MATTHEW 24

Mat 24:1  Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.

Mat 24:2  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.”

* When opening chapter 24, it is extremely important to keep in mind the context of the end of chapter 23.
* Jesus is crying over the city of Jerusalem because of its wickedness and he tells the Jews but the Temple will soon be left desolate.
* Desolate – “deserted of people and in a state of bleak and dismal emptiness.” (Oxford)
* He then tells the Jewish officials they will not see Him again until they say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” which we took to be a reference to the Judgement Day.
* As chapter 24 opens, Jesus is departing the Temple area and His disciples are making it a point to draw attention to the splendor of the Temple complex.
	+ Jesus’ proclamation of the Temple’s desolation was a bold claim considering how great the Temple was in the 1st century.
	+ But Jesus goes even further in verse 2, with the announcement that a day was coming when the Temple would be destroyed. The destruction would be so complete not even 2 stones would stand on top of each other.

Mat 24:3 - 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?”

* If the Temple was the center of your religious life, as it was for the Jews, Jesus’ prediction would have been shocking.
* Naturally, the Apostles are curious about Jesus’ words at the end of chapter 23 and the beginning of 24. They ask when these things will take place.
	+ Their specific question is, **“…when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”**
	+ Luke records their question as, **“Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”**
	+ Mark – records it as, **“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”**
	+ It seems to me these questions not only refers to Jesus’ comment in 24:2 but also 23:38-39.
	+ So they’ve asked about the destruction and desolation of the Temple and about the Day of Judgement (end of time).
		- What is meant by the “end of the age”?
			* How did the Apostle’s understand that phrase?
			* The only place we see the phrase used in Matthew is in chapter 13.
				+ Mat 13:40 - Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the **end of the age**.
				+ Mat 13:49 - So it will be at the **end of the age**. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous
				+ Verse 40 is in the context of the parable of the weeds and the wheat.
				+ Verse 49 is in the context of the parable of the net.
				+ Both of these usages refer to the end of time (Judgement Day).
		- It is possible they believed these two things would happen on the same day. That the Temple wouldn’t be destroyed until the end of time.
		- But that wasn’t the case as we will see as we progress through the chapter.

Mat 24:4 - And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.

Mat 24:5 - For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.

* In the time between Christ’s prediction and the fulfillment of His words, there would be many false christs.
* People would come claiming they were the messiah and preaching messages contrary to that of Jesus.
* Jesus does not want them to be deceived by these imposters.
	+ Some of these imposters are recorded in the book of Acts and by historians like Josephus.
	+ [A.D. 46.] Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, [(10)](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-20.html#EndNote_Ant_20.11b) persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan. For he told them he was a prophet: and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it. And many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to make any advantage of his wild attempt: but sent a troop of horsemen out against them. Who falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them, and took many of them alive. They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head, and carried it to Jerusalem. This was what befel the Jews in the time of Cuspius Fadus’s government. (Antiquities 20.5.1; see also Acts 5:36).
	+ [A.D. 55.] These works that were done by the robbers, filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness: and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. [(21)](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-20.html#EndNote_Ant_20.21b) And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishments of their folly. For Felix brought them back; and then punished them. Moreover there came out of Egypt, about this time, to Jerusalem, one that said he was a prophet; [(22)](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-20.html#EndNote_Ant_20.22b) and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the mount of olives, as it was called; which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said farther, that he would shew them from hence how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down: and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down. Now when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen, from Jerusalem; and attacked the Egyptian, and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight; but did not appear any more (Antiquities 20.8.6; see also Acts 21:37-39).

Mat 24:6 - And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Mat 24:7 - For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

Mat 24:8 - All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

* As is still true today, news of wars and natural disasters get people thinking about “the coming end.”
* Jesus makes the Apostles aware that wars and natural disasters would come but they were not the sign of an immediate end.
	+ A great famine inflicted the land during the reign of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28); (Antiquities 20.2.5).
	+ Numerous warns, skirmishes, and rebellions occurred in the land of the Jews and abroad within the borders of the Roman Empire.
	+ A magnitude 5-6.5 earthquake hit the cities of Pompei and Herculaneum on the Italian peninsula in 62 A.D..
* These only marked the beginning leading up to the fulfillment. Like labor pains before the actual birth.

Mat 24:9 - “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

* As was discussed in the text and the notes of chapter 10, the Apostles would face significant persecution on their mission to advance the good news.
* Traditions tell us all the Apostles, saving John, were martyred.

