be God's temple & dwell with Him forever. This Sunday, we will survey some of the different major views of how to read & understand Matthew 24. Good Christians disagree on the interpretation of Matthew 24. (Calvinism sermon: Too harsh; good Arminians; Objections)

James Edwards: Mark 13 [Matthew 24] is not primarily [given] to provide a timetable or blueprint for the future so much as to exhort readers to faithful discipleship in the present . . . The premium of discipleship is placed not on predicting the future but on faithfulness in the present, especially in trials, adversity, & suffering. [We, like Jesus' disciples, are concerned with How?! & When?!; Jesus' concern: How will you live When all around = calamity!]

There's nothing more important than getting God's Word right & being ready for the return of Jesus Christ! **GOSPEL**

1. The Classic Dispensationalism View (These summaries taken from very helpful D. A. Carson Sermon)

Matthew 24:4-28: A description of the seven year great tribulation before which Jesus comes in secret rapture & afterward Jesus comes in His second coming. So wars & rumors of wars, earthquakes & famines, false christs – all of that has to do with the seven year tribulation period. So what seems to be describing Jerusalem in these verses

are describing Jerusalem with a new temple in it. Verses 36-40 describe the pre-tribulation secret rapture (that day or hour no one knows). Verses 29-35 deal with the post-tribulation second coming of Christ (Immediately after those days, Jesus will return). In verse 34, “this generation” means “this Jewish race” or “this generation alive when these things begin to take place.” (John Wallvoord, John MacArthur)

- **Strength:** It deals with the time indicators very nicely.

- **Weaknesses:** 1) A very weak understanding of the term “this generation.”

(**Sam Storms:** The word for “generation” occurs 27 times in the Gospels & never once means “race.” Every time the words “this generation” occur in the Gospels they mean Jesus’ contemporaries; **Ken Gentry:** Surely Jesus does not denounce the first-century temple in which He is standing (24:1) by declaring it ‘desolate’ (23:38), prophesying its total destruction (24:2), then answering the question ‘when shall these things be?’ (v. 3), and warning about the temple’s ‘abomination of desolation’ (v. 15) only to speak about the destruction of a totally different temple two thousand years (or more) later.)

2) Doesn’t deal well with the other data in the Olivet Discourse in Mark and Luke.

3) Jesus’ answers to the disciples would seem sort of unclear if not outright deceptive. They asked about the destruction of the temple which would take place in their own day. There is no trace of this dispensational pre-tribulational understanding until the end of the 1770’s. No one in early church understood these verses this way.

Classic dispensationalists love Jesus, & they want to get Jesus’ return right, & they want to be faithful to God’s Word! There’s nothing more important than getting God’s Word right & being ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

2. The Fall Of Jerusalem & Return Of Christ View

Matthew 24:15-21, 34: Deals with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD

Matthew 24:29-31: Foretells Jesus’ return (Broadus and Lane)

The disciples asked a rather confused question. They confused the fall of Jerusalem with Jesus’ return, so Jesus interweaves His answer on these themes & flips back & forth as He answers between the fall of Jerusalem & His second coming.

- **Strength:** It deals with each paragraph on its own terms. It seems to deal fairly with each paragraph.

- **Weakness:** It does not handle the time relationships very well. In verse 28, you’re dealing with the tribulation period, & then Jesus comes in verse 29 & following. But then you have great difficulty with verse 34 – this will all take place before this generation passes away.

Those holding this view love Jesus, & they are wrestling with the text, & they love God’s Word, & they want to get Jesus’ return right! There’s nothing more important than getting God’s Word right & being ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

3. The Partial-Preterist View (Preterist: Latin preter = “past”. Prophecy has already been fulfilled in the past.)

The destruction of the temple & fall of Jerusalem is in view from Matt 24:1-35. (R. C. Sproul; Ken Gentry)

The disciples asked two questions, & Jesus answers them in order. The first was about the destruction of the temple, & Jesus answers that question in verses 4-35. This really helps out with verse 34 because the temple was destroyed in their generation – in the next 40 years! Then Jesus answers the question about His return & the end of the age in verses 36-51.

- This view takes verses 29-31, which sound like the return of Christ at the end of the age, to be a kind of coming of Christ to judge Jerusalem or a coming of Christ to the Father in glory for vindication (Daniel 7:13-14) or both:

- **Daniel 7:13-14:** I saw in the night visions, & behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, & he came to the Ancient of Days & was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion & glory & a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, & languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which

shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

- The end of the age is the end of the Jewish age & Christ comes into His own reign as the temple is destroyed & comes into His own authority.

