

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 24

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. There are many passages in the word of God that are misunderstood and misapplied by people in the religious world today.**
- B. It may involve a single verse, a whole chapter, or an entire book. Matthew 24 is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied chapters in the Bible.**
- C. Denominational preachers by the score quote the early verses of this chapter and make the signs found there applicable to the events of this century. Based on these signs, they will then contend that we can know that Jesus is coming soon.**
- D. A careful study of this chapter will show, however, that Jesus is talking about two events: the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming.**

### DISCUSSION

#### I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

**A. The discussion in Matthew 24 falls during the final week of Christ's life on earth, before going to the cross.**

- 1. It was a week of great controversy, a week of considerable anguish on our Lord's part.**
- 2. He is attempting to teach the disciples certain principles of truth that would allow them to continue on in the face of the trials that were before them.**

**B. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus is in the city of Jerusalem and had been in the area of the temple.**

- 1. As He leaves this area with His disciples, He points out the buildings of the temple complex and says to His disciples, "Do you see these buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another."**
- 2. The disciples are perplexed by Jesus' statement and so they ask, "When will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?"**

**C. It has been suggested that they believed they were asking only one question.**

- 1. They felt that the only way the temple could be destroyed would be with the coming of Christ**

and the end of the world.

2. As a result of that belief, they fused the two events together.

D. Jesus, in His response, will plainly show that the two events are not going to happen at the same time.

1. It would seem to me that Jesus is attempting to clear up the misunderstanding of His disciples.

2. Isn't it ironic, then, that this teaching which Jesus gave to clear up the misunderstanding has become one of the most misunderstood passages in the New Testament!

E. In our study of this great chapter I will set forth this basic concept. I will attempt to show that there are two major divisions in this chapter covering two topics.

1. The coming destruction of Jerusalem: verses 1-33.

2. The Second Coming of Christ: verses 35-51.

F. There are two extreme positions that need to be avoided in the study of Matthew 24.

1. The A.D. 70 Doctrine. This teaching would have us believe that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming are the same event.

a. Since the New Testament teaches that at the coming of Christ there would be a resurrection, the end of time, and the judgment, it is contended that all this took place in A.D.70 with the destruction of Jerusalem.

b. The resurrection was not meant to be a bodily resurrection, but the resurrection of the church out of persecution.

c. The end of time simply refers to the end of the Jewish age.

d. Judgment day is not a judgment of all mankind but simply God's judgment of the Jewish nation.

2. The second false view is the premillennial view. This view takes the position that all of Matthew 24 has to do with the coming of Christ and the end of the world. They will tell you to read the signs and you will be able to know that Jesus is coming soon. This view is held by a large number of religious groups in the world today. This view sets forth the following false ideas.

a. Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom. He was rejected by the Jews which led to His crucifixion. As a result of this rejection He had to postpone the establishment of His kingdom.

b. In the place of the kingdom Jesus established the church. The church is a substitute, an

afterthought, in God's original plan.

c. Jesus will then one day return and establish His earthly kingdom. By looking at the signs of Matthew 24 we can see that we are in the last days and Jesus will be returning soon.

## **II. KEYS TO UNLOCKING THE MEANING OF MATTHEW 24.**

**A. The first key is verse 34.**

1. Sometimes a key verse in a passage or chapter will help clear up some of the difficulties within a passage or chapter.

2. If a person does not see the significance of Matthew 24:34, then he will probably misunderstand the chapter.

**B. Verse 34 contains several important words.**

1. "This generation"—with these two words Jesus states explicitly who is to receive the signs given in this chapter.

a. The signs were given to the contemporaries of Christ.

b. These events would take place in the life span of the people then living.

2. "These things"—this phrase appears in 23:36; 24:2,3,6,33,34.

a. The immediate context of the events mentioned in the first 34 verses of Matthew 24 are bracketed by these words.

b. Jesus makes it clear that all "these things" will take place within that generation.

c. It is interesting that after verse 34 there is no further reference to "these things."

## **III. THE QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES (verses 1,2).**

**A. No doubt it seemed incredible to the disciples that the Lord could be talking about the temple's being destroyed.**

1. Josephus states that some of the stones of the temple measured 50 feet long, 24 feet wide, and 16 feet high (Antiquities xv.11.3).

