

Ask The Rabbi – June 22, 2021 (Part 3)

Question:

I feel I don't have a clear understanding of the timeline of end times. The what and when of events we can expect. Growing up I was taught about the rapture or the catching away. What is this and how should I understand the meaning of it?

How do I come back with an answer when others argue the following verses that they see as “rapture” verses?

If the Rapture is not true, how do you explain Matt 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-37.

Response:

The term Rapture has become synonymous in Church teaching and is understood to be a “hidden” or “secret” return of Yeshua, prior to His very public return. Unfortunately, there are no distinct verses that speak specifically to this event occurring. What has occurred is a misappropriation of verses speaking specifically of one event, that being the return of Yeshua and identified as the Resurrection...

Joh 11:23 Yeshua said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Joh 11:24 Marta said, "I know that he will rise again at the Resurrection on the Last Day."

Joh 11:25 Yeshua said to her, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life! Whoever puts his trust in me will live, even if he dies;

Joh 11:26 and everyone living and trusting in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Joh 11:27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Last time we looked at 1 Corinthians 15:50 – 58, the second of three Scripture passages found in the New Covenant writings that have become synonymous with the “Rapture” Doctrine. Tonight we will explore the third, found in Matthew 24.

The last two passages have explicitly emphasized the subject of the author Sha'ul and the matter of the return of Yeshua. In Thessalonica, there was concern that this moment in time had already occurred while in Corinth there was an unbelief in the Resurrection and thus the return of Messiah in and of itself. Unlike, Sha'ul's accounts whereby he is addressing specific concerns many years after Yeshua's ascension, Yeshua, as recorded in Matthew 24 is addressing specific questions from His talmidim.

Mat 24:3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the talmidim came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that you are coming, and that the `olam hazeh is ending?"

Yeshua's talmidim are seeking insight on three specific aspects...

1. When will all these things happen? Pertaining to Matthew 24:2

Mat 24:1 As Yeshua left the Temple and was going away, his talmidim came and called his attention to its buildings.

Mat 24:2 But he answered them, "You see all these? Yes! I tell you, they will be totally destroyed—not a single stone will be left standing!"

2. What will be the sign of your coming? (That is His return)
3. What will be the sign of the end of the olam hazeh (the end of this age)?

Thus I want to start off with some background provided by David Stern's commentary...

From David Stern's Jewish New Testament Commentary:

Chapters 24-25, the "Olivet Discourse" (because it was given on the Mount of Olives, [Mat 24:3](#)), discusses the future and constitutes Yeshua's fifth and final teaching in the book of Mattityahu (see [Mat 13:1-52](#)). It is interesting to compare with this chapter a Talmud passage that predicts events prior to the Messiah's coming:

"Rabbi Yitzchak said that Rabbi Yochanan said, 'In the generation when the Son of David is to come, scholars will be few in number. As for others, their eyes will fail from sorrow and grief. There will be much trouble, and evil decrees will be renewed, with each new evil coming quickly, even before the other has ended.'

"Our Rabbis taught that the following would happen during the seven years at the end of which the Son of David is to come. In the first year, 'I will cause it to rain upon one city and cause it not to rain upon another city' ([Amo 4:7](#)). In the second, the arrows of hunger will be sent forth [food shortages, with no one being fully satisfied]. In the third, there will be a great famine, during which men, women, children, pious men and saints will die; and [hunger will cause] the Torah to be forgotten by its talmidim. In the fourth, there will be surpluses of some things but shortages of others. In the fifth there will be great plenty-people will eat, drink and rejoice; and the Torah will return to its talmidim. In the sixth year, there will be sounds [in the light of what follows, either rumors of wars (compare [Mat 24:6](#)) or heavenly voices or shofar blasts (see [Mat 8:2](#)) announcing the Messiah's coming]. In the seventh year there will be wars. And at the end of the seven years the Son of David will come." (Sanhedrin 97a)

What do we have here but a foundation, that is an expectation that transcends church theology and is grounded within Torah and the Prophets as interpreted by the Rabbis. Thus Yeshua paints a picture that among the learned P'rushim may have sounded familiar...

