

Introduction

If someone asks you to look for something, how you understand what they mean is very important.

I remember one particular occasion when I had started a part-time job for a landscapers and I was asked by some of the fellas to go to the local supply store to get a few things. Amongst the list was “a long weight/wait” and “tartan paint” and I will be honest with you today and tell you that while I caught on to the Tartan Paint, I was looking for a good 5 minutes for the long weight before it sank in.

When we come into the Gospel records of the NT we read of many Jews not believing in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Why is this? One reason out of others is that they were looking for the wrong Messiah! Oh yes, the Jews had been given the privilege of possessing and reading God’s Word, but they completely misunderstood God’s Word! For example:

- Many Jews were looking for a Priest who would offer sacrifices on behalf of Israel – but the Scriptures spoke of a Priest who would be the Sacrifice and offer Himself on behalf of the world.
- Many Jews were looking for a King who would conquer the Romans and bring political peace to Israel – but the Scriptures spoke of a King who would conquer Sin and bring Peace to the entire world later.
- Many Jews were looking for a human Prophet who would simply speak truth – but the Scriptures spoke of a Prophet who is Truth – God Himself.

Many Jews had the wrong expectations and so they completely missed the Messiah!

This ought to be a challenge to us in two ways:

First of all, While Christ was not the Messiah many expected He was exactly the Messiah every person needed and still needs today. Let me ask you, Do you have Him as your Messiah?

- Is Christ your Prophet and God of Truth?
- Is Christ your Priest who offered Himself on your behalf on the cross to pay the debt for you sins?
- Is Christ your King who destroys sin in your life and leads you into righteousness?

Secondly, if many of the Jews who had the Word of God in the OT era mistook the prophecies regarding Christ’s first coming, is it possible that you and I in the NT era can mistake the prophecies regarding Christ’s second coming? Let us be careful and prayerful in making sure we don’t have the wrong expectations!

Context

Having seen the Promises God has given at the three major sections of the OT regarding the End Times...

- God’s Promises to Abraham in the Pentateuch;
- God’s Promises to David in Historical Books;
- God’s Promises to the Prophets in the Prophetical Books;

Today you and I will begin to look at a new major section in the NT, namely,

- God’s Promises through Christ in the Gospels.

While I could focus this evening on the many parables Jesus Christ spoke in the Gospel records which speak to us about the End Times – an interesting study in itself and one worth your consideration; yet it is my desire to focus on the famous Olivet Discourse as it is recorded for us in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21; because it is here that the LORD Jesus Christ speaks about the subject of signs in relation to His coming and it is from this discourse that many people today will look to today as the basis for what they are looking for before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example – based on Matthew 24, many people will say...

- Jesus Christ will not come until the Gospel has gone into all the world;
- Jesus Christ will not come until there is a rapture of believers;
- Jesus Christ will not come until there is the great tribulation or
- Jesus Christ will not come until the abomination of desolation is seen

And because none of these have happened yet – Jesus Christ cannot come today, nor can the Day of the LORD commence today. These signs must happen first.

But is this true? Do we have clear signs that must precede Jesus Christ’s coming or do we not? Your answer (and indeed your behaviour today) will be determined on what view you take regarding Matthew 24 for there are two main ways of interpreting it.

It is my desire to look at these interpretations today:

The Mount of Olives Discourse

After speaking three times in the previous 3 chapters about God's punishment on the nation of Israel for her sin in rebelliously rejecting the Messiah God has sent ((Matthew 21:33-36; 22:1-14; 23:29-36), in 23:37-38 the Lord Jesus Christ mentions it for a fourth time, this time with very specific reference to the house, the Temple of God in Jerusalem...

- Matthew 23:37-38, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! **Behold** (take note, listen to this – as a result of your rebellion), your house is left unto you desolate.*"

Jesus Christ then mentions His second coming in v39... "*For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*"

Jesus Christ spoke these words while He and His disciples were in the very Temple itself in Jerusalem, and then in Matthew 24:1 we read that when Jesus Christ departed from the Temple the disciples began to ask Christ to look at the great buildings of the Temple – their greatness, splendor and strength: almost saying, Surely you will not destroy this?

