

Realized Eschatology

Matthew 24:

The Destruction of Jerusalem, The Second Coming of Christ, or Both?

Introduction

1. We have under consideration, in this study, one of the most oft-abused chapters in the Bible.
 - A. This is especially so, given the current popularity of doctrines which concentrate upon the things that are to happen in the “last days” of the world, or making it to be that the “last days” and “end of the world” has already taken place when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.
2. The advocates of Realized Eschatology see all references to the “last days,” the “second coming of Christ,” the “judgment day,” the “resurrection of the dead,” and the “end of the world,” as already taken place at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and Matthew 24 has become one of their principal targets.
 - A. They view the end of the Hebrew economy as the single decisive event of the New Testament.
3. As we shall see, some things about this chapter are surprisingly simple. Speculators have made complex a good deal that is straightforward and plain.

Matthew 24

The Disciples' Questions of Matthew 24

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

Matthew 24:3 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?**"

1. **The disciples first asked Jesus about the fall of Jerusalem, which to them seemed to imply the end of the world (or at least the world as they knew it).**
 - A. **They figured a devastation so catastrophic as to include the total leveling of a structure of the magnitude of the Temple must surely herald the end of the world. As it was, it only heralded the conclusion of the Jewish economy.**
 - B. **The temple was the pride and glory of the Jews the world over. It was four-five times the size of its predecessors, and was from 20-64 AD in the building process. Josephus, the historical scholar from the day states:**
 - 1) **Stones were 50 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 16 feet thick.**
 - 2) **They were cut of white and green-spotted marble that glistened in the sun "like a white mountain" in the distance as one approached from afar.**
 - 3) **The Jews considered it built to last, maybe even forever!**

- C. Jesus dashed their hopes with His few words which heralded God's retributive act of judgment.**
 - 1) He portrayed the coming destruction as absolute, leaving no vestige.** Josephus (Wars of the Jews 7,9).
- 2. "These things" in verse 3 refers to the buildings of the temple and their destruction (24:2).**
 - A. From verse 4 through verse 35, Jesus is primarily discussing the desolation and destruction of the temple and Jerusalem.**
 - 1) A key verse is Matthew 24:13 which says:**

Matthew 24:13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

- 2) Jesus looked beyond the fall of Jerusalem to what would be the actual (literal) end of the world. This would be the section of scripture beginning in Matthew 24:36 and continuing through Matthew 25:46.**

“This Generation” Passage

- 1. Matthew 24:34 is a key passage in confirming that the destruction of Jerusalem would take place in that generation.**

Matthew 24:34 Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation** will by no means pass away till all **these things** take place.

- A. We must note that the reference to “these things,” and “this generation” is defined by its earlier use in the book of Matthew.**

Matthew 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

Matthew 11:16 But to what shall I liken **this generation?**.....

- 1) The, “this generation,” of this text is the “now” of Matthew 11:12.**

Matthew 12:39, 41, 42, 45

- 2) “An evil and adulterous generation this generation this wicked generation” is that era, that day, the generation of Christ’s personal preaching, death, burial and resurrection.**
 - a) The “men of Nineveh” is the generation of Jonah. The “queen of the south” is the generation of Solomon contrasted with “this generation” of Jesus.**

Matthew 16:4

- 3) **The “generation” of this passage is the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus’ day (reference “sign” in Matthew 16:1, 4).**

Matthew 17:17 ..."O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?..."

- 4) **That generation was the time Christ was “with” them.**

Matthew 23:36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

- 5) **Observe that “this generation” is distinguished from “the days of your fathers” (Verse 30).**

2. In Matthew 24:34-35 Jesus said this:

Matthew 24:34-35

A. All that Jesus mentioned in His foregoing remarks, the signs and signals of Jerusalem’s catastrophic demise, all these were to take place before the end of one generation.

- 1) **Attempts by eschatologists to make “this generation” an end-time generation are doomed to failure on account of the context.**

B. If I said to you that certain things would happen before the end of “this generation.” would you not understand me to be speaking of the generation in which we live today? Of course you would.

