

ROSE GUIDE TO

END-TIMES PROPHECY



What Jesus Said About the End of the World

Jesus talked a lot about the end times—and no wonder! Don't forget: Jesus is the beginning and the end, the source and the goal of God's work in human history.

The future has a name and that name is Jesus.

Most of what Jesus told his first followers about the end times didn't take the form of lectures or discourses, though. When talking about the end of time, Jesus mostly told parables—analogies in the form of short stories with a particular point about God's work.

Jesus told his disciples about:

- A field where weeds and wheat grew together because an evil neighbor had tossed weed seed into the field (Matthew 13:24–43);
- A net filled with every kind of seafood; some fish were saved in baskets while the rest were hurled into a raging furnace (Matthew 13:47–50);
- A king who condemned an uninvited guest for crashing the crown prince's wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1–14);
- Five bridesmaids who missed the bridegroom because they didn't bring enough olive oil with them (Matthew 25:1–13);



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- Three servants who would be glorified or condemned, based on what they did with what they were given (Matthew 25:14–30);
- People from all nations who would be separated “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,” based on how they responded to the followers of Jesus (Matthew 25:31–46).

What do these parables teach us? Well, I suppose they could remind you to keep extra oil with you at all times, to double-check your wedding invitations, and to be careful what your neighbor tosses in your garden. But seriously: What do these teachings of Jesus tell us about the end times? *Here are three truths about the end of time that come directly from these parables:*



The Foolish Virgins, by James Tissot (1886–1894).

- 1. Jesus will return:** In the parable of the bridesmaids, the bridegroom comes back at an unexpected hour (Matthew 25:10). In the story about the sheep and the goats, the Son of Man returns “in his glory” (Matthew 25:31). At his return, he sends angels to gather the wheat and to separate the fish (Matthew 23:41–42, 47–50). (Jesus clearly had no problems with mixing metaphors.)
- 2. No one knows when Jesus will return:** Before and after the story of the bridesmaids who ran out of oil, Jesus made it clear that no one would be able to know the time of his return (Matthew 24:36; 25:13). The angels don’t know. The disciples of Jesus won’t know. In fact, during his time on planet earth, not even Jesus knew when he would return!
- 3. There will be a final judgment:** After separating the wheat from the weeds, angels throw the weeds into a fiery place where the condemned will

grind their teeth and cry in agony (Matthew 23:41) fate meets the fish that weren't kept, the uninvited wedding guest, the servant who kept his master's money to himself, and the goats that reject the brothers and sisters of Jesus (Matthew 23:47–50; 22:13; 25:30, 46).

When it comes to those three points from the parables that tell us about the end times, everyone who trusts the truth of Scripture can find common ground.

WHAT JESUS SAID ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

There is one exception to this pattern of parables in the teachings of Jesus about the end times. Once, as Jesus left the temple courts, a few of his followers pointed out the splendor of the temple that Herod the Great had renovated. Jesus responded by predicting the unthinkable: ***The Jewish temple would be destroyed.***

When the disciples reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus revealed to them a series of events that were, for him and his first followers, still in the future. Because these words were spoken on the Mount of Olives, they are sometimes known as the “Olivet Discourse.” Three of the New Testament Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—include the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

- But how far in the future were the events that Jesus described?
- Were they only a generation away? Could they have been fulfilled around AD 70, when the temple was destroyed?



The Disciples Admire the Buildings of the Temple, by James Tissot (1886-1894).

- Were they far in the future, close to the time when Jesus returns to earth?
- Or might Jesus have described both events? Did his discourse predict first-century events as well as ones that will happen in the end times?

Biblical scholars differ on the answers to these questions. The differences in interpretation come down to two words that we learned earlier. Remember the terms “futurist” and “preterist” from the first section of this book? Some interpreters look at the Olivet Discourse only from a *futurist* perspective; others see both *futurist and preterist* elements in these words of Jesus.

