

Date: May 12, 2019

Title: When The Heaven's Fall

Text: Matt. 24:1-31

Theme: The visual shadow is being torn apart only to give way for the arrival of God's promised substance. It is unlike anything we would expect or craft or design. It is God's way. During this horrific birth, we must not be deceived into believing lies nor be dazed by the magnitude of the shaking. We must keep looking to Jesus and we must keep standing for Jesus. Even as we go through this violent shaking, Jesus stands ready to return and thoroughly straighten all that is crooked. Thus, His people can rest in hope knowing the end is now.

Introduction:

The entire Olivet discourse is a private discussion between the Lord and His disciples. It is not a public discourse like the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7).

"The Jerusalem *temple* was widely admired around the world. See Josephus, *Ant.* 15.11 [15.380-425]; *J. W.* 5.5 [5.184-227] and Tacitus, *History* 5.8, who called it "immensely opulent." Josephus compared it to a beautiful snowcapped mountain."¹

If and when the Temple falls, you will be in the end of days. Every descriptive you could possibly attach to this moment grips the soul and casts it into turmoil. The idea that the Temple would be destroyed is unfathomable. It happened once before in 586 BCE and will happen again in 70AD. Both times it is described in apocalyptic language, "THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." The language was not meant to be taken literally. It is using language to describe the abject horror of this moment.

"The most beautiful body soon will be food for worms, and the most magnificent building a ruinous heap."²

"With the statement *not one stone will be left on another* Jesus predicted the total destruction of the temple, something that did occur in a.d. 70."³

If you and I were to think of some of our most horrific moments on a national scale, then we would begin to understand the abject horror of this moment.

It would be like St. Peters Cathedral and Vatican City Rome Italy destroyed or the Mosque on the Temple Mount blowing up or Mecca and the Kaaba [the cube] in Saudi Arabia being decimated. It isn't Notre Dame burning. Tragic, yes; but there is no religious fervor attached to it. In these first three verses, what Jesus tells them grabs their True North and shatters it. He is sending them adrift.

The question they ask in verse 3 is most natural because if the Temple falls and all that it represents, then we must be at the end of the age.

What is Jesus saying?

“It is concluded here that the traditional preterist-futurist view is preferable.

Matt 24:4-14 describes the course of the present age, during which ‘enduring to the end’ and ‘preaching the gospel of the kingdom’ are the Church's duties.

In 24:15-28 the ‘abomination of desolation’ is understood to refer both to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem and to the ultimate abomination against God's people committed by the eschatological antichrist.

Christ's return to earth is described in 24:29-31.

Finally, 24:32-41 underlines the certainty of the prophecy's fulfillment with the assertion that Jesus' contemporaries will not die before they see his prophecy fulfilled.”⁴

vv. 1-3 Blunt Force Trauma

“In the latest episode of Fifth Gear, they conducted an interesting crash test involving a Ford Focus and a concrete wall. Usually, these tests are done at speeds below 60 mph (100 km/h). However, for this one, the Ford Focus was travelling at 120 mph (192 km/h). The results of the test are frightening, to say the least. The Ford is reduced to a pile of twisted metal.”⁵

We read our Bibles with little emotional engagement. It isn't the Scripture that moves us, but our conflicted circumstances and stressful situations. We are hormonally driven and emotionally volatile. Thus, when we read these three verses we should be captured and overwhelmed by the force of this statement.

Our thought runs through two chapters. We can break the first section (vv. 1-31) into two parts.

I. Concerning Jerusalem (vv. 4-28)

A. vv. 4-14 Right Now and the [Currently and up to] . . .

This is what is going on with them in the first century.

1. Five things describing this period of time

- a. There is a distortion of the truth (vv. 4, 11).
 - False (7:15; 24:11, 24)
 - Astray (24:4, 5, 11, 24)
- b. There is a disturbance in the world (v. 6).
 - False Christs
 - Wars
 - Famines and earthquakes
- c. There is a discrimination against God's People (v. 9).
 - Persecution of God's people

- d. There is a defection from God's Truth (v. 10).
 - Scandal (Matt. 26:31, 33)
- e. There is a darkness in the human heart (vv. 10, 12).
 - The end is not yet (v. 6)
 - All these are but the beginning of the birth pains (v. 8)
 - And then the end will come (v. 14)

Yet, none of this is unusual. This is what has existed, exists, and will exist up until Jesus comes back.

