

Jesus' Answer

There are those that believe that Matthew got it wrong, that the apostles did not ask about *"the conclusion of the system of things"*. (Mt 24:3) Their argument is that Mark and Luke did not use those words, therefore Jesus must not have said them. They believe that the apostles only asked about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Regardless of whether or not that is true, Jesus' answer includes two descriptions, each describing a specific event and time period. Below is the answer that Jesus gave in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The blue texts ONLY apply to the last days.

The red texts ONLY apply to the destruction of Jerusalem.

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(Matthew 24:1-42) Now as Jesus was departing from the temple, his disciples approached to show him the buildings of the temple. ² In response he said to them: "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, by no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down."

³ While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: "Tell us, **when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?**"

⁴ In answer Jesus said to them: "Look out that nobody misleads you, ⁵ for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶ You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet.

⁷ "For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. ⁸ All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress.

⁹ "Then people will hand you over to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name. ¹⁰ Then, too, many will be stumbled and will betray one another and will hate one another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will arise and mislead many; ¹² and because of the increasing of lawlessness, the love of the greater number will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who has endured to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ "Therefore, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken about by Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place (let the reader use discernment), ¹⁶ then let those in Ju·de'a begin fleeing to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house, ¹⁸ and let the man in the field not return to pick up his outer garment. ¹⁹ Woe to the pregnant women and those nursing a baby in those days! ²⁰ Keep praying that your flight may not occur in wintertime nor on the Sabbath day; ²¹ for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. ²² In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.

²³ “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look! Here is the Christ,’ or, ‘There!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones. ²⁵ Look! I have forewarned you. ²⁶ Therefore, if people say to you, ‘Look! He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out; ‘Look! He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For just as the lightning comes out of the east and shines over to the west, so the presence of the Son of man will be. ²⁸ Wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

²⁹ “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. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in grief, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a great trumpet sound, and they will gather his chosen ones together from the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens to their other extremity.

³² “Now learn this illustration from the fig tree: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors. ³⁴ Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

³⁶ “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be. ³⁸ For as they were in those days before the Flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹ and they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the hand mill; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. ⁴² Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

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(Mark 13:1-37) As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him: “Teacher, see! what wonderful stones and buildings!” ² However, Jesus said to him: “Do you see these great buildings? By no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down.”

³ As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives with the temple in view, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately: ⁴ “Tell us, **when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are to come to a conclusion?**” ⁵ So Jesus began to tell them: “Look out that nobody misleads you. ⁶ Many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and will mislead many. ⁷ Moreover, when you hear of wars and reports of wars, do not be alarmed; these things must take place, but the end is not yet.

⁸ “For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in one place after another; there will also be food shortages. These are a beginning of pangs of distress.

⁹ “As for you, look out for yourselves. People will hand you over to local courts, and you will be beaten in synagogues and be put on the stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them. ¹⁰ Also, in all the nations, the good news has to be preached first. ¹¹ And when they are taking you to hand you over, do not be anxious beforehand about what to say; but whatever is given you in that hour, say this, for you are not the ones speaking, but the holy spirit is. ¹² Furthermore, brother will deliver brother over to death, and a father a child, and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all people on account of my name. But the

one who has endured to the end will be saved.

¹⁴ “However, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader use discernment), then let those in Ju-de’a begin fleeing to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let the man on the housetop not come down nor go inside to take anything out of his house; ¹⁶ and let the man in the field not return to the things behind to pick up his outer garment. ¹⁷ Woe to the pregnant women and those nursing a baby in those days! ¹⁸ Keep praying that it may not occur in wintertime; ¹⁹ for those days will be days of a tribulation such as has not occurred from the beginning of the creation that God created until that time, and will not occur again. ²⁰ In fact, unless Jehovah had cut short the days, no flesh would be saved. But on account of the chosen ones whom he has chosen, he has cut short the days.

²¹ “Then, too, if anyone says to you, ‘See! Here is the Christ,’ or, ‘See! There he is,’ do not believe it. ²² For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the chosen ones. ²³ You, then, watch out. I have told you all things beforehand.

²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling out of heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and will gather his chosen ones together from the four winds, from earth’s extremity to heaven’s extremity.