Mat 24:10 - And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

Mat 24:11 - And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

Mat 24:12 - And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

Mat 24:13 - But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

* There persecution would lead many to abandon Christ and His church and “fall away.”
* Not only would they abandon Christ for themselves, they would betray those they had once loved as brothers/sisters, even to the point of hating them.
* False teachers would spring up convincing people to believe messages which did not have their origin in God.
	+ We will encounter some of these false doctrines when we study the epistles.
	+ They were tricky, deceptive, and not easy to spot.
	+ 2Co 11:13-14 - For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.
* Verse 12 reads, “And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.”
	+ KJV reads, “And because iniquity shall abound…”
	+ The other day I was listening to a podcast about widespread corruption in an East Asian country.
		- The host of the podcast had moved to this country and was talking about how difficult it was not to be corrupted yourself when you are surrounded by so much corruption.
		- His co-host agreed and gave several examples of how honest individuals are tempted, sometimes by employers, sometimes by friends, sometimes by government officials, to abandon their high moral views and “just do what everyone else is doing.”
		- They discussed how they had set out to avoid the corruption and how it had slowly crept into their lives.
	+ The same is true in the Christian life.
		- When we are surrounded by Christians, it is easy to act like a Christian,
		- But as the community around us changes and old Christian friends surrender to the world, it gets harder to preserver.
		- It is easy to join the “in crowd.”
		- It would have been easy to relinquish their convictions about Christ and avoid the pain and persecution of enemies and backstabbers.
		- When others act lawlessly towards you, it is difficult to maintain Christlikeness.
		- The Apostles had been commanded to love their enemies, turn the other cheek, and go the 2nd mile, and Jesus was describing for them a time when the rubber was going to have to meet the road.
* The trials ahead of them were going to be very difficult, but Christ promises them, if they endured to the end, they would be saved (and we know many of them did).

Mat 24:14 - 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.

* During this time, the good news about the salvation brought by Jesus would be taken across the world and preached to all kinds of people.
* Notice, the gospel of the Kingdom would go to “all nations” before the Temple was destroyed.
* The Apostles didn’t pick up on this phrase, but they would soon be shown by the Holy Spirit that God desired the good news to go to the gentiles as well as the Jews.

Mat 24:15 - “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

* If we wanted to we could devote a whole set of notes to this one verse.
* Jesus doesn’t pull this phrase, “abomination of desolation” out of thin air.
	+ As mentioned, the wording comes from the book of Daniel.
	+ Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11
* Many believe the “abomination of desolation” is a specific term referring to only one event/time in history.
	+ This is not my understanding.
	+ The reference in Daniel 9:27 appears to be speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
	+ The reference in Daniel 11:31 appears to be referencing the disrespect of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes between the years (171-163 B.C.).
	+ This can be understood through a study of the context in Daniel 9 (specifically the 70 weeks of Daniel) and chapter 11.
* Considering the context of Matthew 24, it is almost certain Jesus’ is citing the statement recorded by Daniel in his 9th chapter.
* Luk 21:20 - But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand.
* The Hebrew term for “abomination” is used many times in the Old Testament, most often to refer to idolatry, pagan worship, and immorality.
* The desolation foretold by Jesus would come at the hands of wicked and abominable men.
* The destruction of the city and the Temple in 70 A.D. would absolutely be classified as “desolation.”
	+ If you have time, search for some of the historical records discussing the Roman siege.
	+ Some of these details can be found in Josephus’ writings.
* When they saw the abomination of desolation (Roman army) standing “in the holy place” they were to take action.
	+ What is “the holy place?”
	+ This seems to be a reference to the city of Jerusalem.
	+ At the time this was spoken the Apostles certainly would have thought of Jerusalem as a holy place.
	+ Jerusalem contained the holiest place of all, the Temple.
* What action were they to take?
* It is described in the following verses…

Mat 24:16 - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 - Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,

Mat 24:18 - and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.

Mat 24:19 - And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

Mat 24:20 - Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

Mat 24:21 - For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

Mat 24:22 - 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.

