

Matthew 24 And The Destruction Of Jerusalem

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The Olivet Discourse

“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’”

Matthew 24:1–3
(*Mark 13:1ff & Luke 21:5ff*)

The Key To The Discourse

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the very doors. Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled.** Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”

Matthew 24:32–36

“This Generation”

Thayer: “1. *a begetting, birth, nativity... 2. passively, that which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family ... the several ranks in a natural descent, the successive members of a genealogy ... b. metaph. a race of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character, and esp. in a bad sense a perverse race ... 3. the whole multitude of men living at the same time: Mt. xxiv. 34; Mk. xiii. 30; Lk. i. 48 ...xxi. 32 ... 4. an age (i.e. the time ordinarily occupied by each successive generation), the space of from 30 to 33 years...*”

Vine: “2. ...connected with *ginomai*, to become, primarily signifies a begetting, or birth; then that which has been begotten, a family; or successive members of a genealogy ... or of a race of people, possessed of similar characteristics, pursuits, etc., (of a bad character) ... or the whole multitude of men living at the same time, Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 1:48; 21:32 ... Transferred from people to the time in which they lived, the word came to mean an age, i.e., a period ordinarily occupied by each successive generations, say, of thirty or forty years...”

Flavius Josephus



- A Jewish Priest who led a rebellion against Roman oppression in Galilee
- Captured by the Romans at the fall of Yotapata in 67 A.D., and held as a prisoner in Caesrea till 69 A.D.
- Returned to Jerusalem with Titus in 70 A.D.
- Knew Jewish Sects
- Traveled with Roman Army
- Eyewitness at destruction of Jerusalem
- Made a Roman Citizen by Vespasian Caesar

Matthew 24:4–5

“False Christs”

Josephus: “But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place.” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 2:3:5)

Josephus: “Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their efforts 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.” (*The Antiquities Of The Jews*, 20:5:1)

Matthew 24:6–8

“Wars And Rumors Of Wars”

Tacitus: “The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible with battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the sword; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time.” (*The Histories*, 1:2)

Josephus: “Now the people of Caesarea had slain the Jews that were among them on the very same day and hour [when the soldiers were slain], which one would think must have come to pass by the direction of Providence; insomuch that in one hour’s time above twenty thousand Jews were killed, and all Cesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants;” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 2:18:1)

Matthew 24:7

“Famines” And “Pestilences”

Luke: “And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world: which also came to pass in the days of Cladius Caesar.” (*Acts 11:27*)

Josephus: “Now her coming was of very great advantage to the people of Jerusalem; for whereas a famine did oppress them at that time, and many people died for want of what was necessary to produce food withal, queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of corn, and others to Cyprus, to bring a cargo of dried figs...” (*The Antiquities Of The Jews, 20:2:5*)

Tacitus: “Many prodigies occurred during the year. Ominous birds took their seat on the Capitol; houses were overturned by repeated shocks of earthquake, and, as the panic spread, the weak were trampled underfoot in the trepidation of the crowd. A shortage of corn, again, and the famine which resulted, were construed as a supernatural warning.” (*The Annals, 12:43*)

Pestilences are the usual attendants of famine.

Matthew 24:7

“Earthquakes”

J. Marcellus Kik: “And as to earthquakes, many are mentioned by writers during a period just previous to 70 A.D. There were earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, Campania, Rome, and Judea. It is interesting to note that the city of Pompeii was much damaged by an earthquake occurring on February 5, 63 A.D.” (*An Eschatology Of Victory*, p. 93)

Luke 21:10–11

“Fearful Events From Heaven”

Josephus: “...for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshadowed some great calamities that were coming.” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 4:4:5)

Josephus: “Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet that continued a whole year. Thus also, before the Jews’ rebellion... so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour. ...Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass armed with iron, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 4:4:5)

Matthew 24:14

“Preached To All Nations”

Paul: “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: ...If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister...” (Colossians 1:5, 6, 23)

Lars P. Qualben: “Tradition assigns the following fields to the various apostles and evangelists: Andrew is said to have labored in Scythia; hence the Russians worship him as their apostle. Philip spent his last years in Hierapolis in Phrygia. Bartholomew is said to have brought the gospel according to Matthew into India. The tradition concerning Matthew is rather confused. He is said to have preached to his own people, and afterward in foreign lands. James Alphaeus is said to have worked in Egypt. Thaddeus is said to have been the missionary to Persia. Simon Zelotes is said to have worked in Egypt and in Britain; while another report connects him with Persian and Babylonia. The evangelist John Mark is said to have founded the church in Alexandria.” (*History Of The Christian Church*)

Mark 13:9

“Stand Before Kings”

Peter & John	Acts 4
Stephen	Acts 7
James	Acts 12
Paul	Acts 18 (Gallio)
Paul	Acts 24 (Felix)
Paul	Acts 25 (Agrippa)

Under Nero, it was a crime to be a Christian!

Matthew 24:15

“Abomination Of Desolation”

Prior to the siege, the temple became a gathering place for wicked men. After the siege, the Romans placed their ensigns over the Eastern gate.

