A Close Examination of Matthew 24

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Introduction

Matthew 24 is one of the most debated chapters in the Bible, often cited as a roadmap to the end times. Many believe that the events described in this chapter are yet to be fulfilled, pointing to modern-day crises as evidence that we are in the “last days.” However, a closer examination of the text within its historical and biblical context reveals a different understanding—one that places these events in the past, specifically in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

This study will explore Matthew 24 verse by verse, considering the disciples’ questions, Jesus’ prophetic words, and the historical fulfillment of these events. By understanding the context and language of this chapter, we can gain clarity on what Jesus was truly prophesying and avoid common misinterpretations.

Part 1 – Setting The Context

Part 1 – Abridged Video Transcript

Jesus is coming soon; we are living in the last days, and the end is near. This statement is often heard, accompanied by claims that signs all around us point to an imminent fulfillment of biblical prophecy. But what do these claims truly mean?

As a Christian, you may have wondered: When will these events happen? Are things destined to worsen? Should we be worried? Among believers, one of the most commonly discussed topics is the end times.

Understanding the End Times

The term “last days” is often misunderstood. According to **Hebrews 1:2**, the “last days” began with Christ’s earthly ministry and continue until now. This means that the term does not necessarily indicate an imminent, catastrophic end but refers to the era ushered in by Jesus.

The end times refer to the final events of history as revealed in Scripture. Yet, with thousands of interpretations available, many people find themselves confused about how these events will unfold.

It’s essential to study what the Bible actually says, rather than relying on speculation. If even a portion of these end-time prophecies are unfolding now, we should take them seriously and seek God more than ever.

The Four Main Views of the End Times

There are four primary interpretations regarding the end times, each with its own perspective on biblical prophecy:

1. **Futurism** – The dominant view among modern Christians. This perspective holds that most of the prophetic events in Revelation, Matthew 24, and other passages are yet to occur in the future.
2. **Preterism** – This view asserts that most, if not all, biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the past, particularly around 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. **Historicism** – This approach sees the events of Revelation as unfolding progressively throughout history from the time of Christ until now.
4. **Idealism** – Rather than seeing biblical prophecies as literal events, this view interprets them as symbolic representations of spiritual realities applicable in all ages.

The Dominance of Futurism

Futurism is the most widely accepted interpretation today, largely due to the influence of **19th-century dispensationalist theology** introduced by John Nelson Darby and later popularized by C.I. Scofield's *Scofield Reference Bible*.

A futurist interpretation asserts that passages like Matthew 24, Luke 21, Daniel, and Revelation describe future catastrophic events. Many futurists anticipate an imminent fulfillment of prophecies such as wars, earthquakes, and cosmic disturbances, believing these signs indicate the nearness of the end.

The Issue with Date-Setting

While many believe we are living in the last days, history is filled with failed predictions about the timing of Christ's return. Books such as *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* have misled many believers. These repeated errors remind us to avoid speculation and focus instead on Scripture itself.

The Proper Approach to Studying Scripture

Many Christians approach the Bible with preconceived beliefs, interpreting Scripture through a modern lens. However, a more accurate approach involves:

- Examining the original Greek and Hebrew meanings of key terms.
- Understanding the historical and cultural context of biblical passages.
- Comparing Scripture with Scripture to ensure consistency in interpretation.

A critical example is found in Matthew 21:43, where Jesus states:

> *"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (KJV).*

This verse is interpreted differently among theological traditions. Some believe it refers to Gentiles receiving the gospel, while others see it as the church—comprising both Jews and Gentiles—becoming the new people of God.

Where Do We Begin?

Many people, when studying the end times, immediately turn to the book of Revelation. However, without a proper foundation,

Revelation can be difficult to understand. The best place to begin is **Matthew 24**, commonly called the Olivet Discourse.

To gain even greater context, it is helpful to start in **Matthew 21**. In this passage, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees through parables, illustrating that their time as God's chosen people was ending due to their unfaithfulness.

Jesus' Warning to Israel

In Matthew 21:33-41, Jesus tells a parable about a landowner who sends servants to collect fruit from his vineyard, only for them to be beaten and killed by the tenants. Finally, the landowner sends his son, whom the tenants also kill.

