



PENTECOSTAL
CHURCH OF ZION

A GUIDE TO
MATTHEW 24

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Matthew 24 is one of the most commonly abused chapters in the New Testament among Dispensationalist teachers. The reason I use a word as strong as 'abused' is for the simple fact over the last two centuries, Dispensationalists have used this chapter to bolster erroneous prophecies. Those prophecies, having been proven wrong time and time again, continue to be updated and modernized to fit whatever political climate or whim that sells the most books and timeshares. This doctrine, which was created by John Nelson Darby and spread by preachers like D. L. Moody and Cyrus Scofield, did not exist for millennia in Christianity in any real way until the mid-19th century. As an unfortunate consequence, the Pentecostal movement, which grew due to the mass outpouring of the Spirit in the United States from the late-19th to early-20th centuries, has been infiltrated by this bad theology perhaps as a result of both movements finding little appreciation in the traditional Protestant world.

It is a travesty, however, that a doctrine both carnal and shallow, has a stranglehold on the discourse among a people that should be the most spiritual and insightful. Why is it, that those who believe in the active role of the Spirit of God in daily life, are teaching and repeating one of the most carnal and worldly doctrines. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* This is the work of Satan to cast a stumbling-block and a snare against born-again, Pentecostal believers. It prevents us from leading where we must lead, from building where we must build and from laying up in store for our future generations. The idea that in our brief lifetimes Christ will return and set up a physical, carnal nation in the Middle East and bail us out of our conflict with the powers of spiritual darkness is dangerous and it is causing people to be lost due to repeated false prophecy. The scripture so plainly teaches us Christ's kingdom is Spirit in nature. And that Kingdom is eternal, and there will never be another.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Matthew 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

These are but a few scriptures that prove beyond a shadow of doubt when the Bible talks about God's kingdom, it is speaking of a higher spiritual kingdom, not a lowly corruptible kingdom of flesh. This is indeed the message of meaning of the entire Bible.

The scripture says *you will know the tree by its fruit*. Pre-Millennial Dispensationalism as a doctrine has fruit, and none of it is positive, Godly fruit. Here are some examples:

- Premillennial eschatology is a pessimistic view in which the failure of the church is mandatory. This leads otherwise Godly people to withdraw from society instead of being vocal leaders in our communities. The enemy has enjoyed the withdraw of fervent believers from public discourse in Western Society.
- Dispensationalism leads to views regarding salvation that are contrary to Jesus and the Apostles doctrine. Many Dispensational preachers teach there is no point in converting an ethnic Jewish person because they will have a different path in a future dispensation. This is heretical to the scripture.
- Pre-Millennial Dispensationalism is marked by rabid commercialism of the Gospel. *The love of money is the root of all evil*. How many *Left Behind* books have been sold? The entire mega-church movement in the United States was engineered by Dispensationalists because it is so easy to profit on whatever current political events can be distorted into some false prophecy to create a sense of urgency among their followers.
- Speaking of false prophecy, how many times can Dispensationalists get away with lying for money, without losing their audience? From the six-day war, to the gulf wars, to Hamas violence, or anything involving the modern-day nation of Israel. How many times do we allow people to claim the end is here, before we condemn their message and affirm the truth of the Scripture?

With all of that said, let's begin the exercise. We will examine Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24, but unlike the Dispensationalists, we will not divorce it from the context of Matthew 23, or the context of Mark 13 and Luke 21, which are the other chapters containing the same teaching from Jesus. John does not record this. One might speculate as to why, and it could be that he felt it was covered well enough already, or perhaps the events described had *already occurred*, as John's gospel was likely composed very late in the Apostles life.

Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Matthew 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Matthew 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

Matthew 23:17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

Matthew 23:18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Matthew 23:19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Matthew 23:20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

Matthew 23:21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

Matthew 23:22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Matthew 23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Matthew 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Matthew 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Matthew 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Matthew 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Matthew 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Matthew 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Matthew 23:31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Matthew 23:32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Matthew 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Matthew 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

Matthew 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Matthew 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Matthew 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Matthew 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

This is a rather large chunk of text from Matthew here, but it is important to read this for context in the next chapter. Very broadly Jesus does the following:

1. Pronounces eight woes on the Pharisees.
2. Says they are filling up the measure of wrath against them along with their fathers.
3. They and their fathers killed prophets from Abel to Zechariah
4. Their house will be desolate, Jesus brings desolation into view here.
5. They will kill Christians.
6. All of this judgement would come upon their generation (which it did).

