

Is the Prophecy of Matthew 24:29-31 a Future Endtime Event?



The siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 A.D.

Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of *those days* shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

One of my friends referring to this prophecy told me this morning, "That has NOT happened yet!" I knew there are alternative interpretations of these verses that say the prophecy was fulfilled in the past, but rather than tell him so on the spot I felt inspired to write up a Bible class about it based on my own understanding of the Word of God and what Bible commentators of the past had to say.

One brother told me I don't need to read any Bible commentators of the past. I don't agree with him. The Bible tells me in Ephesians 4:11-13:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, **pastors and teachers**; {12} For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: {13} Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

I value the Bible commentators of the 16th – 19th centuries. Not only were they learned and godly men, but also because they lived before the Jesuit inspired false doctrines of the Endtime became popular in the evangelical world. Their views of the prophecies of Daniel, Matthew 24, II Thessalonians 2, and the Book of Revelation were not tainted with Jesuit interpretations of these passages. It was John Nelson Darby of the 19th century, and C.I.

Scofield of the early 20th century who promoted the Jesuit interpretations of these passages and made them popular.

I've [written extensively on this subject](#) on my website, but in this article, I want to focus only on Matthew 24:29-31.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days

Even without the aid of any Bible commentator of the past, I can tell you just from my own study of the context of that prophecy and what the Gospels of Mark and Luke say about it, the “tribulation of those days” is *not* a future event but all about the judgement of God on the unbelieving Jews for rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.

Let's compare the three parallel verses in the synoptic Gospels referring to the tribulation of those days:

Matthew 24:21 For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Mark 13:19 For **in those days shall be affliction**, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

Luke 21:22 For **these be the days of vengeance**, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Affliction on whom? Days of vengeance on whom? The context is talking about the unbelieving Jews who did NOT obey Jesus commandment to flee Jerusalem when they saw the Roman army coming!

Luke 21:20-21 And **when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies**, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. {21} Then **let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains**; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

They believed the false prophets and fled into the Temple instead and were destroyed. I covered this in my article, on [What is the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24?](#)

Conclusion: Because the the Word of God clearly says, “Immediately after the tribulation of *those days*”, and because both “tribulation” and “those days” are clearly referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the

rest of the passage of Matthew 24:29-31 must be allegorical in nature and not an Endtime event.

shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

What British Methodist theologian Adam Clarke (1762 – 1832) has to say:

In the prophetic language, great commotions upon earth are often represented under the notion of commotions and changes in the heavens: –

The fall of Babylon is represented by the stars and constellations of heaven withdrawing their light, and the sun and moon being darkened. See Isaiah 13:9, Isaiah 13:10.

The destruction of Egypt, by the heaven being covered, the sun enveloped with a cloud, and the moon withholding her light. Ezekiel 32:7, Ezekiel 32:8.

The destruction of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes is represented by casting down some of the host of heaven, and the stars to the ground. See Daniel 8:10.

And this very destruction of Jerusalem is represented by the Prophet Joel, Joel 2:30, Joel 2:31, by showing wonders in heaven and in earth – darkening the sun, and turning the moon into blood. This general mode of describing these judgments leaves no room to doubt the propriety of its application in the present case.

The falling of stars, i.e. those meteors which are called falling stars by the common people, was deemed an omen of evil times.

Conclusion: I think it's perfectly logical and safe to say with the context of the rest of the Bible in mind, the sun, moon, stars and powers of the heavens referred to in verse 29 are allegorical in nature.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

What Adam Clarke has to say:

The plain meaning of this is, that the destruction of Jerusalem will be such a remarkable instance of Divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the Jewish tribes shall mourn, and many will, in consequence of this manifestation of God, be led to acknowledge Christ and his religion.

What English Baptist minister John Gill (1697 – 1771) has to say:

He shall appear, not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come: for the sense is, that when the above calamities shall be upon the civil state of that people, and there will be such changes in their ecclesiastical state it will be as clear a point, that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is also come in his vengeance on that nation, for their rejection and crucifixion him, as if they had seen him appear in person in the heavens. They had been always seeking a sign, and were continually asking one of him; and now they will have a sign with a witness; as they had accordingly.

What American pastor Albert Barnes (1798 – 1870) has to say:

The sign of the Son of man – The “evidence” that he is coming to destroy the city of Jerusalem. It is not to be denied, however, that this description is applicable also to his coming at the day of judgment. The disciples had asked him Matthew 24:3 what should be the sign of his coming, and “of the end of the world.” In his answer he has reference to both events, and his language may be regarded as descriptive of both. At the destruction of Jerusalem, the sign or evidence of his coming was found in the fulfillment of these predictions. At the end of the world, the sign of his coming will be his personal approach with the glory of his Father and the holy angels, 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Luke 21:27; Matthew 26:64; Acts 1:11.

All the tribes of the earth mourn – That is, either all the “tribes or people” of the land of Judea shall mourn at the great calamities coming upon them, or all the nations of the world shall wail when he comes to judgment. All the wicked shall mourn at the prospect of their doom, Revelation 1:7. The cause of their wailing at the day of judgment will be chiefly that they have pierced, killed, rejected the Saviour, and that they deserve the condemnation that is coming upon them, John 19:37; Zechariah 12:12.

