

The Coming of the Son of Man

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 24. Matthew chapter 24.

We have spent already now two weeks in chapter 24. And so far we've made it through the first 22 verses.

So my desire for the sermon is that we'll start in verse 23. And we'll try to make it to the end of this section, which is verse 35. Since we have already spent two weeks reading the passage and I've already preached the first part, I'm going to skip over the first 14 verses.

Again, we've read it. You're familiar with it, I think, by now. So I'll pick up in verse 15. That's where we were last Sunday. For the sermon. We'll pick up at verse 15 and read through verse 35. But again, my desire is to start today's message in verse 23.

So if you look there with me, Matthew 24, beginning of verse 15. So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place, let the reader understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

[1 : 28] Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house. And let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days.

Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now. No, and never will be.

And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, look here, it's the Christ.

Or there he is. Do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders. So as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

See, I have told you beforehand. So if they say to you, look, he is in the wilderness. Do not go out. If they say, look, he is in the inner rooms. Do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

[2 : 32] Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

And the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call. And they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other. From the fig tree, learn its lesson.

As soon as the branches become tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near at the very gates.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Let's pray together.

[3 : 31] Dear Heavenly Father, we again acknowledge just how needful we are of your help here. In understanding your word. And we pray that your spirit would make clear the meaning of your word.

As people hear what's preached, as they receive it. That what they would receive and what they'd hear and understand of the passage would be what's true. And what you intended originally. So help us in that, Lord.

And we pray also that we would not think of this merely as an intellectual exercise to comprehend the meaning of apocalyptic language. But that, Lord, we would understand that this is meant for our spiritual good.

And so that you'd feed us from your word today. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. So we're continuing the section we've been looking at. So allow me to recount some of the things you've heard now two weeks already.

But just remind you all that God is declaring that he's leaving the temple. And to some extent, Jerusalem behind. And the visible expression of that is Jesus actually leaves the temple.

[4 : 29] He walks out of the city. He begins to ascend the Mount of Olives. As he's going up the Mount of Olives, the disciples say to him, Look how grand the temple is. Only for Jesus to say the temple will be destroyed.

Every stone, even to the very foundation of the ground. Or the foundation of the temple. And I've argued all along that Jesus is speaking of the destruction of the temple in AD.

That seems like the obvious and logical conclusion. And we've seen that expressed in the two passages as we've gone through them. And so as Jesus explains this to them, they then ask the question, When is this going to happen?

And you may remember that I've explained that they're really asking two questions. They ask Jesus, When will these things take place? And, so that's the first question, When will the destruction of the temple take place?

And that's what we've been looking at. And, what will be the sign of your second coming? And what will be the time of the end? When will be the end? And so I said, that's really the second question.

[5 : 26] When will Jesus return and bring the end of all history? Or, the consummation of the eschaton, the end times. And so, so far, I've argued, we've just been looking at the first part.

Jesus is answering the first question. You want to know when the temple will be destroyed? Let me give you, here are the signs. And the first week we said, here are the not signs. Here are the things, the events that will happen that are not signs of the coming, excuse me, of the destruction of the temple.

And I'd argued even that, to some extent, I think Jesus is saying, these are the typical signs of this age that we'll live in. In the church age, this is what we should be expecting. And know that these aren't signs of the destruction of the temple.

And again, we could argue even as an extension, nor of the future return of the Lord. I've said all along that essential to our understanding is these parentheses type phrases.

In chapter 23, verse 36, we see that all this will come upon this generation. And then verse 34, we see, excuse me, chapter 24, verse 34, we see Jesus repeating something very similar.

[6 : 28] Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until these things take place. And so we've argued kind of everything within there, Jesus is saying, is going to happen to this generation. And so that's how we have to understand it, or at least we have to reckon with that language if we're going to try to understand it any other way.

If we're going to try to argue that this is something future, then we've got to deal with the fact that Jesus says this is going to happen to this generation. And so we've been seeing that as we've gone through, that so far what we've looked at has been the events around the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

Now, starting with verse 36, he begins to answer the second question. And Lord willing, next week we'll actually get there. We'll see that transition.

So bear with me, we're almost there to a transition where Jesus begins to talk about his second coming. So the argument that we have seen so far is this.

The destruction of the temple can be dated. And in fact, here are the events of it. There are signs of the destruction of the temple. Here are the signs.

[7 : 33] And what I'm arguing is that what we'll see starting, Lord willing, next week is that Jesus is saying, there are no signs of my second coming. Be ready for it. Be prepared for it.

But I'm giving you no signs of that. And so, so far we've been seeing the signs of Jesus's, excuse me, of the destruction of the temple. We've been seeing the signs of the destruction of the temple.

And likewise, we've seen Jesus say the things that aren't signs of the destruction of the temple.

So last week in verse 15 through 22, Jesus described the great tribulation of A.D. 70 and the signs that foretell its arrival. And he gave warnings for the Christians to flee when they saw these signs.

