



Let No One Alarm You About Dates

Matthew 24:29-35

What would you do with \$100 million? If you had to use this amount of money to improve world conditions, what would you do first?

Do you remember the rapture prediction of May 21, 2011? What do you remember reading or hearing of this? How would you see such a prediction today?

This morning is the “main course” of this series: the coming of the Son of Man. So far, we’ve seen through both direct speech (“you, etc.”

18X) and historical verification how seamlessly Matthew 24 fits into what the disciples would witness in the first century. But can the coming of the Son of Man fit into the first century? The answer may surprise you.

Today's text looks at the topic of the “coming of the Son of Man.”

Jesus is coming again BUT here Jesus refers to what took place in events of the first century. Here's why:

- 1) Words/phrases can have layers of meaning and not recognizing this can lead to confusion (Ex. “flesh” in John 1:14 and Romans 8:8).
- 2) Jesus speaks of events preceding his coming as something the disciples would witness in Matthew 24:33.
- 3) In Matthew 24:34, Jesus limits “all these things” to “this generation” (the current generation, not any future one)! This is the way the phrase is used consistently in Matthew (11:6, 12:41-45, 13:36).

Verse 29

- Here Jesus uses prophetic/apocalyptic imagery of God's wrath and judgment through an invading army, resulting in social and political upheaval.
- A modern parallel is how we may describe some events as "earth shattering."
- That said, there were cosmic signs during the Jewish War that led to Jerusalem and the temple's destruction, as verified by Jewish historian Josephus and Roman historians Tacitus and Cassius Dio.
- These exact motifs are found in the judgment on Babylon in Isaiah 13, which use cosmic signs to describe earthly destructions.
- In other words, prophetic apocalyptic imagery does not describe "the end of the world" but "the end of the world as we know it!"

Verse 30a (The sign of the Son of Man)

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn...

Cosmic signs were present during the Jewish War, as heavenly armies were seen in the sky

(Josephus, *War*, 288-300; Tacitus, *Histories*, 5.13)!

Verse 30b (The coming of the Son of Man)

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

Next Week:

- We'll see what Jesus later says of his coming, and how this connects to Jewish Messianic expectations and the most quoted and alluded to verse of the Old Testament!
- How this was fulfilled in the first century AD.

The best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible!
This week, read Isaiah 13 and note how earthly realities are described in theological and cosmic imagery. Get in the habit of interpreting the Bible with the Bible!