

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 24:15-28 | Jerusalem's Judgment
Sunday November 23, 2025

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

 **REVIEW:**

For the past several weeks, we have been studying a new genre in Biblical literature—prophecy.

Theologically, we're examining a small part of Eschatology.

Eschatology is a combination of two Greek words, eschatos, “last,” and logos, “the word,” meaning “the doctrine of last things.”

After last Sunday, I felt an uneasiness with this passage.

I get it, prophecy is heavy and can be disturbing.

Looking back at Matthew's Gospel, much of it has been narrative—a story of Jesus' life with the Disciples.

And with any good story, there are heroes and villains—the hero, obviously, is Jesus, and the villains are the Jewish religious establishment—scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees.

The Romans are also included in a subplot in the narrative.

Matthew's Gospel has many genres.

He starts with genealogy, Jesus' discourses (sermons), parables, and miracles, and now we're in the prophetic.

The last thing in the world I want to do is scare or startle you in any way as we study the prophecy in Matthew 24 and 25.

Prophecy should bring us peace, not anxiety. Prophecy is a part of God's story.

The Lord has and will continue to love and provide for His people.

One of the primary reasons we teach the Gospels verse by verse is that there is no way to understand these prophetic chapters unless we know what God has done in the past.

That's why the Gospels are so fun to learn—because in understanding the person and work of Christ, they point us back to the OT—

- Which includes the beauty of creation, the relationship God had with Adam and Eve, and the tragedy of The Fall,
- The promises and covenants that God made with His people,
- Why the law was given to Moses and our complete and utter inability to keep it,
- The role of the prophets.

At the same time, the Gospels point us forward to the Apostle's Epistles in the NT, which provide a theological basis, explanation, and complete fulfillment of the OT.

Looking back, we see what God has done for his people, rescuing them time and time again from their stupidity and sin.

This helps us to understand the character of a loving Father, the Son as Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit who shows us how to live.

It also helps us to appreciate the work of Christ through a blood-stained cross and an empty grave.

Prophecy is a promise of how God puts the whole story together.

Somebody told me last Sunday that it's not so much the doctrine of last things as the doctrine of the beginning.

The Gospel—this era of grace is certainly a new beginning, but we also know that it's not heaven on Earth.

That's another critical reason why we want to get our eschatology correct; otherwise, we'll start demanding that our best life be right now.

Two weeks ago, we talked about signs that people would misinterpret as signs of the end times.

In other words, they were signs that are not signs of The End.

They are manifestations of what we see in a very broken world: deception, lies, wars, famines, and earthquakes.

Jesus didn't tell us these things to scare us but to prepare us.

Jesus gave us these signs to comfort the Disciples and the Church today

Jesus tells us these things so that we would know and have confidence that God is in absolute control.

We are to be assured that God is always good, even in the midst of great trials and tragedies.

KEYPOINT 1:

These signs are not signs of God's absence—but signs of God's sovereignty.

↳ Deception, false teachers, wars, famines, earthquakes
Jesus prophesied about these things so we wouldn't have to speculate about His Second Coming.

He tells us in advance so that we would stay on mission until He returns.

Our mission is to share Jesus day by day. We've all been divinely commissioned to share the Good News of the Gospel.

So with that disclaimer, here's a quick review from last week— we heard some pretty disturbing things from Jesus.

However, we also found encouragement to press on.

Last Week's KEYPOINT 1:

People abandon the local visible church because they were never part of His invisible church.

How do you know if people are true Christians? Watch them under pressure.

How do they respond when the heat gets turned up or their world gets turned upside down?

Who do they turn to? Themselves or the Lord?

We'll see a mass exodus of people leaving the church and a steady influx of others coming into the church during the End Times.

True Christians know the value of God's Bride—just as a Christian husband doesn't abandon his wife, true Christians don't abandon their church.

One day, Jesus was teaching some hard things, and people started to leave. *→ Eat my body? Drink my blood.*

He looked at His Disciples and asked, “Are you also going to leave?”

