
Premillennialism: The Doctrine – The Error – And The Consequences
Class Sessions 7 & 8: The Truth of Matt. 24, the Last Days, and the Second Coming

Objectives (at the end of the two class periods, the student will be able to ...)

- state, in general terms, the premillennial view of the last days and the second coming of Christ
 - refute this premillennial view, using key verses from Matthew 24 and other references
 - understand the signs that Christ gave foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem
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Instructions: Use the text of Matthew chapters 23, 24, and 25, along with the articles by Wayne Jackson and Brent Kercheville to answer the following questions. Also, reference the texts from Mark 13 and Luke 21 as companion readings.

The Context: Matthew 23 and 24:1-3 (Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7)

1. Scan over Matt. 23 and list the two major subjects Jesus dealt with. (vv. 1,37)
2. According to Matt. 24, vv.1 & 3, where were Jesus and his disciples coming from and going to?
3. What strange and disturbing prediction did Jesus make?
4. What question or questions did the disciples ask Jesus in reaction to his dire prediction?
Use all three companion readings to assist you.
5. Within the context of these verses, the disciples questions referred to what event?

The Signs of the Times: Matthew 24:4-31 (Mark 13:5-27; Luke 21:8-28)

6. List the signs that Jesus gave for the disciples to look for in connection with the coming great event.v. 5

 v. 6

 v. 7

 v. 9

 v. 10

 v. 11

 v. 14

 v. 15

 v. 21

 v. 24

 v. 29

 v. 30

The Timing of the Signs: Matthew 24:32-36 (Mark 13:28-32; Luke 21:29-33)

6. According to Jesus, when were the signs and the great event going to happen? (v. 34)
7. How sure could the disciples be that Jesus' words were true? (v. 35)
8. Who knew the exact day and hour that these things were going to occur? (v. 36)

The Preparation of the Disciples: Matthew 24:12-13, 16-20, 26-28, 37-51

9. What should the disciples have done to be saved from the predicted lawlessness? (vv. 12-13)
10. Where should the disciples have gone and what should they not have done when they saw the signs? (vv. 16-20)
11. How should the disciples have reacted to false reports of Jesus' appearance? (vv. 26-28)
12. According to vv. 37-41 what attitude should the disciples have had as contrasted with the people of Noah's time?
13. The disciples were commanded to do what in preparation for the coming of the Son of Man? (vv. 42-44)
14. What does a disciple need to be doing to be found as a faithful and wise servant? (vv. 45-48)
15. What happens to the wicked servant who does not heed the master's wishes? (vv. 50-51)

The Last Judgement: Matthew 25:31-46

Thought Question: Use 25:31-46 to describe the particulars of Christ's coming for final judgement?

The Timing of the Signs: Matthew 24:32-36 (Mark 13:28-32; Luke 21:29-33)

16. According to Jesus, when were the signs and the great event going to happen? (v. 34)
17. How sure could the disciples be that Jesus' words are true? (v. 35)
18. Who knew the exact day and hour that these things were going to occur? (v. 36)

The Preparation of the Disciples: Matthew 24:12-13, 16-20, 26-28, 37-51

19. What should the disciples have done to be saved from the predicted lawlessness? (vv. 12-13)
20. Where should the disciples have gone and what should they not have done when they saw the signs? (vv. 16-20)
21. How should the disciples have reacted to false reports of Jesus' appearance? (vv. 26-28)
22. According to vv. 37-41 what attitude should the disciples have had as contrasted with the people of Noah's time?
23. The disciples were commanded to do what in preparation for the coming of the Son of Man? (vv. 42-44)
24. What does a disciple need to be doing to be found as a faithful and wise servant? (vv. 45-48)
25. What happens to the wicked servant who does not heed the master's wishes? (vv. 50-51)

The Last Judgement: Matthew 25:31-46

Thought Question: Use 25:31-46 to describe the particulars of Christ's coming for final judgement?

Matthew 24

24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. 23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors! 34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

NKJV

Luke 21

21:1And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

5Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."

7So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" 8And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. 9But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." 10Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. 12But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19By your patience possess your souls.

20"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

29Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

34"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." 37And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. 38Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.

