# FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

## MATTHEW 24:1-31 THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (part 1)

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2026**

## MATTHEW 24:1-31 Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

### 24 SIGNS OF THE TIMES

1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6 You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 At that time many will fall

away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

**Perilous Times**

15 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 Behold, I have told you in advance. 26 So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. 27 For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

# MATTHEW 24:1-31

**The Glorious Return**

29 “But 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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other..

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

# *Enduring Word Commentary*: Matthew 24:1-31 Jesus' Olivet Discourse (part 2)

## A. The destruction of the temple and its implications.

**1. (1-2) Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple.**

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

a. **Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple**: Jesus would contend no more with the religious leaders, and never again come to the temple in His earthly ministry. With emphasis, He **went out and departed**.

i. **Went out and departed**: "There is an emphasis on the idea of the verb. He was going away, like one who did not mean to return." (Bruce)

ii. "They came to their Master, going before in a deeply preoccupied mood, and tried to change the gloomy current of His thoughts by inviting Him to look back at the sacred structure." (Bruce)

b. **His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple**: After the destruction of Solomon's temple, this temple was originally built by Zerubbabel and Ezra (Ezra 6:15). Herod the Great (who ruled when Jesus was born) greatly expanded and improved it. This temple was the center of Jewish life for almost a thousand years – so much so, that it was customary to swear by the temple (Matthew 23:16), and speaking against the temple could be considered blasphemy (Acts 6:13).

i. "Josephus the Jew (Antiquities 15.14) tells us that for eight whole years together he kept 10,000 men a-work about it; and that for magnificence and stateliness, it exceeded Solomon's temple." (Trapp)

ii. After Herod's work, the temple was huge: nearly 500 yards or meters long and 400 yards or meters wide. Herod's plan for rebuilding started in 19 B.C. and was only completed in A.D. 63, taking more than 80 years. The temple was finished only seven years before it was destroyed.

iii. But the Second Temple wasn't just big; it was also beautiful. The Jewish historian Josephus said that the temple was covered with gold plates, and when the sun shone on them it was blinding to look at. Where there was no gold, there were blocks of marble of such a pure white that from a distance strangers thought there was snow on the temple.

c. **Do you not see all these things?** The disciples wanted Jesus to look at the beautiful **buildings**; Jesus told them to turn around and take a good look at those **things**.

i. "These *things*, not building, implying indifference to the splendours admired by the disciples." (Bruce)

d. **Not one stone shall be left here upon another**: Some 40 years after Jesus said this, there was a widespread Jewish revolution against the Romans in Palestine, and they enjoyed many early successes. But ultimately Roman soldiers

crushed the rebels. In AD 70 Jerusalem was leveled, including the temple – just as Jesus said would happen.

i. "Titus (it is said) would have preserved the temple, as one of the world's wonders, from being burnt, but could not; such was the fury of his soldiers, set a-work by God doubtless." (Trapp)

ii. It is said that at the fall of Jerusalem, the last surviving Jews of the city fled to the temple, because it was the strongest and most secure building in the city. Roman soldiers surrounded it, and one drunken soldier started a fire that soon engulfed the whole building. Ornate gold detail work in the roof melted down in the cracks between the stone walls of the temple, and to retrieve the gold, the Roman commander ordered that the temple be dismantled stone by stone. The destruction was so complete that today they have true difficulty learning exactly where the foundation of the temple was.

iii. "Josephus says the stones were white and strong; fifty feet long, twenty-four broad, and sixteen thick. Antiq. b. 15. c. xi." (Clarke)

e. **That shall not be thrown down**: This prophecy was fulfilled literally. There was a real temple, and it was really destroyed. The literal fulfillment of this prophecy establishes the tone for the rest of the prophecies in the chapter. We should expect a literal fulfillment for these as well.

i. "We may also observe how little God values splendid houses of prayer when they are made dens of thieves." (Poole)

**2. (3) Jesus' prediction brings up two questions.**

**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?"**

a. **As He sat on the Mount of Olives**: Removed from the temple, yet overlooking it, the disciples asked Jesus questions about His bold prediction concerning the destruction of the temple.

i. It was an appropriate time for such a discourse. The religious leaders rejected Jesus, and would soon deliver Him to the Romans for crucifixion. He knew the bitter fate awaiting Jerusalem, and He wanted to give hope and confidence to His disciples who would soon be greatly tested.

