

Fulfilled Prophecies

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**COMMENTATORS
OF THE 16TH,
17TH, 18TH, AND
19TH CENTURIES
AGREE ON
MATTHEW 24:14**



By Dan Maines

**COMMENTATORS OF THE 16TH, 17TH, 18TH, AND 19TH
CENTURIES AGREE ON MATTHEW 24:14**

Most modern commentators align with those of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. For centuries, the leading understanding among respected writers was that Matthew 24 referred to the events that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

John Calvin's Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, on Matthew 24:34 and context

(16th century) "34. This generation shall not pass away. Though Christ employs a general expression, yet he does not extend the discourses to all the miseries which would befall the Church, but merely informs them, that before a single generation shall have been completed, they will learn by experience the truth of what he has said. For within fifty years the city was destroyed and the temple was razed, the whole country was reduced to a hideous desert..."

Calvin explicitly ties Jesus' time marker, this generation, to the first century outcome.

He notes the destruction of the city and temple within that generation, aligning with the fulfilled reading of Matthew 24:34.

Geneva Bible Translation Notes, 1599, on Matthew 24:14
(16th century) "(3) The gospel will spread abroad, angering the world and the devil ever so much: and those who continually believe will be saved."

The Geneva note affirms the worldwide spread of the gospel as Jesus foretold.

It views the gospel's advance in the apostolic age as a settled expectation, fitting the fulfilled understanding of Matthew 24:14.

John Lightfoot's Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations
(1658-1674) "[And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.] Jerusalem was not to be destroyed before the gospel was spread over all the world: God so ordering and designing it that the world, being first a catechumen in the doctrine of Christ, might have at length an eminent and undeniable testimony of Christ presented to it; when all men, as many as ever heard the history of Christ, should understand that dreadful wrath and severe vengeance which was poured out upon that city and nation by which he was crucified."

Lightfoot linked the worldwide spread of the gospel with the judgment on Jerusalem.

Paul confirmed this truth in Romans 10:18: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

By AD 70 the nations had heard the message of Christ, and Israel's rejection was undeniable.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (1706-1721) "It is intimated that the gospel should be, if not heard, yet at least heard of, throughout the then known world, before the destruction of Jerusalem; that the Old-Testament church should not be quite dissolved till the New Testament was pretty well settled, had got considerable footing, and began to make some figure. Better is the face of a corrupt degenerate church than none at all. Within forty years after Christ's death, the sound of the gospel was gone forth to the ends of the earth, Romans 10:18. St. Paul fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum; and the other apostles were not idle. The persecuting of the saints at Jerusalem helped to disperse them, so that they went every where, preaching the word, Acts 8:1-4. And when the tidings of the Redeemer are sent over all parts of the world, then shall come the end of the Jewish state. Thus, that which they thought to prevent, by putting Christ to death, they thereby procured; all men believed on him, and the Romans came, and took away their place and nation, John 11:48. Paul speaks of the gospel being come to all the world, and preached to every creature, Colossians 1:6, 23."

Henry stressed that the "end" Jesus spoke of was the fall of the Jewish state.

Paul declared the gospel had already been preached "in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).

The very act of crucifying Christ brought the destruction they thought to prevent.

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes of the New Testament (1754) "This Gospel shall be preached in all the world, Not universally: this is not done yet: but in general through the several parts of the world, and not only in Judea. And this was done by St. Paul and the other apostles, before Jerusalem was destroyed. And then shall the end come, Of the city and temple. Josephus's History of the Jewish War is the best commentary on this chapter. It is a wonderful instance of God's providence, that he, an eyewitness, and one who lived and died a Jew, should, especially in so extraordinary a manner, be preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important facts, which so exactly illustrate this glorious prophecy, in almost every circumstance. Mark 13:10."

Wesley understood "the end" to be the fall of Jerusalem and its temple.

He pointed to Josephus, whose eyewitness account confirmed the prophecy with remarkable detail.

John S. C. Abbott and Jacob Abbott's Illustrated New Testament (1878) "In all the world. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the gospel had been preached through all the regions of the then known world."

The Abbott brothers affirmed the gospel had reached the extent of the Roman world before AD 70.

This showed Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled in that generation.