* Historical context is important to understand these passages.
* I will make this as concise as possible.
	+ The siege of Jerusalem was not a spur of the moment siege on a singular city of the Jews.
	+ The Jews had staged a rebellion in Judaea (Jerusalem and beyond)
	+ By the time the Roman army, led by Vespasian, arrived at Jerusalem they had already put down several Jewish rebellions located throughout the countryside.
	+ Vespasian finally arrived at Jerusalem and was prepared to subjugate them as he had the rest.
	+ Josephus, *Jewish Wars 4.9.2-3*:
		- And now the war having gone through all the mountainous country, and all the plain country also, those that were at Jerusalem were deprived of the liberty of going out of the city. For as to such as had a mind to desert, they were watched by the zealots. And as to such as were not yet on the side of the Romans, their army kept them in, by encompassing the city round about on all sides… 2. Now as Vespasian was returned to Cesarea, and was getting ready with all his army to march directly to Jerusalem, he was informed that Nero was dead… Wherefore Vespasian put off at first his expedition against Jerusalem, and stood waiting whither the empire would be transferred, after the death of Nero. Moreover, when he heard that Galba was made Emperor, he attempted nothing, till he also should send him some directions about the war. However, he sent his son Titus to him, to salute him; and to receive his commands about the Jews. Upon the very same errand did King Agrippa sail along with Titus, to Galba. But as they were sailing in their long ships by the coasts of Achaia, for it was winter time, they heard that Galba was slain, before they could get to him; after he had reigned seven months, and as many days. After whom Otho took the government, and undertook the management of publick affairs. So Agrippa resolved to go on to Rome, without any terror, on account of the change in the government. But Titus, by a divine impulse, sailed back from Greece to Syria, and came in great haste to Cesarea, to his father. And now they were both in suspence about the publick affairs: the Roman empire being then in a fluctuating condition: and did not go on with their expedition against the Jews: but thought that to make any attack upon foreigners was now unseasonable; on account of the solicitude they were in for their own country. And now there arose another war at Jerusalem.
	+ When Vespasian withdrew, a power vacuum was created in Judea and many sects battled each other for wealth and supremacy.
	+ Even thought the Romans had departed there were still significant Jewish bloodshed.
	+ Civil war existed in Judaea but also in Rome. Three emperors rose and fell from power in a matter of months (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius).
	+ Even after the withdraw of Vespasian, the Jews were held inside the city of Jerusalem by the various sects involved in the civil war.
	+ Eventually, these factions gained access to the city and the Temple was turned into a fortress.
	+ Josephus tells us the actions of the men belonging to some of these factions within the city were abominable:
		- For he [John] permitted them to do all things that any of them desired to do. While their inclination to plunder was insatiable: as was their zeal in searching the houses of the rich. And for the murdering of the men, and abusing of the women, it was sport to them. They also devoured what spoils they had taken, together with their blood; and indulged themselves in feminine wantonness, without any disturbance, till they were satiated therewith. While they decked their hair, and put on womens garments, and were besmeared over with ointments: and that they might appear very comely, they had paints under their eyes; and imitated not only the ornaments, but also the lusts of women: and were guilty of such intolerable uncleanness, that they invented unlawful pleasures of that sort (Jewish Wars 4.9.10).
		- Their civil war resulted in much of the food storage being burned.
	+ Josephus writes:
		- Those men made the temple of God a strong hold for them, and a place whither they might resort, in order to avoid the troubles they feared from the people: the sanctuary was now become a refuge, and a shop of tyranny.
		- the temple was defiled every where with murders. (Jewish Wars 5.1.2)
		- And the same advantage that Eleazar and his party had over him, since he was beneath them; the same advantage had he, by his higher situation, over Simon. On which account he easily repelled the attacks that were made from beneath, by the weapons thrown from their hands only: but was obliged to repel those that threw their darts from the temple above him, by his engines of war. For he had such engines as threw darts, and javelins, and stones; and that in no small number. **By which he did not only defend himself from such as fought against him, but slew moreover many of the priests, as they were about their sacred ministrations**. For notwithstanding these men were mad with all sorts of impiety, yet did **they still admit those that desired to offer their sacrifices**: although they took care to search the people of their own country beforehand; and both suspected, and watched them. While they were not so much afraid of strangers: who although they had gotten leave of them, how cruel soever they were, to come into that court, were yet often destroyed by this sedition. For those darts that were thrown by the engines came with that force, that they went over all the buildings, and reached as far as the altar, and the temple itself; and fell upon the priests, and those [(2)](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/war-5.html#EndNote_War_5.2b) that were about the sacred offices. **Insomuch that many persons who came thither with great zeal from the ends of the earth, to offer sacrifices, at this celebrated place; which was esteemed holy by all mankind; fell down before their own sacrifices themselves, and sprinkled that altar which was venerable among all men, both Greeks and Barbarians, with their own blood; till the dead bodies of strangers were mingled together with those of their own country; and those of profane persons with those of the priests: and the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves.** And now, “O must wretched city, what misery so great as this didst thou suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify thee from thy intestine hatred? For **thou couldest be no longer a place fit for God**; nor couldest thou long continue in being, after thou hadst been a sepulchre for the bodies of thy own people; and **hadst made the holy house itself a burying place** in this civil war of thine. (Jewish Wars 5.1.3)