Simon Peter said, Lord, where else are we going to go? You have the words that give eternal life. (John 6:68) *→ We MAY NOT always understand the Lord, but we CAN always trust Him.*

In the church age, it's the true church that takes Jesus' words, reads them, explains them, and applies them to the here and now. Why?

 **Last Week's KEYPOINT 2:**

Endurance is always a mark of salvation.

Endurance proves who we are—Christians.

And there is nothing that the world can do to a faithful Christian for him to recant or deny Christ.

I closed last Sunday by applying Jesus' concern for us:

1. Pray for your personal faith—so you don't fall away. Pray for your church.
2. Be careful of the slow fade.
3. Persevere and endure—although your body may be failing, your inner man is being renewed. (2 Cor. 4:16)

 **INTRODUCTION:**

Today, we'll study the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction. *judgment.*

Jesus told Israel that their house—the Temple—would be *desolated*. (Matt 23:38).

Today, Jesus provides those details to the Disciples.

The destruction of Jerusalem is a terrible example of the “labor pains” that Jesus warned us about last Sunday.

The prophecies that Jesus speaks of started with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zechariah.

So what Jesus is doing is clarifying to His Disciples what the OT prophets didn't know or realize at the time.

That's what the New Testament does—the NT explains and clarifies the OT.

Today, Jesus addresses the judgment that is about to fall on the city of Jerusalem.

He tells the Church how to behave during this time.

We have the benefit of history.

We know precisely when Jerusalem fell—it was 70 AD, 40 years after Jesus spoke these words.

But the Disciples did not, so Jesus began to answer their questions.

In doing so, Jesus has a clear message for His Church today.

What is it? Let's find out together!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

+ **Matthew 24:15**—“So when you see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place” (let the reader understand),

+ **Matthew 24:16**—“then those in Judea must flee to the mountains.

+ **Matthew 24:17**—A man on the housetop must not come down to get things out of his house,

+ **Matthew 24:18**—and a man in the field must not go back to get his coat.

+ **Matthew 24:19**—Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days!

+ **Matthew 24:20**—Pray that your escape may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

+ **Matthew 24:21**—For at that time there will be great distress, the kind that hasn't taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again.

+ **Matthew 24:22**—Unless those days were cut short, no one would be saved. But those days will be cut short because of the elect.

+ **Matthew 24:23**—"If anyone tells you then, 'See, here is the Messiah!' or, 'Over here!' do not believe it.

+ **Matthew 24:24**—For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

+ **Matthew 24:25**—Take note: I have told you in advance.

+ **Matthew 24:26**—So if they tell you, 'See, he's in the wilderness!' don't go out; or, 'See, he's in the storerooms!' do not believe it.

+ **Matthew 24:27**—For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

+ **Matthew 24:28**—Wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather.

These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God.

+ **PRAY:**
The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need. He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with

oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD as long as I live. (Psalm 23)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 23:37—"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

Matthew 23:38—See, your house is left to you desolate.

Matthew 23:39—For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Matthew 24:1—As Jesus left and was going out of the temple, his disciples came up and called his attention to its buildings.

Matthew 24:2—He replied to them, "Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down."

Matthew 24:3—While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Matthew 24:4—Jesus replied to them, "Watch out that no one deceives you."

Matthew 24:5—For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many.

+ **Matthew 24:6**—You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet.

+ **Matthew 24:7**—For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

+ **Matthew 24:8**—All these events are the beginning of labor pains.

+ **Matthew 24:9**—“Then they will hand you over to be persecuted, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name.

+ **Matthew 24:10**—Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one another.

+ **Matthew 24:11**—Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

+ **Matthew 24:12**—Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold.

+ **Matthew 24:13**—But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

+ **Matthew 24:14**—This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

+ **Matthew 24:15**— “So when you see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place” (let the reader understand),

+ **Matthew 24:16**—“then those in Judea must flee to the mountains.

The Disciples asked for a sign—here’s the first sign that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed.

+ **Matthew 24:15**— “So when you see ***the abomination of desolation***,

First things first, what is a Biblical abomination?

An abomination is a deeply repulsive act (sexual sin), object (idol), or practice (idol worship) that fundamentally offends God's holiness and character.