Josephus: “And now, when the multitude were gotten together to an assembly, and every one was in indignation at these men’s seizing upon the sanctuary, at their rapine and murders but had not yet begun their attacks upon them ... Agnus stood in the midst of them, and casting his eyes frequently at the temple, and having a flood of tears in his eyes he said, ‘Certainly, it had been good for me to die before I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations, or these sacred places that ought not to be trodden upon at random, filled with the feet of these blood-shedding villains...’” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 4:3:10)

Luke 21:20–21

“Jerusalem Surrounded”

Josephus: “And now Vespasian had fortified all the places round about Jerusalem, and erected citadels at Jericho and Adida, and placed garrisons in them both ... 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; ... 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 ... the Roman empire being then in a fluctuating condition, and did not go on with the expedition against the Jews...”
(*The Wars Of The Jews*, 4:9:1,2)

The Legions of Rome camped at the Mount of Olives (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 5:2:3)

A trench was literally cast about Jerusalem — a nine mile long wall was put up in three days, which totally enclosed the city. (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 5:12:2)

Matthew 24:16–21

“Great Tribulation”

Josephus: “But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses wither the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is of such as died by the famine; they then stood in horror at this sight, and went out without touching anything. But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many houses was quenched with these men’s blood.” (*The Wars Of The Jews*, 6:8:5)

Matthew 24:29

“Stars Will Fall From Heaven”

- Judgment on Babylon (*Isa. 13:10, 13*)
- Judgment on Edom (*Isa. 34:4–6*)
- Judgment on the Peoples (*Isa. 51:5–6*)
- Judgment on Judah (*Jer. 4:1–6, 23–28*)
- Judgment on Egypt (*Ezek. 32:7–8*)
- Judgment on the Nations (*Joel 3:15–16*)
- Judgment on Nineveh (*Nah. 1:1–5*)
- Judgment on Israel (*Amos 8:1–2, 9*)

Matthew 24:30

The Sign Of The Son Of Man

Jesus did not say:

“And then shall appear the Son of man in heaven”

“And then shall appear the sign in the heaven(s) of the Son of man”

He did say:

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven”

- Literally: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in the heaven” (*Berry’s Interlinear*)
- The phrase “in heaven” denotes the locality of the Son of man, not the locality of the sign

The destruction of Jerusalem itself served as a sign of the fact the Son of man was ruling in heaven, because it was the fulfillment of His prediction (Deut. 18:20–22)

Matthew 24:1–2

“One Stone Not Left Upon Another”

Titus did not want to destroy the temple. He told his soldiers, “I appeal to my own army, and the Jews that are now with me, and even to you yourselves, that I do not force you to defile this sanctuary; and if you will but change the place whereon you will fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavor to preserve you your holy house, whether you will or not.” (Josephus, *The Wars Of The Jews*, 6:2:4)

After the city was taken, “Caesar gave order that they should now demolish the entire city and temple ... but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.” (Josephus, *The Wars Of The Jews*, 7:1:1)

Micah 3:12 “Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps...”

Significant Contrasts

Destruction Of Jerusalem

“Days” (24:19, 22, 29)

“Know” (24:15, 33)

Abnormal Times (24:4–13)

Warning (24:32–33)

Time for Flight (24:16)

Limited, Local Judgment (24:15–22)

Imminent Judgment (24:15–16, 34)

Judgment on Earth (24:15–18)

Coming Of The Lord

“Day” (24:36, 42, 44,50; 25:13)

“Know Not” (24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13)

Normal Times (24:37–42)

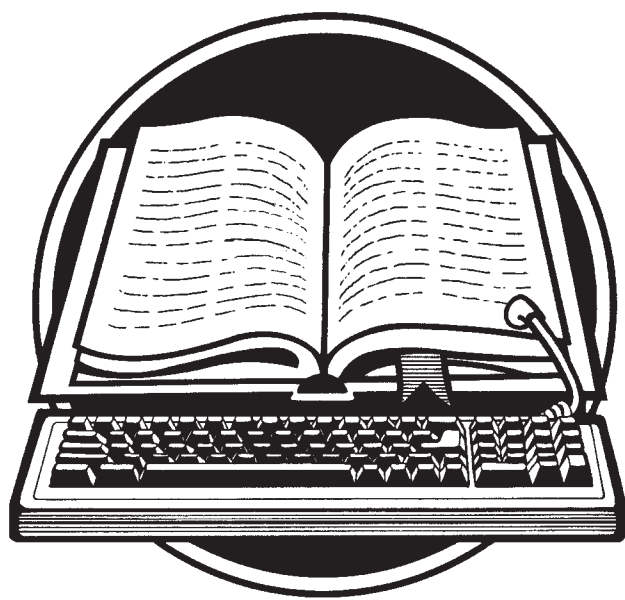
No Warning (24:43–44)

No Time for Flight (24:39)

Universal Judgment (25:31–46)

Delayed Judgment (24:48, 50; 25:5, 19)

Judgment in Heaven (25:31)



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