Jesus then asks the Pharisees what the landowner will do, and they reply that he will destroy those wicked men. Jesus confirms this, saying:

> *"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43, KJV).*

This statement signifies a transition—God's kingdom was being taken from national Israel and given to a people who would bear fruit.

The Prophecy of Destruction

In Matthew 22, Jesus gives another parable about a king whose invited guests refuse to attend a wedding feast. In response, the king declares:

> *"The king was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matthew 22:7, KJV).*

This passage foreshadows the destruction of Jerusalem, which

would occur in 70 A.D.

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces judgment upon the religious leaders, saying:

> *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee… Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37-38, KJV).*

The Disciples' Questions in Matthew 24

To fully grasp Jesus' prophecy, Matthew 24 should be read in conjunction with **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**, which provide parallel accounts of the same discourse. These passages help to clarify the historical and theological context of Jesus' words.

After leaving the temple, Jesus' disciples point out its beauty. He responds:

> *"See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2, KJV).*

This statement alarms the disciples, leading them to ask in Matthew 24:3:

1. "When shall these things be?"
2. "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [*aion*, meaning age]?"

The Meaning of "Coming"

Throughout Scripture, the phrase **"coming of the Lord"** often refers to divine judgment rather than a physical return. This theme is found in passages such as **Isaiah 19:1**:

> *"Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come*

> *into Egypt…”*

Similarly, Jesus warned the churches in **Revelation 2:5**:

> *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent… or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.”*

Thus, in biblical language, “coming” frequently signifies divine judgment.

Conclusion

With this context in mind, we can now properly approach Matthew 24. Jesus’ discourse is not primarily about events thousands of years in the future but rather about the impending judgment upon Israel, which was fulfilled in 70 A.D.

In the next section, we will explore Jesus’ detailed response to the disciples, examining how He described the signs leading up to Jerusalem’s destruction and the transition into the new age of the Messiah.

Part 2 – Understanding The Signs

Imagine you and I are walking down a sidewalk in a quiet suburban town on a beautiful sunny day. As longtime residents of this peaceful city, we admire its charm and beauty. We talk about how picturesque our neighborhood is—the bright, happy houses lined up perfectly, the white picket fences, and the lush green grass. A friendly mailman walks by, offering a warm greeting.

But then, you notice I become quiet, my expression turning solemn. Concerned, you ask, “What’s wrong?”

I slowly look up and say, “Do you see this beautiful neighborhood? God showed me that not one brick of these houses will be left standing. Everything will be destroyed.”

Now, for the sake of argument, let’s say I was known in our community as a prophet—someone whose predictions have consistently come true. After hearing my words, what would be your first question? Likely, you’d ask, “When is this going to happen?”

Now, let’s step into a time machine and travel back 2,000 years. In our last study, we learned that Jesus told the Jews that their kingdom would be taken from them and given to others (Matthew 21-23). He declared that their city would become desolate as judgment for their centuries of wickedness and their ultimate rejection of Him.

After these pronouncements, Jesus walked out of the temple. His disciples, marveling at its grandeur, pointed out the beauty of its buildings. Jesus responded with a startling prophecy:

“See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2, KJV).

This prophecy was deeply unsettling. Jesus had just predicted the complete destruction of their temple. Naturally, the disciples wanted to know more. In verse 3, they came to Him privately on the Mount of Olives and asked two questions:

1. “When shall these things be?”
2. “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

Understanding Their Questions

To properly interpret Jesus' answer, we must first understand the disciples' questions.

The first question—"When shall these things be?"—is straightforward. Jesus had just prophesied the destruction of the temple, and they wanted to know when it would happen.

History records that this occurred in 70 A.D. when the Romans besieged and destroyed Jerusalem. Jesus' prophecy came true about 40 years after He spoke it. The fulfillment of this event is undeniable.

But what about their second question? What did they mean by "the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?"

What Did They Mean by "Thy Coming"?

When modern Christians hear the phrase "the coming of the Lord," they often think of the Second Coming—an event where Jesus physically returns in the future. We envision cosmic upheaval: the heavens opening, Jesus descending on a cloud, trumpets blasting, and the final judgment commencing.

But is this what the disciples were asking?

Think logically. Jesus had just predicted the destruction of the temple. Why would the disciples, in response, suddenly ask about an event thousands of years in the future? Wouldn't their immediate concern be about their own time and nation?