- In v2 we are told, "*And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you (or, of a truth I say unto you), There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*"

Moving from being just outside the Temple, to now being out of the city and on to the Mount of Olives, the disciples come to Jesus Christ and ask Him two questions.

- 24:3, "*And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*"

Note with me: The disciples ask Jesus Christ two questions.

Some people think there are three questions, but the Greek makes it clear that only two interrogative pronouns are used – *When* and *What*. The Gospel records of Mark and Luke also only ask two questions.

These two questions are:

1. When shall these things be? Speaking about Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed – with all the stones of the Temple being thrown down? And
2. What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world? Or literally, "What is the sign of thy coming and the end of the age?"

To put it in another way, the disciples ask Christ about two events:

1. The Temple being destroyed; and
2. The coming of Christ at the end of the world

It is very possible that the disciples saw these two events as occurring at the same time – as seen by the fact that they only ask for one sign in relation to both events.

Many commentators would also say that the mindset of the Jews at this time was that the Temple being such a grand and magnificent building – the centre of the Jewish way of life with their sacrifices, ceremonies and feasts. It was inconceivable to think of the Temple being destroyed and the end of the world not occurring. No, the Temple is so permanent that the only time it could be destroyed would be at the end of the world and the coming of Christ.

So with two events mentioned in the context of Matthew 23 and in the questions of the disciples, namely, the destruction of the Temple and the second coming of Christ at the end of the world, there are two ways in which people interpret Christ's answer.

- **View One** – Jesus Christ dealt with both events – the destruction of the Temple and His Second Coming
- **View Two** – Jesus Christ ignored the first event and dealt only with His Second Coming

Both of these views will have significant implications to our lives today and how we view the world around us.

Notice with me...

1) The Interpretations of the Two Views

If you look at the notes attached to this message or indeed on SermonAudio you will notice the two major ways of interpreting Matthew 24:

	View One	View Two
v4-8	General events before Destruction of Temple	General events before Second Coming
V9-14	General events before Destruction of Temple	Signs immediately before Second Coming
v15-28	One Sign before the Destruction of Temple	One event before Second Coming
V29-31	Details of the Second Coming	Details of the Second Coming
V32-35	Parable about Sign before Destruction of Temple	Parable about Sign before Second Coming
V36	Second Coming Contrasted to Destruction of Temple	Tribulation contrasted to Second Coming
V37-44	The Timing of the Second Coming is not Known	The Fact of the Second Coming is not Thought about
V45-51	Be Faithful now so not Ashamed at Second Coming	Be Faithful now so not Ashamed at Second Coming

For View One...

