

Amillennialism

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For Discussion: Does Amillennialism have an Achilles' Heel?

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What are the three different views of end time events?

- Premillennialism – there will be a 7-year tribulation followed by a 1,000-year physical rule of Jesus over mortals on earth followed by the Eternal State.
- Postmillennialism – The church will “Christianize” the world to usher in the return of Christ and the Eternal State (New Apostolic Reformation, Seven-Mountain Mandate, Christian Nationalism).
- Amillennialism – There is no tribulation or millennial rule of Christ on earth; when Jesus returns, the Eternal State is immediately ushered in.

What percentage of Christians are amillennial?

A Lifeway Research survey of Protestant pastors found 48% are premillennial, 31% are amillennial, and 11% are postmillennial.

- Google AI: Protestants make up about 37% of all Christians around the world.
- Non-protestant Christians (Catholic, Orthodox) are 100% amillennial.

Therefore, in Christendom: 18% are pre millennial, 4% are postmillennial, and 78% are amillennial.

What is the crucial vulnerability of amillennialism?

Amillennialism has a critical flaw revealed in the Olivet Discourse that undermines the credibility of all its other precepts.

What is the basic assumption of amillennialism regarding the status of Israel?

Amillennialists have to believe that God is finished with Israel.

- Some claim that God rejected Israel after Jesus’ crucifixion and replaced the nation with the church (Replacement Theology).
- Others insist that the Lord always intended for Israel to become the church as part of a continuing covenant of grace.

Why must amillennialism assume that God is done with Israel?

They spiritualize the prophecies about God ruling for 1,000 years from a restored Israel. If God’s purpose for the nation of Israel has ended:

- The church is the new Israel.
- There will be no future restoration of a kingdom to Israel.

How do we know that God is not done with Israel?

Jesus’ Olivet Discourse contradicts all the teachings that dismiss Israel as irrelevant to Bible prophecy.

- If these verses await a future fulfillment, it demonstrates that God’s purposes for the Jewish people remain intact to this very day.

What do amillennialists have to believe about the prophesied temple defilement in the Olivet Discourse?

They have to believe the event Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:15–18 had to happen in AD 70 when the Roman general Titus ransacked Jerusalem and destroyed the second temple.

- If Jesus’ words refer to a still future time, then amillennialism and all its offshoots cannot be true.

What makes Matthew 24:15–18 so vital?

It’s their link to a critical prophecy found in Daniel 9 regarding the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

- One must interpret Jesus’ prophetic words in Matthew 24:15–18 in light of Daniel 9:24–27.

What precipitated the Olivet Discourse?

The Matthew 24:1–2 conversation between Jesus and His disciples regarding the temple began with Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem when He said “*your house is left to you desolate*” (Matthew 23:39).

- Trying to make sense of His words, the twelve pointed out the grand buildings that comprised the temple as they left it courtyards.
- Can you imagine their shock when the Lord responded by predicting its total destruction?

When they reached the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Jesus about the signs of the end of the age and His “coming” (Matthew 24:3). After listing several signs of the last days, the Lord spoke these words:

Matthew 24:15–18 – *So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.*

How do we tie this passage in Matthew to Daniel?

The words, “*the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel,*” tie Jesus’ words to the seventy weeks’ prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24–27.

- There God specified seventy weeks of years for the fulfillment of His purposes for the Jewish people and Jerusalem.
- Jesus’ prophecy in the above passage predicts the defilement of a temple, which Daniel 9:27 says will happen at the midpoint of the seventieth week.

What does Daniel reveal about the 70th Week?

God said the last week will begin with a seven-year covenant between a future “prince” and “the many” (a group that certainly includes Israel).

- He also stated that three and a half years later, the midpoint of the week, this ruler will break the covenant by desecrating the temple.

That’s the event Jesus refers to in Matthew 24:15.

Is it possible that Titus’ destruction of the temple in AD 70 fulfilled what Jesus predicted in Matthew 24?

No, for the following reasons:

- There is no record of any seven-year covenant or agreement between the Roman general and Israel such as the Lord told Daniel would initiate the seventieth week.
- The Lord Himself would destroy the temple defiler at His coming (2 Thess 2:3–8). However, Titus died of natural consequences 11 years after destroying the temple; the Lord didn’t directly kill him at the end of the 70th week.
- This “*man of lawlessness*” would proclaim himself to be God while sitting in the temple (2 Thess 2:4). Why would he destroy the very place he needs to maintain his ruse of deity?

Why isn’t Matthew 24:15–18 the kiss of death for amillennialism?

Jesus’ words in Luke 21:20–24 are erroneously equated with Matthew 24:15–18.

