

## **Watch For The Lord's Coming<sup>1</sup>**

(Matthew 24:1 - 25:13)

Everyone who has a biblical worldview has surely wondered at one time or another when the world will come to an end. That question was also of interest to Jesus' apostles. We have a record of his answer to them in the Gospels. However, because his answer was given at the same time he answered another question, some believers are confused by what he said. This confusion is generally because there is a failure to discern where Jesus' answer to the first question ends and his answer to the second question begins.

Please open your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 24, and examine scripture with me. We'll read what Jesus said, and then we'll show its relevance to those who lived then as well as to those of us who live now. You might also insert a marker at Mark, chapter thirteen, verses one through thirty-two, and Luke, chapter twenty-one, verses five through thirty-six, because these are the parallel passages in those Gospels. We'll occasionally look to those Gospels also. Before observing what Jesus says, we'll find it helpful to notice the occasion on which he spoke, and then we want to be sure we understand the questions he is addressing.

These remarks of Jesus about the end of the age came during the last week of his earthly ministry, just a few days before he was crucified. Jesus' disciples had been with him as he was teaching in the temple. After much teaching and considerable confrontation with the Sadducees, Herodians and Pharisees, Jesus and his disciples went out of the temple. That's when his disciples called his attention to the buildings of the temple and how it was "adorned with beautiful stones and donations" (Matthew 24:1; Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5). Like other Jewish people, they must have been very proud of its splendor. However, Jesus said, "Do you not see all these great buildings? Assuredly, I say to you, the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6).

That must have surprised them. After that statement, we can imagine them growing silent and wondering when this would happen. However, they had been with Jesus long enough to know that whatever he said was true. No one doubted his word. Later, as Jesus was seated on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, the disciples Peter, James, John and Andrew came to him and asked him privately, "Teacher, tell us when will these things be?" (Matthew 24:3-4; Mark 13:3-4; Luke 21:7).

Now, that is the first question. It is a question asking when the temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed. I call to your attention that in this question the words "these things" relate to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The words "these things" occur in Matthew 24:2, 3, 6, 33, and 34. Every time "these things" occurs, it refers to the same thing – the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Likewise, in Mark 13:4, 29 and 30 and also in Luke 21:6, 7, 9, 12, 28,

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<sup>1</sup>Copyright © by author, Robert L. Waggoner, 1997; revised, 2003. Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute this manuscript, if unchanged, for non-commercial educational purposes. All other rights reserved. (Please note that following the manuscript there is a harmony of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. That is followed by an outline of this sermon manuscript. Hopefully, the harmony and the outline will assist in creating a better understanding of this subject.)

31, and 36 the words “these things” refer to the forthcoming destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. By way of emphasis (even though you may think me redundant) every time “these things” is mentioned in all these verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, whatever is associated with “these things” does not refer to the end of the world, but to the destruction of Jerusalem and particularly to the temple within it. All “these things” happened in or before 70 A. D.

The disciples also asked a second question. In Mark, the second question asks for a sign when “all these things will be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:4). In Luke, the question is worded slightly differently, wanting to know “when these things are about to take place?” (Luke 21:7). In other words, in Mark and Luke, the second question follows on the first, and relates to the same idea. The disciples want to know what sign to look for just preceding the destruction of the temple. After all, the destruction of the temple means war, and when war comes, it is better to be elsewhere. The temple could not be destroyed unless the city of Jerusalem is first destroyed. Therefore, the question relates to knowing when they and others might be warned to leave Jerusalem before their lives are endangered.

In Matthew, however, the second question is worded differently. It is, “what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). While it may be, as some scholars suggest, that the disciples mistakenly assume that the final coming of Christ and the end of the age will occur at the same time as the destruction of the temple, that assumption is by no means certain. What the facts disclose is that in Matthew the second question is asked differently than in Mark and Luke. And this difference is reflected by the fact that Jesus will discuss his final coming and the end of the world. Even so, a careful reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicates that in all three Gospels Jesus begins his response to these questions by talking about what will happen before the destruction of the temple.