NKJV

Mark 13

13:1 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" 2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." 3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" 5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. 7 But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. 9 But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his garment. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19 For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20 And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 21 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in heaven will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

28 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near--at the doors! 30 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-- 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

NKJV

[Lesson adapted from a sermon by Brent Kercheville](#)

Answering Matthew 24

Introduction:

This text has been the subject of all sorts of speculation and wild theories about the end of time and the events that will happen at the return of Christ. Many believe in among the brethren that this text is talking about the second coming of Christ. Many believe it refers to other events. But let us put out of our minds what we have been taught about this passage or what scholars have said, and let the text speak. The first thing that we must understand is that each particular gospel had a particular audience that the words were for, especially when considering the synoptic gospels. For example the gospel of Matthew was written primarily to the Jews as an audience, and that is why Matthew quotes the Old Testament prophecies so many times in his book. Mark was written with the Roman audience in mind and that is why it is to the point, powerful, and practical. Luke was written to the Gentile audience. This is important to note because people have run to Matthew 24 and try to begin to explain the events that are taking place. But there is a failure to understand that the things written were written to a Jewish audience and so the signs and symbols would have a meaning to that audience. In short, for us to understand Matthew 24 we need to think like a Jew and understand the Jewish background and mindset. Let us now get into the text.

I. Matthew 24:1-13

Setting the scene

First let us notice what Jesus has been talking about coming into Matthew 24. Jesus has been speaking to the Pharisees and scribes and have pronounced woes upon them and called them hypocrites. But notice also 23:37-39. Here Jesus is pronouncing a woe upon the city itself for the evil that it has committed by killing the prophets and stoning God's messengers. Now as Jesus and his disciples are leaving the temple, the disciples are remarking about the temple buildings. Now the disciples are not pointing these things out like a tourist. They have been to the temple many times with Jesus. This is not a guided tour. What are they doing? Jesus has just condemned the city of Jerusalem and the disciples are pointed out in essence, "how can you condemn such a noble structure?" **Luke 21:5** clarifies for us what is taking place-- *"When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said,..."* The disciples are pointing out how the city has beautiful stones dedicated to God. Look at all the gifts dedicated to God. Look at the magnificence of this temple and these buildings are all for the glory of God. Jesus elaborates further in verse 2, *"And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'" Jesus says that not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down. To what is he referring to? The buildings of the world? No, the temple buildings. They are going to be destroyed.*

The disciples' question

Now verse 3 is important to understanding the rest of the text, for if we miss what the disciples are asking, then we are going to misinterpret what Jesus' answer is. **Matthew 24:3**, *"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying,*

'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" By the initial reading it sounds like the disciples are asking about the second coming of Christ and what will be the signs about the end of time. Let me show you why that cannot be the case.

First, the disciples did not believe that Jesus was leaving and did not understand that Jesus would be crucified. The disciples did not understand the second coming because they did not understand Christ must be killed in the first place. **Luke 18:31-34** verifies that they did not understand the things Jesus spoke about his death. It was not until the resurrection that the disciples began to understand these things. That is one reason why they are not talking about the second coming.

Second, we need to see the other gospel accounts to see what is being asked. Look at **Luke 21:7**. *"Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?"* Look at the account in **Mark 13:4** *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"* Do we see the question they are asking? It is not about the second coming, but when are these stones going to be not left upon each other. They understood Jesus' woe on Jerusalem and understood he was speaking of its destruction. The questions are "When will these things take place and what is the sign to know that it is about to take place?" If we read Matthew we must think like a Jew. The coming of the Messiah was a label for judgment. What is the sign that this judgment is going to take place? And the end of the age does not automatically mean the end of time. It simply refers to a definite period of time or era. The destruction of the temple would certainly be the end of an era, the end of the Jewish era. Therefore what they ask is the sign of the end of this period of time. And so these are the questions asked by the disciples: When will these things take place? What is the sign that these things will be fulfilled? Jesus is going to answer these questions in reverse order. First, he starts with the signs to indicate that these stones will not be left upon each other.

Jesus' response: Watch for false signs (24:4-14)

Jesus now warns that many are going to rise up claiming to be the Messiah who will rescue the people of Israel. Many are going to claim to be the ones who can overthrow Rome. Many will claim to be the power of God. Jesus says do not follow them. They will lead you astray. Jesus says that wars and insurrections will be heard, but do not be afraid because that is not going to be the destruction of these temple buildings. Nation will be against nation and there are going to be problems but all of this must occur before the destruction of the temple buildings.