FOUR WAYS TO READ END-TIMES TEXTS		
Four Views	How Revelation Is Viewed	More About This View
Futurist	Revelation is prophecy primarily about the future end of the world.	In the futurist view, all or nearly all of Revelation is yet to occur. Revelation is a prophecy that describes the end of time and the years leading immediately to the end. Dispensational premillennialists as well as some historic premillennialists interpret Revelation in this way.
Historicist	The book of Revelation is prophecy about church history from the time of John to the end of the world.	Historicists view the events in Revelation as symbolic descriptions of historical events throughout church history. (Some futurists also understand the Seven Churches [Revelation 1–3] in a historic manner, treating each church as descriptive of a particular era of church history.)
Idealist	Revelation is a non-historical and non-prophetic drama about spiritual realities.	This perspective seems to have originated among ancient Alexandrian theologians, who frequently spiritualized and allegorized biblical texts, but this view also has contemporary followers.
Preterist	The book of Revelation is prophecy that was fulfilled primarily in the first century AD.	“ <i>Partial Preterism</i> ” views most of Revelation as prophecy fulfilled in the first century AD, though final chapters of Revelation describe future events to occur at the end of time. “ <i>Full Preterists</i> ” contend that the return of Jesus described in Revelation 19 was spiritual and occurred in AD 70. Christians throughout church history have understood full preterism to be a heresy. Preterists are typically <i>amillennialists</i> or <i>postmillennialists</i> , though some <i>historic premillennialists</i> might fit in this category.

TWO VIEWS OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)

VIEW 1 FULFILLMENT IN THE END TIMES ONLY: FUTURIST

How should these words of Jesus be interpreted? As a description of the end times (futurist)

Who takes this perspective?

- Dispensational premillennialists
- Some historical premillennialists

Overview

The disciples asked about

1. The destruction of the temple
2. The sign of the Messiah's return
3. The end of the age

In the Gospels According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus did not answer their first question. At most, Jesus may have described the destruction of the temple in Luke 21:20–24. Instead of addressing the destruction of the temple, Jesus taught his disciples about a future tribulation, near the end of time as we know it. His focus was on:

1. The calamities at the beginning of the tribulation
2. The Antichrist's sacrilege in the rebuilt Jewish temple
3. The return of "the Son of Man" to earth



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VIEW 2 PARTIAL FULFILLMENT IN THE FIRST CENTURY, COMPLETE FULFILLMENT WHEN JESUS RETURNS TO EARTH: PRETERIST AND FUTURIST

How should these words of Jesus be interpreted? As a description of the fall of Jewish temple and of the end of the age (preterist and futurist)

Who takes this perspective?

- Amillennialists
- Postmillennialists
- Some historical premillennialists

Overview

The disciples asked about

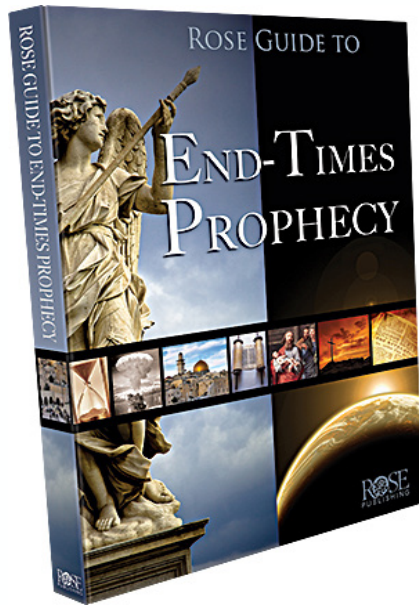
1. The destruction of the temple
2. The sign of the Messiah's return at the end of the age

Jesus *answered* both questions.

1. Jesus described the time of “distress” or “tribulation” that would begin around AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple (Matthew 24:4–28).
 2. Jesus told his disciples about the “sign” of his coming (Matthew 24:29–31).
- Most take this “sign” to be the return of Jesus to earth at the end of time.
 - Understood in this way, the tribulation is not a seven-year event near the end of time as we know it.
 - Instead, the tribulation began in the first century and will continue until Jesus returns.
 - A few identify the “sign” as an event that occurred in AD 70, when the temple was destroyed. This first-century judgment pointed forward to the judgment that will come when Jesus returns to earth.



The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, by David Roberts (1850)



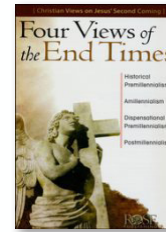
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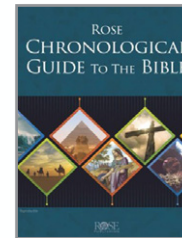
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