Before we notice the response of Jesus to these questions, we think it appropriate to declare that everything recorded by Luke in this passage of his Gospel relates only to the destruction of the temple and the sign which will precede it. Luke says absolutely nothing about the final coming of Christ and the end of the world. Mark has only one verse about the final coming of Christ and the end of the world, viz., Mark 13:32. Matthew is the only one to give much information about the final coming of Christ and the end of the world. The question then becomes, Where does Jesus answer to the first question end, and his answer to the second question begin? My response is that the answer to Jesus' second question begins at Matthew 24:36. Having made that assertion, I now need to prove it.

Since the question “when will these things be?” cannot be answered by giving a date as we might project a date forty years into the future because they had no such dating system as we have. The only way the disciples would know when these things would be is by a sign that would precede the toppling of the stones of the temple. Hence, the two questions recorded in Mark and Luke “when will these things be?” and “what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?” really relate to the same event.

In response, Jesus gives them only one sign by which to identify what will happen. That sign is recorded in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. It is “when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet.” The prophecy comes from Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11 that predicts that there will come a time when the temple sacrifice would be

desecrated. That prophecy was initially fulfilled in 168 BC when Antiochus Epiphanes erected in the temple a heathen altar, and probably an image of Zeus Olympios.<sup>2</sup> This essentially removed Jewish worship and the sanctity of the temple. Jesus reference to the 'abomination of desolation' meant that another such desecration would occur. Luke's Gospel states the prediction less mysteriously. Luke 21:20 simply declares "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near." That's the sign. When that happens, "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her" (Luke 21:21).

Before that happens, there will be many who claim to be Christ, there will be wars and rumors of wars, there will be famines, earthquakes, pestilences, troubles, much sorrow, etc. These things are not really signs so much as they are excessive happenings that would otherwise be recognized as normal conditions of life which the apostles must face. Under those conditions, Jesus gives them two admonitions. First, he says, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8). Second, Jesus admonishes, "watch out for yourselves" (Mark 13:9). Matthew, Mark and Luke all declare that all the apostles will be hated. They will be persecuted by being beaten in the synagogues, delivered up to prisons, and brought before councils. Many false prophets will arise and lawlessness will abound. Even so, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations" before the end [of the temple in Jerusalem] will come (Matthew 24:14). Mark and Luke add that the Holy Spirit will guide the apostles in whatever they say when they are arrested (Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19). Under these conditions, they need to watch themselves. In what way? The implication from Luke's statement "by your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:19) is that they need to take special care to be patient in these trying times.

Following Jesus' declaration that the sign will be that of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, Jesus warns everyone to flee from Jerusalem (Matthew 24:16; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:21). If you're on the housetop, don't take time to go into the house. If you're in the field, don't go back to the house for provisions. Pray that your flight is not in the winter, or on the Sabbath. How terrible for those who are pregnant or for those who are nursing babies. False Christs will arise, but don't be deceived by them. Many will die by the sword while Jerusalem is trampled by the Gentiles. For the sake of the elect, God will shorten those days. History informs us that after the Romans had besieged Jerusalem they withdrew for a short while, thus giving time for all believers to flee from the city.

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<sup>2</sup>On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev in the year 145 (Footnote: That is 167 B.C.) 'the abomination of desolation' was set up on the altar. ... On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the pagan altar which was on top of the altar of the Lord. (**1 Maccabees 1:54**, 59 NEB). They had pulled down the abomination he had built on the altar in Jerusalem, and surrounded their temple with high walls as before, and had even fortified Bethsura. (**1 Maccabees 6:7** NEB). Shortly afterwards King Antiochus sent an elderly Athenian to force the Jews to abandon their ancestral customs and no longer regulate their lives according to the laws of God. He was also commissioned to pollute the temple at Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and to dedicate the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim to Zeus God of Hospitality, following the practice of the local inhabitants. This evil hit them hard and was a severe trial. The Gentiles filled the temple with licentious revelry: they took their pleasure with prostitutes and had intercourse with women in the sacred precincts. They also brought forbidden things inside, and heaped the altar with impure offerings prohibited by the law. (**2 Maccabees 6:1-5** NEB)

At this point in the gospels there appears some difficult apocalyptic language. While both Mark and Luke have similar language, Matthew says it this way,

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (24:29-31).

