

Bible Study 2023-2024

Class #22

3/19/24

Synoptics 23 – 24

- Matthew 24

Matthew 24

- This text is parallel to **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**
- Father pointed out the importance of the writing of *Josephus* and *Bishop Eusebius* from that era
- *Josephus* was:
 - A Jewish historian from the 1st century
 - A Pharisee who was caught by the Romans and made a prisoner of war
 - Became an advisor to the Romans
 - Watched and recorded the three year attack on and destruction of Jerusalem

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- *Eusebius* was:
 - A bishop of the church in *Caesarea Maritima* in the latter part of the 4th century
 - Became a church historian from the time of Jesus until his day
 - In one section, he described the last siege of the Jews after the Christ, which was the destruction of *Jerusalem* in 70 AD
 - He also described the Christian exodus from the city to the town of *Pella* on the Jordan
 - He often quoted from the writings of *Josephus*

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- He described how Jesus completed these events in **Matthew 24**
- He pointed to Jesus' prophecy, that these things would happen within one generation (40 years)
- Further, he explained that God delayed this event as long as possible to allow as many Jews as possible to be converted to the New Way
- His work pointed out that Jesus' predictions were not about the end of the world

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:1-2** *“Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the building of the temple...that will be thrown down”*
 - Jesus left the temple, crossed the *Kidron Valley*, and walked up to the top of the *Mount of Olives*
 - As a 1st century Jew, could you imagine hearing what Jesus said?
 - Trying to put this in perspective, Father asked us to consider Jesus standing today in front of the Wester Wall (the supporting structure for the temple mount), and saying that not one of these stones would be left upon another

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- In this text Jesus was standing within the confines of the beautiful temple under reconstruction by Herod for over 60 years (Herod was trying to legitimize himself as the king of **2nd Samuel 7**)
- Every time he tore something down, (from the second temple built by *Zerubbabel*) he replaced it with something 10 times better
- Jesus' statement in this text would be the equivalent of Him saying this in front of the Dome of the Rock, or outside of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome
- Let us try to wrap our brains around what Jesus was saying

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:3** *“As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, tell us when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age”*
 - Father pointed out that scripture commentators have gotten a bit wacky with this statement, due to their lack of knowledge of the Old Testament
 - It sounds like the disciples are asking three questions:
 - When will this be
 - What is the sign of your coming
 - When is the close of the age

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Once again, Father pointed out that this was written in Aramaic or Greek in the Semitic style of Hebrew poetry
- This means that it contained much repetition as a part of **synonymous parallelism**
- If we look at this passage in Mark and Luke, it is said in one sentence
- Unfortunately, this expanded version can be attributed to the translation of St. Jerome, who has left us some of these problems, including that sometimes Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, and at other times, it was about the end of the world

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that this is not what Jesus said, as we can discover from looking at Mark and Luke (neither of which present the idea of the close of the age, or the sign of His coming)
- This means (using synonymous parallelism) that the first line is the primary information and the second and third lines are synonymous parallelism
- The sign of your coming and the close of the age are two different ways of talking about one stone not left upon another

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:4-6** *“And Jesus answered them, take heed that no one leads you astray...but the end is not yet”*
 - Father referred to the writings of *Eusebius* and *Josephus* to get more details
 - At that time, every individual who rose up as a leader, the people thought was the Christ
 - This was all tied to **Daniel 7** and his prophecy of 490 years until the coming of the Christ with a new covenant
 - If this did not happen, then Daniel must have been a false prophet

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- The Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist if he was the Christ
- Many individual leaders arose during this period
- *Gamaliel* talked about this in the Acts of the Apostles
- By the time we got to the 60s or 70s, all kinds of people were propping up every year who they thought might be the Christ

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:7-8** *“For nation will rise against nation,...all this is but the beginning of the sufferings”*
 - “Nation against nation” is about the Roman Empire in the 1st century
 - Jesus was quoting from **Isaiah 13:9-13*** which was a prophecy about the Babylonian captivity
 - With this statement, Jesus was telling His listeners about things that were going to happen and at the same time, the reason why it was happening
 - Jerusalem had become like Babylon

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:9-12** *“Then they will deliver your tribulation,...Most men’s love will grow cold”*
 - This is right out of **Matthew 10**: *“You will be hated by the nations for my namesake”*
 - “Hatred of family members,” and “those who endure to the end,” is in from **Matthew 10**
 - Jesus told His listeners that before He returns, all of these things will happen before they have gone through all the villages and towns of Israel

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- This meant that some sort of event will happen in the 1st century
- In fact, by the time they reached the end of the 1st century, all the villages and towns of Israel will have been gone through by the Christians, as well as most of the Roman Empire (Christians were in Spain, England, and everywhere)

