

Matthew 24:1-14. *Architectural demise.*

Jesus had just given a series of “woe to” declarations to folks in the temple. So as He was leaving the temple, His followers came up and called His attention to the magnificent buildings of the temple complex. Seizing the teaching moment, Jesus taught some tough lessons...

See all this? Amen, not one stone here will be left on top of another; every one will be thrown down.<sup>4</sup>

Later in a more private setting, the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked—When will all this happen? How will we know when you are coming and when is the end of the age?

Be careful! Deception is rampant. Several will come, alleging by Me, that they are the Christ. You’ll hear about wars and rumors of wars—don’t be alarmed. Sure, such things must happen, but the end? It is still to come. Nations will war against each other; famines & earthquakes will foretell the *beginning* of a new life, birth pains as it were.

Then it will get tough—you’ll be handed over to be persecuted, put to death, and hated by all types of people because of Me. During these times many will turn away from the faith; many will betray and hate each other. Many false prophets will bubble up and deception will be their *raison d’être*. The increase of wickedness will turn love into a cold stew. But, he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And, the good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed to all peoples—then the end will come.

- Q Where did Jesus say the stones would be thrown down? Where did warn about the coming times & tribulations?
- Q About what period was Jesus speaking? The time of His death & resurrection? The time of His return to His creation? The end of the Roman empire? The tribulation of the church in the 2-4<sup>th</sup> centuries? When?
- Q Why will believers be persecuted? What can we do to avoid this persecution?
- Q What will happen to many during these periods of persecution? Why “love turning cold?” What will save us, according to the Christ?
- Q When will the end come, then?

## MATTHEW 24:1-14

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. <sup>2</sup>"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

<sup>3</sup>As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup>You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>7</sup>Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup>All these are the beginning of birth pains.

<sup>9</sup>"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. <sup>10</sup>At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup>and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup>Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup>but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup>And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

<sup>4</sup>Excavations in 1968 uncovered large numbers of these stones, toppled from the walls by the invaders.

Matthew 24:15-29. *Abominational demise*. So what? Remember Daniel's warning about the desolation which comes from abomination.<sup>5</sup> So when you see this abomination in the holy place, flee to the mountains, don't even bother to get anything out of your house. Leave your coat in the field. It'll be horrible for the pregnant and nursing mothers. Just pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

There will be great distress, distress the world has never seen before, and never to see again. In fact, if those days had not been cut short, even those destined to be saved would be killed.

During those times if people say "Here is the Christ" or "There he is," don't believe it. False Christs and false prophets will indeed appear, and will perform great signs and miracles to deceive even those God will be saving—if that were possible. See, I've told you up front, now, ahead of time.

Just as the lightning from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. The distress will be obvious—wherever vultures gather, you'll find a carcass. Remember the words of Isaiah:

The sun will darken, the moon will blacken, the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

- Q What is an abomination to the holy place of God?
- Q How should our reaction be characterized? Is it a time of hope, or fear, or distress?
- Q What determines who is a false Christ? How can you tell? Hint: how can you tell who is righteous today? A true believer, as it were?
- Q Why is the period of distress delimited?

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<sup>5</sup>Daniel 9:27—He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an *abomination that causes desolation*, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Daniel 11:31—"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the *abomination that causes desolation*."

Daniel 12:11—From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the *abomination that causes desolation* is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

## MATTHEW 24:15-29

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' [Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11] spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—<sup>16</sup>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. <sup>18</sup>Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. <sup>19</sup>How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>20</sup>Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. <sup>22</sup>If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. <sup>23</sup>At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. <sup>24</sup>For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. <sup>25</sup>See, I have told you ahead of time. <sup>26</sup>"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. <sup>27</sup>For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup>Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. <sup>29</sup>"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.' [Isaiah 13:10;34:4]

Matthew 24:30-51. *Abomination denied*. I will appear in the sky while all people are mourning from the abomination of desolation. Angels will proclaim the coming of the Son of Man, and will gather the saved from all directions.