And so we left off there. Couldn't make it any further. We're picking up in verse 23 and seeing what he says there. So I'm going to do like I've done in the last two weeks. I'm really just teaching through this and hopefully making some application along the way.

But I want us to understand it. So I'm just going to work straight through the passage. We're going to start by looking at verses 23 through 28 and really under the title of false Christ or false prophets. Now, Jesus has already mentioned the appearance of false prophets in Christ as things that are not signs of the end or of the destruction of the temple.

[8 : 50] And now he begins to say that the events of the great tribulation in 70 A.D. will lead some to claim that Jesus has returned. You can understand that.

Christians could look at that and say, look, Jesus is or the temple's being destroyed. Obviously, this is some sign that Jesus has returned. And the events themselves may cause people to expect Jesus to return.

Even the disciples question if the temple is going to be destroyed. I think their expectation is this is the kind of thing that's going to happen at the very end of time. And so to grasp with the idea that the temple could be destroyed and yet history would continue on may have been very hard for some people in the first century church.

And so when you see something as catastrophic as what's happening, it would be easy to associate what happened in A.D. 70 with the full understanding of the eschaton and the consummation of that.

The eschaton just means the end. And, you know, I've argued many times along the way that we're seeing when Jesus comes on the scene, really the beginning of the eschaton, but it's not consummated to the end.

[9 : 56] And we talked about the prophetic flattening. And so it would have been easy for them to group everything that they've seen in the Old Testament and say, it's happening right now. Jesus is going to return. And Jesus is telling them that's not the case.

So I see Jesus saying to them that he's not returning here in A.D. 70. There will be false Christs and false prophets will arise saying that they're Jesus or pointing to other people who they claim are Jesus.

It even tells us in verse 24 they'll perform great signs and wonders. So they're doing these signs, these perhaps it's demonic power if they're deceivers. Perhaps it's some kind of miraculous work that they're doing that they're associating with pointing to the Christ.

But either way, they're false. They're deceiving people. They desire to lead others astray. We see even the elect if possible. So their goal is to lead people away, at least some of them, or trying to lead people away to follow them instead.

It's possible that this is even a demonic tactic. The powers that wage war against God, that they're trying to lead people astray by falling after a false Christ.

[11 : 04] And Jesus' answer, it's pretty simple. Don't believe it. Don't look at verse 23. This is what he says. Then if anyone says to you, look, here's the Christ, or there he is, do not believe it.

He goes on even further. In verse 26 he says, if they say to you, look, he's in the wilderness, what do you do? You don't even go out there. If they say he's in the wilderness, don't even go out there. Don't waste your time hiking out there because I'm not there. Or if they say to you, or if he says to you, I'm in the inner rooms, or I'm in the inner room, he says, do not believe it.

A repetition of what we saw in verse 23. And so Jesus three times in various ways says, don't believe it. Don't be deceived. Don't even pursue it. Don't go out to see or follow these false Christs or these false prophets.

And so Jesus is giving very good instruction here. There will be people, and there will even be reasons why you might think that I returned, but I haven't. So if someone says I returned, don't go out.

[12 : 09] Now Jesus is speaking of the events of AD 70, but if you'll allow me to make some application for a second, the same can be said today. The same is still true. And we're going to argue why in a minute.

But if you have people today, wherever they may be, primarily television is how you're going to be exposed to them because I ought not be here in this church, I hope. But if you have people on the television saying, here's the signs that Jesus is coming back, or here's the year that Jesus is coming back, or even pointing you to someone who they think is the Christ or the Antichrist, don't believe it.

So that's just my application to say, stay off of TBN. Sorry. But there's probably other stations, there's probably other people, but I mean, at least the impression I get is that they're focused upon

this idea that we're going to tell you when Jesus is coming back.

Avoid such things. If Jesus says don't even go out to the wilderness, our application today may be don't even turn that channel on. Don't waste your time. Don't look there. You're going to be deceived. And we can extend beyond television.

Man, there are probably thousands of websites that you can find now that are this very thing. People claiming to be false Christ or people telling you when Jesus is going to return. Don't be deceived. Don't even go there.

[13:17] Don't even look those websites up. Don't waste your time with false teachers, false Christ, false prophets. So I managed to get some application in already. You remember that when we get to the end.

I told you that most of this is teaching, but I do think there's application for us in all this. Verses 27 through 28. Now, you're going to have to bear with me, and you can challenge me on this if you want to.

My argument all along has been that everything contained in here is pointing to AD 70. It will happen with this generation. My argument for verses 27 and 28 is that Jesus takes a parenthetical contrast.

What I mean by that is he says people are going to say that Christ has come. Don't believe it. Why should you not believe it? Because this is what it will be like when the Christ does return.