The Greek word for "coming" in this passage is *parousia*, which does not necessarily mean a physical descent from heaven. It can mean *presence*, *arrival*, or *coming in judgment*.

Consider Matthew 16:27-28, where Jesus says:

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to

his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (KJV).

Did you catch that last part? Jesus explicitly said that some standing there would live to see His coming. If we interpret "coming" as a literal, future Second Coming, that would mean some of Jesus' listeners are still alive today—an idea that is obviously false.

Even C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian writer, struggled with this verse. He stated that Jesus was clearly mistaken about the timing of His coming. But was Jesus actually wrong, or have many simply misunderstood what He meant by "coming"?

The Biblical Use of "Coming in Judgment"

Throughout the Bible, the phrase "coming of the Lord" often refers to divine judgment rather than a physical return. Consider these Old Testament examples:

- **Micah 1:3-5**: "For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him…"
- **Isaiah 19:1**: "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence…"

Neither of these passages describes a literal descent from the sky. Instead, they use vivid imagery to depict God's judgment upon nations.

Similarly, in Revelation 2:5, Jesus warns a church that unless they repent, He will "come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." This is not referring to His Second Coming, but rather to an imminent judgment upon that church.

The Disciples' Real Concern

So, when the disciples asked about "the sign of thy coming," they were not inquiring about the end of the physical world. They were asking when Jesus' prophesied judgment on Jerusalem would take place.

Jesus had just told them that their house (temple) would be left desolate (Matthew 23:38). He had spoken of a city that would be burned (Matthew 22:7). The natural question on their minds was: *When will this judgment happen?*

And Jesus answered them—not with a prophecy about the distant future—but with details about the destruction of Jerusalem that would take place in their own generation.

What About "The End of the World"?

The phrase "end of the world" in Matthew 24:3 is often misunderstood. The Greek word used here is *aion*, which more accurately translates to "age" rather than "world."

The disciples were not asking about the end of the physical world, but the end of the Jewish age—the system of temple worship and sacrifices, which would come to a definitive close with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Conclusion

What we often assume to be references to a far-future Second Coming are, in fact, discussions about a first-century event. Jesus was not predicting the end of time; He was warning of the judgment that would fall upon Jerusalem within their generation.

In the next section, we will explore how Jesus elaborated on these signs, detailing the turmoil and tribulation that would precede Jerusalem's fall. Understanding this historical context is crucial to interpreting Matthew 24 correctly.

Part 3 – Sign of Thy Coming & The End of The Age

In this section, we continue with Matthew 24:3 and the disciples' questions. We previously discussed the first part of their question: "When shall these things be?" which referred to the destruction of the temple and their city. Now, we turn to the second part: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?"

Many people assume this passage speaks about the end of the physical world, but careful examination suggests otherwise.

The Importance of Asking the Right Question

Before diving into Jesus' response, we must emphasize the importance of the question itself. If we misinterpret the question, we will inevitably misinterpret the answer. The rest of Matthew 24 is Jesus' response to these questions, so understanding them correctly is crucial.

Many assume that when the disciples asked about Christ's "coming," they were referring to His Second Coming at the end of the world. But as we have seen, the phrase "coming of the Lord" often refers to divine judgment, not a literal return to earth.

The same principle applies to their second inquiry: "What shall be the sign of the end of the world?" The word "world" here is often misleading. The Greek term used is *aion*, which means "age" rather than the physical planet. This distinction is critical because "age" and "world" carry vastly different meanings.

Age or World? Examining the Greek

Certain Bible translations, such as the King James Version, translate *aion* as "world," which has contributed to confusion. However, many modern translations correctly render it as "age."

The Greek language contains a separate word for "world": *kosmos*. This term appears elsewhere in Scripture when referring to the physical universe, such as:

- "Ye are the light of the world [*kosmos*]" (Matthew 5:14, KJV).
- "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world [*kosmos*], and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36, KJV).

Since the disciples used *aion* rather than *kosmos*, it becomes clear that they were not asking about the end of the physical world but rather the end of an era or dispensation.

What Age Were They Referring To?

At the time, Jewish believers viewed history in terms of two ages:

1. **The Present Age** – The age of the Law, which they were currently living in.
2. **The Age to Come** – The Messianic Age, which they believed would be inaugurated by the Messiah.