It mocks God's commands, His authority, and common grace to all mankind.

Today, when we think of *abominations*, we may automatically think of things like idolatry, witchcraft, sexual sin, and murder.

But the Lord actually defines our terms here in Proverbs 6.

There are seven things that are vile in the eyes of our Holy God.

+ **Proverbs 6:16**—*The LORD hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to him:*

+ **Proverbs 6:17**—*arrogant eyes (pride), a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,*

+ **Proverbs 6:18**—*a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil,*

+ **Proverbs 6:19**—*a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers. —gossip, slander,*


This list should grab our attention, bring us to our knees in repentance.

+ **Matthew 24:15**— “So when you see ***the abomination of desolation***,

Desolation is destruction and utter ruin.


In other words, Jesus speaks of an abomination to God (sign) that causes the desolation/destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

There are two parts to Jesus' answer—one historic, one prophetic.

 **Matthew 24:15**— *So when you see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place"...*

Daniel predicts this abominable event, which occurs 435 years later—200 years after Jesus and the Disciples are having this conversation.

Daniel looks forward, while Jesus looks back.

 **Daniel 11:31**—*His forces will rise up and desecrate the temple fortress. They will abolish the regular sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation.*

The obvious question is “whose” forces?

Following Alexander the Great, a king named Antiochus Epiphanes ruled Syria.

He was a madman who believed he was the embodiment of the Greek god Zeus.

When Antiochus realized that the Jews in Israel were not worshipping him as god, he became enraged and ordered the destruction of Jerusalem.

In one single day in 168 B.C., one hundred thousand Jewish men were killed, along with other things that are too disturbing to discuss.

When Antiochus entered the Temple, he slaughtered a pig on the altar and forced the priests to drink its blood and eat the raw pork.

He smeared the remainder of the pig's blood on the Temple walls.

It was the abomination of desolation, for it was abominable to God, and it left the Jewish people desolate.

Ironically, when Antiochus died, he had gone totally insane. Why?

Because of the Jewish rebel Judas Maccabaeus—Maccabaeus defeated him in a battle.

That's the history of the *abomination of desolation*—and every one of Jesus' Disciples knew that history.

However, Jesus' answer is also prophetic—it has a double fulfillment—which the Disciples didn't know because they didn't know about His Second Coming.

There will be a second “abomination of desolation,” which Daniel prophesies.

+ **Daniel 9:27**—*He will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and offering. And the abomination of desolation will be on a wing of the temple until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator.”*

Who's the “he?” Scripture calls this man the Antichrist.

In the last days, a politician emerges who will make a peace treaty with Israel.

Appearing to be Israel's friend and protector, he will seem to solve all of the problems in the Middle East.

He will be charismatic, persuasive, and intelligent—he will capture the world's attention. → *the world will love this man.*

But he will break his promises and demand to be worshipped as god—similar to Antiochus Epiphanes.

This second abomination will signal judgment for the whole world—we'll get to the details of that next week.

In the judgment upon Jerusalem, however, Luke's Gospel fills in some crucial details.

+ **Luke 21:20**—*"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that its desolation has come near."*

+ **Matthew 24:15/16**—*(let the reader understand), "then those in Judea must flee to the mountains."*

What are the Disciples to understand? Run for their lives!

Prophecy is not to scare us but comfort us—Jesus tells the Disciples exactly what to do. *beforehand.*

Jesus tells the Disciples to flee, and the Disciples will tell the rest of the new Church.

+ **Matthew 24:15/16**—*"then those in Judea must flee to the mountains."*

The Greek verb for flee is *phuegō* (fev-vo) — we get our English term *fugitive*.

Please understand that Jesus is commanding them to leave their city, ^{→ home} their place of worship, and their own people.

That's not an easy command to keep—this goes against everything the Disciples know and have been taught.

Do you remember what Peter did when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus?

He took out his sword and fought (26:51; cf. John 18:10).

Peter, James, and John would be tempted to stay and fight for their city and Temple.

The Disciples know that when a nation is invaded, people flee into the safety of the city.

Jerusalem had massive walls to protect its people.

