

Matthew 23:37-24:31

**ARE ANY SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING IN
THE CHURCH AGE?**

2 Categories of Views of Matthew 24:4-14

1. Historical-Futurists view portions of Matthew 24:4-14 as being fulfilled historically, during the present Church age and other parts as having fulfillment during the future 70th week of Daniel.
2. Strict Futurists view all of Matthew 24:4-14 as being fulfilled in the future, during the 70th week

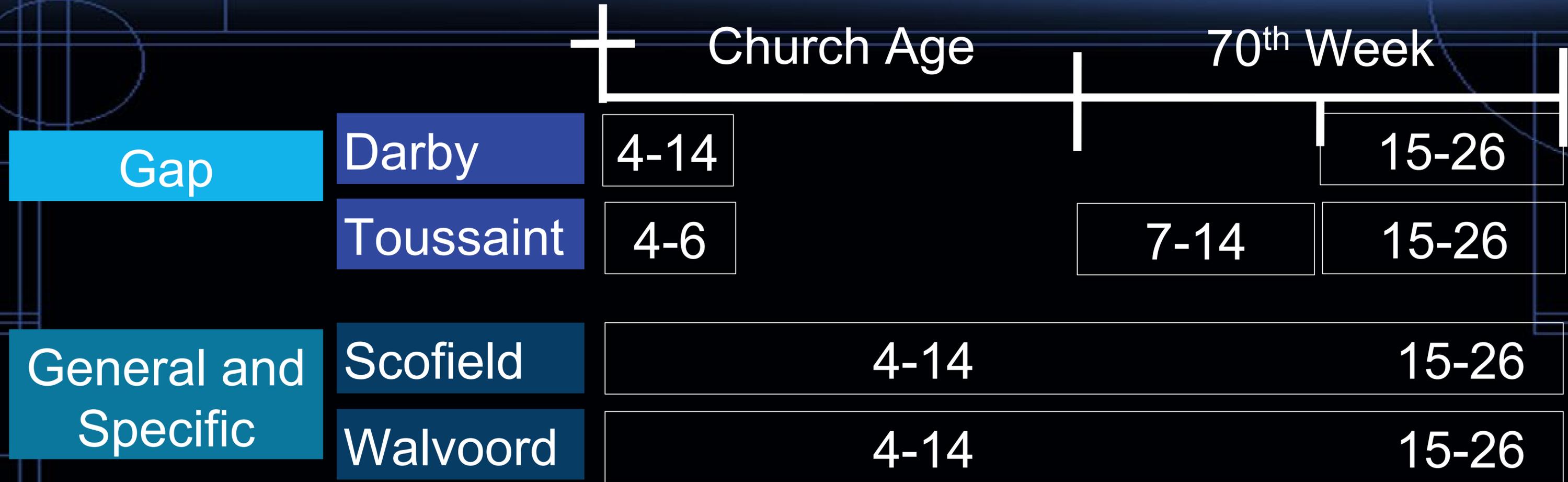
Historical-Future Views



Weaknesses of the Gap View

1. There were no false Christs between AD30 and 70
 - “We possess no *historical* record of any false Messiahs having appeared *previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.*” - Ice
2. The birth pangs are not adequately dealt with
3. An gap in fulfillment is contrary to the illustration of the fig tree

Historical-Future Views



Weaknesses of the General and Specific View

1. It is a double interpretation
 - “Verses 4 to 14 have a double interpretation.” - Scofield
2. The birth pangs are not adequately dealt with
3. It is contrary to the illustration of the fig tree

Historical-Future Views



Gap

Darby

4-14

15-26

Toussaint

4-6

7-14

15-26

General and Specific

Scofield

4-14

15-26

Walvoord

4-14

15-26

Chronological
Historic and
Future

Chafer

4-8

9-26

Cooper

4-5

6

7-8

9-14

15-26

Fruchten.

4-6

7-8

9-14

15-26

Weaknesses of the Chronological Historic-Future View

1. The wars in verse 6 and 7 are the same wars, not different wars, as proven by the explanatory *γὰρ*.
2. It is too speculative to argue that WWI and WWII fulfilled verse 7
3. The expression “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” is better connected to the second seal in Rev 6:4
 - “Here one must be very cautious and avoid dogmatism.” - Cooper

Weaknesses of the Chronological Historic-Future View

4. The earthquake data from the 20th century shows a slight decrease in both frequency and intensity during the 20th century.
5. It does not deal adequately with the birth pangs
6. It does not fit with the illustration of the fig tree. Those who saw WWI did not see all these things.