Tacitus tells us some of the history of the time between AD 30-70. He says "the history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible with battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the swords; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time." Josephus and other historians of the time describe the a very disturbed state of Judea during this time. Massacres of the Jews were perpetuated at Caesarea, at Alexandria, in Babylonia and in Syria. In addition to the trouble in Palestine, the Pax Romana was momentarily destabilized in 68-69 A.D. Natural calamities were happening during this time also. Famine ravaged Judea during the rule of Claudius which we read about in **Acts 11:28**. More than 30,000 died of pestilence in ancient Babylon, parts of Judea and in Rome before AD 70. There is an earthquake recorded in **Acts 16:26**. All of this was going on, but Jesus says when these signs are happening, it is not the end of Jerusalem yet. We also see that persecutions would also

begin before the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

II. Signs of the Destruction of the Temple

Gospel proclaimed in all the world (24:14)

Notice what Jesus says here in verse 14. *"This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come."* This statement proves to us that this must be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem. In **Colossians 1:23**, Paul says *"if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister."* Now Colossians was written about 61 A.D. And so Paul says that the gospel has been heard by everyone under heaven by 61 A.D. So we have one of two choices. Either the world came an end at about 70 A.D. Then what are we doing alive? Or Jesus must be referring to the end of the Jewish nation, then end of the temple buildings. Jesus said once the good news was proclaimed to the whole world, the end would come. The end of the Jewish nation must be referred to because by 61 A.D., Paul claimed that the gospel had been proclaimed throughout the whole world.

When you see the abomination (24:15-31)

In verses 15-16, 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."* Now is this referring to the great tribulation that will happen at the end of time? No, we are talking about signs about the destruction of Jerusalem. So what is the abomination of desolation? Turn to **Luke 21:20** to see the answer. Here Luke writes, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near." Here is the answer. The abomination is the Roman Empire and the holy place must refer then to the holy city of Jerusalem and Jesus says that they are going to cause it to be desolate. When you see the city surrounded by Roman armies, then you will know that the end is here. What were the people to do? Leave immediately. Do not pack, do not go back to your house to get things, because the disaster is going to be the worst the world has seen.

Let us hear from the historians about this great tribulation. Outside the city hundreds of Jews were crucified. Inside, civil war broke out as several factions spent more time fighting each other than the Romans. The temple courts were awash with blood. The blockade had reduced the city to a state of famine so severe that mothers ate their own children. Pestilence, starvation, slaughter and monstrous atrocities were commonplace. By August of A.D. 70, 1.1 million Jews had fallen by the edge of the sword and 100,000 had been led away captive into all nations. A high percentage of the cities population was exterminated and enslaved during the fall of Jerusalem. In verse 29 Jesus is describing the "lights out" for the nation of Israel. These symbols and pictures are used by many Old Testament prophets to described the end of a nation. Here Jesus uses the pictures to refer to the nation of Israel. No longer were they God's chosen people, now salvation will be offered to everyone on the earth (vs. 31).

III. When Will These Things Happen?

Learn from the fig tree (vs. 32-35)

Just as plants spout leaves and begin to be fruitful tells us that summer is near, so also these signs will note that the destruction of Jerusalem is near. Notice verse 34, *"I assure*

you: This generation will not pass away until these things take place." Premillennialists take this passage as the second coming and the coming tribulation that will occur after the rapture. If that is true, then that generation must still be alive somewhere. Somewhere there are nearly 2000 year old people. Ridiculous. What Jesus was saying here is that within that generation's lifespan, these things would happen. It would not be something for a really long time, not far into the future, but shortly these things would happen. Everything else may pass away, but his words about this event would surely occur. There was no doubt.

The day/hour no one knows (vs. 36)

Verse 36 is interesting for not even Jesus knew the exact day that these things would occur. Jesus has listed the signs that would occur when the destruction was coming. The disciples have also asked when these things would be. Give us the year, month, and day. Jesus has narrowed it down that it would be within their lifetime that these things would take place. But concerning the day and hour, the angels do not know, nor does the Son of God. Only the Father knew when his judgment would take place.

Therefore be alert (vs. 44)

Since the day or the hour was not told to the disciples, they had to be ready at any time for these things to take place, for it will be like the days of Noah. Things in the world will be going on just like they always have, but then the judgment will come. The same is true for the judgment of Jerusalem. Things will seem like the ordinary everyday things, but suddenly the destruction will happen. So pay attention to the signs so you do not get caught in the city.