[Mat 24:4](#) Yeshua replied: "Watch out! Don't let anyone fool you!

[Mat 24:5](#) For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray.

[Mat 24:6](#) You will hear the noise of wars nearby and the news of wars far off; see to it that you don't become frightened. Such things must happen, but the end is yet to come.

[Mat 24:7](#) For peoples will fight each other, nations will fight each other, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various parts of the world;

[Mat 24:8](#) all this is but the beginning of the 'birth-pains.'

[Mat 24:9](#) At that time you will be arrested and handed over to be punished and put to death, and all peoples will hate you because of me.

[Mat 24:10](#) At that time many will be trapped into betraying and hating each other,

[Mat 24:11](#) many false prophets will appear and fool many people;

[Mat 24:12](#) and many people's love will grow cold because of increased distance from Torah.

Mat 24:13 But whoever holds out till the end will be delivered.

Thus painting a picture of what is to come, yet not providing any dates or timeline, yet conveying a well known method throughout Scripture of "signs" to watch, signs to pay attention to. For it will not be a specified time we are to trust, for which has not been revealed for even Yeshua conveyed to not knowing the

hour or the day, for this will be conveyed later in this passage...

Mat 24:36 "But when that day and hour will come, no one knows—not the angels in heaven, not the Son, only the Father.

For what Yeshua has revealed as part of the sign of the destruction of the Temple whereby not one stone will remain standing had occurred 1951 years ago, thus these verses do not only apply to the destruction of the Temple because verse 14 offers anyother layer as to what Yeshua is conveying.

Mat 24:14 And this Good News about the Kingdom will be announced throughout the whole world as a witness to all the Goyim. It is then that the end will come.

A surprisingly similar view of how the Messianic Age will come can be found on the same page of the Talmud:

"It has been taught that Rabbi Nechemyah said, 'In the generation of Messiah's coming impudence will increase; esteem will be perverted [people won't esteem each other]; the vine will yield its fruit, yet wine will be expensive [because everyone will get drunk and become careless and lazy, so that there will be scarcity]; and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy, and no one will rebuke them.' " (Sanhedrin 97a)

A great deal will occur, thus culminating with the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, yet based on verse 14 The Good News about the Kingdom has barely left Y'hudah. Keep in mind when Yeshua conveys that the whole world will be made known about the Kingdom it is not the whole known world at the time, but the entire world as is known today. Thus, this verse is key when understanding a time frame. For some have concluded that the next verse had already happened.

Mat 24:15 "So when you see the abomination that causes desolation spoken about through the prophet Dani'el standing in the Holy Place" (let the reader understand the allusion),

Yeshua has alluded to the signs that would occur leading to the destruction of the Temple, yet this verse requires a Temple to still be standing. Thus some have concluded that this verse occurred prior to the destruction of the Temple, yet the Timeframe expressed by Yeshua includes the entire world being made known about the Good News of the Kingdom.

The view pertaining to Matthew 24:15 is known as a Preterist perspective whereby these prophecies have been fulfilled in the first century of the common era. This would mean that a similar moment in time to that which would have occurred in relation to Daniel's prophecy would have to occurred. For Daniel's prophecy is associated with that of Antiochus...

Antiochus IV ("Epiphanes") conquered Jerusalem in 167 B.C.E. he erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple. [1Maccabees 1:54](#) and [1Maccabees 6:7](#) refer to this as a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, but Yeshua is pointing to an additional, future fulfillment.

Yet, Yeshua is conveying to His talmidim and Matthew to the reader, pay attention to Daniel, but that it is not associated with what had already transpired. It is an allusion, an indirect reference that is similar to Daniel, but different than what had occurred. Thus, verse 15 implies that there must be another Temple standing in order for verse 15 to be fulfilled.

