

The Gospel of the Kingdom: Jesus and the Future
Matthew 24:1-51

Two Qualifications

- We should approach our understanding with great humility.
- We should focus strongly on the main points—Jesus is the reigning and coming King.

A Reminder about Context

- Matthew 24 is often read in isolation from Matthew 23.
- What is going to happen to these religious leaders and the people (“this generation”) of Israel in light of their rejection of Christ as Savior and king?

An Explanation of the Text

- A twofold question:
 - When will these things be? (answered in vv. 4-35)
 - “These things” → the destruction of the Temple and the judgment of Israel
 - What will the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? (answered in vv. 36-51)
 - “Your coming” and “end of the age” → the Second Coming of Christ
- What is the “abomination of desolation” (v. 15)?
 - Daniel prophesied a day when the temple would be desecrated by a pagan king.
Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. (Daniel 11:31)
 - Jesus was saying that an even greater abomination would occur in their lifetimes.
But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. (Luke 21:20-22)
- What about the gospel being proclaimed in the whole world before the destruction of Jerusalem?
In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (Luke 2:1)
[The gospel] has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit. (Colossians 1:6)
- What about vv. 29-31? How are those verses related to the context of judgment?
 - Cosmic language in the Old Testament is frequently the language of regime change.
For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. (Isaiah 13:10)

When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. (Ezekiel 32:7) (see also Is. 24:3; Joel 2:10)

- National Israel was falling from power and the true Israel (Jesus) was rising in power.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

This poetic language appropriately refers to the great changes which were about to take place in the world, when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. It speaks of the Son of Man entering into his kingship, and his angels gathering in his new people from all the earth. The fall of the temple is thus presented as the end of the old order, to be replaced by the new régime of Jesus, the Son of Man. (New Bible Commentary)

- Jesus said all of these things would take place within a generation, and they did. (v. 34)
- So, what about the sign of His coming and the end of the age?
 - Jesus says that the day of his appearing will be mundane and ordinary.
 - And the sign? There is none. (vv. 36, 39, 42, 44, 50)

The godly and the ungodly, at present, are all mingled together. In the congregation and in the place of worship—in the city and in the field—the children of God and the children of the world are all side-by-side. But it shall not be so always. In the day of our Lord's return, there shall at length be a complete division.... Wives shall be separated from husbands, parents from children, brothers from sisters, masters from servants, preachers from hearers. There shall be no time for parting words, or a change of mind, when the Lord appears. All shall be taken as they are, and reap according as they have sown. Believers shall be caught up to glory, honor, and eternal life. Unbelievers shall be left behind to shame and everlasting contempt. Who can describe the happiness of those who are taken, when the Lord returns? Who can imagine the misery of those who are left behind? May we think on these things and consider our ways. (J.C. Ryle)

Three Applications

- You can trust Jesus' word—all of it.
- Rejection of Jesus is not a light matter.
- Jesus is the great King and Shepherd of our souls.

*Mine are days here as a stranger
Pilgrim on a narrow way
One with Christ I will encounter
Harm and hatred for his name
But mine is armor for this battle
Strong enough to last the war
And he has said he will deliver
Safely to the golden shore*

*And mine are keys to Zion city
Where beside the King I walk
For there my heart has found its treasure
Christ is mine forevermore
Come rejoice now, O my soul
For his love is my reward
Fear is gone and hope is sure
Christ is mine forevermore.*