Rapture or Rome?

Verses 40-41 are used by many to show that this passage is talking about the rapture. I hope by now we have seen that there is no way that this passage could be talking about the second coming of Christ or the end of time. So what does this passage mean? This is talking about what it will be like when the Roman armies come in. Some are going to suddenly be taken by Rome and dispersed or killed, and others if they listen to these words will be and be left alive. This is what it would be like when the Roman armies came. People were going to begin to disperse, many would stay to be killed, and the onslaught would begin.

Chapter 25

Now Jesus has described all of these things that will happen as sign to the events of one stone not being left upon another. Jesus is now going to continue on his discussion and describe what it will be like after these things. Notice **Matthew 25:1**, *"then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins."* That is an important word. It is not like the other places like in **24:32**, now from the parable or verse 36, *"now concerning that day."* Jesus will now describe what the kingdom will be like after all of these things take place.

Conclusion:

Everything in chapter 24 is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs that will precede that event. It was a great and terrible event for which Jesus told his disciples to be ready for. The use of apocalyptic language does not need to throw us, especially since we have two other gospel accounts to help us decipher the language found in this chapter. This is how the Lord spoke when referring to a coming judgment upon a nation. He used this same language with the prophets of the Old Testament referring to the surrounding

nations, the nation of Israel and the nation of Judah. The same type of language is found in Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation and other places. To help us know what judgment the Lord is referring to in this chapter, remember that Jesus said that the generation alive then would not pass away until all these things take place. Therefore we reject premillennialism that takes this passage out of its context. We reject the great tribulation theorized. We reject the rapture of only saints while others are left behind. None of that is true in this text and is a twisting of the scriptures to destruction.

www.westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/articles/textual/ans_matthew_24.htm

[Lesson adapted from a sermon by Brent Kercheville](#)

A Study of Matthew Twenty-four

by Wayne Jackson

In this era of change, from one millennium to another, there may be no context that has become the focus of more controversy than the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel record. This marvelous depository of prophetic literature has been victimized by considerable theological speculation. Several theories, spawned by a misunderstanding of this chapter, have generated confusion in the religious community.

There are two extremes relative to Matthew 24 which must be addressed. First, there is the notion, advocated by the proponents of "realized eschatology," that *all* Bible prophecy, including everything within Matthew 24 (e.g., the second coming of Christ, the judgment day, and the end of the world), was fulfilled in the event of Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70 (see King, 342-78). For a refutation of the major components of the A.D. 70 dogma, see the author's book, **The A.D. 70 Theory - A Review of the Max King Doctrine.**

On the other hand, those who subscribe to the doctrine of "dispensational premillennialism" tend to view the whole of Matthew 24 as a sort of end-time manual which allows one to determine the characteristic events, and therefore the general time, at which the Lord will return to initiate his "millennial reign." For example, in his popular book, **The Late Great Planet Earth**, first published in 1976, Hal Lindsey argued that Matthew 24 contains the prophetic information which indicates that the "generation" witnessing the "rebirth of Israel" is the same generation that will observe the fulfillment of the "signs" of Matthew 24:1-33, consummated by the second coming of Christ. Inasmuch as the "rebirth of Israel" took place in 1948, and since Lindsey viewed a "generation," as "something like forty years," he felt confident in contending that the Lord's return would be in the neighborhood of 1988 (43). Later, as the 80s approached, Lindsey vacillated, stretched his 40-year timetable to as long as 100 years. He also confessed that he really did not know whether or not the terminal "generation" commenced with the rebirth of Israel (**Eternity**, 1/77). Billy Graham frequently has preached that "Matthew 24 is knocking at the door." Neither of these views is correct.

The "key" that unlocks the chapter

Occasionally, in a context characterized by some difficulty, there will be a "key" passage that unlocks the meaning of the material (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26). Such is the case with reference to Matthew 24. The significant verse is 34, wherein the Lord states: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished" (ASV). Before giving consideration to some of the details of this verse, let us make a general observation. When there are several passages that deal with a topic, some of which are clearer than others, or some of which are framed in language more literal than others, the less-ambiguous, or more literal, are to be employed as the guiding force in the interpretation. This is fundamental exegetical procedure. Now here is the point: Matthew 24:34 is a clear, literal statement from the Lord relative to the events previously discussed. This text, therefore, must be a prevailing guideline in the interpretation of this inspired narrative.

