
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Does Matthew chapter 24 describe the end of the world? (pt. 2)**

Last week we discussed Mt. 24 and we noticed that the chapter deals with three questions which were asked by the disciples of Jesus.

Matthew 24:1-3

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

One of these questions deals with the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. They asked, "Tell us when will these things be?" But the disciples also asked about the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world. Will there be any signs of the second coming of Christ and the end of the world?

Jesus first dealt with the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem. He said:

Matthew 24:34

34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

In other words, everything before verse 34 deals with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The generation which was living in the days of Jesus would not pass away till all of these things occurred.

Here is an interesting question. If you will notice in vv29-31, there are some signs mentioned that seem to refer to the end of the world and not the destruction of Jerusalem. Notice:

Matthew 24:29

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

Remember, Jesus plainly said that all of these things would take place during the lifetime of those people who heard Him preach. What could this verse possibly refer to?

The "darkening of the sun" and moon and the stars falling from heaven is prophetic language. This is a reference to the leaders of the nation falling. In other words, Jesus predicted that the leaders and rulers of the Jewish nation would fall and collapse.

To help illustrate what is being said here, let's read another passage that is more simple to understand:

Genesis 37:5-11

5 Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

6 So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

7 "There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

8 And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, **the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars** bowed down to me."

10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

11 And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Here we see that the sun and moon referred to the mother and father of Joseph's family. The eleven stars referred to the brothers of Joseph. Here the sun, moon and stars are not literally bowing down, but they are being used as symbols. The heads of tribes and families will one day acknowledge Joseph as the leader of them all.

Several times the Bible uses this sort of language to describe leaders of tribes and nations. When Jesus used this language in Matthew 24, and then plainly told us that these things would be fulfilled during the lifetime of those people, we are forced to draw the same conclusion. He

was not describing the actual destruction of the sun, moon and star, but rather, He was describing the downfall of the leaders of the Jewish nation. The chief priests, the governors, the priests, and leaders of Israel would fall and then the temple would be destroyed.

Notice what is said in:

Ezekiel 32:1-8

1 And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

2 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: 'You are like a young lion among the nations, And you are like a monster in the seas, Bursting forth in your rivers, Troubling the waters with your feet, And fouling their rivers.'

3 "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'I will therefore spread My net over you with a company of many people, And they will draw you up in My net.

4 Then I will leave you on the land; I will cast you out on the open fields, And cause to settle on you all the birds of the heavens. And with you I will fill the beasts of the whole earth.

5 I will lay your flesh on the mountains, And fill the valleys with your carcass.

6 'I will also water the land with the flow of your blood, Even to the mountains; And the riverbeds will be full of you.

7 When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give her light.

8 All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, And bring darkness upon your land,' Says the Lord GOD.

This passage is clearly a prediction of the fall of the nation of Egypt – not the end of the world. The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars is not the end of the world, but the end of the ruler and leaders of the nation of Egypt. Similar language is used in Isaiah 13 concerning the destruction of Babylon.

To summarize, we see plainly from Mt. 24:34 that everything Jesus mentioned before this verse concerned the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. All of the:

- Earthquakes
- Famines
- Pestilences
- Wars and rumors of wars
- The sun, moon and stars being darkened

All of this was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Roman army came and destroyed Jerusalem. These signs are not a prediction of the end of the world. Jesus, in fact, told us in Mt. 24:36 that no one knows when the world will end – only the Father in heaven. There will be no signs of the end of the world, but it will be like a "thief in the night" (Mt. 24:42-44).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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