So what I see him doing in verses 27 and 28 is not speaking to signs that you're to be looking for. He's contrasting what's happening or what's going to happen in AD 70 with the reality of what will happen when he returns.

[14:18] Does that make sense? So for some of you may not be satisfied. You may say I'm contradicting myself because I'm going to argue verses 27 and 28 are speaking of Jesus' future return, although he's acknowledged already that these things will happen in your generation.

So let's look at this and see if you can buy it, if that's true. Let me start in verse 26. So if they say to you, look, he's in the wilderness, do not go out. If they say, look, he's in the rooms, do not believe it. For, why? Why are you not to do that? Therefore, for as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Even that itself is a little bit cryptic language there. But what is Jesus saying here? What do I understand him to be saying?

I think what Jesus is saying is don't believe false Christ and false prophets because when Jesus returns, or he's saying when I return, you'll know it. You won't need somebody pointing you to say, look, there's the Christ.

[15:21] Everybody's going to know it. Just as there's no question when you see the lightning, you see it all around, people know, hey, that's lightning. Or just as a vulture finds a dead animal, or maybe you could say, or by the signs you see a vulture flying over a dead animal, you know, you see him circling, you know what's up, don't you?

There's a dead animal over there somewhere. It will be so obvious to everyone that there will be no need for signs. There will be no need for someone to say, hey, Christ is over there. Everybody in the world is going to know it when Jesus returns.

That's my understanding of what Jesus is saying. So this is why you don't believe false teachers.

Why you don't believe false Christ or false prophets who are saying, hey, Christ is over here, or he's going to come. At this point, you don't need such signs.

When he comes, everybody's going to know it. You won't need the help. You don't need the assistance. That's my understanding of what Jesus is saying. Another way of saying this is that when Jesus returns, it will not be a secret.

Jesus isn't going to secretly return. He's going to be hiding out in someone's inner room. Hey, come over to my house. He's over here in my bedroom. What? When Jesus comes back, the whole world will know it. It will be the consummation of the end of everything that's been foretold.

[16:29] It's it. It's over. This is the end of the world. So this is huge when Jesus comes back. It's not secretive. He's not going to come back and hang out at somebody's house for a few weeks.

And it's not going to be some, you think of his first time here on earth that there were 30 years where there's no public ministry.

Jesus isn't going to come hang out for 30 years again and there'll be no public ministry. When he returns, everyone will know it. So that's my interpretation of verses 27 and 28. Everyone will see the

signs and know that Jesus has returned when he returns.

I think even beyond the signs, I think what's being communicated is everyone's going to see Christ and know he's returned. It will be evident to all. So that was a really quick movement, especially considering how slow we've been going through this passage.

I really quickly have gone through verses 23 through 28 so far. Now, believe me, maybe you will, maybe you won't. But believe me when I say that so far we made it to the first 28 verses of verse of chapter 24.

And that's the easy part. James Montgomery Boyce writes this. I do not think there is any great difficulty understanding what Jesus says in the Olivet Discourse up to verse 28 of chapter 24.

[17:41] So no great difficulty. I've been sweating it for weeks, but no great difficulty so far. He's warned the disciples about disruptive world events that will not be signs of his return. And he has predicted the fall of Jerusalem, which, though an exceptionally traumatic event, would be merely another example of the kind of tragedies that will occur throughout history.

But the easy part is over. Thanks, right? Now we come to the part of the discourse that has given the most trouble to Bible students and commentators.

So we'll read verses 29 through 31, and we're going to talk about it. But that's the part he's speaking of that's been the most difficult for people to interpret. Let's look there again.

So this is the part he's speaking of that's hard to interpret. I'm going to do something I rarely ever do, and it's this.

I'm going to present two views for you, partly because I'm not fully convinced of either one. I see why people could argue for either one. So my desire is to present two views for you that I think are both possibilities.

[19:14] In fact, I think, as far as I can understand, these are the two possibilities. I don't see any other good alternatives. And I'm going to present them and share with you as well. Here are the challenges today. Here's the problems that people see with each view.

And I may lean toward one, but I'm really not going to argue for one or the other. I just want you to understand it. So two ways of understanding of this.

Let me start first with the difficulties of this section. One difficulty in this section as a whole is verse 29, where it says immediately after the tribulation of those days.

The tribulation of those days seems to be talking of what we've just seen, the great tribulation of AD 70. Those days seems quite specific. And so he's saying what I'm about to describe is going to happen immediately after those days.

That's problem number one. The second problem is understanding what does it mean or what is the meaning of the coming of the Son of Man? What does that phrase mean?

[20:18] And then the third problem or struggle is verse 34, when it says that these things will happen during the lifetime of this generation. How do we understand these things?

So how you answer those three questions will probably determine which view you prefer, which view you think is correct. But those are the three challenges. He says that this will happen immediately. He says that he speaks of the coming of the Son of Man.