James Stuart Russell, in *The Parousia*, explains:

> *"It was the belief of the Jews that the Messiah would introduce a new aion, and this new aion they called the Kingdom of Heaven. The existing aion, therefore, was the Jewish dispensation, which was now drawing to its close."*

The disciples understood that Jesus was bringing about a shift. They wanted to know when the current age—the age of the Mosaic Law—would end and give way to the new Messianic Age.

The End of the Old Covenant

The Bible provides additional clarity on this transition. Consider Hebrews 9:26:

- "But now once in the end of the world [*aion*] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (KJV).

Did Jesus appear at the literal end of the world? No. He came at the end of the Jewish age to establish the New Covenant.

Similarly, 1 Corinthians 10:11 states:

- "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [*aion*] are come."

Paul was writing nearly 2,000 years ago. If he was referring to the literal end of the world, his words would make no sense. Instead, he was referring to the end of the Jewish age, which was rapidly approaching.

When Did This Age End?

Hebrews 8:13 clarifies:

- "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

The Old Covenant had not yet fully disappeared but was about

to. The destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. marked the final transition, officially bringing the Jewish age to an end.

Conclusion

When the disciples asked about “the end of the age,” they were not asking about the end of time or the destruction of the physical world. Instead, they were inquiring about the end of the Old Covenant system, which Jesus had been prophesying. This transition was completed with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Understanding this perspective allows us to correctly interpret the rest of Matthew 24. Rather than seeing it as a roadmap to a distant future, we recognize it as Jesus’ prophetic warning about an event that took place within a generation of His words.

In the next section, we will examine how Jesus answered their questions and what signs He provided to indicate the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Part 4 – Has it Already Happened?

We’ve now reached Part 4, and I hope that you are learning something valuable. Let me ask you—do you think understanding this is important?

It certainly is. If **Matthew 24** is talking about future events, and many believe they are imminent, then every Christian should want to know what is about to happen. Being prepared would be crucial. However, if Matthew 24 is not about future events, then there is no need for fear, and we can focus on living faithfully until His return rather than being preoccupied with end-time speculation.

Understanding the Disciples' Questions

Let's recap their questions for clarity:

1. **"When shall these things be?"** – This refers to the destruction of the temple.
2. **"What shall be the sign of thy coming?"** – This refers to the sign that Jesus is bringing judgment upon Jerusalem.
3. **"What shall be the sign of the end of the age?"** – This refers to the sign that the age of the Mosaic Law is ending, ushering in a new era.

Now, the larger question we must consider is whether all of this has already happened. If so, when and how did it take place? Or are we still waiting for these things to occur?

Did it Happen Yet?

Everyone agrees that the destruction of Jerusalem happened in **70 A.D.**, fulfilling the first part of the disciples' question. But what about **the coming of the Lord** and **the end of the age**?

Here is my conclusion, which I will demonstrate through the rest of **Matthew 24** and other scriptures:

I believe that the destruction of the temple, the coming of the Lord, and the end of the age all happened at or around the same time. When Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in **70 A.D.**, it was the **coming of the Lord in judgment**, just as Jesus had foretold. With this event, the **former age of the Mosaic system came to an end**, and a new age—the Messianic age—was fully realized.

The Disciples Saw These Events as One

The disciples understood that these three events—the destruction of their city, the coming of the Lord, and the end of the age—were interconnected. However, **some today separate**

them by thousands of years. Many believe Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in **70 A.D.**, but they claim the coming of the Lord and the end of the age are still future events.

The Importance of Parallels in Scripture

To better understand this, we must compare the parallel accounts of **Matthew 24**, **Mark 13**, and **Luke 21**. These passages record the same conversation between Jesus and His disciples, but each Gospel writer presents the details slightly differently.

Luke 21:7

In **Luke's account**, the disciples ask:

> *"Master, but when shall these things be? And what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" (KJV)*

Notice that Luke does not include the phrases **"sign of thy coming"** or **"end of the age."** Instead, the disciples simply ask about the destruction of the temple and what signs will precede it.

Mark 13:4

Similarly, in **Mark's account**, the disciples ask:

> *"Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" (KJV)*

Again, the focus is entirely on the destruction of the temple and its signs.

Reconciling the Differences

If Matthew 24 were addressing three separate events—one in **70 A.D.** and two others thousands of years later—then why do **Luke**

and Mark only mention **one** event? The simplest and most logical conclusion is that **Matthew, Mark, and Luke are all referring to the same thing**—the destruction of Jerusalem.