		- Josephus tells us, John, the leader of the faction held up in the Temple abused the dedicated holy items.
		- So the Jewish factions were destroying their own Temple.
		- 5. And now, as the city was engaged in a war on all sides, from these treacherous crowds of wicked men; the people of the city between them were, like a great body, torn in pieces. The aged men, and the women were in such distress by their internal calamities, that they wished for the Romans; and earnestly hoped for an external war, in order to their delivery from their domestical miseries… They [3 factions] agreed in nothing but this, to kill those that were innocent. (Jewish Wars 5.1.5)
		- Is it possible this is included in the “abomination of desolation?”
	+ After the Roman empire stabalized, Vespasian was proclaimed emperor of Rome.
	+ His first priority was to ensure control of Alexandria, Egypt, but upon doing so, he turned his attention back to the unsubdued rebellious Jews.
	+ Vespasian wished to return to Rome but sent his son, Titus, to tie up loose ends in the Holy Land
	+ When Titus surrounded the walls of Jerusalem, the 3 factions finally stopped fighting each other (at least for a while). .
	+ While Titus’ legions surrounded the city and were preparing their camp the Jews decided it was now or never.
		- They poured out of the city and took the Roman legion by surprise.
		- After an initial victory, the Jews were driven back to the city but it wasn’t long before they charged out again with “such mighty violence, that one might compare it to the running of the most terrible wild beasts” (Jewish Wars 5.2.5).
		- The drove the Romans back and almost captured Titus himself.
		- Titus then drew back the legion to make camp in the mountains.
		- But the Jews persisted. They followed the Romans and challenged them again.
			* Titus turned to fight them and engaged in hand-to-hand combat.
			* The rest of the legion followed their general and drove the Jews back into the city once more.
	+ It would be some time before the Romans were prepared to siege and during the waiting period the 3 factions started fighting again.
		- It was the time of unleavened bread and the Temple was opened for worship and sacrifice.
		- However, one of the faction leaders disguised his men as worshippers and attacked the faction within the Temple.
		- They murdered the true worshippers and the innocents and made pacts with the opposing faction.
	+ One day, while Titus was riding around the city, one of his companions was injured by a dart from the wall of the city.
	+ This so infuriated Titus he decided to press the assault on the city.
	+ After a time, Josephus was sent to negotiate terms of peace but the discussions were not successful.
	+ Josephus also describes a window of time in which many of the people deserted the city.
		- He records Titus let many of them go free into the countryside.
		- But when the Jewish faction leaders discovered the deserters, the watched the gates of the city and slit the throats of anyone they suspected of deserting.
		- So, it wasn’t so much the Romans the civilian Jews were afraid of… their own corrupt people were keeping them hostage in the city.
	+ Josephus also records the horrors the Jews inflicted on themselves.
		- They were starving due to a food shortage.
		- They created tortures to force people to tell them where their food was hidden.
		- They took to robbing, murdering and cannibalism.
		- It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these mens iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly; that neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries; nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was from the beginning of the world. Finally, they brought the Hebrew nation into contempt (Jewish Wars 5.10.5)
	+ The Romans started crucifying people they caught outside of the walls in hopes the Jews would surrender.
	+ Titus was willing to spare the city from absolute destruction but the faction leaders would not surrender.
	+ The Jews put up a good fight and Titus had to adjust his tactics.
	+ He determined to build a wall around the city and starve them out.
	+ So many people died, the Jews started throwing their bodies over the wall into the valley.
	+ When Titus saw this, Josephus records:
		- …when Titus, in going his rounds along those valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness, that this was not his doing (Jewish Wars 5.12.4).
	+ To make a very long story short, the obstinance of the Jews continued to the very end.
		- The Jews gained a few small victories which prolonged their stay in a foodless city.
		- But ultimately the walls were breached and the city was levelled.
		- Josephus records that Titus told his men not to destroy the Temple but his command was forgotten in the heat of the battle and the entire Temple structure was brought to the ground.
		- Thousands were killed.
		- Blood ran through the streets.
		- Everything the Jews valued was reduced to rubble.
* In another of Josephus’ books, Antiquities, he tells his readers the prophet Daniel predicted the desolation of the Jews by the Romans.
	+ and that from among them there should arise a certain King that should overcome our nation, and their laws, and should take away their political government, and should spoil the temple, and forbid the sacrifices to be offered, for three years time.” And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel’s vision; and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government; and that our countrey should be made desolate by them (Antiquities 10.11.7).
* Now that we have the history behind the text, let’s try to break it down.
* The Jews were supposed to take action when the saw the abomination of desolation.
	+ The gospel of Luke says, “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.”
	+ This was true when Vespasian’s army first surrounded the city.
	+ It was also true when Titus’ army surrounded the city.

