



TRIBULATION HAPPENS - Part 2 (Week 7) *Six Reasons to Study the End Times*

Introduction - insightful teenager

- John Frame's evaluation — already and not yet.
- Summary
- God's people rejected their Messiah, the true temple. God would now reject the earthly temple.

1 Kings 9:6-7

6 But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

- Prophecy as unique trait of Christianity

Matthew 24:21-29

²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

- the temple was 1,000 feet squared
- a single stone was 67 feet long made of pure white marble, 7 feet high, 9 feet wide
- the walls covered with gold
- this was Mt. Zion, to the Jews it was completely indestructible — it was God's temple, the center of worship | it defined their identity

- When we understand the significance of the temple's loss in the history of the nation of Israel this is unprecedented loss.
- Judaism has never been the same since the destruction of the temple. Even today there are more Jewish people in New York City than in Jerusalem.

Romans 11 answers the question, "Has God rejected His people?" Paul says, "I'm a Jew." All the Apostles were Jewish. All the first believers were Jewish. In this chapter of Romans, Paul makes the argument that there have always been and will always be a remnant of Jews who believe in Jesus. Then in the end times there will be a revival of Jews who come to believe in Jesus.

²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

God intervened for the sake of His children.

²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.

²⁶ So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.

Again, He repeats His warning about false teachers. Next He tells them why they shouldn’t believe the false teachers, because His Second Coming will be unmistakable.

²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Like “lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west” — it’s not secret. It’s global. It’s universal and it’s unmistakable.

The Bible speaks loud and clear on this — there is nothing secret about the return of Christ.

²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

As everyone can see vultures hovering over dead bodies from miles away, so the dead will be scattered for miles around at the destruction of the temple.

This much can be safely said, “All of Jesus’ prophecies about the destruction of the city and the Temple by Rome came true. His prophecies about Christians fleeing, came true.”

1. The prophecy of Jesus concerning the destruction of the temple (and all the evidence that it was indeed foretold before the temple was destroyed) confirms His promises about His Second Coming because it shows how utterly reliable the prophecies of Jesus are.

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

We take it for granted that cosmic language is futuristic. This is because we do not swim in the waters of Old Testament cosmic imagery, but the Christians Jesus is speaking to here did swim in those waters.

If Scripture interprets Scripture, which it does, then we must verify our understanding with other Scripture and not just make assumptions.

So, to understand this text, we need to look at similar biblical language.

The context of Isaiah’s prophecy is the Medo-Persian empire conquering the Babylonian empire. The very first verse of chapter 13 tells us so:

Isaiah 13:1

The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

There we have the context. Now, let's skip down to verse 9.

Isaiah 13:9-13

9 Behold, the day of the Lord comes,

Now, when we hear the phrase “the day of the Lord” what comes to mind? Most often I think what comes to mind is the Second Coming of Christ. But that is not what Isaiah is referring to here. He's referring to the judgment of the Lord that's coming.

cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,
to make the land a desolation
and to destroy its sinners from it.

Now listen to the language he's using here to describe this judgment against the Babylonian empire.

10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations
will not give their light;
the sun will be dark at its rising,
and the moon will not shed its light.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,
and the earth will be shaken out of its place,
at the wrath of the Lord of hosts
in the day of his fierce anger.

So, the imagery of this language indicates in the most dramatic way possible a radical reversal of power. It's describing a shift in what kingdom will be in power.

That is what happened during the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. It's a radical and revolutionary moment in the history of Israel. It's symbolic of God's judgment upon Israel. This language is a picture of collapse. That's the point. The destruction of Jerusalem was a collapse of unimaginable proportions.

That's the language Jesus is using here in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:29

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Isaiah and Jesus are both describing a radical shift in power with the imagery of language. They are prophesying about literal

events with cosmic language. Let's look at another prophet and his language.

Ezekiel 32:1; 7-8

32 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him: “You consider yourself a lion of the nations, but you are like a dragon in the seas; you burst forth in your rivers, trouble the waters with your feet, and foul their rivers.

So, he's prophesying about judgment against Pharaoh.

7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. 8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God.

