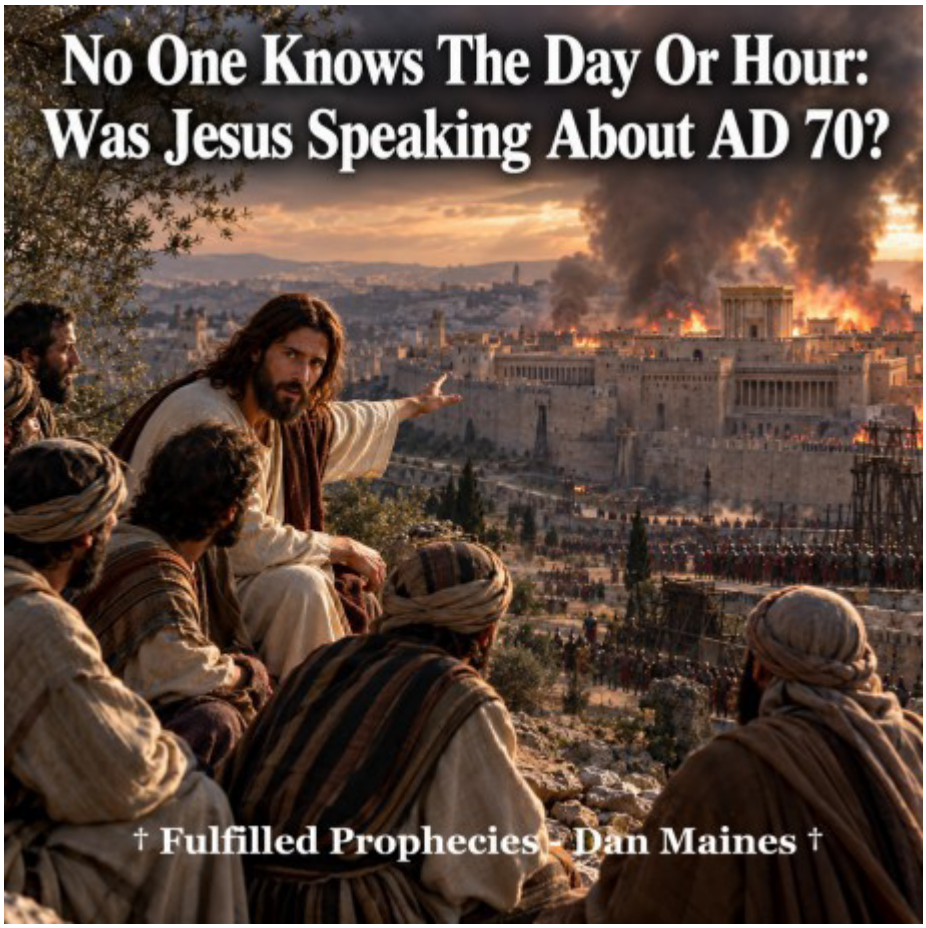
Fulfilled Prophecies

No One Knows The Day Or Hour: Was Jesus Speaking About AD 70?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the most misunderstood statements in the New Testament is Jesus' declaration that no one knows the day or hour of His coming. For generations, Christians have used this statement to argue that the Second Coming must still be in our future. But is that what Jesus actually taught? (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32)

† The problem begins when we remove one verse from its

original setting and ignore everything Jesus said before and after it. Jesus wasn't speaking to Christians living thousands of years later. He was answering questions from His disciples about the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the end of the Old Covenant age (Matthew 24:1-3; Luke 21:20-22).
† Jesus gave His disciples signs they could recognize, warnings they could obey, and a generation in which His words would be fulfilled. Not knowing the exact day or hour didn't mean the event was thousands of years away. It meant the precise moment remained unknown within the period He had already identified (Matthew 24:33-36).
† The question isn't whether Jesus knew what He was talking about. The question is whether we're willing to accept His own explanation of when these things would happen (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).

The Disciples Asked About The Temple And The End Of The Age

Matthew 24:2-3
And He said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.
As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?
† The entire discussion began with Jesus predicting the destruction of the temple. The disciples weren't asking about the destruction of planet Earth. They wanted to know when the magnificent temple standing before them would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-3).
† The end of the age referred to the approaching conclusion of the Old Covenant age, not the end of human history. The temple represented the religious system that was about to lose its covenantal standing through Christ's completed work (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8-10).