- Fall of Rome [476AD]
- The Great Schism [1054AD]
- The Reformation [1517AD]
- WW1 and WW2 [first part of 20th century]

Friend, until Jesus comes there is never a point in time when these things are not present. Only His return will thoroughly straighten all that is crooked and completely eradicate sin and lift its curse. If you think certain things have to happen before Jesus can come, then you dampen the thought of imminent. If you believe those things have already happen, then Jesus could have come in the 1st century all the way through the 21st century. Jesus might tarry, but His return is still imminent.

In every age and at every point what are we to be doing? Two things.

2. Two things describing His People

These two descriptive run in parallel. We are to persevere in proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

- a. The perseverance of His People (vv. 13)

*"But the person who endures to the end will be saved. Jesus was not claiming here that salvation is by works. He was simply arguing that genuine faith evidences itself in persistence through even the worst of trials."*⁶

- b. The proclamation of His People (v. 14)

There is too much talk as to what the gospel of the kingdom is as though it is in opposition to the gospel of Paul or Jesus in 1 Cor. 15:3, 4. The gospel is simply the good news of God given to the bad news of people.

B. vv. 15-28 Immediate Future [70AD]

The Sign of Certainty - The Abomination of Desolation and Daniel's Prophecy

"The reference to *the abomination of desolation* is an allusion to Dan 9:27. Though some have seen the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in the actions of Antiochus IV (or a representative of his) in 167 b.c., the words of Jesus seem to indicate that Antiochus was not the final fulfillment, but that there was (from Jesus' perspective) still another fulfillment yet to come. Some argue that this was realized in a.d. 70, while others claim that it refers specifically to Antichrist and will not be fully realized until the period of the great tribulation at the end of the age (cf. Mark 13:14, 19, 24; Rev 3:10)."⁷

The trauma of the event demands an urgent response.

"The swiftness and devastation of the judgment will require a swift escape. There will be no time to *come down* from the roof and pick up anything from inside one's home."⁸

- Do Not Go Down (V. 17)
- Do Not Turn Back (V. 18)
- Do Not Believe It (V. 23)
- Do Not Go Out (V. 26)
- Do Not Believe It (V. 26)

Hurry up and run, Cut and Run! Now! Don't look back! [Cf. Luke 17:32 "Remember Lot's wife."]

v. 27 - "The Son of Man's coming in power will be sudden and obvious like *lightning*. No one will need to point it out."⁹

II. Concerning Jesus (vv. 29-25:46 [Imminent, Pending, Forthcoming, etc.]

A. The Consequences of His Coming (vv. 29-31)

There is a gap between what has happened in vv. 1-28 and what we await to happen in verses 29-31. When He does return two things will happen.

- The End Has Arrived
- All The Tribes Of The Earth Will Mourn (v. 30)

Why will they mourn, because the great divide is about to happen.

Acts 1 provides insight into this gap.

- Acts 1:6 ¶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea

and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." 9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and **a cloud received Him out of their sight.** 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? **This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.**"

When is He returning? When He is good and ready. However, His return is always at any moment.

B. The Certainty of His Coming - The Parable of the Fig Tree (vv. 32-35)

Throughout the section He speaks to the idea that we cannot predict the time of His arrival even though He lays out what some see as sequence, signs, and wonders. If the sequence is capable of being known, then could we not know the time? Everything will go on as "normal" right up to and until the Son of Man returns. You will not think anything is unusually and in the moment you least expect it, Jesus will return. Is this not what happened with His incarnation?

C. The Separating of His People (vv. 36-25:46 [multiple parables])

When Jesus returns all of humanity will experience the great divide.

III. The Exhortation for Those Who Believe

Negatively

1. Do not be deceived / do not believe the lie
2. Do not be dazed / overwhelmed / surprised

Positively

3. Looking to Jesus (vv. 4, 25)
4. Standing for Jesus (v. 13)

To stop looking and to stop standing is catastrophic. Some wonder if those who stop looking and standing were even saved in the first place. My response is, "I don't know." The text of Scripture does not really give itself to answering that question. What it calls us to, is to keep looking and to keep standing. Do not stop! Just as the one is catastrophic, so also the other is fortuitous. It is far better to obey than to rebel. Both have intrinsic consequences. The gospel does not erase sin's demerit on the horizontal. It fully absorbs sin's defect in the vertical, but let us not think or assume that grace negates the consequences of poor choices.

¹ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+24>

² Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on Matthew 24:1-3.

³ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+24>

⁴ https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/ntesources/ntarticles/gtj-nt/turner-mat24-gtj-88.htm

⁵ <http://www.zercustoms.com/videos/Ford-Focus-Crash-Test-At-120-mph.html>

⁶ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+24>

⁷ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+24>

⁸ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+24>

⁹ <https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+24>