- In v4-8 and v9-14 Jesus Christ will mention general events that will occur before the Destruction of the Temple. These events are not signs of the Destruction of the Temple – they are simply events that will take place and are not to trouble the child of God, for as Christ says...
 - o In v8 makes clear – these are the beginning of sorrows.
 - o And in Mark 13:7 we read that Jesus Christ said, “be ye not troubled: for *such things* must needs be; but the end *shall not be yet.*”
- In v15 Jesus Christ will then state one sign which will occur before the destruction of the Temple – a sign in which His followers can know that the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem is imminent. This sign is the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem according to Luke 21:20.
- In v16-28 Jesus Christ tell His disciples what they ought to do WHEN they see the sign; and what they ought not to do. In summary...
 - o They are to flee Jerusalem; and
 - o They are not to follow any person who says they are Christ who has come to deliver you – they are a false Christ. Unlike these false Christ’s who will appear in isolated and secret places such as the desert or a building, the coming of the true Christ will be like lightning! It will be obvious and spectacular like lightning; instantaneous like lightning and unannounced like lightning. Though no one will foresee it, all eyes will see it.
- In v29-31 Jesus Christ gives His followers details of His second coming when He will come to judge the world for their wickedness (v29) and gather His people together from the four corners of the world (v30-31).
- From v32 Jesus Christ begins to summarise His teaching:
- In v32-35 Jesus Christ says the Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem is like a Fig Tree – there is a sign that will occur which tells you when something is coming;
- However, in v36 Jesus Christ says, “of that day and hour” – that is, of my second coming, “no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” knows the timing. There is no sign preceding it. There is no event which will tell you it is about to come.
 - o In v37-41 Christ says His second coming is like the flood in Noah’s Day. Life will be occurring as normal – people are eating, drinking and marrying. And then suddenly – like the flood – God’s judgment will fall and the unbelievers will not be ready!
 - o In v42-44 Christ uses another comparison. He says the timing of His coming will be like a thief who does not tell you when he is coming. No, it will happen suddenly, unannounced and unexpected!
- In v45-51 Jesus Christ speaks to us who are believers and tells us that since we know that Christ is returning but we do not know when Christ is returning we should be faithful and wise in our service for Him now.

This is the summary of the first view.

- It explains there is a difference between the destruction of the Temple and His second coming; and
- There is a sign before the destruction of the Temple but there is no sign before His second coming

Notice with me now the second view:

The second view teaches that Jesus Christ did not speak about the destruction of the Temple – instead He focussed only on His Second Coming.

As a result...

- In v4-8 Jesus Christ mentions general events that will occur in their generation – but these are not signs of the second coming.
- In v9-14 Jesus Christ will then turn His attention to thousands of years into the future and speak of signs which lead up to His second coming – such as the Gospel going into all the world.
- In v15-28 Jesus Christ will speak of one event which will immediately precede the second coming of Christ. This event is not the Roman armies around about Jerusalem – no, it is Israel entering into a treaty with the antichrist.
 - o In v16-20 Jesus Christ tells Jews to flee Jerusalem during this time and v21-28 speak of a great tribulation which will occur for 3.5 years.
- In v29-31, Jesus Christ promises He will return after this great tribulation – and will commence a millennial kingdom.
- In v32-35 Jesus Christ explains that the second coming of Christ has very clear signs attached to it – it can be known when it is going to occur – down to the very week;
- However, in v36 – no one knows the commencement of the tribulation.
- In v37-44 Jesus Christ speaks of people not thinking about the Second Coming – even though they should know when it will occur.
- And finally, in v45-51 Jesus Christ will apply His teaching on the Second Coming – exhorting believers to be faithful so they will not be ashamed at His Coming.

As you can see there are two major differences between View one and View two:

- One view says there are no signs before Christ's coming – the other view says there are very clear signs
- One view says the timing of Christ cannot be known – the other view says the timing of Christ's coming can be known – down to the very couple of days.

Having seen the interpretations of the two main views, notice with me now...

2) The Discussion of the Two Views

There are three main questions for discussion:

A) ***Can v4-14 refer to events before the destruction of the Temple in AD70?***

To many people it would seem impossible that the events mentioned in v4-14 could refer to that which happened between the timing of Christ speaking around AD30 and before AD70; after all, these are events that we see occurring today throughout the world and in fact some of them have not been completed. Take for example the event of v14 where Christ has said that before His Second Coming the Gospel will have gone into all the world. Today, using modern technology like radio, television, and the internet the church is able to proclaim the Gospel to more people than ever before in history, but it cannot be said that even today all the people in the world have heard the Gospel. Surely it cannot be said then that the Gospel went into all the world almost 2,000 years ago before AD70?!

This is the argument put forth by many of those who hold to view two for the reason why they hold to view two.

But notice the argument put forth by View One.