The way the question is phrased in **Matthew 24** includes references to "the coming of the Lord" and "the end of the age." However, knowing that the phrase "coming of the Lord" often means **judgment** and that "end of the age" refers to **the end of the Mosaic era**, it becomes clear that all three Gospel accounts are describing the same event.

Were the Disciples Wrong?

If the disciples believed that all three events—the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of the Lord, and the end of the age—would happen at the same time, why do some today say that the **coming of the Lord** and the **end of the age** are still future?

Some claim that the disciples were simply **wrong** in their understanding. They argue that while Jerusalem was destroyed in **70 A.D.**, the coming of the Lord and the end of the age must still occur in the future.

While it is true that the disciples sometimes misunderstood things, were they truly wrong about **this**? If they were, why did Jesus not correct them?

The real issue is that many today misunderstand what the **coming of the Lord** and **end of the age** mean. If we allow Scripture to interpret itself, we see that these terms do not refer to **the Second Coming at the end of time** but to **God's judgment upon Israel in 70 A.D.**

Jesus' Response in Matthew 24

Now that we understand the disciples' question, let's examine Jesus' response:

> *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:4-6, KJV).*

Jesus warns them about **false messiahs**, **wars**, and **rumors of wars**—signs that would precede Jerusalem’s destruction.

The Use of “You”

A key detail is how **Jesus directly addresses the disciples** using the word **“you.”**

> *“And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars…” (Matthew 24:6, KJV).*

If Jesus were speaking about events thousands of years later, why would He say **“ye” (you)** to His disciples? He was telling **them** what **they** would witness.

Did These Signs Happen?

False Messiahs:

- Many people claimed to be the Messiah in the years leading up to **70 A.D.**. The historian **Josephus** records multiple individuals who deceived many.

Wars and Rumors of Wars:

- The Jewish-Roman wars broke out within decades of Jesus’ prophecy. Even three years after His death, conflicts erupted.

Earthquakes and Famines:

- The **Book of Acts** mentions earthquakes and a famine in **Acts 11**.
- Ancient historians, including Josephus, recorded major earthquakes and food shortages.

These things **did happen** before **70 A.D.**, just as Jesus predicted.

Conclusion

When we interpret Matthew 24 **correctly**, we see that **Jesus was not giving a prophecy about events thousands of years in the future** but was warning His disciples about events that would happen **in their lifetime**.

In the next section, we will continue through Matthew 24 and examine the other signs Jesus gave regarding the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Stay tuned as we uncover even more compelling evidence that these events were fulfilled just as Jesus foretold!

Part 5 – The Generation That Will Not Pass

We've now reached Part 5, and as we continue, let's take a moment to reflect on an important question: **Are these signs Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 already fulfilled, or are they still waiting to happen in our future?**

Many today believe that the increasing chaos in the world—wars, crime, natural disasters, and moral decay—are all **signs that the end is near**. They believe that the rapture is imminent, that Jesus is coming back any moment, and that we are on the brink of the end of the world. But where does this

belief come from?

Matthew 24 and Signs of the End

Much of this idea stems from **Matthew 24**, where Jesus outlines various signs that will precede His "coming." But what did He actually mean by these signs? And more importantly, **did they already happen, or are they still in the future?**

Reviewing the Signs in Context

If you haven't watched Parts 1–4 yet, I strongly encourage you to go back and review them first. We have already covered key background details about Matthew 24, the disciples' questions, and the meaning of phrases like **"the coming of the Lord"** and **"the end of the age."**

Now, let's continue with **Matthew 24:9-14**:

> *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:9-14, KJV)*

Were the Disciples Persecuted and Killed?

Jesus told **His disciples** that they would be persecuted and killed. Did this happen?

- **Yes.** History confirms that **all but John** were killed before the destruction of Jerusalem in **70 A.D.**

- Even **Jesus hinted to John** that he would still be alive at His “coming.” (John 21:22-23)

> *“Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” (John 21:22, KJV)*

If this **“coming”** refers to the Second Coming at the end of time, that would mean John is still alive today, which is obviously not the case. Many scholars, such as Matthew Henry, affirm that Jesus was referring to **His coming in judgment in 70 A.D.**

The Gospel Preached to the Whole World?