Matthew 24 begins by saying Jesus departed the temple and was shown the impressive temple buildings by His disciples. This was at a time when Herod's rebuild would have been

very new. Jesus responds by saying there would not be left one stone upon another that would not be thrown down. This causes the disciples to ask some questions. These questions are the context for Jesus' response in the rest of the chapter.

Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Luke 21:7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

Mark 13:4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

It is in this context we should interpret the prophecy Jesus gives. When are these things (temple destruction) going to occur and what is the sign of it coming to pass? We know from history the temple was destroyed in AD 70, and every stone was cast down, those stones lay at the bottom of the temple mount to this very day.

Notice in Luke it says "come to pass" and Matthew says "end of the world." Is Matthew talking about something else? No, he isn't. Think about it this way, it would indeed be the end of the world as they knew it, they had no modern concept of a "world" as a planet in space. The Greek word for world is *aion* (G165) and it is often translated as *age*. It refers to a period of time. Matthew is not contradicting the other gospels, but rather affirming them. Remember, the disciples are the ones asking these questions, they didn't even understand that Jesus would need to die and rise again, proven by Jesus' admonition of them after the resurrection. How could they possibly have a theological concept of the second coming of Christ, if they didn't yet even understand Christ's mission? They were looking for Jesus to sit on the literal throne of David in a natural kingdom (sign of the coming). Unfortunately, that is what many are looking for today because they are not spiritual.

When the disciples asked about Christ's coming, they weren't talking about a return to earth from heaven, but rather when Jesus would be coming into His kingdom. In their mind, it was an earthly kingdom of Israel. In reality, it is the heavenly spiritual kingdom of God, which is populated by spiritual Israel. This is the kingdom Jesus was preaching about during His ministry. John the Baptist prepared the way by preaching about it, and the Apostles preached about this kingdom everywhere they went. Unfortunately, this is one of the most overlooked points of theology in Scripture.

For example, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost was not given until Jesus was glorified (John 7:39.) The rule of Jesus over the kingdoms of this world was righteously established due to His worthiness (Revelation 5). Only after His glorification was the baptism of the Spirit sent to the believers at Pentecost.

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Matthew 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Matthew 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

Matthew 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Mark 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

Mark 13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mark 13:7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

Mark 13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

Luke 21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

Luke 21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

Luke 21:10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

Luke 21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

As we can see from these parallel passages, Jesus is explaining that there will be deceivers, false Christs, talk of war, nation will rise against nation, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. These things are called the beginning of sorrows, but the end is not yet. Many will teach this applies to the current time we live in, I would say it could be taken to apply to almost any time period, but there is something very specific Jesus points out which really puts this in its first century context. He said many would say, "I am Christ" and deceive many. Christ is just the Greek word for Messiah. He did *not* say many would say "I am the Son of God." Remember, Jesus's claim to be God was what offended the Jewish leaders, not necessarily claiming to be the Messiah. As we look at history, this did indeed happen, and it happened quite a bit during this time period. Various rebel leaders rose up in Judea, claiming to be the Messiah, to gather armies to themselves in order to cast off Roman rule.

Matthew 24:9 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.

Matthew 24:10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Matthew 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Matthew 24:14 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.

Mark 13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

Mark 13:10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

Mark 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

Mark 13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Mark 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Luke 21:12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

Luke 21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Luke 21:14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

Luke 21:15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

Luke 21:16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

Luke 21:17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

Luke 21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

Luke 21:19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

For the previous passages it is critical to compare each parallel text. If you were to only read Matthew, you would get a sense this passage occurs in chronology after the nation against nation passage. However, Luke gives us a clear view of the chronology as he says “before all these.” So, before nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, the Apostles will experience persecution, being delivered up in synagogues, going to prison, being brought before rulers. This is exactly what Jesus said would happen in Matthew 23. It is exactly what happened in the book of Acts. What we are reading here is a fulfilled prophecy from Jesus. Also in Acts 5 we learn about false prophets, and false messiahs (Theudas and Judas of Galilee) who were already coming on the scene. Another in Acts 8, Simon, practiced sorcery and was viewed as a “great power of God.” In Acts 13, another sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-jesus was blinded by Paul for interfering with the Gospel. We don’t have to trust that Jesus words came true merely through historical accounts, they came true even in the Scriptural narrative during the lifetimes of the Apostles.