Many believe that this type language can only refer to the end of the world, and therefore cannot be referring to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. In support of this view, they refer to John's statement in Revelation 1:7, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.” They cite Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God,” They quote Peter's language in 2 Peter 3:10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

However, if it can be shown that this type language may also be used to refer to temporal events, then we may logically conclude that it need not necessarily apply only to the coming of Christ at the end of the world. Moreover, this language may then be used to apply to the destruction of Jerusalem if we can give explanation of the language in that context. We do not deny that this language may be used to refer to the end of the world. What we are suggesting is that since prophecy is capable of initial and later (i.e., typical) fulfillments, then it may have been intended by Jesus to be understood initially in relationship to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>“The sack of ‘the holy city’ in which over a million people were slain would inevitably appear to those who witnessed it a world-catastrophe of the greatest magnitude; and only language symbolic of cosmic disturbance, such as the darkening of the sun, the failure of the moon to give light, and stars falling from the sky, was adequate to describe it. In using such language Jesus was following the example of the ancient prophets. As Levertoff remarks (p. 80), ‘These are figures, or symbols of divine acts effecting great changes in the world, and are not to be taken literally. The Old Testament prophets employed such imagery in their announcements of God's interventions in the history of nations; cf. Is. xiii. 10, xxxiv. 4; Am. viii. 9; Ezk. xxxii. 7, 8; Joel ii. 28-32.’ Indeed, poets all down the ages have used such language to describe the upheaval caused by cataclysmic historical events. Thus in our own day A. E. Housman in his poem *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries* refers to the first world war as ‘the day when Heaven was falling, the hour when Earth's foundations fled’. It may well be, then, that R. A. Knox is right when he says ‘You must understand the portents of verse 29 as an allegorical way of referring to dynastic changes (AD 69-70 was “the year of the four emperors”); and you must identify “the coming of the Son of man” in verse 30 with some verified experience, e.g. the voice which was heard, according to Tacitus, crying out “The

The three verses or sentences in this apocalyptic section will be treated separately. The first sentence is “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matthew 24:29). Similar language does indeed occur in the Old Testament regarding the destruction of the ancient kingdom of Babylon. In describing that destruction of Babylon Isaiah declared these unnatural happenings, “For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine . . . therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place” (Isaiah 13:10). Similar language is also used regarding the destruction of Tyre, “Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.” (Isaiah 24:23). In these passages, the heavenly bodies probably refer to the ruling authorities. So also in Jerusalem the leading authorities will not be seen. What this sentence is saying therefore is that immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jewish nation will be darkened. And indeed, that was so. The city was ploughed over and a new city, a Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, was built over the ruins. For two centuries little is known of Jerusalem. It was indeed a time of darkness for Jewish people.

The second sentence in this apocalyptic section is “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). Is it possible that this sentence may be understood in a temporal, earthly sense. Language similar to this that may have that intent is recorded in several places. To Caiaphas, Jesus was to say, “hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). To his disciples, Jesus was to say, “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you” (John 14:18, KJV). Hence, this language may indicate that the power and glory of Christ will be made known on earth.

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gods are departing”.<sup>1</sup> The type of language used by the Roman historian in the passage from which this quotation is taken is certainly instructive. ‘Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the Temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: “The gods are departing”: at the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard.’<sup>2</sup> The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple was indeed a divine visitation, which one familiar with the language of Jewish prophecy could describe as a coming of the Son of man on *the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*. It was in fact only after the old order ended with the destruction of the Temple that world evangelism by the Christian Church, now entirely separate from Judaism, could be conducted in earnest. Not till then could the *trumpet* of the gospel be sounded throughout the world. Not till then could the Son of man, having ‘visited’ the old Israel in judgment, *send his angels* i.e. His messengers) to *gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*, a result which could be obtained only when the gospel had been preached to the whole world (29-31).” (R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961) 226-227.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Epistles and Gospels*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Tacitus, *History*, 5.13 (Loeb translation).

The third sentence in this apocalyptic section is “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31). If this does not refer to the end of the world, how are we to understand this statement? One very reputable scholar has answered as follows: “The angels are gospel emissaries, who gathered the elect from the four corners of the earth, in the sense that the gospel was then preached to the four corners of the earth. It refers to the diffusion of Christianity, after the fall of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish state.”<sup>4</sup> Luke comments “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:7).

In addition to the fact that this type language may refer to temporal and earthly events, there are two major arguments for thinking that this language refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and not the end of the world. The first is that in Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, and Luke 21:32, we are told that, “this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.” Since this apocalyptic language may be used to in a temporal and earthly sense, then reason requires that immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, the darkening of the Jewish nation, the Lord's power and glory being seen in a temporal sense, and disciples being gathered to him in the church be included within those things which are to take place before the passing of this generation. The second argument has already been mentioned, namely, that the expression “these things” continues to be used up through Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, and Luke 21:32.

