

### **Matthew 24:29-33 (Parts 1 & 2) – Matthew #102 & #103 – “The end of the world”**

- In v.3, question re timing of judgment on Jerusalem, but also ask re Christ’s coming and end of world. In vv.4-14, Christ describes life in world, particularly for believers, in period between His first and second coming. In vv.15-28, addresses the timing, and tribulation of the prophesied end of Jerusalem.
- Now, and really through to end of ch.25, re the end of the world.
- Will consider vv.29-33 today, particularly to have a right understanding of this portion of Scripture as re end of the world. Emphasising this because Preterism seems to be increasingly popular view today - says this already happened.
- Will be consulting many Scriptures – need to be comparing Scripture with Scripture – moving from the clearer to the less clear passages. *[If taking notes write references to check later. Will endeavour to upload outline to Sermon Audio for future reference.]*
- Why important?
  - o To rightly understand Bible = God’s Word.
  - o To have Biblical hope – those who truly believe love and long for Christ’s appearing. Are we waiting and watching? What are we waiting for?
- *Headings: (1) Past-fulfilment view; (2) Future-fulfilment view (more Biblical view); (3) After the tribulation.*

#### *1. Past-fulfilment view – these verses speak of the end of Jerusalem in 70AD.*

- v.29, **Immediately after the tribulation of those days** = Jerusalem’s tribulation then.
- v.34, **This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.**
  - o Some say whole chapter until v.35 is re Jerusalem – **all these things**; then from v.36 re Christ’s return, with unknown timing (but cf. ‘full-preterism’).

#### *i. Outline of interpretation:*

- o Signs in heavens understood re temporal judgment describing demise of Israel as nation, such as the OT prophets used re various nations.
  - e.g. Isa 13:10 – re Babylon; Eze 32:7-8 – re. Egypt.
  - Perhaps visible signs like eclipses and meteors, but not necessarily.
- o v.30, **sign of the Son of man in heaven** etc understood not of Christ Himself being seen, but rather destruction of Jerusalem and temple as a sign that Christ was reigning in heaven. Also coming in the clouds of heavens etc understood re Christ’s ascension and present reign – using language of Dan 7:13-14.
- o v.30, **tribes of the earth** understood of tribes of the land, and hence of Israel.
- o v.31, gathering of elect understood of advance of kingdom through earth – the angels being messengers/ministers of the Gospel.
- o vv.32-33 - parable of the fig tree relates to Jerusalem, as the nation of Israel is sometimes spoken of as a fig tree.

#### *ii. Advantages / attractions of this interpretation:*

- o Straightforward division of chapter, at least by some – 24:1-35 re end of Jerusalem; 24:36-25:46 re end of world.
- o Straightforward reading of v.34 (**this generation**) re all preceding material.
- o Use of OT imagery, especially from prophets, to understand language.
- o Seeking to protect the truth of God’s Word from accusation of false prophecy:
  - Critics say Jesus thought He would return then – but He was wrong!
  - But this view says, Jesus wasn’t speaking of His coming, but a local judgment on Jerusalem.

→ Apparent simplicity; straightforwardness; comparing Scripture with Scripture; vindicating Christ as true prophet of God.

2. Future-fulfilment view (more Biblical view) – these verses speak of end of the world.
- There are some important problems with the past fulfilment view:
    - i. *Even on the preterist view, not everything prior to v.34 was fulfilled by 70AD.*
      - While v.34 could mean that everything in the verses before would happen before that generation passed, it is not the case:
        - vv.4-14 may be understood as happening in those 40 years, but especially v.14, and the witness to all nations, was only begun.
        - vv.27-28 speak of Christ's personal return (*parousia*), which all orthodox admit did not happen in that generation. It might be said that this was only mentioned for comparison, but strictly speaking still outside of v.34, if **all these things** means everything means
        - v.31 - if the gathering of the elect is the gospel going through the world, this only began in those 40 years, so not all gathered in.
        - Language in Lk 21, re preceding section and these verses, shows not all happened in those 40 years:
          - v.22, **that all things that are written may be fulfilled** – not everything in Scripture, but prophecies re Jerusalem.
          - v.24, **Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.** These times begun, but not ended by 70AD – cf. prophecies in Rom 11
      - There is an attraction to this view. But over-simplistic.
    - ii. *Comparing with other Scriptures proves v.30 is about Christ's final coming.*
      - We need to compare Scripture with Scripture. Language is like Dan 7:13-14, which is re ascension, and needs to be taken into account, but so also must other NT passages which use same language, and clearly re Christ's return.
      - Cf. especially passages linking His coming in glory etc with Final Judgment. [*Method: start with clear/fixed points, understood by orthodox through history re Christ's return; then go back to disputed passages – ignore heretics*].
        - Act 17:31, **Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.**
        - 2 Cor 5:10, **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.**
        - Rev 20:11-13
      - Then back to Matthew's Gospel:
        - Mt 16:27, **For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.**
        - Mt 25:31, **When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. v.32, And before him shall be gathered all nations...**
        - Mt 26:64, **Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.**
      - Confirm in Act 1:9-11 and Rev 1:7, **Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.**
      - Many reasons to take this passage in plain sense – re Christ's return.

