

The Temple's Destruction and Christ's Return

Matthew 24

Group ¹	C	V	Description
Signs of Christ's Return	24	1-2	Jesus predicts the Temple's destruction
		3	Jesus teaches about His coming and the end of the age
		4-8	False Christs
		9-14	Persecutions and False Prophets
Perilous Times		15-22	Abomination of Desolation
		23-28	Do not be deceived!
The Glorious Return		29-31	Son of Man's return and gathering of the elect
Parable of the Fig Tree		32-35	Parable of the Fig Tree (v34 is key)
		36-41	Only the Father knows the Day
Be Ready for His Coming		42-44	Be Ready!
		45-51	Don't procrastinate doing the will of God.

Themes in the Chapter²	God, Discipleship, Evil, Outreach, Prophecy, Salvation, Sin
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Reflections

This is one of those chapters that has sparked much controversy through the years as people have tried to place dates to the events described by Jesus. Here is the thing to keep in mind while reading this chapter, from Jesus' own words.

Matthew 24:36-39 NASB "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. **37** "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. **38** "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, **39** and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

So, let's take God at His word and live each day as if it's our last, because we don't know the day nor the hour when Christ will return or when our time on this earth will come to an end.

Questions

1. What did Jesus' disciples point out to Jesus that they thought were impressive and what was Jesus' response? V1-2
2. What do the disciple ask Jesus to explain to them then? V3
3. What is the first warning that Jesus gives to the disciples? V4-8
4. What else does Jesus say will happen at this time? V9-11

¹ (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

² (Full Color Bible 1095-1096) Theme suggestions without references to allow the reader to discover them in their reading.

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5. Why does Jesus say that these things will take place? V12
6. What promise does Jesus give regarding those who endure and the gospel? V13-14
7. What then should the disciples look for? v15
8. When this happens, what were those who were living in the region then to do and what was to be the manner in which they did it? V16-18
9. What else does Jesus say about this time? 19-22
10. What else does Jesus warn the disciples about again? V22-23, xref v5, 11
11. Why does Jesus say that He is telling the disciples about this now and how does He describe what His appearing will be like? V25-28
12. What other details of Jesus' arrival does He provide His disciples? V29-31
13. What parable does Jesus use to help the disciples understand what He is talking about? V32-35
14. How does Jesus describe the day of His return and what will people experience when it happens? V36-41
15. Why does Jesus tell His disciple they must live in a state of readiness at all times? V42-44
16. How does Jesus illustrate what the disciples should be doing with their time until His return? V45-51

Conclusion

There has been much conjecture as to when these prophecies have been or will be fulfilled. Some appear to have been fulfilled with the destruction of the temple in ad 70 by the Romans and the persecution leading up to and after those events. Some appear to be yet future events to take place.

According to scientists, the sun is expected to burn for another 5 billion or more years.³ That shouldn't give us license to do whatever we want. God can interrupt at any moment and declare the mission of the disciple to be accomplished—declaring the gospel among all the nations—which we see many missions agencies are putting more effort into with a goal of having the gospel preached to every nation by 2050.

We have our assignment from our master. Let's not neglect our duties and spend our time simply eating, drinking, and mistreating others but rather be the faithful and sensible disciples that Jesus wants us to be looking forward to His return at any moment. Maranatha—Come Lord Jesus!

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study⁴: *my LOG vs others SPECK. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.*

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

•

P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

•

E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

³ (Lawrence)

⁴ *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

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- C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?
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- K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?
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Response to Questions

