

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 24 (PART 1)

Matthew 24:1-2 – Prophecy Of Temple's Destruction

Jesus leaves the city of Jerusalem and will arrive on the Mount of Olives, the mountain adjacent to the city which would provide panoramic views of the city of Jerusalem and the temple complex.

The Temple was the permanent place central to the worship of Yahweh. It was first constructed by King Solomon during the golden age of the nation, known as the time of Zion. The temple was a replica of the tabernacle, the portable tent-based worship location shown to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. In the temple, all of the commanded elements were made permanent now that the children of Abraham had their own land and capital city.

Solomon's temple was a beautiful and majestic construction. But the centerpiece of the Temple was not the altar, the gold or even the Ark of the Covenant, it was the presence of God which was manifested in that special place to foster a covenant relationship with his special people. As a result, after years of idolatry and infidelity, punishment came to the kingdom of Judah, and the city of Jerusalem. In 586 BC, the Babylonian Empire, ruled by king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, the temple and exiled most of the people to Babylon for 70 years.

After the 70-year exile, a remnant returned under leaders like Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This Second Temple marked a new beginning, but it was far less impressive than Solomon's. Some of the older leaders wept when they saw it, remembering the former glory (Ezra 3:12). Judah was no longer an independent kingdom but lived under foreign rule, first Persia, then Greece, and eventually Rome. Worship resumed, sacrifices were offered, and the temple remained central to Jewish life, yet the nation still longed for full restoration and the fulfillment of God's promises.

By the time of Jesus, this Second Temple had been dramatically expanded by Herod the Great, beginning around 20–19 BC. Herod transformed the temple into one of the most magnificent structures of the ancient world. Massive stones, an enlarged temple mount, and brilliant white limestone made it visually stunning, especially in the sunlight. Herod invested enormous time and resources into expanding the temple to secure political legitimacy, win the loyalty of the Jewish people, and display his power and wealth. Though he ruled under Rome and lacked Davidic credentials, beautifying the temple allowed him to appear as a faithful protector of Israel's God and traditions, even as he used the project to stabilize and strengthen his reign.

Yet there was deep irony in its beauty. A beautiful temple does sit on Mount Zion, yet a son of David isn't on the throne and the entire nation is ruled by Rome. The temple looked glorious on the outside, but Israel was still waiting for true freedom and renewal.

It is this temple that Jesus and His disciples are gazing at as they leave Jerusalem and stand on the Mount of Olives. For many, the temple represented God's presence, national identity, and security.

To imagine it destroyed was unthinkable. And it is here, with all this history in view, that Jesus speaks words that will profoundly challenge how his followers understand the future, judgment, and where their hope lies.

Matthew 24:3 – Two Questions

- Questions:
- 1 - When will these things happen?
 - 2 - What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?

Jesus will begin to answer these 2 questions in the remainder of this chapter. He doesn't say: "ok, here's the answer to question 1 and now I'm going to answer question 2" but instead speaks to the general signs of his coming and some of the more localized signs of the destruction of the temple. "Jesus' answer to these questions apparently intertwines prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming. The near event (the destruction of Jerusalem) serves as a symbol and foreshadowing of the more distant event (the 2nd coming)." (ESV Study Bible, Matthew 24:3)

I think this is a good time to remember what we learned when we studied the book of Revelation. It is important as we read prophetic writings, which Matthew 24 certainly qualifies, to not jump first to interpreting the passages in light of our current events or modern perspective. We first should always ask "what did this mean to them" (the original audience) and then build on that with our understanding of all of Scripture and the history that has unfolded. As we study this chapter, we will endeavor to read it on its own in context to try and gain the understanding that the disciples gained. This means we won't be flipping to Revelation to try and decode or make an endtime timeline that matches with a book that these disciples on the Mount of Olives didn't have yet.

The words of Jesus here are to help his original disciples understand what to watch for in light of Jesus' victorious coming as the glorified Messiah. They provided both warning & hope for them & were designed to originally. That is not to imply that we don't look at the world around us & observe the "signs of the times", for the return of Christ has not yet happened. When we see the signs that Jesus will highlight, we too should be resolute and sober in our faith, made ready for his coming.

And so before we get into some of the specifics, I want to make two points.

