

Matthew 24 (2nd destruction of Jerusalem)

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Scripture reading – **Luke 19:41-44**

- The destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD was not a pretty sight
- Jesus foretells of this in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21
- Josephus writes that ~1.1 million people died in the siege (Romans, Jews, civilians in Jerusalem)
 - This number is possibly exaggerated, but the death toll was very significant
 - The siege started shortly before Passover that year and many Jews from surrounding areas trapped inside the city and could not get out once the siege started
 - ~97K were taken captive by the Romans at the conclusion of the siege: men over 17 were executed, women and children were sold to slavery
 - I will refer to Josephus a few times in this sermon, but please note that Josephus was simply a historian (front line reporter for the Romans during the siege of Jerusalem), **not an inspired writer of God**
- There are several OT prophecies in addition to Jesus' prophecies in the NT: Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Hosea
 - Note that the first destruction of Jerusalem (Babylon) was a shadow of this event
 - Israelites were able to survive after the Babylonian Captivity and return to Jerusalem – not so at the conclusion of this event. This ended the Jewish nation in Jerusalem as Jesus prophesied (Matthew 24:21)
- Revelation seems to speak of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD
 - This is not intended to be a sermon on Revelation, but when you think of Matthew 24 – you likely will naturally think of Revelation and vice versa
 - I have a document that I put together recently that has my full evidence for saying Revelation speaks to Jerusalem in 70AD – I'd be happy to share this with you if you'd like **(PLEASE CONTACT THE CHURCH IN COVINGTON IF INTERESTED IN SEEING THIS)**
 - But for now, just take the following comparisons and read them on your own time
 - Matthew 23:33-39, Matthew 27:20-26, Revelation 18:19-24
 - Matthew 24:2, Revelation 18:21
 - Matthew 24:29-32, Revelation 6:12-7:3
 - Luke 21:24, Revelation 11:1-2
 - Luke 23:28-31, Revelation 6:15-17
 - Matthew 24:30, Mark 14:62, Revelation 1:7
 - Revelation 6 – historically speaking, Revelation 6 describes exactly what happened in Jerusalem in 70AD
- The Roman siege lasted ~5 months and left the city in ruins
- This sermon will focus primarily on the Matthew 24 account, but the parallel accounts are Mark 13, Luke 21
- Luke 19:41-44

- As Jesus entered Jerusalem, he wept over it (vs 41)
- Why?
 - Because he knew their enemies would encompass them and will not leave one stone on another (vs 44)
 - Because they did not recognize God (vs 44)
- Israel – God’s chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6) would be subject to this siege and many would not survive

- **Matthew 21:33-45**

- Landowner rented land to farmers to work
- Landowner sent servants to the farmers – farmers killed them
- Landowner finally sends his son – farmers kill the son as well
- Jesus asks Pharisees – “what will the landowner do to the farmers?”
 - Pharisees: “bring them to a wretched end and rent to other tenants”
 - This is exactly what happened – according to God’s plan (vs 42)
 - Christians are now God’s chosen people, not just Israelites (Romans 11 & Acts 10) – basically the entire book of Acts and Romans
 - Israelites who believed were still God’s people
 - But Gentiles are welcome now as well if they accept
- Pharisees knew that Jesus was speaking against them (vs 45)
- Acts 7:51-53 – Jews killed prophets who prophesied of Jesus coming, and then killed Jesus, and were unrepentant
- This no doubt, played a part in God’s decision to destroy Jerusalem

- **Romans 11:13-22**

- Vs 1-12: Paul is defending the fact that God did not reject all Israel solely because they are Israelites
 - The Israelite nation just did not attain what they were seeking – the elect did (vs 7)
 - Elect consists of both believing Israelites and believing Gentiles (spiritual Israel)
- Vs 13: Paul now writes to Gentiles
 - Do not boast in this rejection – but rather rejoice with those Israelites who believe and are reconciled
- This idea is compared to a root with natural branches (Israel) and grafted in branches (Gentiles)
 - Vs 20-21 – if God did not spare the natural branches for unbelief (Israel), He will not spare the grafted in branches either (Gentiles)
 - Vs 22 – Note the kindness and severity of God
- This lesson will focus on the severity of God

