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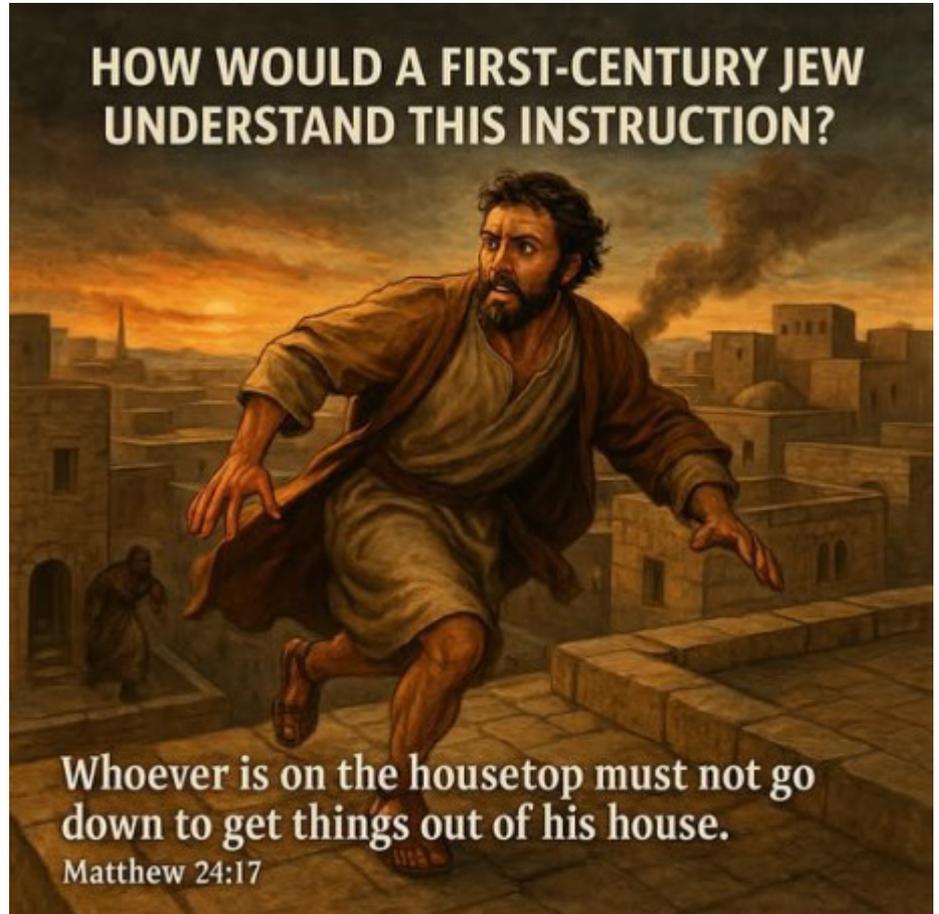
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**Matthew 24:17 -
How would a first-
century Jew
understand this
instruction
(Matthew 24:17)?**



By Dan Maines

**How would a first-century Jew understand this instruction
(Matthew 24:17)?**

A first-century Jew would have understood Matthew 24:17 as a warning of immediate and urgent physical danger, not a call to delay, pack, or hesitate, but to flee instantly when the signs appeared.

Here's how they likely would have understood it:

Housetops were flat and connected – In Jewish homes, the rooftops were often used like patios, and they were commonly connected by walkways or staircases on the outside. So, if someone was on the housetop, they could flee without going back down into the house. Jesus was telling them: "Don't even take a moment to re-enter your home, just run."

This was a real escape plan – This wasn't symbolic to them. They understood this as literal instruction for survival. When they saw the signs He gave (like the abomination of desolation), they were to flee to the mountains, just as Luke 21:20-21 says: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near... those who are in the country must not enter the city."

It echoed Old Testament flight patterns – Jews were familiar with urgent escape commands in times of judgment. Think Lot fleeing Sodom (Genesis 19:17), where the angel said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you." Jesus was speaking with that same tone of urgent covenantal judgment.

They saw this as fulfillment of prophecy – Those who believed Jesus' words would see them as tied to Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:26-27), and they would understand this to mean Jerusalem was about to be judged.

So, a first-century Jew would hear Matthew 24:17 as a life-saving command, when the sign comes, don't hesitate, don't gather your things, don't go back inside, just flee. Many early Christians in Jerusalem did just that and escaped to Pella, avoiding the destruction in 70 AD.

So Why Do Futurists Pick and Choose?

Here's the inconsistency: futurists often admit Matthew 24:17 was for the first century, yet they claim the rest of the chapter is for us in the 21st. Why? Because accepting verse 17 as fulfilled

undermines their entire timeline.

You can't have it both ways. If the flight to the mountains was fulfilled in 70 AD, so were the preceding signs (like the abomination of desolation) and the following events (like the coming of the Son of Man in judgment on Jerusalem).

The whole context is unified, Jesus was warning His disciples about their generation's judgment, not outlining events for us 2,000 years later.

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