Weaknesses of the Chronological Historic- Future View

7. 24:9 is not a good description of what will happen to Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Historical-Future Views



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Futurist Views



Chronological
Future 1st Half

Gaebelein

Ryrie

McClellan

Bigalke

4-14

15-26

4-14

15-26

4-14

15-26

4-14

15-26

Weaknesses of the Chronological Futurist 1st Half View

1. Matt 24:9 is not a general description of martyrs under the altar under the fifth seal in Rev 6:9-11. The “you” in context are future Jewish believers hated and persecuted by the “nations”.
2. The first half of the Tribulation does not end in verse 14 because verse 14 is the end of the birth pangs altogether, which is the end of the second half coterminous with the Second Coming.
3. The placement of the phrase “the beginning of birth pangs” is in the wrong verse in this view, and should be in verse 14. But verse 14 says “then the end will come,” indicating it is the end of the second half

Futurist Views



Chronological
Future 1st Half

Gaebelein

4-14

15-26

Ryrie

4-14

15-26

McClellan

4-14

15-26

Bigalke

4-14

15-26

Chronological
Future 1st and
2nd Half

Pentecost

4-8

9-26

Barbieri

4-8

9-26

Showers

4-8

9-26

Enns

4-8

9-26

- “There seems to be evidence to support the view that the first half of the week is described in verses 4-8. The parallelism between verses 4-8 and Revelation 6 seems to indicate that the first half of the tribulation is here described....There are indications that verses 9-26 describe the events of the last half of the week. The abomination of desolation (24:15) is clearly stated by Daniel (9:27) to appear in the middle of the week and continue to the end of the period. The word “then” in verse 9 seems to introduce the great persecutions against Israel that were promised them and were described in Revelation 12:12-17, where John reveals that this persecution will last for the last half of the tribulation period (Rev. 12:14).” - Pentecost

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The Argument of the Gospel of Matthew

- Matthew's argument is two-fold; Jesus is indeed the King even though Jesus' kingdom did not come (Matt 1-11). The reason the kingdom did not come is because the kingdom's arrival in history is contingent on Israel's repentance. When Israel rejected the King (Matt 12) the kingdom was postponed and the King began to prepare His disciples for an interadvent age (Matt 13-28). This was the informal rejection of the King. The formal rejection would take place later, leading to the crucifixion.

The Five Discourses all Relate to the Kingdom

- The Discourse on Kingdom Righteousness (5-7)
- The Discourse on Kingdom Missions (10)
- The Discourse on Kingdom Postponement (13)
- The Discourse on Kingdom Greatness (18)
- **The Discourse on Kingdom Coming (24-25)**
- The discourse in Matt 24-25 describes the conditions in the world that will bring Israel to repentance, issuing in the return of the King and His judgments.

The Context of the Discourse on Kingdom Coming (Matt 23:37-39)

- Jesus' scathing rebuke of the Pharisees (23:13-36)
- Jesus' lament over Israel's rejection (23:37)
- Jesus' proclamation of the temple's destruction (23:38)
- Jesus' pronouncement of departure until Ps 118:26 is uttered by Israel (23:39)

The Disciples' Questions (24:1-3)

- The issue in the disciples' minds was Jesus' statement about the temple being destroyed (23:38)

The Disciples' Questions (24:1-3)

- Two questions? Or three? Or four?!

The Disciples' Questions (24:1-3)

- Two questions
 - Two interrogatives – “when” (*ποτε*) and “what” (*τι*)
 - When will these things happen?
 - What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?
 - TSKS construction

The Disciples' Questions (24:1-3)

- Hart requires two questions to make his case because without it there is no chiasm
- "...Jesus answers these two questions in reverse order. This technique is called chiasm." – John Hart
- Hart claims that the first question is about the beginning of the day of the Lord (70th week), but the first question is not about the beginning of the day of the Lord, but about when the temple buildings would be destroyed.

The First Question - when temple would be destroyed

- The answer to the first question is not recorded by Matthew, but by Luke in 21:12-24
- “It should be obvious that in this section of Luke’s account we have the answer of Christ to the disciples’ question about the judgment of Jerusalem and the temple, for here He speaks especially of the events which will occupy the time from His departure to the destruction of the city in A.D. 70.” – Alva McClain

The Second Question - sign of His coming

- Zechariah 14:6-7, “In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.”

The Second Question

- The disciples had a very definite meaning of *παρουσια* in mind. It referred to the day He would return to earth to end this present age and usher in the Messianic age. It certainly did not refer to a broader period of time such as “the day of the Lord” or the entire “70th week” as some suggest. Their question relates to a precise time that would signal His coming

The Third Question - the end of the age

- The end of the age is related to the Second Coming. Jesus refers to it several times in the discourse (v 6, 13, 14).

What did the disciples really want to know?

- The meaning of the three question, and what the disciples' really wanted to know was, "What is the relationship *in time* between the destruction of the temple buildings, the sign of His coming and the end of the age?"

Jesus' Answer (24:4-31)

- Matthew does not record Jesus' answer to the first question. Luke does in 21:12-24. The reason Matthew records it is to show that the disciples thought these were all related questions. The reason Matthew does not record the answer to the first question is because they are not all related. The temple will be destroyed in the near time frame and the sign of His coming and end of the age in a far time frame. Matthew also didn't record it because it was not germane to his book argument.

