

Reconciling Matthew 24 & September 11th

“And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.’ And as He was sitting 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?’” (Matt. 24:1-3)

With the events of September 11th, many religious “scholars” have tried to reconcile those tragic events with the Bible, in particular Matt. 24 and the book of Revelation. During tough times, such as we are currently experiencing in this country, people look for places to find comfort and answers to their many questions. Over the last several months I have listened to the radio as folks have tried to fit these events with Matthew 24 in order to proclaim the inevitable return of the Lord. But, does Matthew 24 truly predict the return of Jesus? Were the events of September 11th a “sign of the times”? Let us investigate this popular idea.

First, it is important to remember the context in which Jesus was speaking.

After stating that the temple, along with its buildings, would not stand, Jesus was questioned by His disciples as to when these events would take place (v. 3). Notice the focus of their questions were **not** when He would return, but rather when the temple would no longer stand. To the Jew, the temple was a sight to behold. It was their holy shrine, one which they thought would stand forever because it was where God dwelt. They never dreamed this house of worship would not stand forever.

Second, the Lord’s description of these events are to be interpreted in the context of the Lord’s remarks. In speaking of the destruction of the temple, Jesus gave many indicators as to when these events would take place. He said there would be false Christs (v 5), wars and rumors of wars (v 6), famines and earthquakes (v 7), and false prophets would arise (v 11). Jesus still has not changed His focus. His description is still within the context of when the temple and its buildings would be destroyed. As a side note, consider this point. If chapter 24 deals with the end of the world, as some say it does, how would we honestly know the end was near? I mean, how long have wars been raging? How long have there been earthquakes and famines on earth? You see, we would never really know for sure when the Lord was to return just by looking at Matthew 24.

Third, Jesus specifically limits the fulfillment of the events described to the first century. In v 34 He said, *“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”* He would go on to say, *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone”* (v 36). If Jesus was talking about His return and not the destruction of Jerusalem, there are some **very** old people walking around on the face of the earth!

The point of Jesus’ discourse was to make the disciples, and others, understand the importance of being prepared. There was a day coming in which the beautiful temple would no longer stand. A time when the Jews’ pride and joy would be destroyed. No, this passage does not prove our world is about to end. However, the principle is the same. We, just like the Jews, need to be ready for the coming of the Lord. We know it’s going to happen, but only God knows when it will. May God bless you as you strive to serve Him in your every day life.

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