- **Background of Matthew 24**

- **Jesus enters Jerusalem: Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, John 12**

- 5 days before Passover feast (Sunday) – John 12:1, John 12:12
 - Jesus died that Friday – day before Sabbath (Mark 15:42)

- Jesus was the sacrificial Passover lamb (Luke 22:7) (Hebrews speaks to this in many locations as well)
 - And Jesus knew what was going to happen at the end of the week (John 12:20-29)
 - Entered Jerusalem anyway – amazing
- It is interesting to see the reaction of the people at this time vs the end of the week
 - Praising him now (Jesus says if the people grow silent, rocks will cry out – Luke 19:40)
 - Calling for his death just a few days later (Luke 23:18-25)
 - Likely made up of mostly a different group of people, but this is still worth noting
- Once in Jerusalem, Jesus taught daily in the temple (Luke 19:47)
 - It seems to me that Jesus and companions camped at Bethany and the Mount of Olives this week (Mark 11:11) which were both short walks from Jerusalem
 - Remember, they passed the fig tree that Jesus cursed and withered on the way back and forth (Mark 11)
- While in Jerusalem, He spoke against the Pharisees
 - Jesus knew His time on earth was short – not mincing words at this point
 - Parables in Matthew 21 & 22
 - Directly in Matthew 23 (woes to the Pharisees)
- Finally, Jesus says the following in **Matthew 23:37-39**
 - Foretells of the destruction of Jerusalem
 - Beginning here is where I'd like to spend the rest of my sermon in Matthew 24
- As Jesus and his disciples leaving Jerusalem one day, Jesus makes a comment about the temple
 - **Vs 2**
 - This was very direct and could not be missed – clearly a reference to the destruction of the temple which his disciples did not even miss (at least Peter, Andrew, James, and John did not miss this – Mark 13 account)
 - Keep in mind, they did not have the completed NT at this time as we do, so his disciples and apostles missed more of the things like this than they caught onto
 - This led to the following questions in vs 3
 - When will this happen? (destruction of temple)
 - What will be the sign of your coming? (establish your earthly throne)
 - What will be the sign of the end of the age? (end of Roman rule in Judea)
 - Disciples did not understand what they were asking
 - Likely thought they were asking of one event (Jesus would come and establish an earthly kingdom, destroying the temple and forcing the Romans out of Judea)
 - This is clearly not what Jesus was referring to as evident by His answer to these questions

- Understanding the rest of Matthew 24 lies on our understanding of the questions Jesus answers
- From this point forward, there is a clear distinction in Jesus' response
 - Vs 4-35: destruction of Jerusalem
 - Vs 36-25:46: Christ's second coming
 - Vs 4-14
 - Jesus starts his response by saying: "This will happen, but this is not your sign."
 - Many will come in Jesus name (vs 5)
 - Acts 5:17-42
 - Apostles being persecuted for healing and teaching in Jerusalem
 - Sanhedrin wanted to kill them but Gamaliel spoke up
 - "Theudas and Judas gathered followings that amounted to nothing"
 - Jesus is saying many situations like this will happen
 - Much fighting (vs 6-7)
 - Reading through Josephus – lot of fighting going on in this region constantly
 - So much so, that I can hardly follow what I'm reading
 - Judea was a very tumultuous region
 - This played into Pilate's decision to crucify Jesus
 - He feared that if he didn't, a revolt would start and word would get back to Caesar that Pilate could not keep Jews under control
 - Natural disasters (vs 7)
 - Earthquakes were not uncommon to this region at this time
 - Josephus writes of a severe earthquake that happened during the reign of Herod the Great (the Herod in power at Jesus' birth)
 - Matthew 27:51 describes an earthquake that happened at Jesus' death – this was so significant and so timely that even the Roman centurion acknowledged that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 27:54)
 - Acts 11:28 – Agabus by the Holy Spirit foretold of a famine over the entire Roman world which happened during the reign of Claudius
 - Once Vespasian (Roman general) began making his way Southward to Jerusalem through Galilee, one of the cities (Joppa – see Acts 10) was taken as a result of a wind storm on the Mediterranean Sea
 - All this is simply the beginning of birth pains – not an immediate sign for anything (vs 8)
 - Persecution (vs 9-14)
 - Nero reigned as emperor of Rome from 54-68 AD (before destruction of Jerusalem)
 - According to *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, he led the first widespread Christian persecution
 - Won't go into details of his persecution as they are graphic
 - Peter and Paul died during this time
 - Many Christians turned away (Revelation)