- The sun being darkened & the moon not giving its light etc. are ways the prophets in the OT spoke of great judgments of God. **Isaiah 13:10:** For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.

- **V. 14:** And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come - **Colossians 1:23:** the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

- **V. 31:** is not angels going out to gather the elect, but messengers – preachers of the Gospel.

- **Strength:** It handles the time relationships really well.

- **Weakness: D. A. Carson:** Although as you go through verses 29-30, you can pull out the little statements one by one: the Son of Man refers to Daniel 7; clouds of heaven indicate the presence of God; receiving a kingdom from the ancient of days; angels can mean messengers; four winds might mean everywhere in the Gentile world; yes, yes, if you pick them out one by one, this interpretation could be plausible. But, & it is a very big but, the combination of these themes all together simply rings as the second coming of Christ to any Christian reader. You've got to really strain to make this passage only refer to the fall of the temple in AD 70. When you see terms like this used together all over the New Testament – it's clearly speaking of the return of Christ. Furthermore, in Daniel 7 "coming of Christ" it marks the end of pagan rule. Whereas with the destruction of the temple in AD 70, it marks the beginning of pagan rule.

Partial-preterists, like R.C. Sproul/Sam Storms, love Jesus, & they love God's Word, & they want to get it all right!

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4. D. A. Carson's View (A Modification of #2)

In the disciples' minds, the questions about the temple being destroyed, the end of the age, & the coming of the Lord would happen all at the same time.

One of the things Jesus is doing is teaching His disciples that there will be delay before the end, & that delay will be characterized by opposition & persecution. This is what Jesus teaches from V. 4 to V. 28. This period is the birth pains of the Messiah. But there is one particularly sharp birth pain – the fall of Jerusalem & the destruction of the temple in 70 AD – covered in V. 15 – 21. These birth pains happen during the whole period leading up to the return of Christ, & then Christ returns – which we see in Vs. 29-31. Then, Vs. 32-35 purposely go back to accessing the significance of the signs in Vs. 4-28.

Carson takes Vs. 22-28 as referring to all the days that are characterized by the birth pains before Christ's return.

The Abomination that causes Desolation: The destruction of Jerusalem & the temple being destroyed. The Christians in Jerusalem heeded this warning & left. (Daniel refers to this 4 times; More immediate fulfillment: Antiochus Epiphanes, in 168 B.C., slaughtered 40,000 Jews, plundered the temple, sacrificed a pig on altar of burnt offering, sprinkled pig broth all over, & set up an image of Zeus above the altar.) - 2nd & 3rd fulfillment!

What does V. 21 mean? **V. 21:** For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, & never will be.

This is a difficult verse for every position. Even if you take this as the great tribulation right before the return of Christ, then why would Jesus say there never will be? Of course there never will be: millennium or new earth!

70 AD was really bad: The Warsaw Jews in WWII were just about wiped out, but a few thousand escaped. Some

Jews escaped Aushwitz.

- Stalin was merciless, but millions of believers did escape.

- When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, no one escaped. Mothers ate their own children. They ate their own defecation.

Sam Storms: When Jerusalem fell in 70 AD and the temple was destroyed, everyone was either killed or sold into slavery. Approximations are that 1,100,000 people were killed and 100,000 were enslaved. Before the final destruction, the Roman armies surrounded the city; the cities granaries and storehouses were burned and the water reservoirs were polluted. Famine set in. People sold their homes and their own children to obtain food. People would go outside the city to find food and get captured and were crucified on crosses – sometimes 500 per day so that all could see!

Josephus told of one woman who killed her son, roasted his body, ate half of him and hid the remaining half. When the smell drew others desperate for food, she offered to share his body, [causing] horror among the multitudes.

This doesn't mean there won't be a great tribulation at the end right before Christ returns: **1 John 2:18:** Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.

V. 21 is the common language of God's judgment: Exodus 11:6: There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.

- **Joel 2:2:** a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.

- **Ezekiel 5:9:** And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. [Refers to the impending Babylonian captivity]

D. A. Carson: I think, brothers and sisters in Christ, we have confused the great tribulation with the end of the age, when there are two great tribulations. There's a great tribulation in density & concentration that is now behind us. And there is a final outbreak of evil before the Lord returns at the end.