b. **When will these things be?** Jesus said the temple would be completely destroyed. It was logical that the disciples wanted to know when it would happen. Jesus will speak to this question, but only in the context of answering their next two questions.

c. **And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?** The disciples probably thought they asked only one question. In their minds, the destruction of the temple and the **end of the age** were probably connected. But really, they asked two questions (some say three), and this second question is answered in the remainder of the chapter.

i. "The disciples did not so tabulate their questions. In all probability they presented them as one request, supposing that all these things would happen simultaneously. Jesus' answer was directed mainly to correct this misapprehension." (Morgan)

ii. It may also be that this second question was asked as they remembered the events surrounding the first temple's destruction:

Solomon's Temple was destroyed in the context of national judgment and exile.

d. **And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?** As Jesus answers this important second question, He will make many specific comments and predictions about the end times. These predictions have been the source of significant disagreement among Christians who have tried to understand them. Why didn't Jesus simply say it so clearly that there was no possibility anyone could misunderstand Him?

i. One reason why prophecy may seem vague or imprecise is because God wants every age to have reasons to be ready for Jesus' return. We should not think of Jesus' return as an event far off on a time line, but something we have been running parallel with since the day of Pentecost.

ii. Others suggest that God's intention was to keep the future somewhat vague and clouded to confound the Devil, even as the resurrection of the Messiah was vague in the Old Testament.

iii. Though some prophetic interpretations are different, we are sure of this: *He is coming again*, and we must be ready.

**B. The flow of history until Jesus' return.**

**1. (4-8) Jesus describes general world conditions during the period between His Ascension and the time immediately preceding His second coming.**

**And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows."**

a. **Take heed that no one deceives you**: From the outset, Jesus warned the disciples that many would be deceived as they anticipated His return. There have been times in the history of the church when rash predictions were made and then relied upon resulting in great disappointment, disillusionment, and falling way.

i. One notable example of this was the prophetic expectation in 1844 with William Miller in the United States. Because of his prophetic interpretations, calculations, and publications, there were hundreds of thousands in the United States who were convinced that Jesus would return in 1844. When He did not, there was great disappointment, with some falling away, and some cultic groups spawned from the prophetic fervor.

b. **See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet**: The kind of things Jesus mentions in this section are *not* the things that mark specific signs of the end. Things like false messiahs, **wars**, **famines**, **pestilences, and earthquakes** have certainly marked man's history since the time of Jesus' Ascension – but were not specific signs of the end. In effect Jesus said, "Catastrophes will happen, but these will not signal the end."

i. In the midst of any great war or any great famine or any great earthquake, it is natural to believe that the world is coming to an end. But Jesus said there is a far more specific sign that would indicate His return, and He describes this later.

ii. "One clear aim of this chapter is to prevent *premature excitement* about the parousia." (France)

c. **All these are the beginning of sorrows**: Though none of those events are the specific sign of the end, collectively they *are* a sign. When Jesus described these calamities as **the beginning of sorrows**, He literally called them *the beginning of labor pains*. Just as is true with labor pains, we should expect that the things mentioned – **wars**, **famines**, **earthquakes**, and so on – would become *more frequent* and *more intense* before the return of Jesus – without any one of them being the specific sign of the end.

i. "The *beginning*: such an accumulation of horrors might well appear to the inexperienced the end, hence the remark to prevent panic." (Bruce)

**2. (9-14) Jesus describes what His disciples must expect during the time between His Ascension and Second Coming.**

**"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."**

a. **They will deliver you to tribulation and kill you**: In the period after Jesus ascends to heaven and before He comes again, His disciples should expect to be persecuted. This may make His followers believe the end is near, but this also is not the specific sign of His return.

i. "Rather, *Then they will deliver you up to affliction*…By a bold figure of speech, *affliction* is here *personified*. They are to be delivered into affliction's own hand, to be harassed by all the modes of inventive torture." (Clarke)

ii. **Will betray one another**: "Persecution would reveal the traitors within the Church as well as the enemies without." (Spurgeon)

b. **False prophets will arise and deceive many**: In the period after Jesus ascends to heaven and before He comes again, the disciples of Jesus will see many false prophets, and their success. But these also are not the specific signs of His return.

