

A Study Of Matthew 24-25

Introduction. One of the frequently used passages to “prove” the premillennial theory is Matthew 24-25. Advocates of this theory believe that Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18), John (Revelation 20:1-10) and Jesus (Matthew 24) all discuss this subject.

This discussion takes place during the last week of the life of Jesus. He had just lamented over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-39. He now makes His statement about the temple being destroyed and answers the disciple’s questions.

This study will examine the scriptural interpretation of this passage. Not only does this passage not support premillennialism, but it also give us important insights into the prophecy made by Jesus concerning the fall of Jerusalem and important points for us to remember as we face the end of time.

I. ***Proposed Premillennial Outline Of Matthew 24***

- A. The beginning of sorrows (vss. 4-8).
 1. False Christs (vss. 4-5; Revelation 6:1-2).
 2. Wars (vs. 6; Revelation 6:3-4).
 3. Famines (vs. 7; Revelation 6:5-6).
 4. Death (vss. 7-8; Revelation 6:7-8).
- B. Events leading up to the end (vss. 9-14).
 1. Martyrs (vs. 9; Revelation 6:9-11).
 2. Worldwide chaos (vss. 10-13; Revelation 6:12-17).
 3. Worldwide preaching (vs. 14; Revelation 7:1-17).
- C. The great tribulation (vss. 15-28).
 1. The Abomination of Desolation (vs. 15; Revelation 13:1-18).
 2. Warnings to the Jews to flee (vss. 16-20).
 3. The tribulation proper (vss. 21-27; Revelation 16:1-21).
 4. Gathering of nations at Armageddon (vs. 28; Revelation 19:17-18).
- D. After the tribulation (vss. 29-31).
 1. Signs in heaven (vs. 29).
 2. The coming of Christ in power (vs. 30).
 3. The gathering of Israel or the “elect” (vs. 31).
- E. Three concluding exhortations (vss. 32-44).
 1. The fig tree (vss. 32-35).
 2. The days of Noah (vss. 36-42).
 3. The householder (vss. 43-44).

II. ***The Destruction Of Jerusalem***

A. Facts about the temple.

1. Josephus records that some of the temple stones, built of white limestone, were nearly seventy feet in length, twelve feet in height and eighteen feet in breadth.
2. He also records that there were crowns, shields, goblets, golden chains and a golden vine with clusters adorning the temple (Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5).
3. It took 46 years to finish the temple, and ten thousand skilled workmen are said to have been employed in its construction (John 2:20).

B. The disciples asked three questions.

1. When shall the temple be destroyed?
2. What shall be the signs which precede its destruction?
3. What shall be the sign of the end of the world?
4. The destruction of the temple seemed an event of such magnitude that they could not but associate it with the end of the world.

C. Signs of the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. False Christs (Matthew 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8).
 - a) Theudas (Acs 5:36), Simon (Acts 8:9) and the Egyptian (Acts 21:38) are examples of this type of rebellion.
 - b) The rise of Bar Cochebas in A.D. 132 is an illustration of what was common in that time period.
 - c) Farrar states that in Jewish history, there were more than sixty who came in the name of Christ.
2. Wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9).
 - a) The wars here mentioned are only those that would affect the Jews. Alford enumerates three threats of war made against the Jews by as many Roman emperors, and three uprisings of Gentiles against Jews in which thousands perished.
 - b) The Roman historians, Tacitus and Seutonius, give corroborative details of these threats of war.
3. Earthquakes, famines and pestilences (Matthew 24:7-8; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).
 - a) There is abundant historical evidence of these occurrences.
 - (1) Crete (A.D. 46 or 47).
 - (2) Rome (A.D. 51).
 - (3) Apamea (A.D. 53).
 - (4) Laodicea (A.D. 60).
 - (5) Campania (A.D. 62 or 63).
 - b) There were indefinite numbers of famines referred to by Roman writers, and at least one pestilence during which 30,000 perished.

4. Persecutions (Matthew 24:9-10; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19).
 - a) Acts furnishes abundant evidence of the fulfillment of this sign (Acts 4:18; 5:18, 40; 7:57-59; 8:1-4; 9:1-2; 12:2).
 - b) The civil and ecclesiastical authorities (kings and synagogues) united to oppress the church.
 - c) Peter, James the elder, James the younger, Paul and doubtless many more of the apostles suffered martyrdom.
 - d) The Roman historian Tacitus bears testimony to the hatred and blind bigotry of Romans toward Christians.
5. False prophets (Matthew 24:11; Mark 13:22).
 - a) This refers to the false teachers which arose in the church.
 - b) The apostles bear abundant testimony to their appearance (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 19-20; 2 Timothy 3:8-9; Titus 1:10-11; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Jude 1-25).
6. The abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:14-15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20).
 - a) The gospel would be preached in all the world and then the end would come (cf. Colossians 1:23).
 - b) This was an abomination to the Jews because of the desolation it would bring into the country.
 - c) Luke 21:20 explains the abomination of desolation for us (cf. Deuteronomy 28:49-57).
7. Fall by the edge of the sword (Luke 21:24; Mark 13:19).
 - a) There would be a "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21). Luke describes this tribulation as Jerusalem falling to the Gentiles (Luke 21:23-24).
 - b) Josephus offers the following summary:
 - (1) Approximately 1,100,000 perished.
 - (2) In surrounding provinces, 250,000 were slain.
 - (3) Approximately 97,000 were taken captive.
8. The times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24).
 - a) By comparing this passage with Romans 11:25, we find that the times of the Gentiles signify a period wherein the church is composed of Gentiles almost to the exclusion of the Jews.
 - b) Jesus said that the fall of the city would be followed by an indefinite period where Jerusalem would be oppressed by the Gentiles.
 - c) Jerusalem has never fully been in the hands of the Jews since this prophecy of Christ.
9. After the tribulation (Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-27).
 - a) Like other prophets, Jesus uses figurative language to depict the city's fall.