A common objection to the **70 A.D. fulfillment** is this part of the prophecy:

> *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matthew 24:14, KJV)*

Many believe this verse means the gospel must be preached to every person on **planet Earth** before Jesus returns. However, let’s look deeper at the Greek word translated as **“world”** here.

World = Oikumene (Not Cosmos)

If Jesus meant **the entire planet**, we would expect the Greek word **“cosmos”** (which refers to the whole world) to be used. Instead, the word used is **oikumene**, which refers to **the inhabited world, specifically the Roman Empire.**

Let’s confirm this using **Luke 2:1** as an example:

> *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” (Luke 2:1, KJV)*

Did Caesar Augustus tax the entire planet? **No.** He only taxed the **Roman Empire.** This confirms that "oikumene" refers to the known, inhabited world **of their day**—not the entire Earth.

Paul even affirms this in **Romans 1:8**:

> *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8, KJV)*

The gospel had already spread throughout the Roman Empire **before 70 A.D.**, meaning this prophecy was fulfilled **before the destruction of the temple.**

The Abomination of Desolation

Now, let's move to **Matthew 24:15-16**:

> *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." (Matthew 24:15-16, KJV)*

Many believe this refers to a future event where the **Antichrist** will place an idol in a **rebuilt** temple. However, Jesus **directly connects** this prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Luke Clarifies the Meaning

In **Luke 21:20-21**, which is a **parallel passage**, we read:

> *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains." (Luke 21:20-21, KJV)*

Luke clearly interprets the abomination of desolation as the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Roman armies.

What Happened in 70 A.D.?

- The **Roman army**, led by **Titus**, surrounded Jerusalem.
- The **city was destroyed** and the **temple was burned** to the ground.
- Christians **fled to Pella**, heeding Jesus' warning.
- **Josephus, a Jewish historian,** recorded the horrors of this event.

This was the **fulfillment of Jesus' warning.**

Great Tribulation Unlike Any Other

> *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21, KJV)*

Many assume this refers to a **future global event.** However, **the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.** was one of the most horrific events in history.

> *"If those days had not been shortened, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:22, KJV)*

- Over **one million Jews were slaughtered** by the Romans.
- **Cannibalism broke out** due to extreme famine inside the city.
- The temple, which was the **center of Jewish worship**, was completely destroyed.

Josephus records that this was a **tribulation unmatched in Jewish history.**

Conclusion: Did These Signs Already Happen?

As we analyze **Matthew 24 in context**, it becomes increasingly clear that these prophecies were **fulfilled in 70 A.D.**

- **False messiahs** appeared.
- **Wars, famines, and earthquakes** occurred.
- **The gospel was preached throughout the Roman Empire.**
- **The abomination of desolation (Roman armies) appeared.**
- **The Great Tribulation came upon Jerusalem.**

Yet, **many today still insist that Matthew 24 is about the end of the world.** But based on what we've studied, **which interpretation makes more sense?**

What's Next?

We still have more to cover in **Matthew 24.** Next, we'll explore **whether Jesus' statements about His "coming in the clouds" should be understood literally or symbolically.** Stay tuned!

Part 6 – The Misunderstood "Rapture"

Are These Signs Already Fulfilled?

We've now reached Part 6, and as we continue, let's take a moment to reflect on an important question: **Are these signs Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 already fulfilled, or are they still waiting to happen in our future?**

Many today believe that the increasing chaos in the world—wars, crime, natural disasters, and moral decay—are all

signs that the end is near. They believe that the rapture is imminent, that Jesus is coming back any moment, and that we are on the brink of the end of the world. But where does this belief come from?

Matthew 24 and Signs of the End

Much of this idea stems from **Matthew 24**, where Jesus outlines various signs that will precede His "coming." But what did He actually mean by these signs? And more importantly, **did they already happen, or are they still in the future?**

Reviewing the Signs in Context

If you haven't watched Parts 1–5 yet, I strongly encourage you to go back and review them first. We have already covered key background details about Matthew 24, the disciples' questions, and the meaning of phrases like **"the coming of the Lord"** and **"the end of the age."**

Now, let's continue with **Matthew 24:29-31**:

> *"Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31, KJV)*

Are These Signs Literal or Symbolic?