Matthew 24:15 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:)

Matthew 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Matthew 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Matthew 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Matthew 24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

Matthew 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

Matthew 24:21 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 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Mark 13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

Mark 13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

Mark 13:16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

Mark 13:17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

Mark 13:18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

Mark 13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

Mark 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Luke 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Luke 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

Luke 21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Luke 21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

Luke 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Now Jesus begins to speak about the end. The end of what? The world as they know it. The end of the temple, the end of the Levitical priesthood, the end of the sacrifices and carnal ordinance of the Mosaic Law. Much has been made about the "abomination of desolation" but the concept is very simple. In fact, a temporary version of it happened before, during Greek control of Judea under Antiochus IV. Daniel 8:11-14 plainly records this defilement and gives the timeframe until the rededication as recorded in *Maccabees*. The difference between this defilement of the temple in Daniel 8, and Daniel 9, which Jesus is referring to here, is that the Daniel 8 defilement did not lead to a permanent desolation. Daniel 9 clearly shows the desolation will remain until the *kala*, (H3615,) meaning "full end." Contrary to dispensationalist views, the Bible clearly teaches there will never be another temple, and there is no power in any cow of a certain pigment to cleanse anything. Those who seek such ends merely endanger people living today due to political unrest. Not once in the millennia since the temple destruction has anything other than a pagan shrine existed on the temple mount. History has seen pagan shrines on this site from the temple of Jupiter to the Dome of the Rock. Those who interpret the Old Testament carnally, and claim it prophesies of another physical temple, have that belief in common with Jews who rejected Jesus Christ and still reject Him to this day. As

Jesus told His disciples in Luke 24, Moses, and the Psalms, and the Prophets all spoke of Him. They should have known better than to think that Jesus would not rise again. The same is true today. We as Christians should know better than to believe in our future, temple centered worship will ever return. It is foolishness. The Scripture plainly tells us that we are the Temple of the Living God. This is what the Old Testament prophets were teaching us. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.*

It is also clear from Luke that the desolation and Jerusalem being besieged by armies occur in one event. In AD70, the legions that attacked Jerusalem were all from different nations, from Gaul to the north of Mesopotamia. Local kings and leaders allied themselves with the Romans against the Jews as well. Jesus says the greatest affliction that would ever occur was in this time and place. It's not hard to believe when you consider what we know of this event. Reportedly over a million people were killed in this once siege alone. Mothers ate their children. People starved in their home. By the time Roman soldiers entered the city, there was hardly any killing left to do.

"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 a 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 of the houses was quenched with these men's blood" – Josephus Wars of the Jews

Amazingly, even though one million were killed, even though one hundred thousand were enslaved, forty thousand people were allowed to leave by the Romans during the siege (Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book VI, 378–386.) One must speculate, but were these Christian refugees? There is no way to know, but what is clear is that even during the direst moment, many fled as Jesus instructed.

Matthew 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

Matthew 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Matthew 24:25 Behold, I have told you before.

Matthew 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

Matthew 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Mark 13:21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

Mark 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Mark 13:23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

Jesus warns not to follow false messiahs. He isn't going to operate the way these fakes will operate. When the Son of Man comes into His kingdom, there won't be time for rumors, or whispers, like lightening, it will just happen. Jesus uses the term "Son of Man" to refer to himself quite a bit, and He uses it here purposefully once again. This shows us that Jesus is the figure referred to in Daniel as the Son of Man. Daniel 7 depicts a heavenly judgement in which the Son of Man ascended to the Ancient of Days and was given all dominion. In Daniel 7:13 a very important phrase is recorded: *one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him*. As we can see here, Jesus coming with the clouds was not Jesus returning to earth, but rather ascended to the Father's throne. Daniel says the Son of Man was brought to the Ancient of days. We find the same thing in Revelation 5: *And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof*.

Today there are still historical accounts of lying signs and wonders performed immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Many people believed the messiah would come before Jerusalem was destroyed (which He did), but in their minds the messiah would be an earthly king and a military leader. Jewish occultism grew from this messianic fever. The Talmud records this sort of Rabbinic witchcraft as reported by John Lightfoot in the 17th century.

False Christs broke out, and appeared in public with their witchcrafts, so much the frequenter and more impudent, as the city and people drew nearer to its ruin; because the people believed the Messias should be manifested before the destruction of the city; and each of them pretended to be the Messias by these signs. From the words of Isaiah, "Before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child," the doctors concluded, "that the Messias should be manifested before the destruction of the city". . . . Mark that also; "The Son of David will not come, till the wicked empire [of the Romans] shall have spread itself over all the worlds nine months; as it is said, 'Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth.