Hence we come to the challenge of the Temple mount and the third Temple. Remember what Yeshua had said previously, "not a single stone would remain standing" Thus the Temple and all its surroundings would be completely and totally destroyed and decimated. There are many questions that can be asked today about this rebuilding of the Temple for which we will not go into detail here but I have shared in the past.

1. Is what is identified as the Temple mount today really the Temple mount?
2. Which Temple will be built – Herod's Temple or Ezekiel's Temple.

Both are important when considering the ramifications moving forward and the current expectations within both the Jewish community and even the Christian community. These are questions to be answered for another time.

The abomination that causes desolation implies that a standing and functioning Temple will exist and in this case history will recur whereby what occurred in 167 BCE will occur in a similar manner again, yet through a different ruler. What will transpire, one might say is part of great tribulation. For the Adversary is exhibiting great control and authority.

Mat 24:16 "that will be the time for those in Y'hudah to escape to the hills.

Mat 24:17 If someone is on the roof, he must not go down to gather his belongings from his house;

Mat 24:18 if someone is in the field, he must not turn back to get his coat.

Mat 24:19 What a terrible time it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers!

Mat 24:20 Pray that you will not have to escape in winter or on Shabbat.

Mat 24:21 For there will be trouble then worse than there has ever been from the beginning of the world until now, and there will be nothing like it again!

Mat 24:22 Indeed, if the length of this time had not been limited, no one would survive; but for the sake of those who have been chosen, its length will be limited.

Mat 24:23 "At that time, if someone says to you, 'Look! Here's the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' don't believe him.

Mat 24:24 For there will appear false Messiahs and false prophets performing great miracles—amazing things!—so as to fool even the chosen, if possible.

Mat 24:25 There! I have told you in advance!

Consider the second beast as conveyed in Revelation 13...

Rev 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. It had two horns like those of a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon.

Rev 13:12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence; and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, the one whose fatal wound had been healed.

Rev 13:13 It performs great miracles, even causing fire to come down from heaven onto the earth as people watch.

Rev 13:14 It deceives the people living on earth by the miracles it is allowed to perform in the presence of the beast, and it tells them to make an image honoring the beast that was struck by the sword but came alive again.

Rev 13:15 It was allowed to put breath into the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast could even speak; and it was allowed to cause anyone who would not worship the image of the beast to be put to death.

Rev 13:16 Also it forces everyone—great and small, rich and poor, free and slave—to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead

Rev 13:17 preventing anyone from buying or selling unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Rev 13:18 This is where wisdom is needed; those who understand should count the number of the beast, for

it is the number of a person, and its number is 666.

Yeshua concludes this portion in answering His talmidim's questions not in a concise and orderly fashion but in a manner which addresses an order of occurrence.

1. When will all these things happen? Pertaining to Matthew 24:2
2. What will be the sign of your coming? (That is His return)

For there are many signs that will point to Yeshua's return, one of which is the revealing of the anti-messiah and a standing and functioning Temple. Both must be in place in order for v.15 to occur. Thus the anti-messiah must be made known before Yeshua returns. For Yeshua concludes this part of His response...

Mat 24:26 So if people say to you, 'Listen! He's out in the desert!' don't go; or, 'Look! He's hidden away in a secret room!' don't believe it.

Mat 24:27 For when the Son of Man does come, it will be like lightning that flashes out of the east and fills the sky to the western horizon.

Mat 24:28 Wherever there's a dead body, that's where you find the vultures.

Many people will be deceived, yet Yeshua is providing yet another sign as to His unmistakable return. The sky from the east to the west will be filled with light. Thus this is where we will leave off as we continue to lay a foundation whereby further dispelling the notion of a secret Rapture and concluding that the only subject is identified as the Resurrection that coincides with the Return of Yeshua.

Next week we will complete the remainder of Matthew 24.