And what does that mean exactly? And then thirdly, how is this going to happen during the lifetime of this generation or does it? And if it doesn't happen during the lifetime of this generation, how do we exclude that from what's said in verse 34?

Okay. So those are the challenges. The two positions I'm going to present, these are probably pretty simple. You probably could guess already. But either this is speaking of Jesus' second coming or it's speaking of something that happened in AD 70.

Those are the two possibilities I'm going to present. I'm going to show you both of those and kind of explain the weaknesses of each. So first, I'll argue for or present the position that this is speaking of Jesus' future second coming.

[21:22] This is something arguably that is saying it didn't happen in AD 70. This is happening in some time yet that hasn't happened some future time. So in some ways, that forms a natural continuation of verses 27 and 28.

Jesus has just said there will be false Christs, there will be false prophets. And then he says, but when I come, it will be obvious to all. And immediately after the tribulation, and then he begins to describe his second coming.

You can understand why that might make sense. There's a logical flow there. He just spoke of his second coming. Maybe he's continuing to talk of his second coming. So if you were to take that view, you would almost view that as a continuation of 27 and 28, part of the parentheses that doesn't fall under the things that will happen in this generation.

Jesus is speaking of his second coming and making a distinction between this time and that time. Another advantage of this view would be that the coming of the Son of Man would mean the same thing in both passages, both verses.

So when he speaks of the coming of the Son of Man in 27 and 28, it means the same thing when he says it in 29 through 31. So if we take the coming of the Son of Man to be his second coming, and he repeats it here in this passage, then the argument would be he's still speaking of his second coming and not anything before that.

[22 : 38] Now the greatest difficulty is probably obvious, isn't it? It says immediately, and this generation, the two things I've presented before, the two problems. This view has the hardest time dealing with that.

So how do we address the fact that it says immediately after the tribulations of that day, of those days? How do we understand that? And how do we understand the fact that he says it will happen during this generation?

Well, especially as we move to what we'll begin looking at, Lord willing, next week. Chapter 24, beginning of verse 36, all the way through chapter 25, verse 30, seems to describe a period of a long waiting in between Jesus' first and second coming.

We'll be waiting a while before he comes. And so how do we deal with it being immediately after those days if it's speaking of something future? Here's the response to that that I found.

If we think it's the second coming, then immediately after those days speaks not to the specific tribulation of AD 70, but the typographical, or however you want to say it, the typological suffering that happens during that time.

[23 : 46] In other words, the tribulation of those days is the tribulation of the church age as a whole. Okay, that's how they would explain it. One difficulty with that is that really means nothing if you say immediately after the tribulation of those days, if those days extend for 2,000 years of tribulation, and it only ends when Jesus returns, then of course it's immediate, then it really gives us no dating whatsoever, if that makes sense.

So they're arguing that the tribulation of those days refers to the ongoing church age, described really beginning in verse 9, and not to what happened in 70 AD, which is contained in verses 15 through 22.

So the entire time between Jesus' ascension and his second coming is what they argue that's speaking of. For example, just to give some names, D.A. Carson and James Montgomery Boyce, both of whom I've appreciated in all I've looked at so far, both of them take this perspective, and they argue for it, and I think they make good arguments for it.

Immediately after would then mean that the tribulation will continue right up until the time that Jesus returns. When it stops, Jesus is there. This passage would be a continuation of the description of Jesus' return.

I've already said that. The problem with this, what are some problems with this view? Jesus will soon argue that no one knows when he will come, not even him, and no sign will be given.

[25 : 12] So one question is, does that contradict what Jesus says later? If he says immediately after the tribulations of those days, I'll return, and then he says, but no one knows when I'll return. Well, okay, granted, immediately after the tribulation of those days isn't very specific, is it?

But is Jesus giving a hint where later he says there will be no hint or sign given? A second problem is what I've already discussed.

Immediately seems to be speaking of 70 A.D. You have to stretch the meaning a little bit if you're going to come up with anything other than that. Immediately after the tribulations of those days, what tribulation was he speaking of?

Well, the tribulation of 70 A.D. And so the natural context would say immediately after what tribulation? Not some future or present even tribulation, but the tribulation of A.D. 70 would seem to be what he's pointing towards.

Mark 13.24, the parallel passage, actually gives it with a little more detail, a little bit more specific. Mark writes, but in those days after that tribulation, it becomes even harder to argue that we're speaking of an ongoing tribulation if it says, but in those days and after that tribulation.

[26 : 21] What are those days he's speaking of and what is that tribulation he's speaking of? The natural context of the passage would point us back to A.D. 70. All right.

I've kind of given you, here's how they argue it. I've given you the problems. If you take this view, how do you interpret it? So how would you interpret what's said in verses 29 through 31 if you view it as Jesus' second coming?