Remember the fig tree—tender twigs and new leaves tell you summer is coming. When you see all this, you'll know that it's happening. Truly, this generation will not pass away until all this has happened. You can count on what I've been saying for heaven and earth will pass away, but My words? Never.

No one knows when this will happen, only Father God. Just like Noah's day, the Son of Man will come. People were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, right until Noah entered the ark. Then the flood. Similarly, when the Son of Man comes, two men will be in the field, one will be taken, the other left. Two women grinding grain, one taken, the other left.

So? Keep watch! You do not know when your Lord will come. Just as a house owner guards his house by being ready for the thief, you too must be ready for the Son of Man to come any time.

So how are you to be ready? Be doing the Master's work. Wicked servants will be doing their own thing, thinking the Master won't return soon, I can get away with a lot of stuff—a lot of desolation from abomination. I can mistreat my fellow servants, get drunk on power, food, booze, drugs, sex, and/or self-righteousness. When the Master comes and finds such behavior, He will cut that servant to pieces, assign him to sit with the hypocrites, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Q Why would the Lord be so grim, so tough about the last days, the beginning of a new beginning?
- Q What does it mean for us, long term and short term, to "keep watch?"
- Q Why will the Master cut the unfaithful to pieces and assign them to a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth?"

## MATTHEW 24:30-51

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup>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.

<sup>32</sup>"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it [or *he*] is near, right at the door. <sup>34</sup>I tell you the truth, this generation [γενεα, *genea*, 1074; "race, family, generation"] will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

<sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>36</sup>"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, [some mss. do not have "nor the Son"] but only the Father. <sup>37</sup>As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup>and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup>Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

<sup>42</sup>"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. <sup>43</sup>But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup>So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

<sup>45</sup>"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup>It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. <sup>47</sup>I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. <sup>48</sup>But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' <sup>49</sup>and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. <sup>50</sup>The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. <sup>51</sup>He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**24:1-25:46** The Olivet discourse, the fifth and last of the great discourses in Matthew's Gospel (see 5:1-7:29; Mk 13:1-37).

**24:2** *not one stone . . . left.* Fulfilled literally in 70AD, when the Romans under Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple buildings. Stones were even pried apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire.

**24:3** *Mount of Olives.* A ridge a little more than a mile long, beyond the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem and rising about 200 feet above the city. *when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?* Jesus deals with these questions but does not distinguish them sharply. It appears that the description of the end of the age, however, is discussed in vv. 4-14, the destruction of Jerusalem in vv. 15-22 (see Lk 21:20) and Christ's coming in vv. 23-31.

**24:15** *the abomination that causes desolation.* The detestable thing causing the desolation of the holy place. The primary reference in Daniel may be to 168BC when Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar to Zeus on the sacred altar in the temple of Jerusalem. According to some, there were still two more stages in the progressive fulfillment of the predictions in Daniel and Matthew: (1) the Roman destruction of the temple in 70AD and (2) the setting up of an image of the antichrist in Jerusalem (see 2Th 2:4; Rev 13:14-15; see Daniel 9:25-27; 11:31).

**24:16** *the mountains.* The Transjordan mountains, where Pella was located. Christians in Jerusalem fled to that area during the Roman siege shortly before 70AD.

**24:20** *or on the Sabbath.* Matthew alone includes this because he was writing to Jews, who were forbidden to travel more than about half a mile on the Sabbath.

**24:21** *great distress, unequaled.* Josephus, the Jewish historian who was there, describes the destruction of Jerusalem in almost identical language. Some believe the reference is also to a future period of great distress (see Daniel 12:1).

**24:28** *there the vultures will gather.* The coming of Christ will be as obvious as the gathering of vultures around a carcass (see note on Lk 17:37, where the saying is used in a slightly different sense).

**24:35** Jesus' words are more certain than the existence of the universe.

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<sup>6</sup>Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.