† Jesus connected the temple's destruction, His coming in judgment, and the end of the age within one prophetic discussion. We can't separate His answer from the questions His disciples actually asked (Matthew 24:2-3; Luke 21:5-7).

Jesus Identified The Generation That Would Witness Everything

Matthew 24:33-34
so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.
Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
† Jesus didn't say a generation living thousands of years later would witness these events. He said this generation, identifying the people living when He spoke those words (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).
† The expression all these things includes the events He had just described, including the tribulation, the coming of the Son of Man, and the judgment associated with Jerusalem's destruction (Matthew 24:21, 29-34).
† The generation statement establishes the time boundary. Jesus wasn't providing an exact calendar date, but He was identifying the generation in which His prophecy would be fulfilled (Matthew 24:33-34).
† If we move His coming thousands of years beyond that generation, we're no longer allowing Jesus' own time statement to govern our interpretation (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).

No One Knew The Exact Day Or Hour

Matthew 24:36
But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.
† Notice what Jesus didn't say. He didn't say the event couldn't happen within that generation. He said the exact day and hour were unknown. Those are two completely different statements

(Matthew 24:34-36).
† Knowing the general period of an event doesn't require knowing its precise date. Jesus had already identified the generation, but the Father retained authority over the exact timing (Matthew 24:33-36; Acts 1:7).
† The words but of that day and hour don't automatically introduce an entirely different event. The immediate context continues discussing the coming of the Son of Man and the need for watchfulness (Matthew 24:36-44).
† Jesus' statement about His own knowledge must be respected as He gave it. The text says the Son didn't know the day or hour at that time. It doesn't say His prophecy lacked a definite first-century fulfillment (Matthew 24:34-36).
† The mistake is turning an unknown hour into an unlimited number of generations. Jesus never made that argument. He identified the generation while withholding the precise moment (Matthew 24:33-36).

The Days Of Noah Explain The Unexpected Judgment

Matthew 24:37-39
For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.
For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,
and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.
† Jesus compared His coming to the days of Noah because judgment arrived unexpectedly upon people who continued their ordinary activities without recognizing the danger (Genesis 7:6-10; Matthew 24:37-39).
† Noah knew judgment was approaching because God had warned him. Yet the people outside the ark continued living as though nothing would happen. Their failure wasn't the absence of a warning, but their refusal to respond (Genesis 6:13-22; Hebrews 11:7).

† In the same way, Jesus warned His disciples about Jerusalem's approaching judgment. Those who believed His words could recognize the signs and escape, while those who rejected His warning faced destruction (Matthew 24:15-16; Luke 21:20-22).
† The comparison concerns the sudden arrival of judgment upon the unprepared. It doesn't require the destruction of the physical universe or place the fulfillment thousands of years beyond Jesus' generation (Matthew 24:34, 37-39).

Jesus Told His Disciples To Remain Alert

Matthew 24:42-44
Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.
But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.
For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.
† Jesus addressed His disciples directly. They were the ones instructed to remain alert because the approaching judgment concerned their own generation (Matthew 24:33-44).
† The thief illustration emphasizes unexpected timing, not an event postponed for thousands of years. A thief arrives without announcing the exact hour, even when the possibility of his arrival is understood (Matthew 24:43-44).
† Jesus wasn't commanding every future generation to calculate another possible date. He was warning His original audience to remain faithful and prepared during the approaching crisis (Matthew 24:42-44; Luke 21:34-36).
† The command to watch makes sense because the disciples were living within the period Jesus had identified. His warning had immediate relevance to their lives (Matthew 24:34, 42).

Mark Confirms The Same Generation And Unknown Hour

Mark 13:30, 32-33
Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.
Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.
† Mark places the generation statement and the unknown day or hour within the same prophetic discussion. The timing of the event and the uncertainty of its precise moment aren't contradictions (Mark 13:30-33).
† Jesus didn't say this generation would pass away and another generation thousands of years later would witness the fulfillment. His warning remained directed toward those who heard Him (Mark 13:30-33).
† The appointed time belonged to the Father's authority. The disciples needed to remain alert, not because fulfillment was indefinitely distant, but because its exact arrival couldn't be calculated (Mark 13:32-33; Acts 1:7).