I'm going to give that to you. What this means is Jesus' second coming will bring the end of the world, and here are the events that would accompany the end of the world when Jesus returns. The heavens will be darkened, and to some extent they'll be ended.

It will be an end of the heavens. When we speak of heavens, we're not talking about where the saints dwell in spirit with Jesus. We're not speaking where God is in his presence.

When we speak of the heavens, we're speaking of the stars. You understand that, right? The moon, even the sun, the stars in the heavens, the planets that we see reflected to us. It's going to be darkened, and maybe it can even be argued that those things will pass away altogether when Jesus returns.

[27 : 25] We know that, we know as well, when Jesus returns that all that will be consumed with fire, and there will be a new earth and new skies. So that would make sense in terms of what's told to us elsewhere of Jesus' return.

Some argue that this is still figurative language, and it just speaks to signs in the heavens or something along those lines. There could be signs. It could just be something like a solar eclipse or something along those lines.

People have argued in terms of the heavens being darkened. Verse 30 appears. Verse 30 speaks of his universal appearing and descending in the clouds.

So when Jesus says, everyone will know that I've returned, well, here's the evidence of that. He'll descend from the clouds. That's consistent with what it says in the book of Acts, just as they... I think I have it quoted here.

Acts 1, 6-11. The angels proclaim, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? One, this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go up into heaven. And so they saw him ascend into the clouds.

[28 : 24] So likewise, when Jesus returns, he will descend from the clouds. And so it may just be speaking of Jesus' return, that everyone will see him coming from the clouds. And then verse 31 speaks of his gathering his people to be with him and for the final judgment.

So if you take this view, you would understand verse 31 to be perhaps even the way in which Jesus, when he returns, will raise even the dead.

Our bodies will be reunited to our spirit. We'll have a glorified body. All the saints from all around the world will be drawn to him. Then will come the destruction of the earth and the final judgment. So if we understand it that way, that's how we would interpret that passage.

Everybody tracking so far. Now, I feel like in some ways, I probably gave you an easier one first because the language that's presented in verses 29 through 31, we already associate with Jesus' second coming.

Partly because that's how some people have interpreted this passage and probably what we've been taught. So I realize that I'm going to be presenting something a little bit different in the next passage, and I'm going to try to give some proof of why that's said.

[29 : 30] So the second interpretation is that this is speaking of something that took place in 70 AD. Now, positively, this takes the word immediately after those days or the tribulation of those days, literally.

It doesn't have to give some figurative understanding of what does immediately really mean. It says when Jesus says immediately after that tribulation, that's what he means. Right after that tribulation, this will take place. So there's an advantage of it taking a literal perspective.

And in some ways, it's the most natural reading in light of what Jesus has just been discussing, that he's been speaking of the tribulation. We've already discussed that, that he says immediately after that tribulation, you think you'd mean the tribulation he was just speaking of.

Now, let me say that that also means that even if we take this view, we're also still saying that there is a future coming of Jesus Christ, but we're saying that's not what's being described in this passage.

So Jesus is still returning to the future. In fact, that's what the rest of chapter 24 and all of 25 speak of, Jesus' second coming. So if you take this view, don't think, oh, well, that means I don't believe Jesus isn't coming.

[30 : 40] That's not what it's saying. It's just understanding the coming of the Son of Man in this passage to be something different than Jesus' second coming, and we're going to look at that. This would then argue that the cosmic language of 24-29 is a symbolic representation of the catastrophic political changes in history.

I'm already jumping into the interpretation. I wanted for a second to discuss the weaknesses of this view. So let me do that. One weakness is it requires that we take the meaning. Oh, there it is in my notes.

I wonder why I couldn't find it. It requires that we take the meaning of the coming of the Son of Man to mean something different in 27-28 than it does in 29-31. So the same phrase is repeated, the coming of the Son of Man, and we're going to, in this position, I'm going to be arguing that it meant something, it meant his second coming in 27-28, but now it's speaking to something different.

I think there's a reason why we can understand it that way, but let's just say that that is a difficulty. Why would Jesus use the same phraseology and it means something different? I could even ask, does he mean the same phraseology?

And I haven't taken this view, but there are some who argue that even verses 27-28 are speaking of something that took place in 70 AD. Okay, so if we take this view, then the cosmic language of 24-29 is a symbolic representation of catastrophic political changes in history.

[32 : 07] So look at verse 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. This view is saying that that didn't actually physically happen, that what's being spoken of is something figurative.

And this view would argue that it's using the language drawn from the Old Testament prophecies, that the disciples would have been very familiar with. Jesus is using Old Testament prophetic language to describe what's going to happen in that day.

And the language used in that time would have been referring to political upheaval. So when the sun's darkened and the moon's darkened and the stars fall from the heaven, it's speaking not of physical things that actually took place in those days, but of traumatic or catastrophic changes in political powers.

Now, one problem that we have is that we're so in tuned, I think, with thinking of things in light of what we've heard on TV and are seen elsewhere, that we want to almost always think this is about Jesus' second coming.