Mat 24:16 - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mat 24:17 - Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,

Mat 24:18 - and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.

Mat 24:19 - And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

Mat 24:20 - Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

* When they see the city surrounded, they are to flee to the mountains.
* Verses 17 and 18 gave me a significant amount of trouble.
	+ The verses are not confusing in substance or in this context but they can be very confusing when reading them again in Luke 17:31-33.
	+ Luke’s text appears to be talking about the second coming of Jesus (not the destruction of Jerusalem).
	+ So how should we understand these words.
	+ I believe Jesus intends His audience to understand the principle behind the words rather than to take them literally.
		- Jesus is probably not literally forbidding someone to return to their house or pick up their cloak in the field.
		- Instead, I think He is communicating a principle of preparedness.
		- They need to be in a constant state of readiness.
		- They need to be alert, ready, and sober-minded enough at any time to recognize the signs and take fast action.
		- Being caught off guard could cost them their lives.
* They were to pray their journey was not made more difficult by factors like pregnancy, cold, or the Sabbath day.
	+ Why the Sabbath day?
	+ It probably would have looked really suspicious to walk out of the city of Jerusalem on Sabbath because the people had rules on how far they could walk.
	+ It would have looked especially suspicious if it was your whole family.
	+ It also would have looked suspicious if you were carrying anything with you for your journey because the Jews weren’t supposed to carry burdens on Sabbath.
	+ You would have stuck out like a soar thumb to anyone trying to catch deserters.
* This makes sense in light of what we just examined.
	+ There was only a small window of time for the Jews to escape the city of Jerusalem between the departure of Vespasian and the rise of the 3 waring factions.
	+ And even when those windows appeared, the slightest hinderance could cost them their lives.

Mat 24:21 - For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

* Tribulation would come at the hands of the Romans and their fellow Jews.
* I think we underestimate how the horror of Jerusalem’s siege and destruction.
* Josephus’ writing make clear just how horrible the scenes really were.

Mat 24:22 - 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.

* If the slaughter of the Romans had continued in Judaea with the same ferocity, it wouldn’t have taken long for the entire nation to be destroyed.
* In some way, God abbreviated the siege of Jerusalem and the rage of the Romans for the sake of the elect (the saints; those faithful to Christ)
* Many have speculated as to the exact moment or event which led to the shorting but I’ve not been convinced we can know for sure.

Mat 24:23 - Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.

Mat 24:24 - For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Mat 24:25 - See, I have told you beforehand.

Mat 24:26 - 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.

* Again, Jesus gives warnings about false teachers claiming the arrival of some christ.
* They were to ignore anyone claiming to be or have seen the Christ and to be on the lookout for false prophets.
* It may have been easy for false christs to gain popularity.
	+ Jesus had not been the military leader the Jews had wanted.
	+ Many were probably anxious to step up and fill in as the military messiah.

Mat 24:27 - For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

* The false christs and prophets of the previous verses would claim the Messiah was out in the wilderness or in an inner room, as if His coming would be subtle and needed to be revealed.
* Jesus says otherwise.
* The Son of Man (Jesus) would come like a streak of lighting that lights up the sky from the east to the west.
* Huge bolts of lightning are anything but subtle. They are visible to everyone. Not to mention the thunder that follows them.
* The “coming of the Son of Man.”
	+ You may be wondering, how did we go from discussing the destruction of the city of Jerusalem to the “coming” of Jesus (which probably makes you think of the end of time).
	+ This is part of what makes this text tricky.
	+ How are we to understand the “coming of the Son of Man?”
		- Especially in light verse 34
		- Mat 24:34 - Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
	+ Let us first evaluate our assumptions.
		- When we hear “the coming of Jesus” or the “coming of God” our minds almost immediately go to the “2nd coming of Christ” at the end of time.
		- But does the Bible always use the phrase to indicate a physical appearance of God on the earth?
		- Answer: No!
		- Example:
			* Isaiah 19:1-14 - An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, **the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt**; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them. And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, each against another and each against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom; and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their counsel; and they will inquire of the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the necromancers; and I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.
				+ God is said to be riding on clouds to arrive in Egypt in Isaiah’s writings.
				+ God was going to punish the Egyptians.

But God didn’t literally come down to the earth in physical form.

* + - * + He providentially made an appearance in Egypt to humble the Egyptians for their wickedness.
			* Rev 2:4-5 - But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. **If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand** from its place, unless you repent.
				+ Jesus warns the Ephesian church in the book of Revelation that if they do not rekindle their love, He will come to them and remove their candlestick.
				+ He wasn’t going to come back down to earth to Ephesus, His coming would be spiritual but with very real consequences.
			* Mat 16:28 - Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”
		- Answer: References to the “coming” of God or Christ do not always indicate a physical coming of God to the earth.
	+ So as we look at the “coming of the Son of Man” in this verse and up to verse 34, it is my understand we should we should interpret it as a non-physical, providential coming of God
	+ What does this look like in context?
		- There is no question God worked behind the scenes in the destruction of Jerusalem.
		- The destruction of 70 A.D was the wrath of God poured out on His stubborn people after they had filled up “the measure of their fathers” (23:32).
		- God orchestrated the desolation of their house (24:38)
		- In a very real sense, He came to Jerusalem to accomplish His will.
	+ Jesus says this “coming” of God will be obvious and clear to everyone.
	+ The 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem unquestionably falls into the “obvious” category.