i. **Deceive many**: "Alas, that such teachers would have *any* disciples! It is doubly sad that they should be able to lead astray '*many*.' Yet, when it so happens, let us remember that the King said that it would be so." (Spurgeon)

c. **Lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold**: In the period after Jesus ascends to heaven and before He comes again, His disciples should expect to see society become worse and worse. But this also is not the specific sign of His return.

i. "And lawlessness will lead to the cooling off of *love*, a connection to be noted. *Most men's love* is literally 'the love of the many.'" (France)

ii. "Here is something to tremble at: 'Because iniquity shall abound,' — that is worse than pestilence; 'the love of many shall wax cold,' — that is worse than persecution. As all the water outside a vessel can do it no hurt until it enters the vessel itself, so outward persecutions cannot really injure the Church of God, but when the mischief oozes into the Church, and the love of

God's people waxes cold, — ah, then the barque is in sore distress." (Spurgeon)

iii. "If the heart grows cold, everything will be coldly done. When love declines, what cold preaching we have! All moonlight light without heat; polished like marble, and as chill. What cold singing we get, — pretty music, made by pipes and wind, but oh, how little soul-song! — how little singing in the Holy Ghost, making melody in the heart unto God ! And what poor praying! Do you call it praying? What little giving! When the heart is cold, the hands can find nothing in the purse; and Christ's Church, and Christ's poor, and the heathen may perish, for we must needs hoard up for ourselves, and live to grow rich. Is there anything that goes on as it ought to go when love waxes cold?" (Spurgeon)

d. **This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come**: Jesus also promised that before the end, the gospel would go out to the whole world. The persecution, false prophets, and general downgrade of society would not prevent the spread of the gospel.

i. "Some claim this has already been done, and that therefore the end of the age is necessarily close at hand. This conclusion is open to grave doubt. Everything depends on the meaning of the words, 'for a testimony.'" (Morgan)

ii. The church is to take this seriously as their duty. However, God assured that it *will* happen: *I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue and people – saying with a loud voice. "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."* (Revelation 14:6-7)

**C. Jesus describes the sign of His coming and the end of the age.**

**1. (15) The sign: the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel.**

**"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),"**

a. **When you see the "abomination of desolation"**: Essentially, the **abomination of desolation** speaks of the ultimate desecration of a Jewish temple, the establishment of an idolatrous image in the **holy place** itself, which will inevitably result in the judgment of God. It is the **abomination** that brings desolation.

i. In the vocabulary of Judaism of that time, an **abomination** was an especially offensive form of idolatry. Jesus described a gross form of idolatry, **standing in the holy place**, that brings with it great destruction (**desolation**).

ii. "*The desolating sacrilege* is a literal Greek rendering of the phrase…An 'abomination' in Old Testament idiom is an idolatrous affront to the true worship of God." (France)

b. **Standing in the holy place**: This means that the **abomination of desolation** takes place in the Jewish temple. This is the only plain meaning of the phrase **holy place**. Some believe it happened in a *prior* Jewish temple, before it was destroyed in AD 70. Others – more properly – believe it *will happen* in the **holy place** of a rebuilt temple.

i. For centuries, there was only a small Jewish presence in Judea and Jerusalem. Their presence in the region was definite, and continuous, but small. It was unthinkable that this weak Jewish presence could rebuild a temple. Therefore the

fulfillment of this prophecy was highly unlikely until Israel was gathered again as a nation in 1948. The restoration of a nation that the world had not seen for some 2,000 years is a remarkable event in the fulfillment and future fulfillment of prophecy.

ii. Those who believe that the events of Matthew 24 were all or mostly all fulfilled in AD 70 have a difficulty here. There is no good evidence at all that what they believe was the abomination of desolation (the Roman armies or their ensigns) were ever set up as idolatrous images in the **holy place** of the temple. Instead, the temple was destroyed before the Romans entered.

iii. Therefore, those with this interpretive approach often re-define what the **holy place** is, as does Bruce: "One naturally thinks of the temple or the holy city and its environs, but a 'holy place' in the prophetic style might mean the holy *land*."

iv. "The normal meaning of *hagios topos* ('holy place') is the temple complex... But by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70 it was too late for anyone in the city to flee." (Carson)

c. **As spoken of by Daniel the prophet**: The mention of the **abomination of desolation** is taken from the book of Daniel. *They shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation* (Daniel 11:31). This describes a complete desecration of the temple, prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes in the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

i. Paul elaborates on the future fulfillment of this in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: *That day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*.