And what I'm arguing is that those who hear, those who would have heard Jesus' words, would have been much more familiar with the Old Testament than we are. They would have probably thought of these prophecies quicker than we would have.

[33 : 23] So we want to read it through the biblical lens. Sam Storms, one commentator, wrote that, In the Old Testament, such language was used to portray not what is going on in the heavens, but what is happening on earth.

Natural disasters, political upheaval, and turmoil among the nations are often described figuratively through the terminology of cosmic disturbances. So I'm going to give you a few examples of that, because my guess is our unfamiliarity with the Old Testament makes us think, I'm not so sure about that.

So here's some examples. When God spoke of his judgment on Babylon, described in Isaiah 13, verses 9 and 10, here's what it says. Behold, the days of the Lord come.

Excuse me. Behold, the day of the Lord comes. Cruel with wrath and fierce anger. To make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light.

The sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. So that is almost word for word what we see told here. And it's speaking of the destruction of Babylon. And yet the sun still gives its light.

[34 : 28] The moon still gives its light. We still see the constellations. And so, again, what's being argued is that that was prophetic language for there being this dramatic change in history. The Babylonian Empire falling.

Isaiah 34, 4 through 5 describes God's judgment on Edom. It says, And so, again, almost that same language spoken of in Egypt.

God's going to darken everything in the sky, including all the stars. And the point of it is that they may know that I am the Lord, which I think may be important as we move on. So in all these passages, the cosmic destruction spoken of is not literal, but symbolically describes the destruction of earthly powers.

They will fall. They will be darkened. And so these powers are spoken of in figurative language of, it's like the sun or the moon or the stars. They're going to be darkened. Their light's going to be snuffed out. So it happened with Babylon and Edom and Egypt.

And if such language is used for the pagan nations surrounding God's people, we ought not be surprised that God would use the same language to describe the fall of Jerusalem in Israel.

[36 : 24] And, in fact, if we go even further back, and I'm not going to quote all these because I don't want to belabor you with quotes, but similar language is used about the judgment of Judah in Joel 2.10 and the northern kingdom in Amos 8.9.

So that same language is used to refer to God's people at times. And what I think we see is just a repetition of that same thing here in this passage. Okay, so that explains verse 29. That's how they would understand verse 29.

It's speaking of there being great political upheaval. So what they're saying is immediately after the tribulation that comes from them, Israel as a nation will fall. Their time will be over. As a nation, they're going to cease to exist, which is exactly what happened.

Then the coming of the Son of Man in verse 30 is not Jesus' second coming to earth, but it's referring to the coming of Jesus to the Father for vindication and for enthronement.

Let me explain what that means. Now, I said one problem we've got to deal with is the same language is used, but the problem is our English language. The same word in Greek is not used here.

[37 : 30] So in verse 27, the word parousia or parousia is used. That word everywhere else in the New Testament refers to Jesus' second coming. Paul, especially when he uses parousia, seems to be speaking of Jesus' second coming.

So in verse 27, it says the coming of the Son of Man. He's actually using a different Greek word, but our English language translates it the same as coming. So the problem is really with our language. So Jesus is saying the parousia or the revelation or appearing of the Son of Man, his return. He uses the same language in verse 37 if you look there. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. So this view would argue that in verse 27, he's speaking of his second coming.

And then we move to verse 37. As I said, 36 and on is speaking of Jesus' second coming. And in fact, we know this because he uses a specific wording that speaks to his second coming. However, in verse 30, the word is ercomenon, which can mean coming or going in Greek. So the word can mean the same thing as we translate it in English, but there's a distinction in language where in the New Testament, parousia is used to refer to Jesus' second coming, where ercomenon is not.

[38 : 43] And so the word could mean Jesus is coming or is going, or the coming or the going of the Son of Man. Now, without question, the language itself, Son of Man, is an allusion to Daniel, chapter 7.

And this view would argue that what's being described here is a specific allusion to chapter 7, verses 13 and 14 of Daniel. So listen, this is what Daniel says.

So this view is arguing that the coming of the Son of Man described in verse 30, is the fulfillment of what's described in Daniel, chapter 7.

And again, notice what it says in Daniel, chapter 7. He sees one coming with the clouds of heaven, so coming in the clouds, like a Son of Man, that same language, but where's the coming?

Where does the Son of Man come to? It's not to earth, is it? He comes to the Ancient of Days, which is whom? It's God the Father. So what Daniel sees in the vision is Jesus coming to God the Father.

[40 : 09] And what happens when he comes to God the Father? Well, it says he was given dominion and glory in a kingdom that all people's nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

So let's just think for a second. In light of where we're at in history, Jesus has come. And think about Matthew. Matthew all along has been arguing that Jesus came to usher in what?