And they shall see the Son of man – The Lord Jesus coming to judgment. Probably this refers more directly to his coming at the last day, though it may also mean that the “evidence” of his coming to destroy Jerusalem will then be seen.

In the clouds of heaven – He ascended in a cloud, Acts 1:9. He shall return in like manner, Acts 1:11. “The clouds of heaven” denote not the clouds in heaven, but the clouds that appear to shut heaven, or the sky, from our view.

With power – Power, manifest in the destruction of Jerusalem, by the wonders that preceded it, and by the overturning of the temple and city. In the day of judgment, power manifest by consuming the material world 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12; by raising the dead John 5:29-30; 1 Corinthians 15:52; by changing those who may be alive when he shall come – that is, making their bodies like those who have died, and who have been raised up 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:52; by bringing the affairs of the world to a close, receiving the righteous to heaven Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:57, and sending the wicked, however numerous or however strong, down to hell, Matthew 25:41, Matthew 25:46; John 5:29.

Great glory – The word “glory” here means the visible display of honor and

majesty. This glory will be manifested by the manner of his coming Matthew 26:64, by the presence of the angels Matthew 25:31, and by the wonders that shall attend him down the sky.

What Adam Clarke has to say:

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man – The plain meaning of this is, that the destruction of Jerusalem will be such a remarkable instance of Divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the Jewish tribes shall mourn, and many will, in consequence of this manifestation of God, be led to acknowledge Christ and his religion.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Most evangelicals today will say this passage is referring to the rapture. Let's see what men of God of the past has to say about it.

What Adam Clarke has to say:

He shall send his angels – Τους αγγελους, his messengers, the apostles, and their successors in the Christian ministry.

With a great sound of a trumpet – Or, a loud-sounding trumpet – the earnest affectionate call of the Gospel of peace, life, and salvation.

Shall gather together his elect – The Gentiles, who were now chosen or elected, in place of the rebellious, obstinate Jews, according to Our Lord's prediction, Matthew 8:11, Matthew 8:12, and Luke 13:28, Luke 13:29. For the children of the kingdom, (the Jews who were born with a legal right to it, but had now finally forfeited that right by their iniquities) should be thrust out. It is worth serious observation, that the Christian religion spread and prevailed mightily after this period: and nothing contributed more to the success of the Gospel than the destruction of Jerusalem happening in the very time and manner, and with the very circumstances, so particularly foretold by our Lord. It was after this period that the kingdom of Christ began, and his reign was established in almost every part of the world.

To St. Matthew's account, St. Luke adds, Luke 21:24, They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shalt be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The number of those who fell by the sword was very great. Eleven Hundred Thousand perished during the siege. Many were slain at other places, and at other times.

Many also were led away captives into all nations. There were taken at Japha, 2,130. At Jotapa, 1,200. At Tarichea, 6,000 chosen young men, who were sent to Nero; others sold to the number of 30,400, besides those who were given to Agrippa. Of the Gadarenes were taken 2,200. In Idumea above 1,000. Many besides these were taken in Jerusalem; so that, as Josephus says, the number

of the captives taken in the whole war amounted to 97,000.

Steve Gregg's take on Matthew 24:29-31

[Steve Gregg](#) is a contemporary Bible teacher my wife and I [listen to on YouTube](#) from time to time. We like him because he too was influenced by Jesuit doctrines of Futurism but came out of it just from studying the Scriptures on his own.

The imagery in that statement immediately strikes us as the future, the end of the world, the second coming of Christ. He sends His angels to gather people in, they see Him in the clouds, cosmic disturbances, sun, moon and stars going dark. Did those things literally happen? Some of them amazingly did, but not all of them happened literally. The ones that did not, happened in the sense that the prophets used that terminology. We as American Christians, unless we study the prophets a lot, are not that familiar with the prophetic language.

Let me show you something Isaiah said in Isaiah 13. He's prophesying the fall of the Babylonian Empire to the Medes and the Persians. This happened in 539 BC. He names the Medes in particular as being involved in this, but the Medes and the Persians together were. And as it talks about the destruction of Babylon it says in verse 10:

Isaiah 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Well, that didn't all literally happen when Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians but it was kind of the end of the world for them. But it's just poetic language.

If you turn to Isaiah 34 there's a prophecy against Edom. Edom isn't a nation anymore. The last Edomite that history knows of was Herod the Great. The Edomites were enemies of the Jews in Old Testament history but they were taken into Babylon three years after Jerusalem was Jerusalem went into Babylon in 586 BC. Three years later in 583 BC, the Edomites were taken into captivity into Babylon. They never recovered. Some of them came back or just remained in the land but they were subsumed in the inter-testamental period into southern Judah and put under Jewish law by force. So they ceased to be a nation anymore. The last of them that's known to have been in existence was Herod. This is an extinct nation but this predicts the destruction of Edom.