In v4-14 Jesus Christ speaks of eight major events

- I. The increase of False Messiahs – v5
- II. The increase of Wars and Rumours of Wars – v6
- III. The increase of political upheaval – v7a
- IV. The increase of famines, pestilences and earthquakes – v7b
- V. The increase of persecution among His followers in v9-10 (along with fearful sights and wonders from heaven in Luke 21:11)
- VI. The increase of false prophets – v11
- VII. The increase of religious apostasy – v12-13; and
- VIII. The increase of worldwide evangelism, so that the Gospel goes into all the world – v14

According to view one, while many of these events can be seen to be occurring throughout every age since AD30 yet Scripture and history shows that the period from AD30-70 was particularly marked with these events. Examples are given in the notes for those who are interested in viewing them; but note just a number of examples for now:

I. *Between AD30 and AD70 there was an increase in False Messiahs and Deliverers*

- In Acts 5:36 we read of a man called Theudas rising up as a false deliverer and leading hundreds with him
- In Acts 5:37 we read of a man from Galilee called Judas rising up as a false deliverer and drawing many after him.
- In Acts 8:9-10 we read of Simon the Sorcerer who declared himself to be a great one, and let people think he was "the great power of God."
- In Acts 13:6 we read of one called Bar-Jesus (literally, son of Jesus) who tried to lead a political leader after him.
- In Acts 21:38, we read of an Egyptian which made an uproar and led 4,000 after him – people who committed many murders.

Also, according to history this seems to be true:

- The 1stC historian Josephus said that during this time period deceivers and false prophets were arrested on a daily basis
- The 4thC historian Eusebius said that there was abundance of false messiahs in this period from AD30 to AD70. Certainly more than normal.

II. *Between AD30 and AD70 there was an increase in fighting and conflict*

Within the Jewish world there was a great increase:

- In Caesarea there was an uprising that resulted in 20,000 Jews being killed
- At Scythopolis 13,000 Jews were killed
- In Alexandria 50,000 were killed;
- *In another place 10,000 were killed.*
- In AD40 the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus made a decree that there should be statue of him erected in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Jews refused and as a result Josephus records the Jews lived daily in a state of fearful anxiety over imminent war with Rome and were in such distress that they even neglected to till the land.

Outside of the Jewish world, the *Annals of Tacitus* describes events that happened during this period using phrases such as:

- "disturbances in Germany"
- "commotions in Africa,"
- "insurrections in Gaul,"
- "intrigues among the Parthians,"
- "commotions in Thrace,"
- "the war in Britain," and
- "the war in Armenia".

The period between AD33 – AD70 was a time of wars and rumours of wars. However, as Christ said, "*see that ye be not troubled (thinking that the end is about to come): for all these things must come to pass, but the end (that is the end of the Temple) is not yet.*"

III. *Between AD30 and AD70 there was much political upheaval and turmoil – v7a, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"*

- Between AD30 and AD70 the nation of Syria rose up against the nation of Israel in civil war – the Jews being infuriated at 20,000 of them being killed in Caesarea.
- Between AD30 and AD70 there was also civil war in Rome itself as four emperors fought for the crown of Emperor upon the death of Nero.
- Between AD30 and AD70 there was a huge political and military revolution in Palestine as documents by the historian N.T. Wright (ch6 of his book, *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992)

IV. *Between AD30 and AD70 there were many Famines and Pestilences and Earthquakes? (v. 7b)*

Famines

- In Acts 11:28 we read of a famine in Judaea between AD30 and AD70 (literally AD44) – a famine so great that Christians from all around the world would give aid to Christians in Judaea (Acts 11:29 and other Scriptures).
- Also two Roman historians Tacitus and Seutonius both mention the prevalence of famines between AD30 and AD70:
 - o The 3 famines that occurred during the reign of Emperor Claudius alone
 - o There was an Empire wide famine in 51AD

What about Pestilences? A pestilence is a contagious disease and these are recorded to have happened during this time period AD30-AD70 – for example...

