

Fulfilled Prophecies

[Home](#) > [M](#) > [Share on Facebook](#)

[FACEBOOK LINK](#)

**Matthew 7:21-23:
Was "That Day" A
Judgment Within
That Generation?**



By Dan Maines

Matthew 7:21-23: Was "That Day" A Judgment Within That Generation?

Introduction

† Matthew 7:21-23 is often read as though Jesus immediately transported His audience thousands of years into the future, but the surrounding teaching doesn't require that conclusion.

† Jesus spoke about a coming day of judgment, and elsewhere in Matthew He identified the generation that would experience His coming in judgment (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).

† The phrase "that day" must be understood within Jesus' larger message to His first-century audience, rather than automatically being assigned to the end of human history.

† Matthew repeatedly connects judgment, the coming of the Son of Man, the kingdom, Jerusalem, and that generation.

† When these passages are allowed to interpret one another, Matthew 7:21-23 fits naturally within the first-century judgment that reached its covenantal climax in AD 70.

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

† Jesus specifically spoke of "that day." The expression points to a recognizable time of judgment, and Matthew provides additional statements that help identify its historical setting.

† Jesus was warning people who claimed allegiance to Him while failing to obey His Father. Their religious claims wouldn't protect them when judgment arrived (Matthew 7:15-20, 24-27).

† Notice that these people claimed prophecy, casting out demons, and mighty works in Jesus' name. These signs belong naturally within the apostolic first-century setting described in the New Testament (Acts 8:9-24; Acts 19:13-17; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

† The passage doesn't say that "that day" would occur thousands of years later. That timing has to be brought into the passage from somewhere else.

Matthew 16:27-28

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every person according to his deeds. "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of

Man coming in His kingdom."

† Here Jesus connects His coming with judgment because He said He would repay each person according to his deeds.

† Jesus then gave His audience a time limitation. Some standing there wouldn't die before seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

† This is important for understanding Matthew 7 because the same Gospel that records "that day" also records Jesus placing His coming in judgment within the lifetime of some who were physically standing before Him.

† We shouldn't separate verse 28 from verse 27 when Jesus connected His coming, judgment, kingdom, and the lifetime of His hearers.

Matthew 10:23

"But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

† Jesus was speaking directly to His disciples about persecution they would personally experience.

† They were instructed to flee from one city to another, and Jesus said their mission through the cities of Israel wouldn't be completed before the Son of Man came.

† This again places the coming of the Son of Man within the historical world of Jesus' disciples, not thousands of years beyond their lives.

† Matthew therefore gives repeated audience-specific statements that help establish the timeframe for Jesus' judgment language (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:30-34).

Matthew 23:35-36

so that upon you will fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

† Jesus couldn't have been clearer about the generation upon

whom this covenant judgment would fall.

† He said "upon you" and then declared, "All these things shall come upon this generation."

† This judgment involved accumulated covenant bloodguilt, reaching from Abel to the blood being shed by the generation standing before Jesus (Matthew 23:29-34).

† Matthew 23 leads directly into Matthew 24. The chapter division shouldn't cause us to disconnect Jesus' condemnation of Jerusalem from the judgment discourse that immediately follows.

Matthew 23:37-39

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been 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! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

† Jesus identified Jerusalem as the covenant city responsible for killing the prophets and rejecting those God sent to her.

† His declaration that their house was being left desolate prepares the reader for the disciples' immediate discussion with Him concerning the temple (Matthew 24:1-3).

† Matthew's progression is consistent, judgment upon that generation, Jerusalem's house left desolate, the temple's destruction, the coming of the Son of Man, and fulfillment within that generation.

† Matthew 7:21-23 shouldn't be isolated from this repeated judgment framework.

Matthew 24:30-34

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet blast, and they will gather together His elect from the

four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: as soon as its branch has become tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near; 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 again spoke about the coming of the Son of Man and then gave the timeframe for the things He had described.

† He told His disciples, "when ye (them) see all these things," because they were the audience expected to recognize the signs as they occurred.

† Jesus then said that "this generation" wouldn't pass away until all these things were accomplished.

† Matthew 23:36 says judgment would come upon "this generation," and Matthew 24:34 says "this generation" wouldn't pass away until all these things were accomplished. The statements reinforce one another.

† Reading Matthew 7's "that day" within this same first-century judgment framework respects the time statements Jesus Himself repeatedly supplied.

Matthew 26:63-64

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I place You under oath by the living God, to tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

† Jesus spoke directly to the high priest and those participating in His trial.