His kingdom. Jesus came as the king. He ushered in his kingdom. He's rejected by his own people and put to death. But does that mean the end of his kingdom? Let's go further back for a second.

The Davidic covenant. There will be a son of David who will sit on the throne of David, and he will reign forever. But Jesus has been put to death.

Is he that king? Is he reigning? That would be the question going through our mind if we were a first century Christian. And what this year is arguing is that what's being described here is that what happened in AD 70 was that Jesus was enthroned in the heavens.

[41 : 15] He was given the dominion over all these nations, and it was manifested to the people on earth. How was it manifested? Israel was destroyed. And any hope of an earthly kingdom was put to bed.

There will be no earthly kingdom. It is a heavenly kingdom, and he's reigning from heaven now. Does that make sense? Whether you agree or not, is that kind of at least, is it clicking that what's being explained?

And so this view is arguing that the reason that Jesus uses a different Greek word is because he's not speaking of his second coming. He's speaking of his coming to the Father in heaven to receive his throne and the vindication of his life, his death, and his resurrection being displayed to all the Jews.

This also would click with what we've seen already in Jesus' words to the Pharisees, how he's told them about the judgment for all their accumulated sins will come upon them. They will see the sign in the heavens, and they'll know that they were wrong and that Jesus was right.

So in Matthew, this would mean that the destruction of Jerusalem is the evidence or the signs that Jesus has been given his throne and the kingdom in heaven and is ruling over all the world.

[42 : 27] He's been made the king of kings and the Lord of lords. Evidence of that is that he's put to an end those who might challenge that title. Of course, this fits with verse 29, meaning the fall of Israel immediately after the tribulation of those days.

So immediately after Israel falls, then Jesus will be enthroned. The earthly nation is finished, and Jesus is ushered in a spiritual kingdom over which he will reign eternally to no end, which also encourages us that Jesus is still reigning now.

And if we have questions of, is Jesus really on his throne? What this view is arguing is that that was put to bed, that was settled in AD 70 with the destruction of Israel. That proved to us that Jesus is on his throne.

It vindicated his life and death. And so, let's step back for a second. Jesus' trial. So we're going to see this soon. In Matthew 26, 63 through 64, the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. And Jesus said to him, You have said so, but I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

[43 : 40] So his response to the high priest is, After this, you're going to put me to death, but look, you're going to see me again, and where will you see me? Seated at the right hand of the Father, so enthroned, coming on the clouds.

And again, if we understand coming not necessarily as a return, because it would be awkward if he's sitting on the throne and yet returning. But his coming to the Father, and he's seated on the throne. So his statement is, you're going to see this in your own lifetime.

You're going to witness this. Which again fits with the view of A.D. 70 being the time. So Jesus is saying that Caiaphas will witness the events that affirm Jesus' claim that he is the Son of God.

Namely, God's judgment on Israel for rejecting him. And to that generation will be displayed that he truly is the Son of Man and God incarnate. And that he's the king that was promised in the Davidic covenant.

So let's look again at verse 30. One challenge with verse 30 is, again, difficulty translating from Greek. But we can understand verse 30 literally to mean, Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.

[44 : 47] So instead of thinking of it in terms of a sign in heaven of the Son of Man, the sign of the Son of Man that he is in heaven, that he's reigning in heaven. And then will warn the tribes of the land, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

So the destruction of Jerusalem in the temple is a sign that Jesus is in heaven. Not necessarily a sign in the heavens, but a sign that Jesus is in the heavens and reigning. And the word translated tribes usually refers to the tribes of Israel in the New Testament.

So we could see this as a fulfillment of what was prophesied in Zechariah 12, 10 through 14. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, on whom they have pierced.

So again, this is speaking of the past tense of what's already happened in Jesus' crucifixion. They shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn.

On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be great, as the mourning for Hadad Ramon in the plains of Megiddo. The land shall mourn each family by itself. And so what this view would be arguing is that the mourning of the tribes of the land is the mourning of the tribes of Israel.

[45 : 58] In that day they won't understand that they messed up. They made a mistake. They crucified their Messiah that they should have put their faith in. It won't necessarily be a mourning of repentance either. It will be them weeping because they see the destruction of their nation and of Jerusalem and of the temple because of their rejection of the Messiah.

This could then further be demonstrated by the gathering of God's elect from the furthest ends of the earth in verse 31. So how do you look again at verse 31? How do we understand verse 31 if we think this happened already?

And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other. Well, I think you guys are probably aware that the word angels in Greek means messenger.

So we can translate that as a proper office, the angelic spirits that are serving God as his messengers, or this also used in Greek New Testament to refer to just people who are carrying a message.

And so messengers may be speaking of Christians that go out into the world to gather his elect through the spread of the gospel. So if we read that and understand immediately after these days, here's what's going to happen.