The final words of Jesus in reference to the destruction of the temple relate to the parable of the fig tree (Matthew 24:32-33; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 29-31). Just as when the branch of the fig tree becomes tender, when you see leaves and buds, and then know that summer is now near, so also when you see “these things” happening, know that “it” i.e., the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, is near.

Having said that “this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32), Jesus then certified the truthfulness of both his prediction about the destruction of the temple and also of his comments about the end of the world by saying, “heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). This statement serves as a hinge statement between these two subjects.

While Jesus' disciples may look for a sign regarding when the temple is destroyed, no sign will be given for the final coming of the Lord and the end of the world. In fact, “of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mark 13:32; see also Matthew 24:36). Because no one knows when he'll come again, Jesus remarks are therefore filled with warnings to watch and pray, be ready, be prepared, be faithful, be righteous.

Jesus illustrates this need in several ways. First, just as in the days of Noah no one knew the flood was coming until it came and took them away, “so also will the coming of the

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<sup>4</sup>Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *God's Prophetic Word*, Lufkin, TX: The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Co. 1946, 212-213.

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Son of man be" (Matthew 24:39). Two men will be in the field and two women will be grinding at the mill. One of each will be taken and the other left (Matthew 24:40-41). Therefore "Take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33).

Matthew then records a parable Jesus told about a master who made a servant the ruler over his household while he was gone on a journey. The servant would be blessed by his master if he was found faithful upon his master's return. However, if he was found slothful and drunk upon his master's return, the servant would be cursed. (Matthew 24:45-51). Again, a warning is given. "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44). The same idea of needing to be watchful and prepared is told more graphically in the parable of the ten virgins who were invited guests at a wedding supper. To those who were unprepared, the bridegroom denied that he even knew them. Then the admonition is given again, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13).

While Jesus' admonitions to his disciples concerning the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem were particularly applicable to them, may they not also have general application to us? Are any of his warnings not needed by us today? Do we not also need to take heed to ourselves that no one deceive us? (Matthew 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8). Do we not also need to watch ourselves that by our patience we may possess our souls? (Mark 13:9; Luke 21:19). Do we not also need to take heed to ourselves lest our hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the cares of this life? (Luke 21:34).

Are not Jesus admonitions to his disciples regarding his final coming and the end of the world just as applicable for us today as they were to his disciples then? Do we not also need to take heed to ourselves, watch and pray because we do not know the day nor the hour when he will come? (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:33, 35; Luke 21:36). Do we not also need to be ready? (Matthew 24:44).

**Matthew 24:1** Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2

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."

3 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?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various

**Mark 13:1** Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. 7 But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.

8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and

**Luke 21:5** Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations,

He said, 6 "These things which you see; the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."

7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"

8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. 9 "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately."

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there

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places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 Therefore when you see

troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

9 But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

11 But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the

will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake.

13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19 By your patience possess your souls.

20 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by

the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even

prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

15 Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19 For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.

20 And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

21 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

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

23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves,

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

28 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. 29 So you also, when

25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.

27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already

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you know that summer is near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near; at the doors!

34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come,

you see these things happening, know that it is near; at the doors!

30 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 32 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.

33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

34 But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before

he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

the Son of Man.”

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming; in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning; 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

25:1 Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed,

they all slumbered and slept.  
6 And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

**Luke 17:22-37** Then He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 And they will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ Do not go after them or follow them. 24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32 Remember Lot’s wife. 33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34 “I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36 Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.”

37 And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

## Watch For The Lord's Coming

Matthew 24:1 – 15:13

### Introduction

1. People sometimes misunderstand Matthew 24 and 25 because they fail to distinguish between Jesus' answers to two different questions.
2. One question relates to the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem, while the other question relates to the end of the world.
3. Our purpose is therefore to clarify our understanding of what Jesus said and then to recognize the relevance of his message for our lives.
  - a. To accomplish these objectives, we need first to observe the setting of Jesus remarks, then to observe precisely what Jesus, and finally to understand the relevance of his message for us.
  - b. Our procedure will be to follow the account in Matthew, however, we will sometimes consult Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:5-37 for additional insights, since these are parallel accounts.