Many read these verses and assume they describe **literal cosmic events** that will happen in the future. But is that correct?

Let’s break this down logically:

- **“Immediately after the distress of those days”** – What days? The distress Jesus just described: the destruction of Jerusalem, the abomination of desolation, and the persecution of believers.
- **If these events were fulfilled in 70 A.D., then these signs must also have occurred immediately after.**

So what do they mean?

The Sun, Moon, and Stars: Symbolic Language

This type of **heavenly imagery** was commonly used in the Old Testament **to symbolize judgment and major political shifts**. Here are two examples:

Isaiah 13:9-10 (Judgment on Babylon)

> *“See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.”*

Ezekiel 32:7-8 (Judgment on Egypt)

> *“When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you.”*

Did the **literal** sun and stars go dark when Babylon and Egypt were judged? **No.** This was **symbolic language** describing their downfall.

Thus, when Jesus uses **the same language in Matthew 24**, He is saying that **Jerusalem's fall would be a major cosmic shift**—the end of the Jewish age and the old covenant.

Jesus Coming on the Clouds

> *"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven… and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*

- Many assume this refers to **a physical Second Coming**.
- But **the Bible often describes God coming on the clouds as an act of judgment.**

Examples of God Coming on Clouds in Judgment

- **Isaiah 19:1** – "The Lord rides on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt."
- **Psalm 104:3** – "He makes the clouds his chariot."
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When Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D., **it was a divine act of judgment.** The imagery of Jesus coming on the clouds signifies **His authority as judge.**

The Gathering of the Elect

> *"And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds."*

- **Angels (Greek: angelos)** means **messengers**, not always supernatural beings.
- **Trumpets** were used in the Old Testament to **gather God's people** (Numbers 10:2).

- The elect were gathered into **Christ's kingdom**, as the Gospel spread after 70 A.D.

Conclusion: What Makes More Sense?

- **A literal interpretation?** If so, then stars must physically fall to earth, destroying the planet.
- **Or a symbolic interpretation?** Which fits **Old Testament patterns** and describes a shift in power and judgment.

The Bible consistently uses this imagery to describe judgment on nations. The destruction of Jerusalem was a world-changing event for the Jews, marking **the end of the old covenant age and the establishment of the new.**

What's Next?

We are almost finished with Matthew 24! In the next part, we will look at Jesus' **final statements** that bring all of this together. Stay tuned!

Part 7 – The Kingdom Has Come

We've now reached Part 7, and as we continue, let's take a moment to reflect on an important question: **Are these signs Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 already fulfilled, or are they still waiting to happen in our future?**

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Matthew 24:34 – “This Generation Shall Not Pass”

Jesus then makes **a very important statement**:

> *“Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” (Matthew 24:34, KJV)*

Many futurists try to reinterpret “this generation” to mean a future group of people that will witness the signs. However, in every other instance of **“this generation”** in the Gospels, Jesus is referring to His own contemporary generation.

For example:

- **Matthew 11:16** – “But to what shall I compare this generation?”
- **Matthew 23:36** – “Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.”
- **Luke 17:25** – “But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”

Since “this generation” always refers to **the people alive in Jesus’ time**, it must mean **that all of the events of Matthew 24 would be fulfilled within their lifetime.**

The Rapture Misunderstanding

Many people think that **Matthew 24:40-41** refers to a rapture:

> *“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”*

However, if we look at **Luke 17:37**, the disciples ask **“Where, Lord?”** and Jesus replies:

> *“Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.”*

This means that those **taken were taken in judgment**—not raptured to safety. The righteous were left behind, just like in **Noah's flood** and **the destruction of Sodom.**

Conclusion: The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Matthew 24 is not about the end of the world—it is about **the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish age.**

Jesus' warnings were for **His generation**, and history shows that they came true in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed the temple, fulfilling everything Jesus prophesied.

This should bring relief to Christians today, knowing that we are not waiting for a catastrophic fulfillment of these events. Instead, we should focus on **spreading the Gospel and living in Christ's kingdom today.**

Thank you for following this study through Matthew 24!

Compressed Transcript

Part 1: Setting the Context

We begin by examining the setting in which Jesus delivers this prophecy.