[47 : 08] Jesus will be enthroned in heaven. He will be reigning as king over all the world, and the gospel will go forth to the very ends of the earth. It's exactly what we see happening right now and what we understand of where Jesus is and what he's doing.

So messengers here may be speaking of Christians taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, those who would share the gospel. It may be speaking of angels who accompany or in some way assist that work.

Maybe even as we think of the Holy Spirit that empowers the preaching of the word. But in some form or another, his message will go out, the gospel will go out to the ends of the earth, and God will gather from the four winds his people.

Now, I think this is consistent with what we see elsewhere. For example, Matthew 8, 11, and 12. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So what Jesus has already said is that there will be many in Israel who will be cast out into hell, and there will be many who are outside of the kingdom, being brought into the kingdom from east and west.

[48 : 10] And in the parallel passage in Mark, he actually uses all four compass points. He says, and people will come from east and west, and from north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God.

So what this view is arguing is that what Jesus is speaking of, in terms of people being brought in by the gospel from the four points of the compass, Jesus is now saying will be happening because of his reigning in heaven.

Now, that also ties in with our understanding of the idea that Satan will be bound, that the kingdom may go forward. Satan is not powerless. Satan still has power, but his dominion has been limited. Think of Christians before Jesus came. They were almost exclusively in one small area of Israel. But now that Jesus is seated on his throne, Satan is bound, the gospel is going forth to the very ends of the earth, and Christians are being brought in from all four points of the compass, into the kingdom to share in that wedding feast.

And then the trumpet would refer either to the gospel call, so the gospel being trumpeted out, or it may have reference to the Old Testament jubilee, in which the trumpet would be proclaimed at the day of atonement.

[49 : 20] So it may be a proclamation, atonement's been made, which really is in some way the gospel. Atonement's been made, now is the year of jubilee, now is the day of celebration, would be how they would interpret that.

All right, so I presented two possibilities here. I think there's ways in which we can understand both. There's strengths and weaknesses of both. I think that's a realm in which we, I think we're limited, because I don't see really any other good perspectives on this, but that's my attempt to explain both views.

Maybe you're convinced by one. Maybe you're left more confused than you were before you got here. But there's two presentations of what this may mean, and the strengths and weaknesses of those. I know I've already gone kind of long, and the lesson of the fig tree I've already touched on. I don't want to go in great detail here, but the lesson of the fig tree is just saying, know the signs of the coming tribulation in 70 AD so that you may flee and save yourself.

Jesus is telling them, going back to what we've already seen in the last sermon, verses 15 through 22, here are the signs of the destruction of the temple. Know the signs. When they're near, you know it's time to flee.

[50 : 30] So he's saying just, we know how to judge natural signs, so we ought to know how to judge spiritual signs as well. Verse 33. So also when you see these things, you know that the word he here can be he or it.

So in Greek, there's no distinguishing between those. You kind of have to pick that up from the context. And so it may mean that he is near the gates, or it may just be saying it is near the gates, he's referring to, and I think, let me just say, I think it's speaking of it.

It's neuter. And it's speaking of the destruction of the temple. So you know the destruction of the temple is near when you see the signs that are described in verses 15 through 22. And when you see the signs, you're to flee.

And then verse 34, again, we've talked about extensively, but when we have seen these things, or the people who are hearing this will see those things happen in their lifetime.

It will happen in their generation. And so, again, we have to reckon with the fact that most of this, at least as much as, apart from the contrast that I presented before, seems to be speaking of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and Israel in 70 A.D.

[51 : 45] And then let me just point out that in verse 34 it also says, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. And then verse 35, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

So what Jesus says here are more permanent than the earth, which is so remarkable. I mean, we think of, in terms of permanence, it seems pretty solid. But there is coming a future day when Jesus returns, where this earth will be consumed by fire.

His words will never pass away. These things are sure. And Jesus is just saying, you can trust what I told you. I'm not wrong about this. All these things will come to pass, and you'll know it. Part of what I've been arguing in the last, now, three sermons, is that, unfortunately, we're really slow on the uptake sometimes, and we don't see that Jesus has proved himself to be true and faithful.

His words have come to pass. And what we've seen, if not all, at least almost all of everything we've seen so far in these last three sermons, came to pass in 70 AD.

And so Jesus' words have proved faithful. That ought to encourage us, Lord willing, as we move ahead, that what Jesus says about his second coming can also be trusted. If what Jesus said about the destruction, the judgment that came upon Israel is true, we can know as well that what he speaks of his return will also be true.

[53 : 01] And so it gives us confidence to trust him. So, some final application. Again, I probably lean more toward the second view that I presented than the first view, but I see why people argue for the first view.

If we take the perspective of the second view, some application for us is that this is an amazing vindication of Jesus' divinity and his atoning work.

If Jesus' atoning work and divinity are proven and vindicated by the destruction of Jerusalem, that pretty much says it, doesn't it? For all those people who put him to death, for all those people

