

UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW 24

Matthew 24 is one of the most misunderstood, and misapplied sections of the New Testament. It has become a veritable playground for the sundry denominations that promote the error of Premillennialism. Is all of Matthew 24 discussing the end of time and Jesus' literal second coming, or does at least part of Matthew 24 deal with a figurative "coming" in judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70?

THE CONTEXTUAL SETTING OF MATTHEW 24

John had foretold the coming of God's wrath upon the Jewish nation, **Matthew 3:7-10** (the axe lieth at the root of the trees).

Part of Matthew 24 (4-35) states how and when the axe would fall.

- Note: **Matthew 23:33** -- Christ affirms the words of John.

The antagonism between Christ and the power-broking Jews was extreme:

- **Matthew 23** shows the climax: "Your house is left unto you desolate." (v 38)
- The Temple falls under the wrath of heaven; it has become the house of Desolation.
- Its destruction (along with the city) was inevitable.
- **Matthew 23:36** - all these things shall come upon this generation.
- Leads to the events and question of **Matthew 24:1-3**

NOTE THE THREE QUESTIONS:

- When shall these things be?
- The sign of thy coming?
- The end of the world?

Many today bunch these all together and make the whole passage apply to the end of time, the second coming of Christ. Thus, there is much confusion and misunderstanding of this chapter.

The patience of God had come to an end (**Matthew 23:38**). The Israelites, as a nation, were to feel the wrath of God; Jehovah's presence was to be withdrawn from them - the Law nailed to the cross.

His dwelling place, the Temple, was now the House of Desolation, ready for destruction.

The disciples in **Matthew 24:1**, seem to question Christ's statement by showing Him the temple, God's House -- surely, "Our temple will not be destroyed."

Christ in **verse 2** clearly identifies that He **IS** foretelling the destruction of the Temple.

The question in **verse 3** definitely has reference to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem: "Tell us, when shall these things be?"

The disciples connected the destruction of the temple to the end of the present state of the world, thus very naturally they ask concerning "the end of the world (age)."

So, Christ proceeds to answer their questions, beginning in verse 4:

Verses 4-5

Christ warns them against false teachers, false signs. Of which we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that there existed many deceivers prior to A.D. 70.

Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Verse 6

As we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that there were many wars and rumors of wars prior to A.D. 70. Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Jesus has now mentioned for the second time that "the end" was not yet. This end has reference to the Jewish nation not the end of time as the rest of the verses in the context bear out.

Verse 7

As we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that prior to A.D. 70. there was much kingdom maneuvering going on (amongst worldly kingdoms); there were plenty of famines and earthquakes, and we have logically concluded that there were pestilences. Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Verse 8

All the things he has talked about heretofore are only the beginning of "sorrows" (lit. birth-pangs). You see, there is a figure of speech in play here: the idea is that in A.D. 70 God gave birth (in a clearly visible way) to a whole new system - Spiritual Israel.

Do not get it twisted: the law was done away (in actuality) at the cross, but it was taken out (visibly) in A.D. 70. I am not suggesting the law was in force after the cross in any way!

Verses 9-10

Here the focus is on the persecution of the church.

As we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that prior to A.D. 70. there was a tremendous amount of persecution against the saints. Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

As we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that offense, betrayal, and hatred (from false brethren) were not at all uncommon in the first century church. Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Verse 11

Here Jesus tells them false teachers would abound in the early church.

As we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that false prophets were commonplace in the first century and they sought to undermine the church. Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Verse 12

As we have seen in class, time and again it has been proven that prior to A.D. 70 iniquity was abounding and the love of many was waxing cold. The whole book of Hebrews is written in response to this problem.

Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Verse 13

Jesus has not switched contextual tracks! If he has, where is the proof?

This being so, the "shall be saved" has a primary reference to being saved from the destruction of Jerusalem.

If you hang in there and do not go back to Judaism, you will have the chance to escape the slaughter.

Verse 14

Here Jesus says that the gospel must be preached in all the world before the end (of Jerusalem) comes.

As we have seen in class, the New Testament clearly says this happened prior to A.D. 70.

Verse 15

Here Jesus calls on them to "Remember the Alamo;" i.e. just as the temple was sacked in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes so too will it happen again (let the reader understand).

