

Gospel of Matthew



Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 24:1-51

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. In Jeremiah 12:7, God speaks through the prophet saying: “I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my heritage. I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.” In Daniel 9:17, the prophet begs: “O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate.” Both of these Old Testament prophets write about the sanctuary of God being forsaken and desolate because of the absence of God’s presence.
2. In Matthew 24:36, Jesus tells his disciples that no one knows the day and hour of the close of the age, “not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”
3. Signs that constitute “the beginning of the birth-pangs” include many who will claim to be the Christ and lead many astray; wars and rumors of wars; nation rising against nation, kingdom rising against kingdom; and famines and earthquakes in various places. The image of a woman in labor is used by the Old Testament prophets to describe the grief that will overcome sinners when God comes as judge. Isaiah 26:17-19 includes the prophecy: “Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs, when she is near her time, so were we because of thee, O Lord; we were with child, we writhed, we have as it were brought forth wind. We have wrought no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise, O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!” Jeremiah 6:24 describes a conquering nation set against Jerusalem: “We have heard the report of it, our hands fall helpless; anguish has taken hold of us, pain as of a woman in travail.” And Hosea 13:13 tells what is to befall the descendants of the tribe of Ephraim and those Israelites allied with them in their sin: “The pangs of childbirth come from him but he is an unwise son; for now he does not present himself at the mouth of the womb.”
4. In Matthew 24:12, Jesus says that most men’s love of God will grow cold “because wickedness is multiplied.” In Matthew 24:15 Jesus predicts: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”
5. Daniel 11:31 includes the prophecy that enemy forces “shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.” Daniel 12:11 specifies that “from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” 1 Maccabees 1:20-64 describes how Antiochus Epiphanes sacked Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple there about a century prior to the time of Jesus.

Matthew Lesson 24 Suggested Responses

6. In the Romans' nearly complete devastation of Jerusalem in 70 A.D, the prophecies of Jesus are fulfilled in a literal-historical sense. In the closing of the age of the Old Covenant, there's an even further spiritual significance—the end of all the ages that will occur when Jesus returns in glory to judge the world.
7. Zechariah 14:5 describes the day of the LORD, when the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel will flee as they “fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones with him.” In Matthew 24:28, eagles represent the Roman standard (a graven image of an eagle) which was raised over the Temple grounds. Jesus' words: “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together,” serve as an allusion to scavengers from Rome picking apart the corpse of Jerusalem. In Deuteronomy 28:49, Moses prophesies: “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you do not understand. . . .” Habukkuk 1:8b also predicts destruction using the metaphor of an eagle to describe the Israelites' enemy: “Yea, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour.”
8. In Matthew 24:29-30, Jesus says that immediately after the tribulation, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the power of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heaven, and he will be seen coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The ancients primarily measured time by reference of the earth to heavenly bodies. To speak of the heavenly bodies falling was a dramatic way of saying that time was up for the city or nation under judgment. Jesus' close-of-the-age prophecies declare the spiritual and theological significance of Jerusalem's impending destruction. Time has run out for the age of the Old Covenant, and the age of the New Covenant has arrived.
9. Matthew 24:31 indicates that a loud trumpet call will be the signal for the angels of the Son of man to gather the elect. Isaiah 27:13 prophesies: “And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.”
10. In Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus uses the example of Noah and the flood to explain that the close of the age will have the nature of an unexpected catastrophe. In Matthew 24:40-41, Jesus describes different ways that one will be taken and one will be left in order to explain the way that the righteous will be spared, just as Noah and his family were spared.

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.