ii. "The discourse itself is undoubtedly a source for the Thessalonian Epistles... we may say that Jesus himself sets the pattern for the church's eschatology." (Carson)

iii. Daniel 12:11 gives additional insight: *And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be 1,290 days* (until the end). When this sign is set up, the end may be determined – there will be almost three and one-half years to go until the consummation of all things.

iv. Through the centuries, the most common interpretive approach to the predictions Jesus made in this chapter is to see them all or mostly all fulfilled in the great destruction that came upon Jerusalem and Judea in A.D. 70. This approach is attractive in some ways, especially in that it makes the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:34 easy to understand. Yet the approach that sees this chapter as all or mostly all fulfilled in A.D. 70 is *completely inadequate in its supposed fulfillment of the abomination of desolation*. In this approach, the **abomination of desolation** is almost always understood to be the Roman armies or the ensigns they carried.

v. Yet when we understand the importance and what is said about this event – the abomination of desolation – we must give priority to this event, even more than the easiest interpretation of Matthew 24:34.

- It is the *critical sign* mentioned in Matthew 24.
- It is the *warning to flee* mentioned in Matthew 24.

- It is the *sign of the consummation of all things* in Daniel 9:27.
- It is the sign *foreshadowed by Antiochus Epiphanes* in Daniel 11:31.
- It is the precise marker of days to the end in Daniel 12:11.
- It is the *revelation of the man of sin* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.
- It is the *image of the beast* in Revelation 13:14-15.

vi. Taking these passages in their most plain meaning, the **abomination of desolation** cannot be the Roman armies or the ensigns they marched under; it cannot be totalitarian governments or any other conjecture. The **abomination of desolation** must be some kind of image of the Antichrist set in an actual temple, and is the decisive sign for the end. This means that for the most part, Jesus' predictions in Matthew 24 have not been fulfilled; or at least that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a foreshadowing fulfillment, even as the desecration of the temple under Antiochus Epiphanes was a foreshadowing of the ultimate **abomination of desolation**.

d. **Whoever reads, let him understand**: Here Jesus (assuming that He said these words, and that they were not added by Matthew) directed us again to the central place of understanding, the **abomination of desolation**. It was almost as if Jesus said, "Don't miss this. If you don't understand this, you won't understand many other things." And this is *exactly* the error of many who, with good intentions, misunderstand the plain meaning of the **abomination of desolation**. **Let him understand**!

**2. (16-20) Jesus warns what should be done when the abomination of desolation appears: flee immediately.**

**"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."**

a. **Then let those who are in Judea flee**: These are warnings specifically addressed to Israelites. **Judea**, **housetops**, and **Sabbath** all speak to a Jewish environment.

i. "A refugee's lot is hard enough without extra impediments." (France)

ii. In light of the broader context in this chapter, these words of Jesus should be understood as having primary application to those who see the abomination of desolation in the very last days, during the great tribulation – events that are yet to occur.

iii. Yet there is no doubt that in some ways the catastrophe that came upon Judea and especially Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a prefiguring of that future event; an imperfect foreshadow of the ultimate fulfillment. For this reason, virtually all the Christians fled Jerusalem and Judea in the years leading up to A.D. 70, when the Roman armies arrived in the area intent on putting down the Jewish rebellion in the Roman province of Palestine.

iv. "There is reasonably good tradition that Christians abandoned the city, perhaps in A.D. 68, about halfway through the siege." (Carson)

v. "*Eusebius* and *Epiphanius* say, that at this juncture, after *Cestius Gallus* had raised the siege, and Vespasian was approaching with his army, all

who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan; and so they all marvellously escaped the general shipwreck of their country: not one of them perished." (Clarke)

vi. Sadly, that was *not* what the Jewish people did. "Jesus' advice was that when that day came men ought to flee to the mountains. They did not; they crammed themselves into the city and into the walls of Jerusalem from all over the country, and that very folly multiplied the grim horror of the famine of the siege a hundredfold." (Barclay)

b. **Then let those who are in Judea flee**: This is because at the appearance of the abomination of desolation, the desolation will first be poured out at Judea, and because the church will not be a factor at this time, having already been caught up to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

i. Because Jesus told His disciples about the abomination of desolation (which is set up by the Antichrist in the middle of the Great Tribulation) and warned them of this coming destruction in the Great Tribulation, some Christians believe that all Christians *will go through* the Great Tribulation. To them, it seems evident. Why would Jesus say these things to His disciples if His disciples would not experience them?