In **Matthew 24:1-3**, the disciples marvel at the temple's grandeur, but Jesus tells them that **not one stone will be left upon another**. This shocking statement prompts them to ask three specific questions:

1. **When will these things happen?** (Referring to the destruction of the temple)

2. **What will be the sign of your coming?** (A reference to divine judgment)
3. **What will be the sign of the end of the age?**

A key issue is how one interprets the phrase “end of the age.” Many assume it refers to the end of the physical world, but the Greek word **“aion”** means **age** rather than world. The disciples were asking about the end of the Jewish age—the old covenant system—not the end of human history.

Parallels to this account appear in **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**, which reinforce that Jesus was primarily speaking about events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Part 2: Understanding the Signs

Jesus begins listing various signs that will precede this event (**Matthew 24:4-14**):

- False messiahs
- Wars and rumors of wars
- Nations rising against nations
- Famines and earthquakes
- Persecution of believers
- The gospel being preached to the whole world

While many view these signs as futuristic, a study of **first-century history** reveals that they were all present leading up to 70 A.D. False messiahs, Jewish revolts against Rome, and widespread persecution of Christians occurred during that time.

The phrase **“the gospel will be preached to the whole world”** is clarified when we recognize that the Greek word used here,

“oikumene”, refers to the **inhabited Roman Empire**, not the entire planet. Paul affirms in **Colossians 1:23** that the gospel had already been proclaimed “to every creature under heaven” within his lifetime.

Part 3: The Abomination of Desolation

A pivotal moment in Jesus’ prophecy is **the abomination of desolation** (**Matthew 24:15-22**), a term rooted in **Daniel 9**.

Luke 21:20 provides a direct explanation: **“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.”** This was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Roman army, led by Titus, besieged and destroyed Jerusalem.

Jesus warns those in Judea to **flee to the mountains**—a clear indication of a localized event, not a global one. Historical records confirm that Christians in Jerusalem, remembering Jesus’ words, fled to **Pella**, escaping the destruction.

Part 4: Cosmic Disturbances and Symbolism

Matthew 24:29-31 describes cosmic signs:

- The sun will be darkened
- The moon will not give its light
- Stars will fall from the sky
- The Son of Man coming on the clouds

Rather than interpreting this literally, we should recognize **this is prophetic language used throughout the Old Testament to describe divine judgment.**

For example:

- **Isaiah 13:10** describes the fall of Babylon using similar language.
- **Ezekiel 32:7-8** describes judgment on Egypt with references to the sun and moon going dark.
- **Daniel 7:13** describes the Son of Man coming in judgment—not a physical descent, but **a transition of power and authority.**

Thus, Jesus' "coming on the clouds" is not a reference to a literal Second Coming but a **symbolic way of describing His divine authority being executed in the judgment of Jerusalem.**

Part 5: The Generation That Will Not Pass

One of the most definitive statements in this passage is **Matthew 24:34**:

> *"Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened."*

Everywhere in the Gospels, "this generation" refers to Jesus' contemporary audience—not a distant future group. If we accept the plain meaning of Jesus' words, then all the signs He described must have been fulfilled in that first-century generation.

Attempts to redefine "this generation" to mean "the generation

that will see these signs” distort the text. The destruction of Jerusalem in **70 A.D.** fulfills Jesus’ prophecy perfectly.

Part 6: The Misunderstood “Rapture”

Matthew 24:40-41 says:

> *“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”*

Many claim this supports the idea of a **rapture**, but Jesus’ reference to the “days of Noah” clarifies it.

In **Noah’s time, who was taken?** The wicked. The flood took them away, while Noah and his family were left behind.

Similarly, **Luke 17:37** asks, “Where, Lord?”—referring to those taken. Jesus responds, **“Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.”**

This shows that the ones “taken” are those judged and destroyed, not raptured.

Part 7: The Kingdom Has Come

Jesus’ prophecy culminates in the establishment of the **new covenant**. After 70 A.D., the old Jewish age—the temple system, sacrifices, and priesthood—was **completely abolished**, making way for the reign of Christ and the spread of the Gospel without hindrance.

Conclusion: Relief and Understanding

Matthew 24 **is not about the end of the world** but about **the end of the Jewish age** and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus' warnings were for **His generation**, and history confirms they came true.

This realization should bring **relief** to Christians today. Instead of waiting for catastrophic signs of the end, we should focus on **spreading the Gospel and living in Christ's kingdom today.**

Thank you for following this study through Matthew 24!