- In Babylonia 40AD
- In Italy in 66AD

Earthquakes were also common

- In Acts 16:26 we read of an Earthquake in Philippi when Paul and Silas were in prison. This was not merely an earthquake around the area of the prison, but an earthquake in the area.
- History also records many earthquakes around the world between AD30 and 70 in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Apamea, Campania, and Rome.
- In 58AD the philosopher Seneca wrote: "How often have the cities of Asia and Achaea fallen with one fatal shock! How many cities have been swallowed up in Syria! How many in Macedonia! How often has Paphos become a ruin. News has often been brought to us of the demolition of whole cities at once."
- In AD 60 the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae were all devastated by a quake.

Certainly – AD30-70 seen an increase in each of the events mentioned by Christ so far.

Fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

In [Luke 21:11](#) we read about "*Fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven,*" which when mentioned immediately after famines, pestilences and earthquakes should be taken literally. According to history we know...

- A comet appeared around 60AD during Nero's reign, leading to public speculation that some change in the political scene was imminent.
- Then in 66AD *Halley's Comet* appeared.
- Josephus wrote in *The War of the Jews...*
 - o "there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. At the feast of unleavened bread, during the night, a bright light shone round the altar and the temple, so that it seemed to be bright day, for half an hour...
 - o A few days after that feast, He says, "Before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities." A great noise, as of the sound of a multitude, was heard in the temple, saying, "Let us remove hence."

V. *Between AD30 and AD70 there was intensified Persecution – God's people being brought before synagogues and kings and rulers for Christ (Luke 21:12)? V9-10*

We see this fulfilled in Acts

- Acts 4 – Peter and John were imprisoned and threatened for healing a lame man in Christ's Name
- Acts 5 – the apostles are arrested, imprisoned and beaten for their witness of Jesus Christ
- Acts 7 – Stephen is stoned
- Acts 8 – persecution intensifies under Saul of Tarsus and many believers are thrown into prison
- Acts 12 – the early church leader, James – is beheaded by king Herod
- Acts 16 – Paul and Silas imprisoned and beaten
- Acts 18 – Paul brought before the deputy of Achaia for the Jews had made an insurrection against Paul
- Acts 23 – Paul is brought before the governor Felix

- Acts 24 – Paul is brought before Festus
- Acts 25 – Paul is brought before king Agrippa

Historians record for us that between AD30 and AD70 Christians grew to be despised by all nations and in fact, under Emperor Nero it was even a crime to be a Christian.

By the end of Nero's reign in AD68 – almost all of the apostles had been put to death.

VI. *Between AD30 and AD70 there was an increase in False Prophets – v11*

Well, all one has to do is to look at Galatians, Colossians, 2 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, 1 John, and Jude. All these letters were written with a major focus on rebutting false prophets who abounded between AD30 and 70.

Furthermore, within this time period...

- The apostle John says in 1 John 4:1, "many false prophets are gone out into the world"
- In Galatians 2:4 Paul speaks of false brethren who have sneaked their way into churches.

VII. *Apostasy*

Of course, the inevitable result of persecution and bad teaching from false prophets is that many shall "be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another". Scripture speaks of such between AD30 and AD70.

- The apostle John spoke of those who were offended: who "went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John 2:19
- Paul spoke to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:15 of those who betrayed him. He says, "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes".
- In 2 Timothy 4:16 Paul also spoke how Demas had forsaken him; and when attacked by Alexander the coppersmith, "*no man stood with me, but all men forsook me*".

Finally,

VIII. *Between AD30 and AD70 the Gospel did go into the whole world – v14*

Notice what the Bible itself says...

- In Colossians 1:5-6 the apostle Paul spoke to the Colossians of "*the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world*". Paul here says the Gospel is in all the world!
- In Romans 1:8 the apostle Paul says to the Romans, "*I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*". According to Paul the whole world had heard of the one true faith.
- In Romans 10:18 the apostle Paul says that the sound of the Gospel has gone "*into all the earth*" and the words of the Gospel "*unto the ends of the world*".