Luke's inspired pen (21:20) defines the abomination of desolation as the Roman Army surrounding the city.

This happened prior to A.D. 70.

Why must then we look past that generation? That is what context Jesus placed things in.

Verses 16-20

If Jesus is discussing the end of time, what good would any of these instructions do?

He tells them (those folks then) that their flight not be in winter.

Is Jesus wasting breath on people who do not need to hear his instructions for they are long dead?

Did Jesus make a mistake?

Is Sabbath in force today? Will it ever be again?

There is no way any of this fits an end of time (2098, 3001, 3031, etc) context.

However, it does fit the context that Jesus placed it in - that generation!

Verse 21

Josephus describes the great suffering: 100,000 sold into slavery; 1,100,000 persons slain.

The idea is that there has never been a time when God so punished his people and visibly removed His presence from His people.

How can this happen again without reestablishing the Old Testament with God's authority to do so?

It cannot be done!

Thus, this cannot be a reference to some future event, but must stay in the context Jesus put it in - that generation. A.D. 70 fits.

Verse 22

The idea is that if the siege would have lasted long (which it did not), it would have spread throughout Palestine and Christians (the elect) would have suffered.

Verses 23-28

The idea here is: during the siege, do not be fooled by charlatans who will promise that I will visibly return to deliver the city (and sum up time).

The city must be destroyed, for it is corrupt.

Jesus is saying "When I return (at the end of time), it will be clear to all, you will not have to be told."

He is calling upon them to remember these things when the time comes.

Verse 29

This is simply descriptive, figurative language to describe the passing away of Judaism.

As we noted in class, similar language is used throughout the Bible in the very same way.

Why would it be any different here?

Verse 30

The judgment upon Jerusalem was the sign of the fact that the Son of man was reigning in heaven.

This phrase does not demand a visible appearance (**Isaiah 19:1; Psalm 104:3**).

Compare **Matthew 16:28** - within that generation (those then living) the Son of man would come in His kingdom (proving He was King).

The unrepentant Jews would now realize that Jesus was, indeed, who He claimed to be.

They would learn the hard way via His prophetic judgments coming true before their very eyes.

Verse 31

The idea here is that the destruction will give iron clad proof that true Israel is spiritual, not physical.

The angels do not have to refer to heavenly beings.

The same word is also used for a human messenger. John the Baptist was referred to by the same term (**cf. Matthew 11:10-11**).

The idea here is that the message of Jerusalem's fall is to be shared with all saints abroad.

Verses 32-33

Jesus here reminds them to watch carefully so as to escape the siege and destruction.

They are to look for the signs, just as a fruit picker looks for signs that indicate that fruit will be soon on the trees.

Verse 34

All these things, the things Jesus has heretofore mentioned, must occur before the end comes, but those things **HAD TO** happen within that generation.

They did! Jesus is right.

Why must we look beyond the context Jesus fences us in by?

Verse 35

There is simply no way that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is not going to happen.

It would be easier for the heavens and the earth to pass away than to avoid the fulfillment of what Jesus has been saying.

So verses 1-35 all find the time for their fulfillment fenced in by the context Jesus imposes. There is simply no way that any other event but the destruction of Jerusalem and a visible end to God's authorized Jewish system can be in view... unless we ignore the context and launch out into the unsound waters of "twisting the scriptures to fit my preconceived ideas." This will not do (cf. 2 Peter 3:16).

Verse 36

This is a key verse. Jesus now switches contextual tracks from "those days" (the destruction of Jerusalem and the events prior to it) to "that" day (the end of time).

It was not that Jesus did not know the day, for Jesus knows all (cf. **John 21:17**); the idea in the original language is that of revealing. Jesus would not reveal that day (specifically), as He had just done with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Verses 37-51

There are to be no "signs" preceding the second coming of Christ. Things will seem normal: "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." People will be working "in the field," "grinding at the mill," etc.

They were thus to be ever ready as the consequences are severe if they are found unprepared.

HOW MATTHEW 25 TIES IN WITH 24:36FF

The three parables here remind us that since we do not know the time Jesus will literally return, we should be ready at all times.