1st, we are going to quickly notice that one of the major signs associated with Jesus' return is related to falsehood, deception and fierce misleading. Sadly, much of the handling of sections of Scripture like Matthew 24 have fulfilled the very prophetic words in Matthew 24! Countless have set dates for Christ's return, tried to read verses into the headlines of cable news, and even claimed to be "The Christ" in some way - and so many have been deceived as a result! So let's be quick to read, listen, pray, consider, obey and slower to claim to have it all figured out.

Second, Matthew 24 is not the complete section of Jesus' instruction to his disciples on his second coming. We would be gravely mistaken and underserved if we didn't also include Matthew 25 as part of his discourse on these matters. Matthew 25 contains much of the information for his disciples about how to live and think in light of the things he will say in Matthew 24. Too often Bible readers comb through 24 and don't realize that 25 is critical to correct application and understanding. There

will be things you don't quite understand about chapter 24 but you can know how to live in light of its message in chapter 25. So in other words, stay tuned.

Matthew 24:4-5 - And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

Matthew 24:11 - "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

Matthew 24:23-25 - "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance.

Matthew 24:26-28 - "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. 27 "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The topic of being misled is repeated so often in this chapter (directly 4x) that it is worth taking the time to consider what this means and why Jesus emphasizes this.

Think about the word used here - "mis-lead".

"mislead" - πλανᾶω *planao* (4105) - to cause to wander, to wander

I think there are various levels of being misled - from straight up wrong, evil bold face lies to the more subtle change or shift which over time leads you off course. Even a slight shift followed over a long period of time causes one to arrive in a totally different place.

Q - In what way do you think you are susceptible to being misled?

Q - How do you see to it that you are not misled?

"I am the Christ"? - Think about what it means to be the Christ/Messiah. They are the one who will save, heal, help, rescue, redeem, fix things etc. So sure, some are falling for people who claim to be Jesus Christ reincarnated or something. But the masses, even those who believe in God and Scripture, are looking to others who have Messianic qualities and offerings.

Note that verse 5 says these individuals will "come in (Jesus') name". That's what makes the misleading compelling.

Q - So what does it mean that “..many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.” (24:5) and how might that spirit exist today?

When Jesus says that many will come claiming, “I am the Christ,” we should understand this on more than one level. On the surface, it certainly includes individuals who explicitly claim to be the Messiah or a divine savior. History records many such figures both before and after Jesus, and Jesus warns that some will even perform impressive signs/wonders that make their claims seem credible.

But at a deeper level, Jesus is warning about **substitute messiahs**. To call someone “the Christ” is to say they can ultimately save, fix, heal, restore, or give meaning. That means deception does not always come wrapped in blatant heresy. More often, it comes through people, movements, or systems that promise what only Jesus can truly provide.

In other words, many do not fall for a counterfeit Jesus, but they do fall for counterfeit *saviors*. People are misled when they place ultimate hope in political leaders, spiritual influencers, cultural movements, national strength, economic security, personal success, or even religious systems. These things promise peace, safety, justice, or fulfillment, and over time they begin to function like a messiah. They tell us, “If you follow me, trust me, give yourself to this, things will finally be right.” That is messianic language, even if the name “Jesus” is never used.

This helps us understand why Jesus emphasizes deception so strongly. Being misled is rarely about 1 dramatic moment. It is often a slow wandering. A subtle shift in trust. A gradual re-centering of hope. A quiet replacement of Jesus with something more visible, immediate, or emotionally satisfying.

That is why Jesus begins his entire response with a command, not a prediction: “See to it that no one misleads you.” Staying faithful is not passive. It requires vigilance, humility, and ongoing allegiance to Jesus himself. The antidote to deception is not mastering timelines or decoding signs, but staying anchored to the true Christ.

Jesus is preparing his disciples, and us, for a world filled with competing voices claiming authority, urgency, and saving power. His warning is simple and sobering: do not wander. Do not drift. Do not give your hope to anyone or anything that cannot bear the weight of being your savior.

And as the rest of this chapter will show, the safest place to stand in confusing times is not in certainty about dates or events, but in faithful obedience to the real Messiah, whose coming will not need explanation, promotion, or persuasion. When he comes, we’ll all see him!

Matthew 24:27 - "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Let’s remember that Jesus is telling us in advance that we must “see to it that we are not misled” and that the fact that people and forces and systems are in this world trying to mislead and deceive is a sign that Jesus is coming soon. **Everyone is waiting, not everyone is watching.**