2. This was a tremendous statement for Jesus to make and one that was hard for the disciples to comprehend.

**B. The disciples ask the question, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age?”**

**1. It appears they were asking two, maybe three questions. But in all probability they were asking only one, thinking that the end of the world would have to come in order for the temple to be destroyed.**

**2. But in answering their question Jesus will describe two events and not one. He will describe two comings and two judgments.**

**C. Concerning the statement of Christ that, “not one stone shall be left here upon another,” a Professor H. T. Frank made this interesting observation:**

**1. “In so far as archaeological discoveries are concerned, there has only been found one stone and a fragment of another, that has been specifically identified as belonging to the temple.”**

**2. The Lord’s statement has proven to be literally true. In fact this chapter demonstrates the prophetic accuracy of Christ and thus establishes His authority as being the Son of God.**

#### **IV. THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES (verses 4-15).**

##### **A. Deceivers (verses 5, 23-26).**

**1. Josephus stated that during the time of the procurator Felix “there were a great many imposters that stirred up the Jewish people.”**

**2. Several early writers speak of deceivers who claimed to be the Messiah.**

##### **B. Wars and rumors of wars (verses 6,7).**

**1. Historians will speak of the years from A.D. 37-68 as a period of great conflict and military warfare.**

**2. In one battle it was reported that 50,000 Jews were killed and in another conflict 20,000 were killed. These took place prior to A.D. 70.**

**3. One of Josephus’ books is simply entitled, “The Wars of the Jews.” It is a commentary on the conflicts that took place between A.D. 30-70.**

**C. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (verse 7).**

**1. Compare Acts 11:28,29.**

**2. Suetonius and Tacitus stated that during this time there was a plague that took the lives of 30,000 people. Once again, historical evidence authenticates our Lord's statements.**

**3. A British scholar named E. H. Plumptre wrote a commentary on Matthew 24. Concerning earthquakes he stated, "There has probably been no period in human history where there has been a greater concentration of earthquakes than in the 40 year span between A.D. 30-70."**

**D. Persecution, tribulation, betrayal, false prophets (verses 9-13).**

**1. The New Testament is filled with these kinds of struggles.**

**a. Acts 7—Stephen is stoned.**

**b. Acts 8—great persecution comes upon the church.**

**c. Acts 9—Saul of Tarsus is converted having been a persecutor of both men and women.**

**d. Acts 12—James is killed by Herod.**

**E. The gospel will be preached in all the world (verse 14).**

**1. Many read this verse and argue that it must be in reference to the second coming because the gospel had to go to all the world before the end.**

**2. Consider these verses: Romans 1:5; 16:26; 10:18; Colossians 1:6,23.**

**F. The abomination of desolation (verse 15).**

**1. This is an allusion to the Roman armies (Luke 21:20).**

**2. This siege lasted five months, long enough for the people to know it was what the Lord had warned about.**

**V. THE WARNING TO FLEE THE GREAT TRIBULATION (verses 15-28).**

**A. Premillennialists will say that these signs are pointing to an event that will take place in the near future. Many say that these signs will come before the Battle of Armageddon, which is to be a worldwide holocaust that will start in the Plains of Megiddo and spread to all the major cities in**

the world. Now, think about that kind of worldwide struggle as you read the Lord's instructions.

1. Verse 16—flee the city.
2. Verse 17—don't go back to your house to take anything.
3. Verse 18—don't go back for clothing.
4. Verse 19—it will be hard for women with small children or women who are pregnant.
5. Verse 20—pray that you don't have to flee in the winter or on the Sabbath.

**B. None of these verses make any sense if they are applied to the Second Coming or the so-called "Battle of Armageddon."**

**C. False teachers like to point to verses 21 and 22 and argue that it couldn't be the destruction of Jerusalem because there have been worse tragedies.**

1. Our Lord's words should be viewed as a reference to the quality of the suffering and not simply the quantity of those who died.
2. Jesus is talking about the intensity of the sufferings.

**D. Verses 23-27 contain another warning about false prophets.**

1. Don't be led astray by these deceivers.
2. When the Son of Man comes it will be evident, so don't pay attention to those who tell you to "look here or there."

**VI. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (verses 29-32).**

**A. If you were to ask most people, including most Christians, what these verses are talking about, they would say "the Second Coming of Christ."**

**B. Let me show you three reasons why I know this is not true.**

1. Jesus said it would happen "immediately" after the tribulation of those days. What days? The days of persecution, tribulation, and destruction that Jesus has been discussing up to this point.
2. You must remember verse 34. Jesus said His generation would not pass away until all that He had spoken was accomplished.
3. This language is entirely consistent with many Old Testament passages where the writers used this type of language to describe the overthrow of powers that were hostile to God and His cause.

**a. Remember that the destruction of Jerusalem is a judgment from God against the Jewish nation (Matthew 23:35,36).**

**b. Consider Isaiah 13:1-13; 19:1.**

**C. The parable of the fig tree (verse 32).**

**1. Notice the phrase “you know.” The Lord is telling them that He has given them signs whereby they can “know” when the Roman assault will come upon Jerusalem.**

**2. By knowing when it will happen they would be able to flee to safety.**

**VII. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (verses 35-51).**

**A. The time is not known (verse 36).**

**B. Life will be going on as usual (verses 37-39).**

**C. There will be a great separation (verses 40,41).**

**D. We need to always be prepared because we do not know when Christ will return (verses 42-44).**

**E. Those prepared will be rewarded and those unprepared will be punished (verses 45-51).**

**CONCLUSION**

**Use these notes in studying the parallel accounts in Mark 13 and Luke 21.**

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