Some may find this difficult to grasp – but Jesus Christ used a very specific term in Matthew 24:14 when He spoke of the world hearing the Gospel: He used the word, *oikoumene*, which means inhabited world.

- This same word is used in Luke 2:1 of a decree from Caesar Augustus to tax "all the world". Of course this means the inhabited and known world of the Roman Empire – no further.

- In Acts 11:28 the same word is used of a famine which occurred “throughout all the world” – again, it was a famine that occurred throughout the Roman Empire.
- In Acts 24:5 the apostle Paul was accused before a Roman ruler of causing trouble “throughout the world” – again, a reference to the Roman Empire.

So according to Matthew 24:14, Jesus Christ is simply saying that between AD30 and AD70 in the midst of the major events locally and globally, including the Gospel going throughout the Roman Empire – it is possible for you to think the end of the Temple and life as you know it is about to come – but it is not yet!

A second question of discussion is...

B) Can v15-28 refer to the armies of Rome?

In Matthew 24:21 Jesus Christ said the tribulation would be great, “*such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be*”; that is, it would be the most intense period of persecution in all of history – past and future.

The persecution which the Jews experienced under Titus was severe, but what about the persecution of the Jews in World War II with the Holocaust? While around 1 million Jews died in the siege of Jerusalem in 70AD yet around 6 million died in World War II which is obviously far greater. The verses of v15-28 must therefore be talking about something in the future even greater than the Nazi Holocaust.

This is the perspective of view two, and as a result view two believes the abomination of desolation referred to in v15-28 is the rise of antichrist; the entering of a seven-year treaty with Israel; the breaking of that treaty and a time of unparalleled persecution against the Jews and Christians throughout the world for three and a half years.

So the question comes, can v15-28 refer to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Roman Army in v15-28? Could the Lord Jesus Christ still have spoken these words while knowing what was going to happen in the *years to come in World War 2 with Hitler and Stalin*?

View one asks you to consider four points of consideration:

- ❖ *Luke 21:20 defines the abomination of desolation as armies around about Jerusalem – not anything else*
- ❖ *The proportion of Jews killed in AD70*

According to published world statistics, the percentage of people killed in AD70 was twice that of World War II.

- *In Europe during the Holocaust 0.2% of the world population died. [6million / 2,300 million = 0.2%]*
- *In Jerusalem during 70AD, 0.4% of the world population died – that’s twice as much as the Holocaust: [1.1million / 235 = 0.4%]*

According to published world statistics, the percentage of Jews killed in AD70 was far greater than World War II.

- *In Europe during the Holocaust 63% of Jews were killed. (figures from Holocaust Museum in USA of Jews in Europe) $6 / 9.5 = 63\%$*
- *In Jerusalem during AD70 over 90% of Jews were killed and the rest were put into slavery. This is unparalleled in Jewish history.*

- ❖ *The monstrosities that happened in 70AD*

The 1st century historian Josephus saw the siege and destruction of Jerusalem first-hand and he recorded what he saw.

He recorded how the Romans deliberately polluted the water reservoirs and burned the city’s storehouses and granaries. As a result famine quickly set in. A famine in which...

- People ate cattle dung and pigeon dung, leather shields, hay, clothing, and things from the public sewers that scavenger dogs would dare not to touch!
- People would sell their homes and even their children for food
- Some people would try to flee the city at night to hunt for food, but they were captured by the Romans and around 500 people a day were crucified in plain sight of the city walls.