It says this in Isaiah 34:4-6:

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea (Edom), and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of

lambs and goats, ...

We can see these talk about the destruction of Edom. Bozrah is the capital of Edom. He's talking about something that happened almost 600 years before Christ. He describes it as the host of heaven being dissolved, the heavens being rolled up like a scroll, all the hosts shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, that is, all the stars will fall like a leaf falls from the vine. And so what we have here is of course the language of a cataclysm to be sure, but not literal. This is the way the prophets talk when something very very bad permanently happens to a nation. That's how they talk about it.

Jesus said those things will happen too in that generation. Did they literally happen? Well, not exactly, but they happened in the same sense that they happened in Isaiah 19 or Isaiah 13 or Isaiah 34 or in some of the other passages that use this language.

We didn't look at Ezekiel 32 which talks about the same thing. When Egypt fell to the Babylonians it talks about how the sun and the moon and stars were darkened, and there's other places like that. So what we have is when Jesus said, after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the heaven, everything there is language from Isaiah or some other prophetic passage which in their original context refer to the destruction of some nation of some kind. In this case that apparently is Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

It says the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven. Now, what is the sign of the Son of man? A few lines later He says, "And they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." It says, "The sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn." The word "earth" can be translated as land. "And they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory."

Now the sign of the Son of man in heaven is a term used only here. We don't have any other passage to clarify what it means, but one possible meaning is it's a sign that the Son of man is in fact in Heaven. The reason I say that is because, to the Jews, the Son of man in heaven calls to mind Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. I think it is where he says:

Daniel I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

So He's going up, He's going up to God. It's the ascension of Christ from the Mount of Olives. It's what's referred to as the Son of Man. Daniel is on the other side. He sees the Heavenly Throne. He sees the Son of Man come up through the clouds. The disciples saw Him disappearing into the clouds. Daniel is on their side. He sees Him come out through the clouds to the Ancient days. He was given the throne as Jesus sat down at the right hand of God when He ascended. The coming of the Son of man is an expression that comes from that verse. And so He could be saying, "You'll see the sign that the Son of man has in fact come in that sense you'll see it now."

One argument that has been made is that the very fact that the Temple is destroyed and the Jewish system that crucified Christ will be the sign that God has vindicated Him, that Jesus is reigning now. He's not on the cross anymore, He's not their victim, He's their judge as He sits at the throne at the right hand of God.

It's not clear entirely what this refers to, the sign of the Son of man in heaven when it says "the tribes of the earth." Again, the word "earth" is in the Greek. It's the word that means earth or land. Usually, it's Israel that's divided into tribes, not the planet. The planet is usually divided into nations. Israel is divided into tribes. So to say "the tribes of the land will mourn" makes plenty of sense especially since it's a term that comes from Zechariah 12:10 which talks about all the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourning and seems to be a reference to that. So it's the people of Israel in the land of Israel that are mourning because of this. They see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. Well, Egypt saw God coming in the clouds of heaven but not literally. It saw the Assyrians coming. That was God coming in the clouds. Israel saw the Romans coming and that was Jesus sending them like Isaiah talks about. They saw that in the Romans.

But then there's this verse 31 He will send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they'll gather together His elect from the four winds as the four compass points from one end of heaven to the other, that is, from one horizon to the other horizon where He is gathering them to. Who are these angels that are gathering them? The Greek word which is translated as angels is the word in Greek that generally means messengers. In the Bible, it often means special messengers sent from God from heaven. When we find "angel" in the New Testament, usually we're thinking of a supernatural angel. It is a translation of the Greek word *angelos*. But the same word is the ordinary word for messenger, human messenger. John the Baptist sent two messengers from prison to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who's to come or not?" James talks about how Rahab received the messengers and sent them away safely.

Angelos is the word for human messengers. What if we just translate this as the Greek allows, "He'll send out His messengers, the apostles, the evangelists, the missionaries, and they'll gather His elect into His body, into the Church. It doesn't say they're going to go away to another planet after Jerusalem falls. The Gospel is no longer focused on the Jews, it's now an international message. The messengers of the Gospel go out and they gather His elect from all the parts of the world which has been what's going on for the last two thousand years.

Now, all I've tried to do is show you that everything Jesus said here has parallels in many cases, multiple parallels in the Old Testament that use the same language, the same imagery, and are not talking about the end of the world or a literal Second Coming of Christ.

All this makes sense to me and I hope it does to you too. I consider Matthew 24 one of the most controversial chapters in the Bible. Contemporary evangelicals believe it's all about the great tribulation of the Antichrist, but comparing Matthew 24 in context to other passages, and especially with

Mark 13 and Luke 21 tells me it's not.

If you think differently and believe the prophecy of Matthew 24:29-31 are Endtime events, just keep in mind from whom you got your interpretation of Matthew 24 from. I dare say you didn't get it just from reading the Bible on your own. You were led into it the same as I was. I also believed for 40 some years the prophecy is an Endtime event. Babes in Christ usually don't dispute with their Bible teacher. They will accept anything he says, right or wrong.