- iii. *Comparing with other Gospels proves vv.29-33 are about the end of the world.*
- Language of other Gospels shows Christ's coming here not local judgment on Jerusalem in 70AD. Compare Mt 24:29-33 with Mk and Lk. Significant helps to interpretation in Lk 21:25-31, so will focus there. (cf. Mk 13:24-29).
    - v.27, **then shall they see the Son of man coming** etc – no mention of mere sign that Christ is in heaven. Rather His personal appearance.
    - v.28 – no mention of angels gathering elect, but rather, **And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.**
      - Is 'redemption' re the 'official' end of OT era? No. cf. NT:
      - Redemption accomplished (past – Heb 9:12, **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.**)
      - Redemption applied (individual – Eph 1:7, **In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.**)
      - Redemption consummated – Rom 8:23, **And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**
  - Looking to consummation of redemption = resurrection.
  - This is looking to that final ingathering at return of Christ.
    - Angels are harvesters – Mt 13, Parables of Wheat and Fishes – gathering and separating.
    - 2 Th 2:1, **Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, & by our gathering together unto him**
    - 1 Th 4:16-18.
  - vv.29-31 – parable concludes, **know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.** Is this 'official' end of OT era? Does NT speak thus? No.
    - **Kingdom of heaven at hand** and then in their midst in Christ's ministry (Mt 3:2; 12:28; Lk 17:21). Entered into and lived in in this world by repentance and faith (= eternal life, begun now).
    - Mt 16:28, **There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.** Cf. sermon on passage – not re final return, but death, resurrection, Pentecost, perhaps destruction of temple etc.
    - But here, taken with future **redemption**, and **coming**, looking to the kingdom of glory = the **summer is nigh.**
      - Mt 13:24 & 43; 25:34; 26:29 (1 Cor 15:50-52).
      - Cf. Lk 19:11-12 – the kingdom had come, was coming and would yet come. First all these things to happen.
      - 2 Tim 4:1, **the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.**
  - vv.30-33 set forth the return of Christ in glory – the resurrection, judgment of all men. This is **blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us...** (Tit 2:14).
3. *After the tribulation.*
- Return to v.29 - How to understand '**immediately**'? Not like "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor 15:52); but belongs with "**after**" = soon after, straight away.

- Question: Which tribulation? **Of those days** = when? Three main views:
    - i. *Tribulation of future Jerusalem.*
      - Some see the language of vv.29-33, understand of end of world, then look back at vv.15-28, and say, “Well if Christ is going to return immediately following this ‘**great tribulation**’ (v.21), that can’t have happened yet.” This is a typically *premillennial* view, and perhaps you can see that this view then requires Jews in Palestine, a Jewish Jerusalem, another temple in Jerusalem (so it can be destroyed) etc. cf. Zionism.
        - Sermon on vv.15-28 demonstrates that this is judgment of Jerusalem then.
        - Refer series on Dispensationalism for more.
    - ii. *Tribulation of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jerusalem.*
      - Others, however, more plainly, understanding this of the ‘**great tribulation**’ that was to come on Jerusalem in that generation. At least 3 interpretations of ‘**immediately**’:
        - a. Some say vv.29-33 refer to Christ judging Jerusalem [preterist] – so these signs understood figuratively or literally.
        - b. Others, who understand at least vv.30-31 (or v.33) re Christ’s final coming, see v.29 as describing the progressive shaking of kingdoms of world until Christ’s return at the end of time – so these signs understood figuratively.
          - The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was indeed God’s dealing with apostate Israel, and closing that chapter of His dealings with man.
          - Church largely freed from at least Jewish persecution, and Gospel into world. Cf. language of Heb 12:27-29.
        - c. Others say ‘**immediately**’ to be understood relatively – cf. God’s eternity – a thousand years as a day etc. Compare to other soon and near language in NT.
    - iii. *Tribulation of entire Church Age.*
      - Another view is that this is tribulation of entire period between Christ’s first and second coming. Better fits what has been established re context and ‘**immediately**’.
      - Evidence:
        - In vv.4-14 don’t see word ‘**tribulation**’ in Eng., but described. Yet, same Gk word in v.9, **Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted** [‘to tribulation’].
        - Bible clear on sufferings that Christians will receive if faithfully following Christ – cross to bear; opposition and persecution to expect. To a greater and lesser extent, but will be there.
          - Cf. Act 14:22, **We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God**. Also Rev 7:14 re saints in heaven – **they which came out of great tribulation**.
        - Although Church looks to promises of Gospel prosperity – e.g. Rom 11; Psalms, Prophets; Mt 28:18-20; Lord’s Prayer – yet sin will remain in us and also with temptations from own hearts and world.
- Christ’s return will be our redemption from all tribulation. Cf. Rev 7:14-17; 21:1-4.
- The “end of world” language (sun, moon, stars etc) is used figuratively in places, but here ought to be taken as re the end of the world. What will that exactly look like? What will the new heavens and earth look like? We don’t know, but the Bible speaks in such catastrophic terms of the end of all things.
- Rev 21:1, **the first heaven and the first earth were passed away**.
  - Ps 102:25-28; 2 Pet 3:4-14
- Are you looking to Jesus for salvation? He is only Saviour and now is the time to repent. When that Day comes, no more time. When your Day comes, no more time. Heb 9:27-28.
- Christian, are you looking to His appearing? Are you hastening that Day? Not mere wishing and wheedling away time. But waiting, working, serving. 1 Cor 15:58; 1 Jn 3:2-3; 2 Ti 4:7-8.