- The famine intensifying, Josephus writes, "...rooms were filled with women and children dying of the famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with famine, and fell down dead wherever their misery seized them... Thus did the miseries of Jerusalem grow worse and worse every day . . . and indeed the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another was a horrible sight, and produced a deadly stench."
- Josephus tells of one woman who killed her son, roasted his body, ate half of him and hid the remaining half. When the smell drew others desperate for food, she offered to share his body, inciting horror among the multitudes.
- After 5 months of the siege, the wall of the city was finally breached and the Temple was set on fire. The Roman soldiers went into the lanes of the city with their swords drawn and without mercy slew everyone through whom they met regardless of age or gender. They set fire to the houses whither the Jews had fled, and burnt every soul in them. Lanes were obstructed with dead bodies, until the soldiers grew weary of killing. The whole city did run with the blood of men. 1.1 million people were killed, which was over 90% of those in the city. The destruction was so complete that not one stone of the Temple was left standing on another, even as Jesus had prophesied ([Mt. 24:2](#)).

Josephus' final words on the destruction are as follows: "The afflictions which befell the Jews were the greatest of all those, not only that have been in our times, but, in a manner, of those wherein cities have fought against cities, or nations against nations . . . it appears to me that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to those of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were".

❖ *The Reason for AD70*

What was the reason for God's judgment on Israel? It was for their willful rejection and murder of His beloved Son whom He had sent to be the Saviour of the world and whom they heard and saw in the flesh. This is a crime that has never, and never will be committed again, and as such there never was and never will be such a calamity to befall a nation.

For these four reasons, those who hold to View two say that the words of Jesus Christ are accurate in regards to AD70 that it shall be "be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be".

While some will argue against this and say that the words of Christ must refer to a global persecution in which it is possible to wipe out all "flesh" (24:22), yet view one responds by giving references which show "all flesh" does not necessarily refer to every single person alive but a select group of people (Acts 2:17, Isaiah 66:23 and Genesis 6:13)

A third and final discussion question around Matthew 24 is...

C) *Can v29 refer to the second coming of Christ?*

According to view two, the events of v29 must immediately follow the events of v15-28: that is there must be no time gap between the great tribulation and the second coming of Christ. This is why the timing of Christ's second coming can be known with such precision.

- The treaty being signed by the antichrist with Israel, it will last for exactly seven prophetic years (that is, seven years of 360 days each or 2,520 days).
- The tribulation commencing half way through that time period it will last for 1,260 days, or 3.5 prophetic years.
- While the exact date of the Lord's return cannot be known down to the very day or hour, yet we know it will be immediately after the end of the specific tribulation and therefore can be determined to within two-three days.

If view one teaches that v15-28 speak of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 and that v29-31 then speak of the coming of Christ, then they are in big error for v29 says the coming of Christ must come immediately after the destruction of AD70 – which is nonsense!

This appears to be a major problem for view one. However view one has a defence.

Note the explanation of view one:

In v15-28 we are informed of God's judgment on Israel for the rejection of Christ.

In v29 we are then told that *immediately* after this judgment of God on Israel there would the judgment of God on the entire world and all the wicked who have ever lived referred to in the words, "the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Prophetic imagery found in the likes of Isaiah 13:10-13 which speaks of God's judgment on sinners.

The word "*immediately*" that is used here by Matthew is the word "*eutheos*". When this word is looked at in the rest of Scripture it is clear to see that it does not refer to time in terms of seconds but to time in terms of significance.

- For example, it does not mean that one event is followed by another with little or no time occurring between the two events; instead it means that one event is followed by another no major event occurring between the two events.

In Mark 4 we have the parable of the sower who went out to sow good seed and we are told in v5, “And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth”. The word “immediately” is the word *eutheos*; but Christ is not saying in v5 that the seed sprung up immediately the very second it was sown. That would be ludicrous! No, it would take weeks before the seed would spring up. Christ is not speaking in terms of seconds but in terms of significance. In the parable the seed sprung up quickly. It came quicker than anticipated and there was no major event happened between the sowing and springing up !

In 3 John the apostle John writes to a man called Gaius and in v14 John says, “I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face”. The word *shortly* is the word *eutheos*. John is not saying he hopes to see Gaius that very second or that very day. No, it could be weeks even months before John sees Gaius face to face. John is saying he hopes to see Gaius quickly with nothing coming between now and his seeing Gaius face to face.