Mat 24:28 - Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

* If this statement only appeared in Matthew 24 I would have no problem understanding it, however, it also appears in Luke 17:37.
	+ The context in Matthew 24, as we have discussed, is the destruction of Jerusalem.
		- Many interpret this statement to be a literal statement about dead human corpses.
		- There would be an abundance of corpses during the siege of Jerusalem.
		- Josephus records they were so abundant within the city people started throwing them over the walls.
		- No doubt the scavengers came for a feast.
		- It should be noted, the Greek word used for “corpse” can mean a human body but can also mean an animal body (see Hebrews 13:11).
	+ How then do we understand the same statement in Luke 17 which appears to be talking about the end of time?
		- Many have suggested this statement of Jesus was a cultural proverb.
		- A statement about conditions being right.
			* Where/when the conditions are right, the Lord will fulfill His plans.
			* Vultures will circle a wounded animal waiting for their meal. When their dinner is prepared (dead) they come to eat.
		- Understanding the statement in this way allows us to use the same interpretation in both passages.
			* In Matthew 24, Jesus is warning His Apostles not to listen to people who claim He has returned in the wilderness or in secret in an inner room. He tells them His coming will be obvious (like lightning) and will occur only when He determines the conditions are right (in part, this probably included the Jews filled up the measure of their fathers by killing Christ and persecuting His followers, 23:32; 24:9)
			* At the end of Luke 17, Jesus’ disciples ask Him “where” the events He just described will take place. Obviously, the end of time will be a universal event, so Jesus responds, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” It is not so much a question of “where” but “when.” Jesus will return to judge the world when the conditions are right and God’s will has been accomplished.

Mat 24:29 - “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

* Again, we find language that may sound like “end of the world” language to the average reader.
* This is where knowledge of the Old Testament prophets is really valuable.
* A few things to keep in mind when interpreting this verse:
	+ (1) As stated before, this verse is included in Jesus’ statement in verse 34, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”
		- If you are still alive today (which I assume you are) you will be able to look outside and see the stars in the sky and the sun still shining.
		- If these events were going to take place in in the lifespan of the generation they were addressed to (the Apostles) they clearly were intended to be understood in a figurative way.
	+ (2) The Old Testament uses similar language to describe non-world ending events.
		- Although this may conjure up apocalypse style images in our minds, the minds of a Jewish audience familiar with the prophets would have been drawn back to their scriptures.
		- Isa 13:9-10 - Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. 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.
		- This verse isn’t about the end of the world, it is about God’s punishment on the nation of Babylon.
		- Eze 32:7-8 - When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD.
		- These verses aren’t about the end of the world either, they are in a section of scripture where God is pronouncing judgement on Egypt.
* With this knowledge, how should we interpret verse 29 in context?
	+ God is announcing a judgement on the city of Jerusalem within the lifetime of the living generation.
	+ He is employing the language of the prophets to announce a similar judgement to the ones they announced on gentile nations.
	+ This judgement would occur “Immediately after the tribulation of those days.”
		- What days?
		- Keep the passage in context…
		- Tribulation – “a cause of great trouble or suffering.”
		- The cause of great trouble or suffering here was the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans.
		- Particularly the events leading up to the final destruction.
		- The Jews inside the city experienced all kinds of horrors at the hands of the Romans and their fellow Jews.
	+ After months of misery, the Romans would finally breach the walls of the city, burn the Temple, and slaughter thousands.

Mat 24:30 - Then will **appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man**, 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. [ESV]

Mat 24:30 - 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. [KJV]