1. The disciples were admiring the architecture of the Temple complex but Jesus reminded them that the temple would be completely destroyed. Mark also records this in Mark 13:2. But this is not the only time that Jesus refers to the temple being destroyed—Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19-21. Of course some of these refer to Jesus' body as being the temple. Jesus also said that something greater than the temple was present when He was present on the earth—Matthew 12:26. The temple is just a building and God has no need of a physical dwelling—2 Chronicles 6:18.
2. The disciples then ask Jesus to explain when the events He has been speaking about will come to pass.
3. Jesus first warns the disciples that there will arise people proclaiming to be Jesus with the express purpose of leading people astray. At the same time there will be wars, famines, and earthquakes, all of which are merely early precursors to the events.
4. Christians will experience persecution and betrayal resulting in some being killed and others falling away from their faith. At the same time, other false prophets will lead many astray as well.
5. Because lawlessness will increase and people's love will grow cold. They will increasingly act contrary to God's original design and intent for mankind.
6. Salvation will be the reward of those who endure to the end and the gospel will be preached throughout the whole earth, to every nation. Then the end will come. According to joshuaproject.net, there are 16,543 people groups and of those 6,701 have never heard the gospel. Many of the bible translation ministries have formed a consortium, Forum of Bible Agencies International, with the goal of having the bible translated in every language by 2050.
7. Jesus says that they should look for the "Abomination of Desolation" which Daniel wrote about.

Daniel 9:24-27 NASB "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. 25 "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

Daniel 11:31 NASB "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 12:11 NASB "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and

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the abomination of desolation is set up, *there will be* 1,290 days.

There are a number of interpretations that have been put forth as to when this did or will take place. The IVP Bible Background Commentary⁵ lists these possibilities for its fulfillment.

1. Zealots slaughtered priests within the temple complex in A.D. 66 desecrating the site with human blood.
2. The Romans destroyed the temple completely in A.D. 70 and erected standards bearing the insignia of the emperor on the site, after which it was never rebuilt again.
8. They are to flee without delay and are not to return to get anything of their belongings.
9. It will be a difficult time for women who are pregnant or nursing children. They were also to pray that it not happen during the cold winter months or on a Sabbath. It will be a time of great tribulation but it will only last for a short time and the loss of life will be small in numbers.
10. Many will claim to be Jesus or that someone else is Jesus or the Messiah/Christ but they are not. There will also be many false prophets who will produce many wonders but are only seeking to mislead and deceive.
11. He doesn't want them to be caught unaware or to be deceived by those who would take advantage of them. When He does return, His arrival will be clearly visible to all, just like lightning that flashes across the sky.
12. After the tribulation, the sun will darken and the moon will not reflect its light, stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Jesus' arrival will be clearly visible in that He will appear in the sky, coming on the clouds with great power and glory, and all the nations of the world will see Him. At that time He will gather together from every nation those who are called His elect.
13. Jesus uses a parable involving a fig tree and the cycle of when it produces leaves and the seasons of the year. He uses this to help them understand that they will be able to recognize that His word concerning the destruction of the temple are coming to pass, just as He had told them and within their generation, which it did 40 years later in A.D. 70. He also adds further credence to His words by declaring that His words would not pass away. This was something that was only ascribed to the words of God (see Matthew 5:18). We are also reminded of Jesus' proclamation of the current generation seeing the kingdom taken from them and given to another who would produce fruit (see Matthew 21:43).⁶
 - **Matthew 5:17-18 NASB** "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
 - **Matthew 21:43 NASB** "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.
14. No one knows the day or hour—not the angels, not even Jesus, only the Father. People will be living their lives as if they didn't have a care in the world, just like when the flood came in the time of Noah. And as quickly as the rains came during the time of the flood, so too will the

⁵ (Walton et al. on Matthew 24:15)

⁶ (Walvoord and Zuck on Matthew 24:35)

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arrival of the Son of Man be like. At that time, when He gathers “together His elect from the four winds”, people will mysteriously disappear, right before their eyes, while they are going about their everyday business—both men and women will be removed from the presence of others right where they are working.

15. Because we don't know the day or hour of His arrival—just like we don't know when a thief plans to break into our homes—we must be ready. In fact we should expect Him to come when we least expect Him to come.
16. Jesus then uses an illustration of two types of slaves and how they use their time while their master is away from their presence. Jesus describes one as “faithful and sensible” who takes seriously the responsibility given to him and is ever ready for His master's arrival. Because of his faithfulness in fulfilling his duties, the master will gladly reward him. Jesus describes the other as “evil” because he mistreats others who are working with him and spends his time eating and drinking and neglecting his duties. Then his master will arrive unexpected and find his servant doing what he ought not and will have no choice but to punish him as a result.

Key Words: New Testament, Gospels, Matthew, Jesus, Second Coming, Tribulations, Persecution, Ingathering, Temple



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