Crucial to understanding this verse, and the context overall, is the term "generation." The Lord clearly indicated that "this" generation, i.e., *his* generation, would not "pass away," until the events depicted in verses 4-33 were "accomplished," i.e., fulfilled. It has been

common for dispensationalists to identify “generation” (Grk. *genea*) with the Jewish race, hence to contend that “the family of Israel” will be preserved until all “these things” are fulfilled (Scofield, 1034). Since the Jewish people are still extant, this concept allows dispensationalists to stretch the circumstances of Matthew 24 all the way to the present time. This view of the passage is seriously flawed.

While millennialists argue that *genea* means “race” in rare instances, some of them acknowledge that this is not the “more common and usual meaning of the word” (Archer, 339). Certainly there is no indication that *genea* is ever employed in the sense of “race” in the Gospel of Matthew – perhaps in the entire New Testament.

Genea is found 43 times in the New Testament. In 17 of these cases, the expression is “this generation.” In Matthew’s record, for example, “this generation” is found in 11:16; 12:41,42,45; 23:36, 24:34. A careful consideration of these passages provides a clear sense of the significance of the expression. For instance, Jesus, surveying the Jewish wickedness of his day, warned of an impending punishment. He said: “All these things [the consequences of the Jews’ rebellion] shall come upon this generation” (Mt. 23:36). Why is it millennialists contend that “this generation” in 23:36 is the generation devastated by the Romans in A.D. 70, but allege that “this generation” in 24:34 refers to a far-away “future day” (Barbieri, 75,78)? Arndt & Gingrich suggest that *genea* denotes “basically, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time generation, contemporaries” (153). McClintock & Strong state that the phrase “this generation” in Matthew 24:34 denotes “the generation of persons then living contemporary with Christ” (776). Herodotus, the Greek historian, said that “three generations” fill up a “century” (II.142). To him, a “generation” was a period of some 33 years.

It should be obvious that the events of Matthew 24:4-34 have to do with the “generation” that was contemporary with the Lord. The Christians could look for certain tell-tale indicators, detailed by the Savior, and “know” that the Lord’s judgment upon Jerusalem was near (33). But of “that [the] day” of the Son’s final coming, “knoweth no one” except the Father (36). There is thus a clear contrast between Christ’s temporal activity, chronicled prior to verse 34, and that of the Lord’s judgment at the end of time.

Jerusalem’s destruction

As Jesus left the environs of the sacred area, his disciples directed attention to the temple. The Lord declared that this edifice would be “thrown down” so that not one stone would be left upon another (24:2). There is no doubt but that Jesus was uttering an oracle concerning the destruction of the city by the Romans (cf. Mt. 22:7; Lk. 21:20). Later, on the mount of Olives, the disciples asked: “When shall these things [the demolition of the temple] be?” They also wanted to know what would be the “sign” of his “coming, and of the end of the world” (24:3). R.C. Foster has well observed: “Much of the confusion in interpreting the predictions of Jesus recorded in Matthew 24 and the parallel passages arises from the failure to see that the disciples asked and Jesus answered two questions: one, concerning the fall of Jerusalem; the other, concerning His second coming” (1187). The disciples likely assumed that the destruction of the temple, and the end of the world, would occur at the same time. The Master sought to correct that impression, first, by discussing the Roman invasion (4-34), and then by commenting regarding his final coming to render universal judgment (35-51).

Jesus gave a series of clues which could be used by first-century saints to determine when Judaism's fall would occur. A brief survey of these is as follows (see vss. 5-14):

- a. False "messiahs" would arise.
- b. There would be numerous military encounters.
- c. Famines and earthquakes would occur.
- d. Disciples would be persecuted.
- e. Some would "stumble," i.e., depart from the faith.
- f. False prophets would be prevalent.
- g. Decreasing spirituality on the part of some saints would be evident.
- h. Those who endured would be delivered.
- i. The gospel would be published far and wide during these four decades.

As unlikely as some of these prophetic declarations may seem to the skeptic, each of them was fulfilled by the time Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70. A more thorough discussion of these matters may be found in J. Marcellus Kik's volume, **Matthew 24**.