* I usually don’t provide two translations of the text but it is important for this verse.
* There is a significant difference between these two.
* My understanding is that both of the translations are grammatically correct and it comes down to the preference of the translators.
* The translation determines what or who is “in heaven.”
	+ If the first translation is taken, it is “the sign” that appears in heaven.
	+ If the second translation is taken, it is “the Son of Man” who is in heaven and the location of the sign is not specified.
* ESV, NKJV, and NASB us the first translation.
* KJV, ASV, and NIV us the second translation.
* In my opinion (not because I know any Greek but because of the context) the translation of the KJV, ASV, and NIV make the most sense.
* The Bible often uses the term “sign” to speak of a physical reality that confirms a spiritual truth.
	+ In Genesis 9, the rainbow was a “sign” of God’s spiritual covenant with Noah.
	+ In Genesis 17, circumcision is given as a physical sign of God’s spiritual covenant with Abraham.
	+ In Numbers 17, Aaron’s rod is kept as a sign to remind the people God will punish those who grumble.
* These signs can also be thought of as evidence of a truth.
* What then is the sign of Matthew 24:30?
	+ The sign was the evidence/reminder that Christ was in heaven, on the throne, and ruling over the nations.
	+ The sign was the destruction of Jerusalem.
	+ It was a display of the power of God’s kingdom.
	+ For centuries in the Old Testament God brought judgement on the nations who opposed Him and His people.
		- This time, it was the Jews who opposed the Kingdom of God.
		- Their destruction was a display of the power of the King of God’s Kingdom.
		- It was evidence Christ was on the throne.
		- Jesus was going to return to fulfill His words in 70 A.D., not in a physical sense, but as the orchestrator behind the events.
		- His presence would have been apparent to anyone who remembered these words.
	+ The event confirmed the words of Jesus in chapter 23 (there house was left to them desolate) but in a larger sense, all of His condemnations of the Jewish nation, and all His words in general.
	+ Jesus followed up on His prophecy which meant He wasn’t dead, His body wasn’t stolen by the Apostles, it meant He was on the throne.
	+ The Kingdom they so violently opposed would crush those who opposed it.
		- Dan 2:34-34 - As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.
		- Dan 2:44  And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,
		- The prophecy in the book of Daniel speaks of these events.
		- The Jewish nation probably never imagined they would stand in the way of the Kingdom of God as it “filled the whole earth.”
* As we already indicated, language about God coming on the clouds doesn’t necessitate a physical appearance of God on the earth.
	+ Isaiah 19:1-14 - An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, **the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt**; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them. And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, each against another and each against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom; and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their counsel; and they will inquire of the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the necromancers; and I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.
	+ This passage is Isaiah’s discussion about God’s judgement on Egypt.
* Here, the language is a discussion of God’s judgement on the Jews.
* It would certainly be a display of Christs “power and great glory, “ a power and great glory the Jews had always denied.
* SIDE NOTE: Perhaps the reason our minds immediately go the end of the world when we hear this language is because we aren’t as familiar with the prophets as we should be. There would probably be a lot less confusion about this passage in the religious world if more of us knew the prophetic writings.

Mat 24:31  And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

* Again, we have some language that sounds like it might have to do with the end of the world… but… we must keep in context.
* We’ve already established this language is highly figurative.
* So what “angels” is God sending to the world?
* What is an angel?
	+ If you aren’t familiar with the word the Greek uses for “angel,” it is the same word the Greek uses for “messenger.”
	+ In fact, John the Baptist is referred to by the exact same word in Matthew 11:10
	+ Mat 11:10 - This is he of whom it is written, “‘Behold, I send my messenger (angel) before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’
	+ The messengers John sent to Jesus in Luke 7:24 are also referred to using the same term (this parallels Matt 9:14ff)
	+ Luk 7:24 - When John's messengers (angels) had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?
	+ The term here can refer to a heavenly messenger (angel) or a human messenger.
* What is the trumpet?
	+ A trumpet was often used to call people to attention to hear a message.
	+ If a king wanted to make a proclamation, he would send out his herald to blow the trumpet proclaiming, “By order of King Luke…”
* Who are the elect?
	+ The elect are almost certainly a reference to the faithful of God (followers of Christ).
	+ Many New Testament writers refer to Christians as the “elect.”
* With these things in mind, how can we understand verse 31, keeping in mind its figurative context?
	+ When Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, many Christians (there was a large congregation in Jerusalem) escaped the city and were dispersed throughout the world.
	+ The Jews actively attempted to undermine the message of Jesus and confused new converts (just take a look at Paul’s letters).
	+ Biblical and secular history tells us the rich Jews in Jerusalem funded those who actively attempted to destroy faith in Christ.
	+ When the lucrative Temple complex was destroyed the money dried up and Christians likely experienced much less interference.
	+ In addition, Christians had long been considered just another sect of Judaism.
	+ But when Jerusalem was ruined and all the holy sites of the Jews destroyed, it gave the Christians an opportunity to distinguish themselves to the world.
	+ So following God’s judgement on the Jews, Christians were spread throughout the world as **messengers** of God, figuratively trumpeting the good news of the King as a herald to His subjects.
	+ They were gathering the elect of God from all nations through the preaching of the gospel.
* Let me reiterate the importance of context.
	+ If this verse stood alone in the New Testament, I would definitely interpret it in terms of the end of the world and Judgement Day.
	+ But in light of the context, especially verse 34, we must adjust our understanding.

Mat 24:32 - “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.

Mat 24:33 - So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

* If you missed our lengthy study of fig tree botany in chapter 21 go check that out for a fuller understanding of fig trees in Palestine.
* The new leaves of the fig tree start to become visible in late March or early April.
* The appearance of the fig leaves indicate summer is right around the corner.
* In the same way, the appearance of the signs Christ described would indicate the Judgement on the city was right around the corner.
* They needed to keep their eyes open to interpret the signs of the times (remember the Pharisees couldn’t do this in chapter 16:1-4 and they would fail to do again in 70 A.D.)