Isaiah 34:4-5

4 All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

5 For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.

The Old Testament Scriptures are the Scriptures that Jesus and His first followers were immersed in. When we read Isaiah and Ezekiel and we understand their language describing these events of God's judgment using figurative language to describe literal events. Then why when we get to Jesus using this same language do we suddenly demand hyper-literalism? This actually leads to more problems and some very absurd reasoning.

Matthew 24:30

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man,

Now, the first thing to notice here is that what appears in heaven is not the Son of Man, but the *sign* of the Son of Man. Right? So, that tells us something very important. *It's a sign.*

The question that has to be answered is, “What is the sign of the Son of Man?” Well, let's see how this sign is described:

and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

First, who are the tribes Matthew is referring to here? When you think tribes, what comes to mind? The Twelve Tribes is Israel. So, the Twelve Tribes of Israel will mourn, but what will they mourn over?

the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Remember this from the book of Daniel?

Daniel 7:13-14

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.

14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;

his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Do you remember what this was referring to? Not the Second Coming but the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God where He now rules the nations with power and great glory.

Matthew 24:31

³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Okay, we need a little Greek lesson here, the language this was originally written in. This word of angels (ἄγγελος) is the word that is used for messenger. The expression ‘servants of God’ or even ‘messengers of God’ tends to overlap in meaning with expressions used to characterize the role and function of the prophets who were sent as messengers from God. So, this same term is used of both prophets and angels. We have to determine if this messenger is a spiritual being or an earthly being from how it’s used in the passage.

The primary reason I take this to mean the Lord sending out messengers with the gospel to gather His children from across the globe is because of verse 34. Everything before verse

34 has to be something that the generation He is speaking to could also experience.

Now, can you understand this to mean the Second Coming? Yes. There is precedent for that understanding in Scripture itself in Matthew 13. But the big question for me is what do we do with verse 34? So, I go with the interpretation that answers the most questions and leaves the least problems.

Matthew 24:32-35

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

³² “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The lesson of the fig tree is simply this: when you see these signs, know that God’s judgment is at the gate — the temple and Jerusalem are about to be destroyed. God’s judgment is near. I think understanding the fig tree as God’s judgment upon Israel is straight forward. Verses 32 and 33 are not

complex. As we’ve seen, some things in the Bible are harder to understand than others.

- **The difference between looking for signs and not knowing the day or the hour.**

One of the most embarrassing things about evangelicalism is our history of end times prognosticators, people who have made predictions about when Christ will return. One of the reasons for their inaccurate predictions — they were reading Matthew 24 as completely futuristic. They were looking for signs that had already occurred. It’s a mistake we need to stop making.

Matthew 24:36-42

No One Knows That Day and Hour

³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Now, it’s clear that Jesus is talking about His Second Coming here. He’s talking about His return and the context is what? Noah. He’s comparing His return to the days of Noah.

³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when

Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.

If Noah and the ark is the context, what were people in Noah's day left for? Judgment. And if you were taken on the ark? You were saved from the coming judgment.

⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

What good does studying the end times do? It motivates us to order our lives in light the Second Coming of Christ.

2. The Coming of Christ should motivate us to reorder our priorities.

2 Peter 3:11-12

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, **12** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

3. If we are eager for Christ to return, we should be purifying ourselves. We

should be seeking to be as pure as we will one day be in God's presence.

Matthew 24:43-46

⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

4. Our ignorance of the return of Christ means that we must be ready at any time for His return. Jesus is saying that He is coming again and it would be wise for us to be doing what He has called us to do when He returns.

“Instead of trying to connect the signs of the end to current events, the church is to be about its divinely commissioned task of preaching the gospel. Jesus has not called us to speculate about his coming... He has called us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is the task with which we must be concerned.” (Kim Riddlebarger)

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

5. He promises us that our labor for Him today is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Matthew 24:47

⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

6. Finally, when Jesus comes we will receive a reward and we should look forward to that reward in our labors here.

Matthew 5:12

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:46

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

1 Corinthians 3:13-14

13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will

test what sort of work each one has done. **14** If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

Matthew 24:48-51

⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

• Joan Overfelt and The Rapture