### ***I. The occasion of Jesus' remarks was during the last week of his ministry.***

- A. His disciples "came up to show him the buildings of the temple (Matt. 24:1) "how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations" (Luke 21:5) "one of His disciples said to Him 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!'" (Mark 13:1).
- B. **Response of Jesus** "Do you see all these great buildings? Assuredly, I say to you, the days will come in which not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
- C. **Later**, "as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple" (Mark 13:3) "the disciples" (Matthew 24:3) "Peter, James, John, and Andrew" (Mark 13:3) "came to Him" (Matthew 24:3) "asked Him privately" (Mark 13:3) "Teacher, tell us
  1. "When will these things be?" (Matthew 24) "when will these things be?" (Mark & Luke) i.e., when will these stones be thrown down and these buildings destroyed?
  2. "What sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" (Luke) "What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" (Mark) "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew) i.e., How will we know when these things are about to happen? (Disciples may have partially misunderstood, thinking that the destruction of these buildings could only happen at the end of the age when the Lord returned?)
  3. (It is worthy of observation that none of the disciples questioned the accuracy of Jesus regarding his predictions, so great was their belief in his truthfulness. Their concern was regarding when these things would happen, not whether they would happen.)

### **II. Jesus Response**

- A. With reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (24:6-35) - "these things" (Matt. 24:2, 3, 6, 33, 34)
  1. Take heed that no one deceives you (Matt. Mark, Luke) for
    - a. Many will come in the name of Christ
    - b. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars
    - c. There will be wars, earthquakes, pestilences, famines, and troubles.

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2. Before all these things, they will deliver you up to tribulation, to councils, persecute and beaten you in synagogues; lawlessness will abound; gospel will be preached to whole world. But...
    - a. Your arrest will give occasion for testimony. (Mark & Luke)
    - b. Do not worry what to say, the Holy Spirit will guide you. (Mark & Luke)
    - c. Family members will be against one another. (Mark & Luke)
    - d. You will be hated for My name's sake (Mark & Luke)
    - e. By your patience possess your souls (Luke)
  3. When you see the 'abomination of desolation' (Matt & Mark) i.e., "Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that desolation is near. Flee to the mountains (Matt, Mark, Luke)
    - a. If you're on the housetop, don't take time to get anything from the house, if you're in the field, don't go back to the house for clothes.
    - b. Woe to those who are pregnant or nursing children.
    - c. Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath.
    - d. Many will fall to the sword, while others are taken captive. (Luke)
    - e. For sake of the elect, God will shorten those days
  4. Then - apocalyptic language –
    - a. Unnatural conditions: Sun darkened, moon dark, stars falling, sea & waves roaring,
    - b. Men's hearts failing for fear
    - c. Sign of son of Man appearing in heaven, earth mourning
    - d. Look up and lift up your heads because your redemption draws near
  5. Parable of the fig tree - Just as the branch of the fig tree becomes tender, when you see leaves and buds, and then know that summer is now near, so also, when you see "these things" happening, know that "it" is dear, at the doors!
- B. With reference to "the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age," Matt. 24:36-25:46) "of that day and hour," no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but My Father only."
1. Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down ... with cares of life
  2. As the flood came unexpectedly in the days of Noah, so also the coming of the Son of man will come unexpectedly.
  3. Watch therefore, be ready, (Matt) pray always (Luke)
    - a. Parable of the faithful & wise servant, who would be made ruler, but of the evil servant who did not watch, whose master surprised him, and cast him out.
    - b. Parable of the ten virgins, five of whom wisely prepared, and five of whom were unprepared when the bridegroom delayed and came at an unexpected hour.
    - c. Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)
    - d. Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

### III. Summary of Lessons to be learned from Jesus

- A. Ref forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem
1. Take heed that no one deceives you (Mt. 24:4; Mk 13:5; Lk 21:8)
  2. Watch out for yourselves (Mk. 13:9) "by your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:19)
  3. Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. (Lk. 21:34)

## Watch For The Lord's Coming

### B. Ref. the end of the world

1. Take heed, watch and pray always for you do not know when the time is. (Mt. 24:42; Mk. 13:33; Lk. 21:36)
2. Watch therefore for you do not know when the master of the house is coming (Mk 13:35)
3. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Mt. 24:44)
4. Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming (Mt. 25:13)