

## Week 25

### Prophecy of Jesus: Be Ready Pt.1

#### Matthew 24:1-42: Know the signs of the end

Two things. One is that Jesus comes out of the temple. He is finished with his work in there. He warned them. Jesus gave them scripture and reason. If the religious rulers will not listen then the temple is doomed. In 70 ad. The Romans sacked Jerusalem and the temple was destroyed. Jesus knew that much. God's wrath on his children was beginning. Actually, it had happened several times before. They were slaves to Egypt. Slaves to Babylonia. Now they were slaves to Rome. Yet, God came to help. I suppose he had heard their cry's again.

John 8:33 has the religious rulers telling Jesus *"We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"* It's insane to think that they believed they were free. Was that freedom? What had happened was that Rome cut a deal with these men. The religious rulers were to keep the Jews in line. However, they couldn't keep Jesus in line. He was a threat to their deal.

So, Jesus leaves the temple and stands before this massive building. He proclaims that it will be destroyed. It's blasphemy. It's ludicrous. Yet, about 37 years later it happens. Remember I mentioned to you earlier that I believed many people were with Jesus all the time. It says here in Matthew 24 that his disciples were with him. Yet, at Jesus trial his comments about the temple were used against him. Jesus threw them under the bus inside and outside the temple court. They heard it on purpose. Jesus needs to head towards the cross. It must be that way. Jesus provokes a response to fulfill prophecy. What do you think of Prophecy?

Matthew 24:2 **"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down."**

Daniel 9:26 **"After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed."**

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In university, we were discussing the make-up of the Bible. During that conversation the topic turned to chapters and books. Who decided which books are in the Bible? Why do we have chapters? The Bible used to be a series of scrolls. There were no chapters. Even the books were all separate stories. In that class one boy vigilantly argued that the chapters were ordained by God. Is he right? The

professor disagreed. I am going to depart with recent tradition and break up a part of Matthew 24 and add it to chapter 25. I look at this section just a little bit different than the Bible scholars did.

So, we will be studying Matthew 24:1-42. The men who built the Bible are not wrong. The Catholic Bible is slightly different than the Protestant one we use. I feel that this set of verses has a message: be ready. Jesus is standing outside. He knows the future. He knows that these men were not ready. The synagogue followers were not ready. Do you know what being ready before Jesus returns looks like?

Matthew 24:42 **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”**

Isaiah 13:9 **“See, the day of the LORD is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.”**

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In a way this part of Chapter 24:1-42 has several themes. One is to be ready. Another is to know and see the signs. Several times in the Bible Jesus tells his disciples to know the signs. He also questions the religious rulers why they did not. This chapter and chapter 25 mark the end to talk. Jesus tried. God tried. I wonder if Jesus had to come this way. Was there ever another way?

Matthew 24: 33 **“Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.”**

Joel 3:14 **“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.”**

Read Matthew 24:1-42. Read Hosea 9. See if you catch the reference to the fig tree. Gods pleaded with Israel all through the Old Testament to return to him. In many ways Jesus did the same thing through his time on earth. Extra reading if you're interested Daniel 9.

1. Prophecy is interesting. There is prophecy that relates to Rome. Some was for Babylon. Yet, others are still not fulfilled. If you read the many prophecies (a lot) it's possible you don't want them to happen. What is the purpose of prophecy? I bet that it comes down to who holds the future in our hands. Is it fate? Is it God? Is it providence (what will be will be)?

Matthew 24:2. Will the temple be torn down? Many believe this is really talking about Jesus death and resurrection. I suspected that these statements by Jesus came from the Mount of Olives. This is so much like a final statement just as the beatitudes were his opening comments in the beginning of his ministry. In verse one he leaves the temple. In verse three he is standing on the mountain. I bet he is staring down towards the temple as he spoke.

In Matthew 4 the Devil offers him the temple. In Matthew 12 Jesus says someone greater than the temple is here. Throughout this book we have references that the kingdom of God is here. I

go to church in a movie theatre. Is God dwelling in there? Church is symbolic of Christians gathering together. They do it in homes, parks, and buildings? God is present where he chooses to be present. God is in places that sinners dwell. Jesus went to them. God is in the temple. Jesus went there. God is in the rejected. Jesus gathered them. Verse 13 and 14 points out that the gospel message is far more important than the church. Matthew has been telling us that for 24 chapters.

**Matthew 24: 14 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”**

**1 Kings 8:27 “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”**

- Let’s take a look at verses 15-28. These are well worn verses. What is the abomination of desolation? If you read 15 answers on the net you will get 16 answers. Nobody knows. The best guess is when the Romans entered the temple, sacked Jerusalem and torn down the temple. It makes sense. Daniel references this event in prophesy. If Jesus mentioned it then trust me the people knew exactly what was meant. It’s like the ultimate Jewish ghost story.