- This concludes Jesus' list of non-immediate signs
- Vs 15-20
 - Jesus no longer speaking in non-signs
 - Gives most obvious sign in vs 15
 - *"Let the reader understand"*
 - Jesus and the Holy Spirit (inspired this writing) did not want anyone missing this sign
 - So what is *"abomination that causes desolation"*?
 - This language is referenced in Daniel 9, 11, 12 as Jesus mentions
 - At least one of these 3 is the same reference (Jesus said so)
 - It appears to be the chapter 9 reference (chapters 11 & 12 talking about Antiochus Epiphanes – Northern kingdom (Seleucid Greeks), Southern kingdom (Ptolemaic Greeks) fighting each other following the division of Alexander the Great's empire)
 - Luke 21:20
 - Jesus and Holy Spirit give an even more accurate description so this could not be missed
 - Abomination that causes desolation = armies surrounding Jerusalem
 - From Josephus:
 - ~63 AD: Roman forces from Caesarea sent to Jerusalem to subdue revolt
 - This failed. Forces in Jerusalem sent surviving Romans back to Caesarea
 - This just caused a bigger revolt that spread to all of Judea (not just Jerusalem anymore – Galilee, Decapolis, etc.)
 - Vespasian sent by Nero to subdue this revolt in February 67AD
 - Vespasian puts down revolt in all Galilee & the Decapolis before getting to Jerusalem
 - ~68 AD: Vespasian surround Jerusalem with intent to begin siege
 - At this time, Vespasian receives word from Rome of Nero's death & the ensuing civil war
 - Vespasian leaves Jerusalem to go back to Rome at this time
 - This is what Jesus is referring to – this was the Christian's sign to get out of Jerusalem immediately and do not come back
 - From reading Revelation, it appears that many, if not all, Christians got out of Jerusalem before Vespasian surrounded it originally (Revelation 11:2, 12:6, 12:14)
 - These passages speak of how the church was protected and Jerusalem was trampled for 42 months = 1260 days = time, times, half time = 3.5 years
 - This is the exact amount of time that the siege which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem lasted (February 67AD when Nero first gave

the order – August 70AD when the destruction of Jerusalem was complete)

- 2 years later when Vespasian wins civil war in Rome, becoming emperor - sends Titus to Jerusalem to finish the job he started
- Don't take time to pack (vs 17, 18)
- Hopefully you aren't pregnant or nursing (vs 19)
- Pray this isn't in winter or on Sabbath (vs 20)
 - Prayers answered – Rome came in spring
 - If on the Sabbath, gates to the city would be closed – could not get out
- Jesus message here: when you see Romans surrounding Jerusalem, get out immediately if you haven't gotten out already

- Vs 21

- The distress of these days will be unequalled
 - For context of brutality, Ezekiel 4 and 5 discuss atrocities of first destruction of Jerusalem, and 2 Kings 6:24-30 discuss atrocities of when Assyria sieged Israelites in Samaria
- From Josephus:
 - 2 rebel faction leaders in Jerusalem at this time (there was actually a third, but he joined forces with one of the other 2 due to cruel trickery)
 - These rebel faction leaders fought each other and civilians just as much or more than they fought Rome
 - As part of this, the factions would burn each other's food supplies
 - Josephus notes that these leaders were a bigger threat to civilians in Jerusalem than the Romans were
 - 3 walls around Jerusalem
 - While all this is going on, Romans take control of the areas encompassed by the first 2 walls and build their own wall around Jerusalem's third wall with intent to starve them out
 - From reading Ezekiel 4 & 5, and 2 Kings 6:24-30, you can figure out what happened next