-Lightfoot, A Commentary on the New Testament, 2:318

Nor did any one of them escape with his life. A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now, a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when a such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such deliverance. Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers.

-Flavius Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 6:5:2-3.

Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Matthew 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.

Matthew 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mark 13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

Mark 13:25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

Mark 13:26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Mark 13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Luke 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Luke 21:26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Luke 21:27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Luke 21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Many read about Jesus “coming in the clouds” and think “coming to the earth.” But that is not what it is saying. It’s literally telling us the opposite. The problem is, we remove Matthew 24 and its parallel chapters from their context, which is a frank conversation between a yet-on-earth Jesus and four of His closest disciples.

The prophetic motif of the Sun and Moon darkening is not a novel one at this point. This appears in the Old Testament in a few places. There is a whole study for another time on what the Sun and Moon represent in prophecy, but when this language appears in the Old Testament it is a prophecy of the New Covenant, which represents a cosmic change to the order of the world. The old host of heaven cast down and a new heaven is created. It is about the arrival of the Holy Spirit. You don’t have to take my word for it, the Apostle Peter explains this in Acts 2: *For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

The sun and the moon and stars of the sky are avatars for false gods (*spiritual wickedness in high places*) in scripture. Them being darkened refers to their power and dominion being taken away; their death (Isaiah 34:4-5). This is the language of the Ancient Near East, and this is the language the Bible uses. This is what was understood by the people at the time. It isn’t a scientific or astronomical prediction. How can a “star fall to the earth” literally? In our physical reality, a star is commonly hundreds or thousands of times the size of the earth, made up of super-heated elements under-going constant nuclear reactions. They are light years away in space. This is not something that can happen in the natural world, but it is a manner in which to explain how the kingdom of darkness was expelled from heaven (war in heaven, Revelation 12).

Matthew 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

Matthew 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Matthew 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Mark 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

Mark 13:29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

Mark 13:30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

Mark 13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Luke 21:29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

Luke 21:30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

Luke 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Luke 21:32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Luke 21:33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

This section gives whiplash to people who contend Jesus is making a future (to us) prophecy. Just as He said in Matthew 23, Jesus says in Matthew 24, the generation He is speaking in will not pass until *all* of these things are accomplished. This is where people will perform mental gymnastics to try and move this generation out of the first century, but that clearly violates the plain reading of the text, as well as the context of the entire discussion. Jesus is answering very plainly the specific questions to four of His closest disciples regarding the destruction of the temple. The idea that Jesus coming into His kingdom coincides with the end, or the last days, of the temple era should not be a foreign concept to us, but many have worked to confuse people on this matter. Luke 9: 27 says, *But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.* There are so many scriptures that show us that the Kingdom of God was near at hand during the time of Christ.

Luke 10: 9 *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

Luke 10:11 *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

Luke 11:2 *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*

Luke 16:16 *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

These are just a few examples. A big one people often overlook is in Luke 11 where Jesus says “*But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*” This should be a big tip off. Jesus is literally telling them, my authority over the kingdom of darkness shows you my kingdom has come to this world. The demons being cast out by authority proved the authority of the kingdom of darkness had been superseded.

Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Matthew 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

Matthew 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Matthew 24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Mark 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Luke 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

Luke 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Luke 17:31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

Luke 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

Luke 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Luke 17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

Luke 17:35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Luke 17:36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Luke 17:37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Jesus isn't talking about a rapture in these passages. Jesus mentions two people in a field, one *taken* and the other left. Many use this to support a pre-tribulation rapture position within the dispensationalist sphere. This position can only be maintained if you ignore what Jesus is referring to by being *taken*. Jesus said the flood came and *took* them away, and so it will be when the Son of Man comes into His Kingdom. Being taken in this context is receiving the judgement of God. Just as the wicked and perverse world of Genesis 6 was brought to an end, so would the pre-kingdom world and the temple would not survive its end.