The Chronological Future 1st and 2nd Half View

- “In 24:4-8 Jesus describes the signs in the first half of the Tribulation. These are not signs for the church, since the church will be raptured prior to the Tribulation. These signs parallel Revelation 6....In the second half of the Tribulation (vv. 9-14) the suffering will intensify. “Then” (v. 9) marks a transition, referring to the occasion when the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel and persecutes the nation (Dan. 9:27)....Matthew 24:15-26 amplifies the period discussed in 24:9-14. In 24:9-14 Jesus foretold many signs; now He singles out one sign—the Abomination of Desolation (v. 15).” - Enns

The First Half of the 70th Week (24:4-8)

1. The verb “deceive” binds 24:4-28 into a single unit dealing with the same time period (Gk. *πλαναω*; cf verses 4, 5, 11 and 24). The key characteristic of the 70th week is “deception”.
2. The references to “false Christs” binds 24:4-28 into a single unity dealing with the same time period (cf verses 5, 23 and 24).

The First Half of the 70th Week (24:4-8)

3. “wars and rumors of wars” and “nation rising against nation” in 24:6-7 correspond to the second seal wars in Rev 6:3-4.
4. “famines and earthquakes” in 24:7 correspond to the famines and earthquakes in Rev 6:8, 12-17.

The First Half of the 70th Week (24:4-8)

5. The entire 70th week must be described in 24:4-14 because in 6 is it not the end, but in verse 14 it is the end.
6. The “birth pangs” occur in the 70th week, not throughout the church age “...the involuntary and uncontrollable nature of birth pangs, as well as their intensification leading ultimately to a time of deliverance, well pictured the concept of a time of divine judgment that must run its course until the promise of new life could be experienced.” - Price

The First Half of the 70th Week (24:4-8)

7. All these things must take place in one generation, binding the events of 24:4-8 to the same generation that see the events of 24:9-31.

The Second Half of the 70th Week (24:9-14)

1. In verse 9, the word “Then” (*τοτε*) signifies a succession in time/transition to things that will take place after “the beginning of birth pangs” (v 8).
2. Verse 9 describes what happens to the believing remnant of Israel at the midpoint. The “you” in verse 9, who are delivered over to tribulation and killed and hated by all nations because of Jesus’ name is the believing Jewish remnant addressed through the disciples.

The Second Half of the 70th Week (24:9-14)

3. Verse 10 describes the betrayal among the Jewish people when some Jews follow the anti-Christ and others Jesus Christ. This betrayal will take place in the second half.
4. Verse 11 describes false prophets prophesied to come among Israel in the second half, parallel to Zech 13:2-6
 - “It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land. ³“And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the Lord’; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.” – Zech 13:2-3

The Second Half of the 70th Week (24:9-14)

5. Verse 12 describes the period as one of lawlessness, reminding us that the anti-Christ is a man of lawlessness during the second half (cf Dan 7:25; 2 Thess 2:3)
6. Verses 13 and 14 speak of events right before the end of the 70th week, events that will immediately precede the sign of His coming. These are in the second half.

The Midpoint of the 70th Week (24:15)

- 24:15 is the midpoint and it is the verse that gives the overall structure of 24:4-31 as the 70th week of Daniel. The abomination of desolation is not a sign of the Second Coming but that Jewish believers in the land must flee because of the hatred and persecution of the nations described earlier in 24:9. The only sign of the Second Coming is in verse 30 against the backdrop of verse 29 and described also in Zech 14:6, 7.

Historical-Future Views



Intercalation

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Summary

- The overall argument of Matthew must be kept in mind throughout. All of the discourses relate to the kingdom in some way and the Olivet Discourse relates to the events immediately preceding the coming of the King in His kingdom. Jesus was lamenting the fact that generation of Israel rejected. He pronounced judgment on the temple and announced He would not return until the nation welcomed Him back.

Summary

- The disciples asked about the timing of the destruction of the temple buildings in relation to the sign of His coming and the end of the age. Jesus' answer was that the temple buildings would be destroyed in the near time frame (recorded by Luke) and the sign of His coming and end of the age would occur in a far time frame with all the characteristics of 24:4-31.

Summary

- The far time frame is held together by the verbal use of “deception” and false Christs” throughout the passage. The illustration of the fig tree and the statement that the generation that sees all these things will not pass away until all these things take place puts all the events in the same season, which is the 70th week of Daniel. The descriptions of wars, famines and earthquakes are more certainly linked to the events of the first half of the 70th week than events of the 20th century.

Summary

- Therefore, the first half of the 70th week is described in Matthew 24:4-8. These are the beginning of birth pangs. The word “then” in 24:9 transitions to the second half when the nations of the world will hate the Jewish remnant and deliver them to tribulation and death. The identity of the Messiah will cause division in the nation and false prophets will abound leading many to be deceived. An increase in lawlessness under the policies of the anti-Christ will cause the love of most Jews to grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be rescued.

Summary

- The mention of the end signifies the end of the 70th week. 24:15 recapitulates the events of the second half showing that the abomination of desolation is the event that will initiate the persecution of the Jewish remnant described earlier in verse 9. The conclusion is that there are no signs in Matt 24 that describe events in the present church age that indicate His Second Coming is soon. The events all take place within the 70th week and lead up to the one sign in 24:30 that immediately precedes His coming and the end of the age (cf also Luke 17:20-24).