But Jesus commanded just the opposite. Why?

First, because Jesus is God.

Second, the Temple had to be destroyed.

Disciples are to die for the gospel (if it comes to that), but not for the Temple.

The Temple was no longer a blessing to Israel—it is now an obstacle to true faith.

If the Temple were not destroyed, Israel would rather go through the meaningless motions of religion.

Besides, the Temple's been replaced. Jesus said,

 **John 2:19**—*Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."*

Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT Temple!

The sacrificial system is no more because Christ is the once-and-for-all final sacrifice (Hebrews 9:12).

Here's the good news: because of Jesus' prophecy about Jerusalem's destruction, Eusebius, an early church historian, reports that the Jewish Christians did flee the city.


Eusebius wrote that “the church at Jerusalem ... left the city, and moved to a town called Pella.”

Here's the thing: Pella is in the foothills, rather than the mountains. In other words, the Christians, kinda sorta, obeyed Christ's command.

The Christians obeyed, but imperfectly.

Does this command to flee remind you of another event in the OT?


The warning given to Lot before the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah.

 **Genesis 19:17**—As soon as the angels got them outside, one of them said, “Run for your lives! Don't look back and don't stop anywhere on the plain! Run to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”

Lot didn't do exactly what he was told either.

Regardless, the Lord cared for His people in Sodom, and He cares for His people in Jerusalem in the first century.

He will continue to care for you today—and guess what, the Lord has already cared for the Church during the End Times.

 **Revelation 12:6**—The woman (the Church) fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, to be nourished there for 1,260 days.

The Lord always takes care of His people—He had a plan from the very beginning, and it's through the End Times that we have a front-row seat to watch Him carry it out.

 **Matthew 24:17**—A man on the housetop must not come down to get things out of his house,

 **Matthew 24:18**—*and a man in the field must not go back to get his coat.*

When the Church sees the army marching into Jerusalem, they are to run only with the clothes on their backs.

Can you imagine doing that? Escaping to Mingus Mountain to live with no supplies?

 **Matthew 24:19**—*Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days!*

Jesus always gave women His utmost respect—even when first-century society did not.

He showed kindness to widows, to women living in sin, and to His own mother.

Jesus is concerned about mothers and their babies. Why? Because of how difficult it will be when running for your life when pregnant.


How difficult is it to escape with a newborn infant in your arms?!

 **Matthew 24:20**—*Pray that your escape may not be in winter...*

Winter is Israel's primary rainy season, and obviously, that will cause problems.

It is not uncommon for heavy rains to cause water to rush through dry riverbeds called *wadis*.

In a matter of minutes, there can be a flash flood roaring through the ravine, destroying everything in its path.

 **Matthew 24:20**—*or on a Sabbath.*

Although America doesn't keep the Sabbath day holy, Jerusalem did.

On the Sabbath, it would be difficult to buy needed supplies or to leave a walled city.

Matthew 24:21—For at that time there will be great distress,

Verse 21 is a bit tricky. *At what time* is Jesus talking about?

It seems as if Jesus changes the topic from the local tribulation in Jerusalem to the Great Tribulation of the world.

Matthew 24:21—For *at that time* there will be great distress, the kind that hasn't taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again.

The immediate context is Jerusalem—and it's true that the city has not and will not see this kind of devastation ever again.

However, prophecy is often multi-layered and multifaceted.

In other words, this verse provides a double fulfillment.

Jesus is certainly referring to Jerusalem, but also preparing the universal Church for the judgment that will soon come upon the world as well.

Matthew 24:22—Unless those days were cut short,

Koe-low-boe

The Greek verb is *Koloboō* (cut short) and means that God will instantly stop death, destruction, and devastation.

In other words, God has predetermined and predestined that those days of calamity will stop short of total destruction. Why?

Matthew 24:22—Unless those days were cut short, no one would be saved.

Tragically, the only thing mankind is really good at is killing one another, so the Lord prevents that from happening.

Your translation may read, “survive.”

The Greek verb for “*saved*” or “*survive*” is *sozo*. In this context, Jesus is referring to physical safety.