Matthew 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Matthew 24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Matthew 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Matthew 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Matthew 24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Matthew 24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

Matthew 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

Matthew 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

Matthew 24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

Matthew 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Mark 13:34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Mark 13:35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

Mark 13:36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

Mark 13:37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Luke 21:34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Luke 21:35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Luke 21:37 And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

Luke 21:38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Jesus entrusted His kingdom to the Apostles. He admonished them to watch because the *day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night*. He likened it to going on a journey. The day of return unknown to all except the Lord himself. Why watch? Because those who did not watch would find their place with the hypocrites. Who are the hypocrites? Jesus called the Pharisees and leaders of the Jewish people hypocrites 17 times during His recorded ministry. Those are exactly the ones who would receive judgement in AD 70 as well as all of those who followed them. The Apostles had an amazing responsibility, they were to preach the gospel to the nations, build the early churches, and faithfully perform all of their duty.

Genesis 10 is often referred to as the “table of nations.” These are the seventy nations that came from Noah, and consequently they were dispersed from Babel in the following

chapter. Paul in his letter to the Romans says *I will by you into Spain*. He speaks very definitively about going to Spain despite his current circumstances. I believe this is because the message of the Gospel was prophesied to be preached in all nations by Jesus (Matthew 24:14.) This is also found in the prophets as well (Isaiah 49:6 Isaiah 52:10 Isaiah 66:18 among many more.) This is why Paul said he was going to Spain, not *if the Lord wills* he would go to Spain (James 4:15).

As we have seen, when we weigh the context of these scriptures together, along with our unique perspective living 2,000 years later, the message of Jesus' time was the kingdom is coming soon, it is nigh, Jesus' authority and power was coming to the world. Why would Jesus say he is coming soon, that the kingdom is close and near, and then 2,000 years later it still hasn't happened? This was a message for the common man, not the elite and learned. It was not an esoteric formula that makes far too much about 2 Peter 3:8 (*a day with the Lord...*) Peter isn't handing down a Bible code, he is making a point that God's time is not *our* time. Which is a kindred point to the ones I am making in this study. Jesus is not a false prophet; He is the reigning King of Kings. The Apostles also affirm that those who are born again are indeed part of Christ's kingdom, not that they will be one day, or only after resurrection.

The Apostles taught that their time was the last days:

1 Corinthians 4:9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last...

Hebrews 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...

James 5:3 ... Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days

1 Peter 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time...

One such reference to the last days I want to pay special attention to is 1 Peter 4:7, ***But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*** Peter is telling them to be sober and to watch, because the "end of all things" is "at hand." To say "at hand" is to say that it is happening soon, this is how that phrase is used throughout the Bible. Did Peter make a 2,000-year mistake? Or was he saying something that made sense to the temple-era church, and we are misinterpreting it today? I think the Scripture demonstrates plainly what he was referencing. He uses the same words Jesus did when he warns them to be sober and to watch.

Jesus himself says He comes quickly. When John the Baptist preached the Messiah was soon to come, and *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matthew 3:2), Jesus' ministry would begin within six months. When God says something is going to happen quickly in Scripture, it happens just when He says it will.

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly...

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly...

Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly...

Revelation 22:20 ... Surely I come quickly...

Mat 16:27 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.

Mat 16:28 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.

In Baal worship, they used to call Baal a cloud rider. The Biblical writers mocked this and said Jehovah is the rider of the clouds (Isaiah 19:1.) It is the same imagery with Jesus. Christ, ascending to heaven, coming in the clouds of glory, casts down all false gods, assuming the title and status Baal (or Satan) never could. This perfectly fits not only Jesus' answer in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13, but also the disciple's questions. Remember, this response from Jesus was prompted by a question regarding the destruction of the temple. When Jesus talks about His coming happening in that generation, when He says *I come quickly*, when He says people standing with Him will not die before this happens, He means coming into his kingdom, coming into the clouds of glory, ruling with the rod of iron, and His kingdom growing to fill the whole earth (Daniel 2.)

Did you know there are an estimated 600 million Pentecostals in the world, as of 2024? In fact, is it the fastest growing religious movement in the world. By 2050, 1 in 10 human beings alive will be Pentecostal. That means despite the relatively recent decline of Western Society, the world as a whole is coming to Christ, and His Spirit is moving miraculously like never before. The future looks bright for our grandkids! There will always be hardship, there will always be persecution while evil lurks in the shadows, but now is the time for boldness, now is the time to build the kingdom. And building the kingdom means proclaiming *sound doctrine*.

I hope this guide to Matthew 24 can be a help to you on your personal walk with Christ, and I thank you for reading it. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me at church@pcofz.com.

May God keep you and yours,

Evangelist Ethan Jones

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