- b) The description is similar to those used to foretell the judgment of nations.
 - (1) Babylon (Isaiah 13:6-13).
 - (2) Egypt (Isaiah 19:1-2; Ezekiel 32:2, 7-9).
 - (3) Tyre (Isaiah 23:1; 24:21-23).
 - (4) Edom (Isaiah 34:4-6).
 - (5) Nineveh (Nahum 1:1-5).
 - (6) Israel and Judah (Amos 8:9; Jeremiah 4:23-28).
- 10. The fig tree (Matthew 24:32-33; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 24:29-31).
 - a) When a fig tree blooms, it is an obvious sign that summer is near. Does anyone really need a calendar to tell when the seasons change?
 - b) Likewise, when these aforementioned signs occur, Christ's disciples will know that they should leave Jerusalem (Matthew 24:16-20; Mark 13:15-18; Luke 21:21-23).
- D. Concluding remarks (Matthew 24:34-35; Mark 13:30-31; Luke 21:32-33).
 - 1. When Jesus stated that "this generation" would not pass away until these predictions were fulfilled, He gave us a timeframe for the destruction.
 - 2. A generation was usually considered to last 40 years. Jesus said these words in A.D. 30. Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, 40 years after Jesus spoke these words.
 - 3. The disciples regarded the temple as so permanent that they found it hard to conceive that Christ's words could be fulfilled with regard to it; but He assures them that His prophecies were trustworthy.

III. ***The End Of The World***

- A. A decided change occurs in the language at Matthew 24:36.
 - 1. The only logical explanation of this marked change in language is that Jesus is now discussing a new subject.
 - 2. After giving numerous signs of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus now says that no one can know when He will return. There would be no signs given for that great day.
- B. Three illustrations.
 - 1. The days of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39).
 - a) Those before the flood discharged the business of the day and laid their plans for tomorrow with no thought of evil or anticipation of trouble down to the very moment God's wrath was poured out on them.
 - b) Despite all the warnings, they were taken by surprise when completely off their guard. The Lord's coming will be a surprise (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15).

2. The two in the field and the mill (Matthew 24:40-41).
 - a) These verses have been used by premillennialists to "prove" that Jesus was speaking of the rapture. However, this is the same point as in the previous illustration.
 - b) The one in the field and the mill were "taken" to be eternally punished and the ones who were "left" were righteous.
 3. The faithful householder (Matthew 24:42-45; Mark 13:33-37).
 - a) A thief gives no warning when he robs a house; therefore, one must always be on watch.
 - b) Again, there were definite signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. The only recourse a Christian has now is to watch and be prepared (Luke 21:34-36). To emphasize this point, Jesus teaches us to be prepared with parables.
- C. Three parables.
1. The wise servant (Matthew 24:45-51).
 - a) The good servant is prepared for the Lord's return at any time, is faithful throughout his delay and in the end is highly rewarded. The wicked servant is faithless in fulfilling responsibilities, abusive to fellow servants, and lax in waiting for the master's return.
 - b) This parable teaches that we cannot neglect preparation. The revealed presence of God is represented as such an overpowering event that sinners are crushed by it. The evil servant ultimately earned his expected punishment.
 2. The ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).
 - a) The foolish virgins do not forget to bring oil; rather, the delay of the bridegroom shows they did not bring enough. They were foolish because they failed to provide for their lord's delay.
 - b) This parable teaches that you cannot borrow what you can buy. There will be no borrowed righteousness on the day of the Lord's coming. All Christians must be ready now and each soul must see to their own lamp.
 - c) The oil of God's grace is given without money and without price, but in the hour of the Lord's appearing it will be too late to seek for it (Isaiah 55:1-2, 6).
 3. The talents (Matthew 25:14-30).
 - a) The parable of the virgins represented watchfulness displaying itself in waiting for the Lord, while it is here displayed in working for the Lord. There it was inward spiritual life, here it is external activity.
 - b) This parable teaches that we cannot recall lost opportunities. This advice is especially useful for those of us who have children. We must use what we have and not fret over being judged in regard to what we lack.

D. The judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46).

1. Jesus did not intend to teach that benevolent works are sufficient for salvation. The meaning is that no one can be saved without these fruits of faith and love.
2. God prepared a joyful kingdom and desires that man occupy it with Him. He also prepared a place of sorrow and man can cast his lot there if he chooses.
3. This passage is obviously discussing the final judgment. Always remember that the doom of the wicked is as durable as the reward of the righteous.

Conclusion. These two chapters give the Christian a lot to consider, for it dispels current false doctrine and provides us an admonition to always be ready for the Lord (Luke 11:28). It will be a great blessing for you and for all you come in contact with when you are prepared to give an account for all you believe (1 Peter 3:15).