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5. The Double Prophecy Fulfillment View

James Edwards: The destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem function as a pre-figurement and a paradigm for Jesus' second coming and the end of this age. [There is a fulfillment in this generation & a second fulfillment at the end of history when Jesus returns.]

Often in the Bible we see a double fulfillment of prophecies: Isa. 22:20-22: In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, & I will clothe him with your robe, & will bind your sash on him, & will commit your authority to his hand. & he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem & to the house of Judah. & I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, & none shall shut; & he shall shut, & none shall open

- **Rev. 3:7:** And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens & no one will shut, who shuts & no one opens.

Greg Beale: John views Isaiah 22:22 as a prophecy of Christ, not through direct verbal means, but through the prophetic events narrated about Eliakim, which came to pass within the OT period. Since it is not a direct verbal prediction, it is typological in that **it is a historical prefigurement or foreshadowing of what is to take place on a grander scale with regard to the future Messiah.**

Kevin DeYoung: OT prophecy is full of examples where there is a near & far fulfillment. Isaiah 40, for example, was a word of comfort about the return from Babylon, but later we see it also was a word about John the Baptist who would prepare the way for the Messiah (Mark 1:2-3). Much of the prophetic witness implicitly anticipates a future, fuller, often eschatological fulfillment. Isaiah may not have known that his words about the virgin were Messianic, but this does not mean he'd be surprised to know they were. Israel was always waiting for the everlasting kingdom and the final Deliverer. I think the prophets understood that what they foretold (and forth-told) was for their day, but it could be for the future as well. (Virgin Birth in Isa. 7:14)

The destruction of Jerusalem and the leveling of the temple is a historical prefigurement or foreshadowing of what is to take place on a grander scale with regard to the Jesus' second coming and the end of the age.

Matt. 23:36-39: Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets & stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, & you would not!"³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate.³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

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Jesus got God's Word right! Everything He says happens! God is going to judge sin & sinners! Be ready!

Christ Warns Of Coming Judgment Doom; So We'll Be Ready For The Gloom; And Stand With Him Our Perfect Groom; For All Our Foes He Will Consume!

He's the Seed of the woman Who would crush the serpents head!

He's the Seed of Abraham Who blessed the nations, is blessing the nations, and will bless the nations forevermore!

He's the priest after the order of Melchizedek!

He's the King of peace and the King of righteousness!

He's the promised Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!

He's the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

He's the Great I AM!

He's the Christ our passover!

He's the Rock of Israel!

He's the one lifted up on that cross that He might draw all people to Himself!

He's the Greater Prophet like Moses to come!

He's the cursed One Who hung on a tree!

He's the greater Joshua Who leads us into the promised land!

He's the greater Boaz Who is our kinsman redeemer!

He's the greater David Who is David's greater Son!

He's the one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus!

He's God's beloved Son!

He's the ruler of the nations!

The mouths of babes shall praise His name!

He's the righteous judge of all the earth!

He's the One Who was pierced!

He's the One forsaken by God!

He's the One Who thirsted!

He's the Good Shepherd!

Not one of His bones was broken!

His friends forsook Him!

He was silent before His accusers!

He went about doing good like no other!

Zeal for the LORD's house consumed Him!
He taught in parables!
No man taught like this man!
He's the pre-existent Son!
He's the rejected Stone Who's the Head of the corner!
He's the altogether lovely One!
He's the glory of God that fills the temple!
He was born of a virgin!
He's Emmanuel – God with us!
He's the Wonderful One!
He's the Counselor!
He's the Mighty God!
He's the Everlasting Father!
He's the Prince of Peace!
Of His reign there shall be no end!
He's the sure foundation!
He's the suffering servant!
He's the first and the last!
He's the salvation of Israel!
He's the light of the Gentiles!
His Salvation is unto the ends of the earth!
He was despised and rejected by men!
He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities!
He was cut off!
He made an end to sins!
He accomplished everlasting righteousness!
He defeated death!
He rose from the dead!
He lives forevermore!
And He loves His beloved sheep like no other!

Christ Jesus Is The Center Stage
Even In The End Times Rage
When Saints Argue The Coming Age
And War Like Fighters In A Cage
Christ Is All The End Times Rage
It's All About His Coming Age
He Died And Rose, God's Wrath Assuage
So Trust In Him, Don't Work For Wage
He Saves From Sin That Does Outrage
He's Coming Back To Turn The Page
To History's Glorious, Golden Age
He'll Come And Conquer With Rampage
For Deepest Pleasures Set The Stage
They're Found In Him Our Joy And Sage!