Continuing, Christ declared that the impending invasion had been foretold in the book of Daniel (15). The Savior thus urged the disciples to be ready to flee the city, praying that God would providentially accommodate their departure (16-19). He described the intensity of the Roman assault and promised that God would intervene for "the elect's" sake (21-22). The disciples were not to be swayed by false claims that Jesus had personally arrived, because, when that event actually occurred, it would be globally evident (23-27). The Jewish nation was described as a rotting carcass where birds of prey would gather (28). The fall of the Hebrew system is set forth in the sort of apocalyptic nomenclature that is characteristic of Old Testament literature, e.g., when the prophets pictorially portray the overthrow of Jehovah's enemies (cf. Isa. 13:10-11; 34:2ff; Ezek. 32:7-8). All of this would be a "sign" of the fact that "the Son of man in heaven" was orchestrating these events (29-30). (Note: It is important to observe that the Lord would be accomplishing "these things" from *heaven*, not from some position upon the earth.) The result of Judaism's demise would be a great gospel harvest, reminiscent of the Jubilee celebration of Old Testament fame (31; cf. Lk. 4:17-21).

Finally, just as the ancient citizen of Palestine could determine the coming of summer by the budding of the fig tree, even so, by reflecting upon the signals given by Christ, the disciples would be able to discern the approach of the promised calamity (32-33).

Our major thrust now will be to argue the case that the "signs" of Matthew 24:4ff *do not* find their fulfillment in the final return of Christ.

First, whereas dispensationalists argue for a 20th century fulfillment of these "signs," accompanied by a nuclear holocaust (Lindsey, 135-57), contextual indicators clearly reflect the fact that Jesus had reference to an *ancient and local situation*. Consider the following factors.

- a. The impending destruction would involve the Jewish temple – “the holy place” (24:15), and the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:20) – not New York, Paris, etc., as alleged by Lindsey and others. The temple has lain in ruins for more than 19 centuries, and there is no evidence that it will ever be rebuilt.
- b. The Jerusalem disciples were warned to flee unto the mountains (16) – hardly efficacious advice if a nuclear attack were envisioned. However, the early Christians understood this admonition, and fled to Pella, beyond the Jordan, when the Romans advanced toward the city (Eusebius III.5).
- c. Christ warned: “Let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house” (17). Again, such instruction hardly would be appropriate under the conditions of a nuclear assault. “On the house top” is the last place one would want to be! But the admonition made perfect sense in view of the fact that the houses of old Jerusalem were flat-roofed and situated close to one another. Accordingly, Christians might proceed, by way of “the road of roofs,” to the edge of the city, thus escaping the invading soldiers (Edersheim, 93).
- d. Jesus urged: “Pray that your flight be not in the winter” nor “on a sabbath” (20). This anticipates primitive conditions when winter travel could be rigorous; moreover, the gates of Jerusalem would be closed on the sabbath (Neh. 13:18), which would make escape more difficult.

Second, though the destruction of Jerusalem was seen as a sort of “coming” of Christ (cf. Mt. 10:23; 24:30,33; Lk. 21:27), i.e., in *judgment* upon the Hebrew nation, such was emphatically distinguished from the event known as the “second” coming (cf. Heb. 9:28). The Lord cautioned that if any false teacher should attempt to proclaim his visible “coming” in connection with Jerusalem’s fall, the bogus prophet was to be ignored, because the second coming would be apparent *universally* (23-27), whereas the destruction of Jerusalem was but a *local event*. Jerusalem’s fall would only reflect a “sign” of Christ’s providential “coming” in destructive judgment upon the holy city (29-31), not the Savior’s visible, final coming. More on this momentarily.

Third, it is very significant that the Lord, in connection with his discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem, introduced the remarkable prophecy that had been given five centuries earlier to the prophet Daniel. Jesus said: “When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judea flee ...” (24:15,16). The dispensational theory argues that the “abomination of desolation” is, from our vantage point, yet in the future. Supposedly, the prophetic focus is upon “the Antichrist,” alleged to be “a world dictator” who will “make the temple abominable” in the so-called “Tribulation” period just prior to the Lord’s second coming (Barbieri, 77). The problem with this view is this: Daniel connects the appearance of the “abomination that makes desolate” with the *first* coming of Christ, not the Lord’s *second* coming (Dan. 9:24-27)!

The prophecy of Daniel’s seventy weeks

Let us, in this connection, briefly examine this fascinating prophecy. There is a three-fold thrust to the narrative.