- Those who believe that Titus fulfilled the “abomination of desolation” say that Luke 21:20–24 is another version of Matthew 24:15–18.
- They say that together, they represent Jesus’ full response to the disciples’ question regarding the temple destruction.

What do we learn from Luke 21?

Luke 21:20–24 – *But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

This passage does indeed point to the events of AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Is it possible to harmonize Luke 21:20–24 with Matthew 24:15–18?

No, the two passages cannot be harmonized into a single response to the disciples’ question regarding the temple destruction because of five key differences:

First: What is the difference in what happens to the temple?

In Matthew 24:15–18, Jesus predicts the desecration of the temple by a future ruler.

- His words in Luke 21:20–24 depict the time when Titus would destroy the temple.

Second: What is the difference in the warning signal that Jesus gives of imminent danger?

- In Luke 21:20, it’s the sight of “*Jerusalem surrounded by armies*” that alerts the Jewish people to the threat.
- In Matthew 24:15, it’s entirely different—it’s when those in Judea “*see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place.*”

The passages refer to two separate events with two very different signs that alert the Jewish people of the imminent peril to their lives.

Third: What is the difference in what Jesus says will happen to the people?

In Matthew 24:15–18, Jesus instructs the Jews living at that time to flee for their lives when they see antichrist standing in the holy place of the temple.

- Although Luke’s reference to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem also includes a warning to leave the area, there is a key difference.
- In Luke 21:24 the Lord also predicts that the people will “*be led captive among all the nations.*”

Fourth: What is the difference in the persecution Jesus said will happen?

Although the persecution of the Jews that follows both events is quite similar, there is one glaring difference:

- in Matthew 24:15–28, the judgments extend to the entire world in what Jesus describes as a time of “*great tribulation.*” He says this period will be so severe that unless “*those days had been cut short, no human being would be saved*” (Matthew 24: 22).
- There is no forced captivity of the Jews here, but only that of persecution aimed at their annihilation along with the rest of humanity.

Fifth: What difference will there be regarding the return of Jesus?

The worldwide calamity that follows Jesus’ prediction of the temple desecrations leads directly to His glorious return to the earth (Matthew 24:29–31).

- His Second Coming will cut short this time of “great tribulation” and prevent the ending of all human life on the planet.
- This is far different than the “distress” mentioned in the Luke passage leads to the trampling of Jerusalem “*underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*” which aptly sums up the past two thousand years (Luke 21:24).

What conclusion should be made if Luke 21:20–24 and Matthew 24:15–18 describe two different events?

Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:15–18 must await a future fulfillment when they will lead directly to His return and the rescue of Jews living in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-8).

How do we account for the two different prophecies?

Since Jesus’ words in Luke 21:20–24 and Matthew 24:15–18 refer to distinct events separated by nearly two thousand years, how we account for the fact that He spoke them so close together, perhaps during the same afternoon?

- Jesus spoke the words recorded in Luke 21:20–24 as He and His disciples walked out of its courtyard, shortly after predicting its total destruction. After they reached the Mount of Olives, He addressed the future

defilement of the temple—the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

- It’s also possible that Jesus addressed both matters on the Mount of Olives, but only Matthew recorded His words concerning the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27.

If Matthew 24:15–18 awaits a future fulfillment, when will the 70th Week of Daniel be fulfilled?

It also awaits a future fulfillment. Thus, what was promised for the entire 70 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy will have a future fulfillment...

Daniel 9:24 – *Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.*

Please note that the Lord did not decree sixty-nine weeks for the completion of His purposes for the Jewish people and Jerusalem, nor did He declare His purposes for Israel would end halfway through the final week with the temple destruction.

- The above words dictate Israel’s existence for the entire seventy weeks.

What does the future fulfillment of the 70th Week of Daniel tell us about God’s plan for Israel?

Given that the 70th Week is yet future, then it’s also certain God’s purposes for the nation of Israel remain to this day because He has not yet completed His stated purposes for His people and city.

- This invalidates the core belief of amillennialism, namely that God is finished with Israel upon which all its other beliefs rest.
- In other words, the church cannot be Israel’s replacement, nor can it be a new spiritual extension of its kingdom.

There are many other biblical references that affirm Israel’s restoration during Jesus’ 1,000-year rule over the nations.

What applications do we see from our discussion today?

- Most of Christendom has an amillennial view of the end times.
- Scripture must be allegorized to support amillennialism.
- Amillennialism must embrace replacement theology which often leads to antisemitism.
- Luke 21:20–24 was fulfilled in AD 70, Matthew 24:15–18 has to be yet future due to the Abomination of Desolation.