²⁸ “Now learn this illustration from the fig tree: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Likewise also you, when you see these things happening, know that he is near at the doors. ³⁰ Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

³² “Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father. ³³ Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is. ³⁴ It is like a man traveling abroad who left his house and gave the authority to his slaves, to each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to keep on the watch. ³⁵ Keep on the watch, therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether late in the day or at midnight or before dawn or early in the morning, ³⁶ in order that when he comes suddenly, he does not find you sleeping. ³⁷ But what I say to you, I say to all: Keep on the watch.”

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(Luke 21:5-36) Later, when some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with fine stones and dedicated things, ⁶ he said: “As for these things that you now see, the days will come when not a stone will be left upon a stone and not be thrown down.” ⁷ Then they questioned him, saying: “Teacher, **when will these things actually be, and what will be the sign when these things are to occur?**” ⁸ He said: “Look out that you are not misled, for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The due time is near.’ Do not go after them. ⁹ Furthermore, when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified. For these things must take place first, but the end will not occur immediately.”

¹⁰ Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, and in one place after another food shortages and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs.

¹² “But before all these things happen, people will lay their hands on you and persecute you, handing you over to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and governors for

the sake of my name. ¹³ It will result in your giving a witness. ¹⁴ Therefore, resolve in your hearts not to rehearse beforehand how to make your defense, ¹⁵ for I will give you words and wisdom that all your opposers together will not be able to resist or dispute. ¹⁶ Moreover, you will be handed over even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, ¹⁷ and you will be hated by all people because of my name. ¹⁸ But not even a hair of your heads will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will preserve your lives.

²⁰ “However, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. ²¹ Then let those in Ju-de'a begin fleeing to the mountains, let those in the midst of her leave, and let those in the countryside not enter into her, ²² because these are days for meting out justice in order that all the things written may be fulfilled. ²³ Woe to the pregnant women and those nursing a baby in those days! For there will be great distress on the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴ And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.

²⁵ “Also, there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish of nations not knowing the way out because of the roaring of the sea and its agitation. ²⁶ People will become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ But as these things start to occur, stand up straight and lift up your heads, because your deliverance is getting near.”

²⁹ With that he told them an illustration: “Notice the fig tree and all the other trees. ³⁰ When they are budding, you see it for yourselves and know that now the summer is near. ³¹ Likewise also you, when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all things happen. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

³⁴ “But pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you ³⁵ as a snare. For it will come upon all those dwelling on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that must occur and in standing before the Son of man.”

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To say that Jesus' entire response was describing the destruction of Jerusalem means that everything in the blue text must apply to that destruction. It clearly does not. Nothing in the blue text was fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Furthermore, nothing in the red text can be applied to the last days without contradicting other scriptures. For instance:

(Matthew 24:22) In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short. (see also Mr 13:20)

(Matthew 24:38-41) For as they were in those days before the Flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹ and they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will

be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the hand mill; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. (see also Lu 17:26-30, 34, 35)

Those two descriptions are in contradiction if they are describing the same event. In the **first** things are so bad that all flesh is about to perish. In the **second** life is carrying on normally. They are describing two different events. The **first** is describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the impending death of all the Jews if the Roman attack was not "**cut short**".♦ The **second** is describing "**that day**" that Armageddon arrives. (Mt 24:36) (♦see my article "Replacement Theology")

Another contradiction would be Luke 21:18 which says that "**not even a hair of your heads will perish**" and verse 24 which speaks of them falling "**by the edge of the sword**". (Mt 24:22; Mr 13:20) Both descriptions cannot be describing the same event.

The destruction of Jerusalem was violent with many deaths, but on the day that Armageddon strikes life will be carrying on normally. People will be eating and drinking, and buying and selling, and marrying and going to work as usual. (Mt 24:38-41; Lu 17:26-30, 34, 35) Paul also describes the calm circumstances that will prevail on the day that Armageddon strikes.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-6) Now as for the times and the seasons, brothers, you need nothing to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know very well that Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. ³ Whenever it is that they are saying, "Peace and security!" then sudden destruction is to be instantly on them, just like birth pains on a pregnant woman, and they will by no means escape.

So whether or not Jesus was asked two questions or one, he gave two distinct answers regarding two separate events. And, as you can see, neither of his answers can be applied to both events and time periods.

What do *you* think?

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Last edited 05-28-2023 (date created 05-23-2023)