† He told them they would see the Son of Man seated at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven.

† This draws from Daniel's judgment imagery and again places Jesus' vindication and coming in judgment in relation to the generation that rejected Him (Daniel 7:13-14).

† The people condemning Jesus would witness the historical vindication of the One they rejected when judgment came upon

Jerusalem.

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, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

† Revelation uses the same themes of Christ's coming, judgment, vindication, and kingdom while explicitly declaring that the events must shortly take place.

† John didn't tell his original readers that the time was thousands of years away. He said, "the time is at hand."

† This agrees with Jesus' first-century time statements rather than overturning them (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34).

† Scripture consistently directs the reader toward an approaching first-century covenant judgment.

Historical References

† Josephus described the Jewish War and the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in AD 70. His account records famine, internal violence, siege warfare, fire, death, and the destruction of the city and sanctuary.

† Josephus wasn't interpreting Matthew 7 for Christians, but his history provides an important eyewitness-era record of the judgment that overtook Jerusalem within the generation Jesus addressed.

† Tacitus also recorded the Roman war against Jerusalem and the destruction associated with the conflict, providing a non-Christian Roman historical witness to the events.

† Eusebius later connected Jesus' warnings concerning Jerusalem with the calamities that came upon the city and recorded the tradition that believers left Jerusalem before the final destruction.

† These historical writers don't establish the meaning of Scripture. Scripture establishes the doctrine, while historical testimony confirms that an extraordinary judgment actually fell upon Jerusalem in the first century exactly where Jesus had repeatedly warned that judgment was approaching.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Matthew 7:21-23 still carries a powerful warning even though the judgment setting was first century. Calling Jesus "Lord" has never been a substitute for genuinely belonging to Him.

† We don't need to move "that day" thousands of years beyond Jesus' audience for His words to have meaning for believers today.

† Fulfilled prophecy strengthens confidence in Christ because what He said would happen within that generation happened within that generation.

† We live on the fulfilled side of that covenant judgment, in the kingdom Christ established and the New Covenant relationship His work secured (Hebrews 12:22-24; Colossians 1:13).

† Our message isn't that we're waiting for Matthew 7, Matthew 16, Matthew 23, or Matthew 24 to finally become true. Our message is that Jesus kept His word.

† The fulfillment of judgment doesn't remove our responsibility to follow Christ. It gives us confidence that the King who promised judgment and kingdom fulfillment was faithful to everything He said.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does "that day" in Matthew 7:22 automatically mean the end of the physical world?

A: No. Matthew 7:22 itself doesn't say that. The timeframe must be determined from Jesus' larger teaching, and Matthew repeatedly places His coming in judgment within the lifetime of His first-century audience (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34).

Q: Was Jesus talking about judgment in Matthew 7:21-23?

A: Yes. People appear before Him claiming religious works in His name, and He rejects those who practiced lawlessness. The passage clearly contains judgment language (Matthew 7:21-23).

Q: Why is Matthew 16:27-28 important?

A: Because Jesus connected His coming with repaying each person according to his deeds and then said some standing there wouldn't taste death before seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:27-28).

Q: How does Matthew 23 help identify the timeframe?

A: Jesus directly said the accumulated covenant judgment He described would come upon "this generation" (Matthew 23:35-36). He then pronounced Jerusalem's house desolate before discussing the temple's destruction (Matthew 23:37-39; Matthew 24:1-3).

Q: Doesn't Matthew 24 describe the coming of the Son of Man?

A: Yes, and Jesus placed the events He described within "this generation." He told His disciples they would see the signs and declared that their generation wouldn't pass away until all these things were accomplished (Matthew 24:30-34).

Q: Does fulfilled judgment mean Matthew 7 has nothing to teach us today?

A: No. The prophecy's historical fulfillment doesn't eliminate its spiritual instruction. Jesus' warning against empty profession remains instructive, and His fulfillment of His promises gives us confidence in His faithfulness (Matthew 7:21-27; Hebrews 12:22-24).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

© Fulfilled Prophecies - Dan Maines.

Source Index

† Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 10:23; Matthew 23:35-36; Matthew 23:37-39; Matthew 24:30-34; Matthew 26:63-64; Revelation 1:1-3

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews; Tacitus, Histories; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

Share on Facebook

Links

Facebook Link

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/posts/2127103941511069/>

Fulfilled Prophecies <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/>

Dan Maines

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/user/100001027365819/>

You may share this article freely without permission as long as you include credit to Dan Maines and/or a link to the Fulfilled Prophecies Group.