In John 6:21 the word we read of Christ getting into a boat and then “immediately the ship was at the land whither they went”. There is nothing to say that the boat miraculously moved from the middle of the sea of Galilee (v19) to the shore in a split second. No, it would have taken many minutes, maybe even hours for the boat to get to the shore but journey was quick without any major event coming between the two events of entering and arriving.

The term *eutheos* does not refer to time in terms of seconds, it refers to time in terms of significance – something happening quickly with no major event occurring between.

And so it is with the words of Christ in v29. Speaking about God’s great judgment on Israel in AD70, Christ now says “Immediately after the tribulation (and judgment) of those days shall my judgment come upon the whole world.”

- My judgment will come quickly upon the world – just as Christ promised in Revelation 22, “Surely, I come quickly”.
- My judgment on the world will come after my judgment on Israel – there is no major judgment in-between for you to be looking out for or that will hinder my coming.

These are some of the major points of Discussion on the Olivet Discourse.

- Either the Gospel has gone into all the world or it hasn’t;
- Either God’s judgment on Jerusalem in AD70 could be described as great or it cannot; and
- Either the term immediately means immediately in terms or seconds or it does not.

Notice with me thirdly....

3) The Implications of the Olivet Discourse

Depending on which view you hold to – View one or view two – there will be significant differences to how you view life today:

A) ***It will Impact your knowledge of Christ’s coming***

If you hold to view one, then you believe there are no signs leading up to the coming of Jesus Christ

- As v27 says, it will be sudden like lightning; and
- As v43 says, it will be unannounced like a thief in the night

Believing the day of the LORD to be one 24 hour day and the coming of Christ to bring judgment on all sinners – this means that sinners must prepare to meet their God now for they do not know when Christ will return and their last moment will be.

However, if you hold to view two then you believe there are many signs leading up to the coming of Jesus Christ and that the timing of Christ’s coming can be known with great accuracy. While you may not know the day or the hour, yet it is possible to know the week and be correct to within two days of His actual coming.

Neither you nor anyone you love should need to be concerned about Christ coming back today or tomorrow or even within the next 7 years – after all, the antichrist needs to enter a seven year treaty with Israel – a treaty which has not been entered yet.

The coming of Christ is not imminent; it is not like lightning; it is not unannounced. No, the coming of Christ can be put down into a given week in the diary once the antichrist enters the treaty.

B) It will impact the Circumstances of Christ's Coming

If you hold to view one, then the circumstances around Christ's coming will be like the days of Noah mentioned in Matthew 24:37-41: people will be eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

It will not need to be a time of *unprecedented global catastrophes or unparalleled calamities*. No, human life will be carrying on as normal and humanity will be immersed in the routine affairs of life when everyone is thoroughly involved in the pursuit of their earthly affairs and ambitions.

In fact, Christ will come at a time when his coming is the farthest thing from the minds of the unsaved – for the only ones who thought about the coming flood were those who believed, Noah and his family.

His coming will occur at a time so unexpected, so unannounced, that it will catch people in the middle of their everyday routines.

Oh for the unsaved this is a big challenge – you need to be ready! You need to listen to the voice of God now while He is speaking for He promises no further warnings!

However, if you hold to view two then there are many circumstances for you to be on the look -out for:

- Leading up to the tribulation you should be on the look-out for the rise of false prophets, the rise of apostasy and the rise of the spread of the Gospel into every tribe and tongue.
- You should also be taking great interest in Israel and the rise of the antichrist.
- Finally, when it comes to the arrival of Christ it will not be a time of normality but a time of unparalleled persecution and tribulation of the Jews and God's people.

So your view of Matthew 24 will have a big impact on everyday life and even how we view the circumstances we are in now!

4) The Application of the Olivet Discourse

Read v46-51

Watch...

- We are to be Remembering Christ's Coming
- We are to be Thinking upon Christ's Coming
- We are to be Working in light of Christ's Coming