Matthew 24:22—But those days will be cut short because of the elect.

We see another double fulfillment here—“those days” refer to days of tribulation and in both judgments.

Matthew 24:22—But those days will be cut short because of the elect.

This is the first time Scripture uses the term elect.

Election means “choosing some out of many.”

Scripture reveals that the doctrine of election is exclusively an act of God—it is the method by which He carries out His divine purpose.


And that divine purpose is salvation in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 24:23—“If anyone tells you then, ‘See, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Over here!’ do not believe it.”

Jesus returns to the problem of false teachers in the Church for the third time!

Why does Jesus bring ^{False teachers} this up again?

Because crises in our lives often open the door for people to teach perversion of God’s truth—especially when people claim to be prophets or perform signs and wonders.

 **Matthew 24:24**—*For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

As the Church, we are to pray for discernment and wisdom.

We are to test everything through the Words of Holy Scripture.

It is too easy to be deceived by man-made (or satanic) false signs.

Scripture clearly teaches that evil powers can perform wonders.

Do you remember the classic ^{show-down} contest between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians at the beginning of the Exodus (Ex. 7:8–13)?

At first glance, it seemed the magicians could match the supernatural power God had given Moses.

When Aaron threw his staff on the floor, it turned into a snake.


But Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing.

However, Aaron's snake swallowed all of the magicians' snakes.

Ultimately, the magicians' "miracles" were revealed as tricks—think David Copperfield.

The fact that a someone performs signs is not proof that he's from God.

God will protect His people from being deceived during this Church age. (John 10:28).

 **Matthew 24:25**—*Take note: I have told you in advance.*

This is why it is our joy to read God's Word from cover to cover, over and over.

This is why it's our joy to come together to worship the Lord together, read His Word, and have it explained.

Jesus didn't leave us as orphans—He didn't abandon us.

By God's grace, Christ gave us the Holy Spirit, and it's through the Spirit that His Holy Book comes alive and teaches us how to live today and prepare for tomorrow.

Matthew 24:26—So if they tell you, 'See, he's in the wilderness!' don't go out; or, 'See, he's in the storerooms!' do not believe it.

Jesus shifts gears here—cautioning the Disciples but also us.

Both the wilderness and a storeroom point to a stealthy/private return.

Matthew 24:27—For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Christ's return will be unmistakable.

It would not be secretive because secrets cause rumors.

Jesus' Second Coming will not be stretched over a long period of time but will be sudden, public, visible, universal, and glorious!

This verse also challenges the idea of a secret rapture. *There will be A rapture, but it's not going to be A secret like in The Movies.*

Matthew 24:27—so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Scripture always reveals the Second Coming as a single, visible appearance—not two comings with one being secret.

Every eye will see him. His coming will be an unmistakable event, like lightning flashing across the sky, impossible to miss.

 **Matthew 24:28**—*Wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather.*

That statement may have been a common proverb in Israel or may have been drawn from Habakkuk 1:8 and Job 39:27–30.

Vultures circling over the carcass of a dead animal are not an uncommon sight.

It's a picture of what sin, defiance, and unbelief do to people.

It's a visual picture of a physical and spiritual battlefield.

The Apostle Paul says it this way—

 **Romans 6:23**—*For the wages of sin is death,*

APPLICATION:

How do we apply Jerusalem's Judgement to our lives today? - Several double fulfillments.

In Verses 23 & 26, Jesus says the SAME thing regarding false teachers, "Don't believe it."

+ → Do you know what to believe?
→ How do you know?
→ Can you explain your beliefs to someone else?

We are to believe the word of God through the Spirit of God in the community of God.

I'm so glad you're here to be a part of the community that Christ calls His Church.

We have a new year ahead of us - I hope you're excited to walk w/ the Lord & your brothers & sisters in it.

The closer we get to the end times, the more we'll realize how much we need one another.

→ Prayer / Karen Cooper w/ Soul Care / Poxology

MAY the Lord bless you & keep you. MAY His face shine upon you & be gracious to you. MAY the Lord look w/ favor on you & give you peace.

Numb. 6:24

→ Thanksgiving Potluck

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