Luke Identifies Jerusalem As The Place Of Judgment

Luke 21:20-22
But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
† Luke removes any uncertainty about the geographical setting. Jesus specifically identified Jerusalem surrounded by armies as the warning that her desolation was approaching (Luke 21:20).
† The command to flee was practical and urgent. People living in Judea could obey it when they recognized the approaching

military danger. This wasn't a warning about the end of planet Earth (Luke 21:20-21).
† Jesus called these the days of vengeance, connecting Jerusalem's destruction with the fulfillment of the prophetic judgments written against covenant unfaithfulness (Luke 21:22; Deuteronomy 28:49-52).
† The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 fits the historical setting of Jesus' warning. The fulfillment concerned the removal of the Old Covenant order, not the destruction of the physical creation (Luke 21:20-24; Hebrews 8:13).

Luke Repeats The Same Generation Promise

Luke 21:32
Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.
† Luke confirms the same generation limitation recorded by Matthew and Mark. All three accounts connect the predicted events with the people living in Jesus' day (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).
† Jesus didn't leave His audience without a time boundary. He gave them a clear assurance that the events He described would happen before their generation passed away (Luke 21:32).
† The unknown day and hour cannot overturn this promise. An interpretation that makes the fulfillment indefinitely future contradicts the natural meaning of Jesus' generation statement (Matthew 24:34-36; Luke 21:32).

Jesus Had Already Announced Judgment On Jerusalem

Matthew 23:36-38
Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children

together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.
Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!
† Before Jesus delivered the Olivet Discourse, He had already announced judgment upon Jerusalem and identified the generation that would experience it (Matthew 23:34-38).
† Jerusalem's responsibility for rejecting God's messengers and ultimately rejecting Christ formed the covenantal basis for the coming judgment (Matthew 23:29-38; Luke 19:41-44).
† The desolate house points to Jerusalem and its temple establishment. Jesus' prophecy in the following chapter explains how that desolation would become a historical reality (Matthew 23:38; Matthew 24:1-2).
† The generation in Matthew 23 and the generation in Matthew 24 belong to the same historical setting. Nothing in the text requires moving the judgment into our future (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).

The First-Century Church Expected The Coming Judgment

James 5:8-9
You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.
Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
† James told first-century believers that the coming of the Lord was near. He didn't describe an event that would remain unfulfilled for thousands of years (James 5:8).
† The Judge standing at the door agrees with Jesus' statement that His coming was near when the disciples recognized the appointed signs (Matthew 24:33; James 5:9).
† The original recipients were instructed to strengthen their hearts because they were living during the approaching covenantal transition and judgment (James 5:7-9; Hebrews 8:13).
† The language of nearness must be understood from the

standpoint of the people who originally received these words, not redefined according to our modern expectations (James 5:8-9).

Revelation Confirms The Nearness Of Fulfillment

Revelation 1:1, 3
The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,
Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
† Revelation begins by declaring that its prophetic events must soon take place. The time was near for its original recipients, not thousands of years away (Revelation 1:1-3).
† The language of nearness agrees with Jesus' generation statement and the apostolic expectation of approaching judgment (Matthew 24:34; James 5:8).
† The fulfilled perspective understands Revelation's judgment prophecies in connection with the first-century covenantal crisis that culminated in AD 70 (Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:6-10).
† The fact that the precise day and hour were unknown doesn't cancel the repeated declarations that fulfillment was near. Both statements can be true without contradiction (Matthew 24:36; Revelation 1:3).

Historical References

† Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, described the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the famine, internal violence, destruction of the temple, and terrible suffering during the Jewish-Roman War. His account provides important historical evidence for the catastrophe Jesus predicted (Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Luke 21:20-24).
† Josephus recorded the burning of the temple and the

devastation of Jerusalem in AD 70. His history confirms that the temple Jesus identified was destroyed within the lifetime of His original audience (Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 6; Matthew 24:2, 34).
† Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in the fourth century, reported a tradition that Jerusalem's Christian community departed for Pella before the city's destruction. This account is often connected with Jesus' warning to flee, although the historical details remain debated (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3.5; Luke 21:20-21).
† Tacitus, a Roman historian, also recorded the destruction of Jerusalem during Titus' military campaign. His account supplies non-Christian testimony concerning the historical catastrophe (Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Matthew 24:2).
† These historical writers document the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The identification of that catastrophe with the fulfillment of Jesus' coming in judgment is the fulfilled perspective's interpretation of the biblical evidence (Matthew 24:30-34; Luke 21:20-22).