B. W. Johnson's The People's New Testament Commentary (1891) "This gospel of the kingdom, etc. The gospel was preached throughout the Roman Empire, 'the world' of the New Testament, before A. D. 70. Then the end shall come. Of the

Jewish state."

Johnson highlighted the Roman Empire as the "world" of the New Testament.

The "end" was the fall of the Jewish state, not the end of the planet.

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible (19th century)

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world – The evidence that this was done is to be chiefly derived from the New Testament, and there it is clear. Thus Paul declares that it was preached to every creature under heaven Colossians 1:23; that the faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world Romans 1:8; that he preached in Arabia Galatians 1:17, and at Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum Romans 15:19. We know also that He traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, and Crete; that he was in Italy, and probably in Spain and Gaul, Romans 15:24-28. At the same time, the other apostles were not idle; and there is full proof that within thirty years after this prophecy was spoken, churches were established in all these regions."

Barnes points to early New Testament evidence showing the gospel reached the Roman world before Jerusalem's fall.

This supports Matthew 24:14 as fulfilled rather than futuristic.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary (19th century) "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come, Of the city and temple: that is, when all nations shall, or may be convinced, by the preaching of the gospel, of the crying sin of the Jews in crucifying the Lord of glory; then shall the justice of God bring these dreadful judgments upon that people."

J-F-B interprets "the end" explicitly as the fall of the Jewish system, not the world.

It emphasizes gospel preaching as a witness before judgment fell.

Thomas Scott's Commentary on the Bible (1833) "Notwithstanding all these commotions and scandals, the gospel would soon be preached through the various nations of the Roman Empire, and in the different parts of the then known world; for a witness to them, that the Messiah was come, to be 'a Light to lighten the Gentiles,' and 'to be for salvation to the ends of the earth:' and when this should be accomplished, the end of the Jewish church and state would come."

Scott tied the prophecy to Luke 2:32, showing Jesus as the Light to the Gentiles.

When the gospel spread through the empire, the Old Covenant system came to its end.

Philip Doddridge's Family Exposition of the New Testament (1740) "This gospel-shall be preached in all the world] The accomplishment of this extraordinary prophecy is admirably illustrated by Dr. Arthur Young, On Idolatry, vol ii, p. 216-234. It appears from the most credible records, that the gospel was preached in Idumea, Syria, and Mesopotamia, by Jude; in Egypt, Marmorica, Mauritania, and other parts of Africa, by mark, Simon, and Jude; in Ethiopia, by Candace's Eunuch, and Matthias; in Pontus, Galatia, and the neighbouring parts of Asia, by Peter; in the territories of the Seven Asiatic Churches by John; in Parthia, by Matthew; in Scythia, by Philip and Andrew; in the northern and western parts of Asia, by Bartholomew; in Persia, by Simon and Jude; in Media, Carmania, and several eastern parts, by Thomas; through the vast tract of Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, by Paul; as also in Italy, and probably in Spain, Gaul, and Britain; in most of which places

Christian churches were planted in less than thirty years after the death of Christ, which was before the destruction of Jerusalem."

Doddridge gave a detailed list of how far the gospel spread.

Within thirty years, the message of Christ had reached the nations, just as Jesus foretold.

John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible (1809) "And this Gospel of the kingdom: ... shall be preached in all the world: ... and then shall the end come: ... not the end of the world ... but the end of the Jewish state, the end of the city and temple."

Gill explained that the "end" was not the end of the world, but the end of the Jewish system.

The gospel's universal spread was the final sign before Jerusalem's destruction.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible (1810) "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world] ... St. Paul himself speaks, Colossians i. 6, 23, ... And in his Epistle to the Romans, Rom. x. 18 ... Then shall the end come.]"

Clarke showed that the gospel had already been preached to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23).

The "end" was the termination of the Jewish system.

This was exactly fulfilled when Jerusalem fell in AD 70.

Conclusion

With the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries represented, the historical record shows a consistent fulfilled understanding of

Matthew 24.

These commentators did not interpret "the end" as the end of the physical earth, but as the end of the Jewish system.

Jesus' words were confirmed in history: "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (Matthew 24:34).

The gospel was preached in all the world, then the end came, the end of the Old Covenant and the age of Israel's temple.

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