Verse 20 says that we should be afraid if the end of times come in the winter. Be afraid if the desolation happens. Verse 4 and 23 both mention false Christ’s. Verse 24 scares me because it says even the elect might be fooled. Who are the elect? It’s those who believe in God. Here is what is important. Many books and shows dissect these passages. We are meant to be driven off course. Jesus is frightening in verse 28 saying “wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. We should focus on what we are doing and not what might or might not happen. Be ready!

**Matthew 24:23 “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.”**

**Daniel 9:27 “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”**

- Let’s be clear. It’s really easy to take these passages the wrong way. Thousands of books have been written on these verses alone. Verses 29-31 are three verses. Just three. Yet, we are consumed by them. When will Jesus return? What will be the signs? Who will be saved? These verses were mentioned in many places like Ezekiel 32:7 and Revelation 6:13. This is not new stuff. It’s scary Jewish ghost stories.

Let’s focus on three terms used in Matthew. One is called the Son of God. Jesus is the one sent by the divine. He is divine. Jesus time on earth is a divine calling card (Son of God). The Jewish people were called the children of God or sons of God. That’s the connection.

Secondly, we have the Kingdom of God. It’s wherever God is. Jesus mentioned that the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. The ministry of God is in all creation. The kingdom does not reside in a church, temple, or rock. It’s within us. It’s beside us. It’s coming from above.

Jesus came to confirm that the kingdom is here too. The people needed to be reminded that God's kingdom is wherever God's children are and beyond.

Lastly we have this term Son of Man. It's used sparingly in Daniel. It's connected to the coming Messiah. Yet, it symbolizes what? That Jesus was the leader of men and women. He represents us in heaven. He is called fully divine and fully man. Jesus is connecting himself to the sons of men. To people everywhere. If you read this book of Matthew it's clear that the kingdom of heaven is here through the Son of God and the Son of man: Jesus the Christ.

**Matthew 24:27 "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."**

**Daniel 7:13 "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."**

4. I have mentioned this theme before. What's up with the fig tree? It's a Jewish thing. This fig tree represents the nation. Jesus called this the parable of the fig tree. It's really a section full of theology. Really good stuff too! In verse 24 it says "this generation." That is a sentence full of controversy. Basically, what does it mean? Generation can mean "in this time"; "this group of people"; and possibly "this race or nation." We just don't know the writer's intent. What is clear is that Jesus wants us to be ready. To be watching.

Verse 35 is a big one. The word of God will not pass away. Heaven and earth will change at the end of times. Revelation 21 makes reference to this. It's consistent with the temple passing away and Jesus dying on a cross. No matter what, God's word remains.

Finally, we have verses 31 to 41. Noah was asked by God to build an ark. Noah build that ark for many years (unclear how long). What is clear is that the people just continued on. I bet they ridiculed and mocked Noah. Technically it had never rained to this point. There was a water firmament above the earth. Building an Ark for rain was silly. It's ominous and ironic that Jesus says that one will be taken and one will remain. In Noah's story they entered two by two. The point is that not everyone will be ready.

**Matthew 24:42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."**

**Revelation 21:1 "Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."**

## What it means?

It's my bet that the early Bible scholars wanted to put all of 24 and 25 together. They fit like a glove. I suppose you could say that of Matthew 5, 6, and 7. I have no proof but they feel like one theme. The chapter break just makes reading it easier. Still, as a whole, 24 and 25 echo the book of revelation. They echo the theme of being ready for the day of the Lord.

After chapter 25 we are steaming like a freight train towards the cross. Jesus intentionally provoked the religious authorities. He can't stop it now. My feeling is that Matthew wrote this mildly chronological. Yet, he has intention. I clearly see this book as a manual for the

Christian life. re-read verses 1-42 of chapter 24. The Christian life is not easy. It's dangerous. It's hardship. What kind of sell is that?

Matthew has built a case to this point that the Christian walk includes miracles, controversy, enlightenment, and hardship. The world hates God. I have been stunned at how much venom and vile gets thrown God's way. People just hate it. Yet, since I have believed it's been an amazing roller coaster ride. Am I ready? That is a very good question. Every day I read and learn a little bit more about God. I can see what a good hristian can do if they are preparing, listening, and doing the kingdom work. The hardship seems small compared to the good times with God.

**Matthew 24:37 "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."**

**Matthew 7:14 "but small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."**

**Romans 8:38 "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love."**