Mat 24:34 - Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Mat 24:35 - Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

* Here is the very important text we’ve made reference to many times already.
* All of the things Jesus has spoken to His Apostles about up to this point in His discourse will happen within the lifetime of the living generation.
* This makes sense considering the destruction of Jerusalem was about 37 years in the future.
* Jesus then confirms the security of this prediction.

Mat 24:36 - “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

* Verse 36 is a big shift in the topic of conversation.
* We’ve shown, up to this point, that Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, the signs that preceded it, and events occurring during the lifetime of the living generation.
* Now, Jesus is going to shift the conversation to the second part of the Apostle’s question.
* He had already addressed the question about the stones of the Temple and the signs of His coming, now He moves to answer the question about the end of the age and potentially His statement in 23:19.
* When will the end of time occur? What will the signs be?
* You can recognize the shift if you pay close attention to the words Jesus employs.
	+ In verses 19, 22, and 29, Jesus has been talking about “those days” (plural) when referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.
	+ In verse 36 the language changes to “that day” (singular)
	+ The term “that day” is used commonly to refer to the Day of Judgement even when the surrounding context doesn’t make immediate reference to the end of time (see 2Timothy 1:12; 18)
* However, in this text, the text does appear to make immediate reference to “that” to which the “that” appears.
	+ “That day” is the day heaven and earth pass away (24:35)
	+ Don’t let the subtitle division throw you off.
* Unlike the coming of the Lord in 70 A.D., Jesus’ coming at the end of time will not be timestamped with signs.
* No one knows the time the Lord will return to bring time to an end, not even the angels… not even the Son.
	+ Is this a difficult verse? Yes!
	+ If we claim Jesus (the Son) is God, shouldn’t God know everything?
	+ Why doesn’t Jesus know the time of the end of the world?
	+ Should we conclude Jesus isn’t God?
		- No, that would seem an unreasonable conclusion.
		- We’ve already seen Jesus claim titles of deity (i.e. Lord of the Sabbath) in our Matthew study.
		- John, who Mark 13 reveals heard this discourse, clearly didn’t reach that conclusion when he called Jesus God in the first chapter of his gospel.
	+ How can God not know something?
		- Tons of theological debate has surrounded this question.
		- I think the best explanation is that Christ willingly relinquished the knowledge, at least while in the form of a man.
		- We know Christ relinquished some of the privileges of the divine in order to experience life as a human.
			* God never gets hungry… Jesus did.
			* God never gets tired… Jesus did.
			* God is everywhere (omnipresent)… Jesus, as a man, was in some ways limited to a single location.
			* God is not dependent… Jesus was ministered to by angels.
			* Etc…
		- It may have been the case Jesus willingly forfeited some of His divine knowledge and this fact was part of what He gave up.
		- Why would Jesus relinquish some knowledge when taking on human form?
			* It is difficult to say and speculation may not be very valuable.
			* It may have been necessary in some way to have union with the human nature.
		- SIDE NOTE: KJV does not include the words “nor the Son” in Matthew but they are found in Mark 13.

Mat 24:37 - For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Mat 24:38 - For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,

Mat 24:39 - and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

* This statement is pretty straightforward.
* When the judgement on the wicked people of Noah’s day arrived (the flood) they were caught unprepared.
* By the time they realized what was going on, it was too late to change their fate.
* It will be the same for the wicked at the end of time.

Mat 24:40 - Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.

Mat 24:41 - Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.

* People will be going about their everyday business on “that day.”
* Faithful Christians will meet Jesus in the air at the end of time according to 1Thessalonians 4:18.
	+ 1Th 4:17 - Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
* The faithful will be selected out of the world, one from a bed, one from a field, one from an office, one from the high school, one from the mill, and will be brought up to meet the Lord.

Mat 24:42 - Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Mat 24:43 - But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

Mat 24:44 - Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

* A thief wants to show up at your house when you least expect it.
* He isn’t going to leave signs or hints as to arrival time.
* In the same way, rather than providing any hints, Jesus tells the Apostles to “watch” because He will return when the world is not expecting it.

Mat 24:45 - “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?

Mat 24:46 - Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

Mat 24:47 - Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

Mat 24:48 - But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’

Mat 24:49 - and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,

Mat 24:50 - the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know

Mat 24:51 - and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

* Has your boss ever shown up to work on a day they were scheduled to be out of the office?
* Were people sluffing off because they knew the boss wasn’t going to be around?
* The boss probably wasn’t pleased to know his/her employees weren’t working very hard.
* The same is true for Jesus.
	+ Jesus has entrusted us with work in His Kingdom while we are away.
	+ He has told us to live and love a certain way.
	+ How do you think He will feel if He comes back to find His servants ignoring everything He told them?
* Christ will return to reward those who are “watching” for Him but will punish those who have given their attention to other things.
* This will be a major theme in chapter 25.

Whewwww… we’re done!

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