ii. The answer is simple. We know from this passage and other passages that God will remove His church before the fury of the Great Tribulation, catching them away to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Yet this information is valuable for the followers of Jesus so they can understand His plan for the future. This information is especially valuable for those who *will become* His disciples in the Great Tribulation after the church is gone.

iii. We do well to remember that the disciples who heard Jesus say these words saw none of these things. Yet it was still good for them to hear it. Even if Christians will not go into the Great Tribulation, it is good for them – and those who will become Christians in the tribulation – to know what will happen during that time. Jesus spoke to all ages here.

**3. (21-28) Coming after the abomination of desolation: great tribulation.**

**"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."**

a. **Great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time**: Jesus said that this will be the most awful time in all history. When we think of the terrible wars, plagues, famines, and genocide history has seen, this is a sobering statement. When God pours out His wrath on a God rejecting world, it will be truly **great tribulation**.

i. Those who believe that the events of Matthew 24 were all or mostly all fulfilled in A.D. 70 are in the

unenviable position of arguing that the calamity that befell Jerusalem at that time was the worst catastrophe of all history. This is not possible to adequately defend historically. As bad as the catastrophe of A.D. 70 was, there have been subsequent wars and calamities even worse. This reminds us that this **great tribulation** – this time of catastrophe **such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time** – has not yet been fulfilled.

b. **Look, here is the Christ**: No one should be deceived about the nature of Jesus' coming. It will not be secret or private, but as plain as **lightning** that **flashes** across the sky. But in the midst of such tribulation, there will be a temptation to look for false messiahs (**false christs and false prophets will rise**).

i. **As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man**: "Christ's coming will be sudden, startling, universally visible, and terrifying to the ungodly." (Spurgeon)

ii. **The coming of the Son of Man**: "*Parousia* ('coming') is used only in this chapter in the Gospels (vv. 3, 27, 37, 39), though in the Epistles it is used several times of Jesus' return in glory. Its literal meaning is 'presence' (as in 2 Corinthians 10:10), but it was used for official visits by high-ranking persons, state visits, and also for divine visitations, hence its technical use for Jesus' ultimate 'visitation'." (France)

c. **For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together**: This is a difficult statement. It was probably a figure of speech with the idea, "when judgment is ripe, it will surely come."

**4. (29-31) Coming after the great tribulation: the return of Jesus Christ.**

**"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. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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 His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."**

a. **The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light**: Several prophetic passages describe the cosmic disturbances that will precede and surround the glorious return of Jesus (Joel 2:10, Revelation 6:12-14, Isaiah 34:4).

b. **The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven**: It is difficult to say exactly what this **sign** is. It seems to precede His return as described in Revelation 19:11. Perhaps this sign is somehow related to the incredible cosmic disturbances that will precede the great event.

i. Some, in light of the Roman Emperor Constantine's vision, thought the **sign of the Son of Man** would be a cross in the sky. More probably it is simply a way to describe the physical, visible return of Jesus to the earth from heaven.

ii. "Others point out that *semeion* is the LXX translation for the 'standard' or 'banner' referred to in the Old Testament as a signal for the gathering of God's people." (France)

iii. Barclay on *semeion*: "It is the regular word for the arrival of a governor into his province or for the

coming of a king to his subjects. It regularly describes a coming in authority and in power."

c. **They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**: This is the fulfillment of the end, indicated by the sign of *the abomination of desolation*. Since this has not happened yet, neither has the abomination of desolation.

i. Again, those who claim that all or most of the events of Matthew 24 were fulfilled in the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and Judea in A.D. 70 are in an unenviable position. They often claim that Jesus fulfilled this **coming on the clouds of heaven** of **the Son of Man** with **power and great glory** by "coming" in judgment against the Jewish people in A.D. 70.

ii. Even some of those who believe that most of the events of Matthew 24 were fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem understand that this is a stretch too far. "From the foregoing exposition it appears that the coming of the Son of Man is not to be identified with the judgment of Jerusalem." (Bruce)

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