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need to live in fear of another predicted destruction of Jerusalem or a future end of the Old Covenant age. Christ completed His redemptive work, and the former covenant has given way to the New Covenant established through Him (Hebrews 8:6-13; Hebrews 10:12-18).
† We don't need to calculate prophetic dates, identify modern nations as end-time signs, or search today's headlines for another fulfillment of Matthew 24. Jesus placed those events within His own generation (Matthew 24:33-36).
† We can live with confidence in Christ's established kingdom. Believers have already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem through their relationship with Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24).
† We should still remain spiritually faithful, but our faithfulness isn't motivated by fear of an approaching AD 70 judgment. It's

the response of people who belong to Christ and live under His everlasting reign (Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 12:28).
† The unknown day and hour shouldn't become an excuse to ignore Jesus' clear time statements. His words were fulfilled, and His faithfulness gives us confidence in every promise He has made (Matthew 24:34-35; 2 Corinthians 1:20).
† The kingdom isn't waiting to arrive. Christ reigns now, and His people enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant through faith in Him (Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 12:28).

Q & A Appendix

Q: If no one knew the day or hour, how could Jesus say everything would happen within that generation?
A: Because knowing the generation isn't the same as knowing the exact date. Jesus identified the period while explaining that the Father alone knew the precise day and hour (Matthew 24:34-36).

Q: Doesn't Matthew 24:36 begin a new prophecy about a future Second Coming?
A: The text doesn't explicitly announce a new event. Jesus continues discussing the coming of the Son of Man, using Noah and the thief illustration to explain why His disciples needed to remain alert (Matthew 24:36-44).

Q: Didn't Jesus say heaven and earth would pass away?
A: Yes, but the fulfilled perspective understands the language in its covenantal and prophetic setting. Scripture uses heaven-and-earth imagery for the removal of established orders, while Hebrews describes the Old Covenant as becoming obsolete (Matthew 24:35; Isaiah 51:15-16; Hebrews 8:13).

Q: Why didn't Jesus tell His disciples the exact date?
A: Jesus stated that the Father alone knew the day and hour. The disciples were given signs to recognize and instructions to obey, but they weren't authorized to calculate the precise

moment (Matthew 24:33-36; Acts 1:7).

Q: Was the coming of the Son of Man a physical appearance in the sky?
A: The fulfilled perspective understands this as Christ's covenantal coming in judgment. Biblical cloud imagery often represents divine authority and judgment, and Daniel describes the Son of Man receiving dominion and a kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 19:1; Matthew 24:30).

Q: Did the Roman destruction of Jerusalem fulfill Jesus' prophecy?
A: Yes, according to the fulfilled perspective. Jesus identified Jerusalem's surrounding armies, its desolation, and the generation that would witness these things. The events of AD 70 correspond to that historical setting (Luke 21:20-24, 32; Matthew 24:34).

Q: Does this mean Jesus will never come again to fulfill Matthew 24?
A: Yes, in the fulfilled perspective, the coming described in Matthew 24 was fulfilled within the generation Jesus identified. Scripture doesn't require repeating that covenantal judgment thousands of years later (Matthew 24:30-36; Luke 21:32).

Q: Should Christians today still watch for the end times?
A: We should remain faithful to Christ, but the first-century last-days judgment isn't still awaiting fulfillment. The apostles described those last days as their own time, and Jesus placed the predicted judgment within their generation (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 24:34).

Q: Is there another Day of the Lord still waiting to happen?
A: The fulfilled perspective understands the promised covenantal Day of the Lord associated with Jerusalem's judgment as completed. There is no additional prophetic Day of the Lord required to finish the Old Covenant age (Luke 21:20-

22; Matthew 24:34; Revelation 1:1-3).

Q: What is the most important point in understanding no one knows the day or hour?
A: We must read Matthew 24:36 together with Matthew 24:34. Jesus identified the generation that would witness the fulfillment while withholding the exact day and hour. One statement doesn't cancel the other (Matthew 24:34-36).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Matthew 24:2-3; Matthew 24:33-34; Matthew 24:36; Matthew 24:37-39; Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:30, 32-33; Luke 21:20-22; Luke 21:32; Matthew 23:36-38; James 5:8-9; Revelation 1:1, 3
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5

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