First, it foretells the “Anointed” One’s advent, and what would be accomplished thereby. The Messiah would: finish transgression, bring an end to sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, usher in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, be anointed as the most holy one, make firm a new covenant, and terminate sacrifices. *These things are associated with Christ’s redemptive work at Calvary – not his second coming.* To suggest that Daniel’s prophecy contains a “long parenthesis,” the “church age” (between the 69th and 70th weeks), which was wholly unknown to the Old Testament prophets, is without any rational basis.

Second, the prophecy sets forth a chronological time-frame in which the messianic events would take place. From the time of Judah’s commission to leave Babylonian captivity (in 457 B.C.), some 486 1/2 years (set forth in three increments – with “days” signifying “years”) would pass, thus terminating in the very year of Jesus’ death (see the author’s article on [Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks](#), elsewhere in our [Archives](#)).

Finally, the terrible price for the Jews’ rejection of Jesus is graphically portrayed. “As a result or consequence of the death of the Messiah one making desolate (i.e. the Roman prince Titus) appears ‘upon the wing of abominations’ (i.e. the pinnacle of the temple). By this language the complete destruction of the temple is signified” (Young, 679).

It is not without significance that the Jews themselves recognized that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. Josephus, the Jewish historian, stated that “Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them” (**Antiquities**, 10.11.7). This view of “Daniel’s seventy weeks,” commonly called the “traditional” view, “has been held with slight variation by most Biblical scholars until recent years” (Scott, 364).

Jesus’ discussion of his second coming

Beginning in verses 35ff, the Lord turns his attention to the final day of history, the day of his ultimate “coming.” Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Savior’s words will remain inviolate.

Jesus shows that there had been a broad range of indicators – “all these things” – which, when observed, would allow the Christians to escape the horrible Roman invasion (33). Nevertheless, at the time of the second coming, no such signs would be provided; rather, the end of the world will occur in a dramatically unannounced fashion. Let us study some of the Lord’s arguments.

The Savior affirmed: “But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only” (36). First, observe the use of “but,” an adversative particle, which stresses a contrast between the previous material and that which follows. Professor Kik comments that this verse “gives immediate evidence of a change in subject matter” (101). In 4-34 the Lord had spoke of the “days” (plural) of tribulation associated with Jerusalem’s peril (19,22,29), but now it is “the day” (singular) – an expression commonly used of the final day of history (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Thes. 5:4; 2 Tim. 1:12).

Second, observe that even Jesus himself did not know when “the day” of his coming (cf. 37) would be. Yet, he had given signs whereby others might “know” (33) that he was providentially “nigh” in the destruction of Jerusalem. Obviously the two events were not the

same. Is it not rather ironical that Christ, who gave these “signs,” did not know (while on earth) when his return would take place, but modern dispensationalists can read Matthew 24 and virtually pinpoint the time of the second coming! In 1992 Harold Camping, a syndicated television preacher, wrote: “The results of this study indicate that the month of September of the year 1994 is to be the time for the end of history” (531).

Third, Christ cited an historical example which demonstrated that those of the pre-flood world were unaware of their impending doom “until the flood came, and took them all away.” The point being, “so shall be the coming of the Son of man” (39). There will be no specific, chronological warning!

Fourth, Jesus appealed to certain cultural circumstances to depict the sudden, unanticipated nature of his return. Two men would be working in the field; one would be taken, the other left (40). Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken, one is left (41). Then, in a parallel reference, two men are in bed; one is taken, the other is left” (Lk. 17:34). One scholar has observed that these references contemplate different times of the day – early morning (grinding at the mill), mid-day (working in the field), and night (in bed), thus suggesting that when Christ returns, it will be day in some places, but night in others – day and night, at the same time (Collett, 277). This could not have reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, but must represent a “coming” of the Lord that will affect men globally. Additionally, during Jerusalem’s calamity, it was not a matter of some taken/some left; *all were taken!* More than a million Jews were slaughtered and thousands of others were taken into foreign slavery (Josephus, **Wars** 6.9). Geldenhuys states that “not a single Jew was left alive in the city or its vicinity” (III.141).

Fifth, the Lord refers to a societal situation. The final day will be like the coming of a thief, who never warns or gives clues as to the time of his encroachment (42,43). The Christian thus is cautioned to “watch,” for in an hour “that ye think not the Son of man cometh” (44). Again, the point is: The time of Jesus’ return cannot be anticipated. This clearly divorces the Lord’s second coming from those “signs” associated with the fall of Jerusalem.