- 1) **Why would we want to take the words of Jesus any differently?**

“That Day” Versus “Those Days”

1. **In describing the desolation of Jerusalem, Jesus spoke of the tribulation of “those days.”**
Matthew 24:19, 22, 29
 - A. **But when discussing the judgment, he spoke of “that day and hour.”**
Matthew 24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13
2. **A sharpening of the contrast is seen “in the days that were before the flood” as opposed to “the day that Noah entered the ark.”**
Matthew 24:38

The “Signs” Versus “Suddenness”

1. **Jesus told of the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem; namely “false Christs and false prophets,” and “wars and rumors of wars,” famines and earthquakes — “all these are the beginning of sorrows.”**
Matthew 24:6-8, 23-24
2. **Jesus also told them of “the abomination of desolation.” The Roman army.**
Matthew 24:15
 - A. **“So also, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors!” (Matthew 24:33)**
 - 1) **They could **KNOW** that the destruction of Jerusalem was near, but the coming of the Son of man and the consequent judgment were to be without warning.**
Matthew 24:42-43, 50; 25:13

3. **The desolation and annihilation of “the buildings of the temple” were to be seen by signs** “when you see all these things, know that it is near — at the doors!” (Matthew 24:33)
 - A. “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matthew 24:36).
4. **At least three times Jesus specifically indicated that He was giving tangible evidence of the destruction of Jerusalem.**
Matthew 24:8, 25, 33
 - A. **But the second coming and the judgment were to be sudden, unknown, as a thief strikes**
Matthew 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so **comes as a thief in the night**. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, **so that this Day should overtake you as a thief**.

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.

Local Destruction Versus World Wide Destruction

LOCAL DESTRUCTION

1. The destruction of Jerusalem was a local event as is seen in the following verses:
Matthew 24:6, 15
2. The Roman army was “in the holy place,” not everywhere.
Matthew 24:15
3. The Judean saints were to “flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:16), but why do this if the topic is the end of the world and the final judgment?
4. The commands to those on housetops and in the fields would have little relevance if the second coming and judgment are being considered. (Matthew 24:17-18).
5. The danger to pregnant women and mothers with infants and the difficulty of flight in the winter or on the Sabbath are also unnecessary fears if the end of the world and the judgment are referred to (Matthew 24:19-20).
 - A. Therefore, all these occurrences had to be local and not universal.
6. Jesus spoke of “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until **this time**, no, **nor ever shall be**.”
Matthew 24:21
 - A. This implies that time will continue after **“this time,”** but there is no sense in saying **“nor ever shall be”** if the end of the world and the judgment already took place once and for all in 70 AD.

7. **The same argument can be made from the next verse.**

Matthew 24:22

A. Those days evidently will “be shortened”; they will end, and the elect shall be saved because of it.

1) The Lord decreed to bring the conflict to a close as soon as the general purpose of it had been accomplished.

B. But if the end of the world were in view, the elect would be saved whether the days were shortened or not.

1) Once again we see that the destruction was a local event and not world wide.

WORLD WIDE DESTRUCTION

1. The second coming and judgment are universal. They are compared to the “days of Noah” when “the flood came and took them all away.”

Matthew 24:39

A. The flood was NOT a local event — it was world wide.

2 Peter 3:6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

1) It “took them all away; so the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Matthew 24:39)

B. In the destruction of Jerusalem, the saved are ordered to “FLEE” (Matthew 24:16), but at the coming of the Lord, they are “taken” (Matthew 24:40-41).

2. **Matthew 25 supplements Matthew 24:36-51.**
 - A. **The judgment of Matthew 25 involves and includes “all nations”**
Matthew 25:32
 - 1) **It is the final judgment (Matthew 25:34, 41, 46)**
 - B. **The ten virgins parable says, “be prepared,” “watch.” (25:13)**
 - C. **The parable of the talents stresses the necessity of diligence and faithfulness.**
(Matthew 25:21, 23, 26; compared to – 24:42-51)

Conclusion

1. **Matthew 24 tells us that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. It also tells us to continue to be faithful and watch for our blessed Lord’s coming again because we do not know when He will return!**