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:13-14** *“But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony and then the end will come.”*
 - Father pointed out that this statement is a little timing marker
 - Today, people assume that this means we need more missionaries
 - Many Protestants are driven to accomplish and fund missionary work to fulfill this verse
 - The sooner every village hears the word, the sooner the end of the world will come
 - Father pointed out that is **not** what this verse says

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- It was not the whole world that had to be visited, but the entire Roman Empire
- The Greek word means the whole household; the empire; Kingdom
- By 70 AD, Christianity had been preached throughout the entire Roman Empire
- It may not have reached every village, for that is not what it said

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- It meant the Roman Empire to include Britain, France, Spain, Iraq
- To the extent of the borders of the Roman Empire, all had heard the gospel – good news
- As a testimony and then the end will come
- The end was the destruction of Jerusalem

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:15** *“So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)”*
 - This was not what Jesus was saying to His disciples on the Mount of Olives
 - This Matthew, or a later scribe translating the gospel, interjected this phrase into the narrative
 - We can see a similar example in **John 2:13** where we see John interject the comment, *“When therefore he was raised from the dead, and his disciples remembered that he had said this they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken”*

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that John breaks into the narrative and comments on something Jesus said that will only be understood later
- Jesus was talking about these things before His death and resurrection
- The synoptics were written in the 60s, which was some time later (depending on the date of each Gospel)

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- This reference to Daniel could be an allusion to **Daniel 9:27; 11; 12** which prophesied about the profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (1st Maccabees)
 - Desolation sacrilege – offering a pig on the holy altar
- Nothing was more offensive to the Jews and it led to the Maccabean revolt and the restoration of the temple (Hanukkah)
- The passage may also allude Pilate placing a statue of Caesar in the temple
- Pilate also commanded that a Roman Eagle be put on the gate entering into the temple (this caused a massive revolt)

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Pilate was a Roman Official stationed in Caesarea, but was moved to Jerusalem after it became rebellious
- He certainly was not happy to be in this very Jewish city, and having to deal with these rebellions
- Historians suggest that the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was in part the result of his foolish moves
 - He allowed Roman money to be minted in Jerusalem with the image of Caesar on it (This was unprecedented)
 - He did other things that certainly would have riled the people up

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Father said that scholars are not exactly sure what Jesus was referring to here from the moment He was speaking about it all the way to 70 AD
- He pointed out that we have a great deal of information about this period of time as the Romans prepared to destroy Jerusalem
- When that happened, all the records in Jerusalem were destroyed in the subsequent fires
- This was similar to the fire in the Library of Alexandria which led to an incredible loss of knowledge

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- The same happened when the Babylonians destroyed the city and the temple earlier
- The point is that Jesus said that some event was going to happen, which all will understand is the fulfillment of **Daniel 9**
- This will be some sort of sacrilegious thing in the temple that will bring about a rebellion leading to the destruction of Jerusalem
- Whatever it was, the gospel writer is inserting this information into the words of Jesus

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Matthew 24:16-20 *“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains....Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath”*
 - How would the following impact on this if it was about the end of the world?
 - *Fleeing to the mountains*
 - *Happening in winter*
 - *Returning to your house to get your donkey*
 - *Happening on the Sabbath*
 - *Your wife was pregnant*

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Father asked us to imagine how difficult it would have been for a 1st Century family to pack up and try to flee at the last moment after Jerusalem had been surrounded by the Romans?
- Father related a story that happened to Professor Tim Gray, who while living in Jerusalem, tried to drive through a traditional Jewish neighborhood on a sabbath

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- Matthew 24:21-27 *“For then there will be great tribulation,...So will be the coming of the son of man”*
 - Since, as Jesus said, *“The days were shortened,”* a few more of the people were saved
 - Further, when Jesus stated that, *“he who endures to the end will be saved,”* it must not have been about the end of time
 - The historian Josephus pointed out that many false prophets arose during that period
 - Although he was not a Christian, he reported on these facts in response to the prophecies in the **Book of Daniel**

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- It had been predicted that the Messiah would appear within that (1st century) generation
- So, any individual who arose with followers caused the people to ask if he was the messiah
- The term “messiah,” and “son of man,” are the same thing
- We know that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of Man who was coming

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- **Matthew 24:28** *“Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together”*
 - When Matthew and Mark speak about vultures, they were talking about Jerusalem being surrounded by the Roman legions in 70 AD
 - All carnivores birds (those who eat dead flesh) to include, Hawks, Eagles, and Vultures were seen as the same kind of bird
 - Vulture is another translation of Eagle
 - All were considered to be unclean
 - They will be gathered when there are bodies of corpses

Matthew 24 (Cont)

- The image Jesus is reflecting on this passage is a commentary on the coming destruction of Jerusalem
- The Roman army will surround and besiege it for three years before a massive all-out assault
- Father asked us to try and imagine what it would have been like for the Jews in the city to look over the walls and see Roman standards (the Eagle) flying all around the city for three years
- Jerusalem was surrounded by armies