

Matthew 24

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1. When Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem in about 30 A.D. (this happened in A.D. 70 by the Romans) his disciples asked him two questions in verses 1-3: first, they asked, “When will these things be?” (the destruction of Jerusalem), and second, “What will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the world?” In the rest of the chapter, Jesus answered these two questions.
2. Verses 4-33 answer the first question about Jerusalem. Jesus gave 4 general signs and one specific sign as to when Jerusalem would be destroyed: false Christ’s would appear (5); there would be wars and rumors of wars (6-8); there would be persecution of Jesus’ disciples (9-13); and the gospel would be preached to the the world--the Roman Empire (14; see Colossians 1:23). Then Jesus gave one specific sign for them to look for: “When you see the abomination of desolation... standing in the holy place” (15). An abomination to the Jews would have been a Gentile entering the temple area and desolation would mean destructive power. When the Romans (Gentiles) came to Jerusalem to destroy it, they ransacked the temple--they were the abomination of desolation. Luke’s parallel account says, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies” (Luke 21:20). When the disciples saw the Roman armies approaching they were to get out of the cities and flee to the mountains (16); those who were pregnant would have difficulty getting away and if it happened on the Sabbath day the city gates would be closed and getting out would be hard and if it was in winter, travel would be difficult (17-20). This was a local invasion from which they could escape. Note the use of “those days” in verses 19, 22,29--the days surrounding the invasion of the Romans. We know this is not a description of the end of the world, because when Jesus comes again it won’t matter what day or season it is; and one cannot in that day escape by fleeing.
3. The only difficulty with the above is what is seen in verses 29-31. These verses seem to be speaking about the end of the world. But the language used here is called apocalyptic--whenever a judgment of God is carried out this kind of language is used

to demonstrate that what is happening is by God's hand (see Isa. 13 where this kind of language is used to describe God's judgment on Babylon and Ezek. 32 where God's judgment is stated. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was not an accident, but was a judgment of God upon that city because it rejected Jesus. The end of the world will also be a judgment of God and is described in this way (2 Peter 3:10).

4. Verse 34 is the Time Text of this passage: all the things Jesus mentioned in the previous verses would come to pass in that "generation" (in the first century). In the first 33 verses, Jesus is answering the first question the disciples had asked: "When will Jerusalem be destroyed?"
5. Beginning with verse 36, Jesus answered the second question: "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?" This is the Transition Text as Jesus transitions to the second question. Note the use of "that day" in verse 36 in contrast to "those days" used earlier. He says the end of the world will have no signs; no one knows when it will be (36); it will be unexpected and sudden (37-39); so "watch" (42) and "be ready" (44).