- Vs 29-31

- This sounds like the second coming, but it is not (vs 34)
- Language used in vs 29 is same language used in OT to describe fall of kings & kingdoms
 - Isaiah 2, 13, 34
 - Joel 2, Hosea 10
- Vs 29 indicates the permanent fall of the Jewish nation
 - Note that when the first destruction of Jerusalem happened, Jewish nation survived – not this time though
- Vs 30 & 31 can be tied to Mark 14:62, Revelation 1:7, and Revelation 7:1-4
 - Let's note a few things here:

- This is not Jesus' second coming (Jesus says this is the **sign** of the Son of Man)
- In Matthew, this was a futuristic event at the time, but it would eventually happen to the generation Jesus is speaking to (Matthew 24:34). Therefore, this is not a futuristic event for us today.
- In Mark, Jesus is before the Sanhedrin and tells them the same thing.
- In Revelation, this is no longer a sign. This is happening. Jesus is coming.
- So what is Jesus referring to?
 - The fall of Jerusalem in 70AD was a sign not only to the Jews, but to the entire world, that the Jews were no longer God's chosen people – the church is (Revelation 3:9). Notice, Revelation 1:7 says that **every** eye will see him and that **all** the peoples of the earth will mourn. Not just Jews.
 - The fall of Jerusalem was a monumental militaristic campaign that is to this day is the most devastating/significant conquests in human history. Historically speaking, as far as magnitude goes, this is greater in magnitude than prominent cities such as the fall of Carthage, Constantinople, etc. Jerusalem was well fortified (3 seemingly impenetrable walls), supposedly had the Almighty God on its side, and was thought to have been invincible in this time period.
 - This city could have only fallen by the judgment of the God who gave Jerusalem its prominence.

- Vs 32-33

- You can tell when summer is near from the fig tree
- Similarly, when you see these things, you know the destruction of Jerusalem is near

- Vs 34-35

- This is my evidence for saying everything up to this point is the destruction of Jerusalem

- Vs 36

- Notice the start of this verse: "But of **that day**..."
- There is a clear distinction between this day he is about to discuss and the destruction of Jerusalem which he just concluded on
- Going back to disciples' questions in vs 3
 - Vs 4-35: Jesus answers when the temple will be destroyed and it's associated signs
 - Vs 36-25:46: answering signs of second coming

- So what was His answer?
 - Only the Father knows (not angels, or even Jesus)
 - Conclusion: we do not know when second coming will be, but be ready (vs 42-44)
- So what can we learn today from all of this?
 - God's Word is amazing
 - Matthew 4:4 – "Jesus answered, it is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."
 - Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD as Jesus said it would be
 - Of the temple: one stone truly was not left on another (vs 2)
 - God will punish if necessary
 - Matthew 25:30 – worthless servants will be thrown into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth
 - Jesus was right about Jerusalem, therefore He is right about second coming
 - We do not know when, but we need to be ready
 - At that time, nothing you've done on earth will matter – only if your name is written in the book of life (Revelation 20)
 - Let the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD serve as proof that God will not put up with lawlessness
 - When our days on this life are over, if we have not been faithful, God will grant us with eternal punishment
 - Please use this as motivation to be faithful to God
- If you're not a Christian, the plan of salvation to spare you from such spiritual wrath as we have talked about in this study (using the physical example of 70AD Jerusalem) is simple
- **Step 1: Hearing the gospel** – *Romans 10:13-17*
 - Gospel = Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, arose, and appeared to many – *1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Romans 1:16*
- **Step 2: Believing the gospel** – *Mark 16:16*
- **Step 3: Confession that Jesus is Lord** – *Romans 10:8-10*
- **Step 4: Repentance of sins** – *Luke 13:3*
 - Repentance: a turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. Change of mind that produces a change in action.
- **Step 5: Baptism into Christ** – *Galatians 3:27, Acts 2:38*
 - Baptism: immerse or submerge
- **Step 6: Live faithfully** – *Revelation 2:10*