

Is Matthew 24:29 really talking about heavenly bodies?

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29. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

sun will be darkened... moon will not give its light... stars will fall...

1. Are these heavenly bodies falling supernatural events? No
 - a) Familiarity with the Old Testament prophets will show that this is Jewish hyperbolic language(Hebraisms) about the collapse/fall of a nation.
 - b) It's equivalent to our modern phrase "*I'm going to knock your lights out*".
 - i. In **Genesis 1:14**, God set the sun and the moon to '**govern**' day and night, so in scripture, they are symbols of government.

A) The moon does not literally govern anything; it's a chunk of rock that floats.
Instead, we see this language as the Hebraism that it is.
Those who claim the moral high ground of interpreting the Bible "literally" surely do not think the moon is a governor.
 - ii. Even today, in US government, we have 50 stars to represent 50 states.
Likewise, heavenly bodies such as stars represent governments.
Stars, sun, and moon are often found on country flags.

Isaiah 13:1-13 (Judgment on Babylon)

- c) We will demonstrate that Jesus in **Matthew 24** is pronouncing judgment on an evil nation with the AD 70 judgment and that there is no Biblical basis to believe He is speaking about literal heavenly bodies.
Jesus spoke the language of the prophets, so let's take a look...
Compare with **Isaiah**.
 - i. **Isaiah 13:1** declares judgment on **Babylon**.
See **Isaiah 13:9-10+13**
9. "Behold, the day of the LORD comes,
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,
to make the land a desolation
and to destroy its sinners from it."

10. "For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light."

13. "Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger."

- A) This already happened; "the day of the LORD" is not always the end of the world. There have been many several of them so far in human history.
- B) **Isaiah 13:13** says God would make "the heavens tremble" and "the earth will be shaken out of its place" on that judgment.
- C) **2 Peter 3** says that Christ' 2nd coming will cause the heavens and earth to pass away. **Isaiah 13** is obviously not literal – otherwise there would be no earth left. We wouldn't be here.

Isaiah 13:17 (God used armies to judge with, not heavenly bodies)

- ii. How did God accomplish that **Babylonian judgment**?

With humans.

See **Isaiah 13:17**

17. Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold.

- A) Who was Stirred up against Jerusalem in 70 AD? The Romans. This is judgment on a wicked nation (Israel).
- B) David Guzik says
 - i. "Isaiah finished his prophetic career in 685 B.C., almost 100 years before Judah finally fell before the Babylonian Empire (586 B.C.). At the time of this prophecy, Babylon was a significant nation, but they were definitely behind the Assyrian Empire in status. Yet the LORD who knows the end of all things can speak of the judgment on the pride of Babylon hundreds of years before the judgment comes."
 - ii. According to Guzik, who is a premillennial/Dispensational scholar, this event happened in history.
 - iii. After acknowledging the fulfillment of the prophecy, Guzik then changes course and presupposes that "the day of the LORD"

is a "season of judgment when the LORD sets things right", citing that it is mentioned 26 times in the Bible.

- i. From that, Guzik uses "**the day of the LORD**" phrase to say that Isaiah passage **also** has a future fulfillment, which has no biblical basis. See "The day of the LORD" for commentary on that.
- ii. The only reason to make this a dual fulfillment prophecy is because it has to be, in order for the premillennial theological theory to possibly be true. You will not find a Biblical basis for a dual fulfillment.
- iii. Certainly no Christian believes Jesus will be born on Bethlehem and die on a cross again.
We can't arbitrarily make a prophecy a dual fulfillment just because it makes our theories look good.

Ezekiel 32:7-8 (heavens darkened)

- a) Another example of heavenly bodies becoming dark, in a judgment proclamation on Egypt:

Ezekiel 32:7-8

7. "When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
and the moon shall not give its light."

8. "All the bright lights of heaven
will I make dark over you,
and put darkness on your land,
declares the Lord GOD."

- a) This is not "end of the world" language, but judgment language, which Jews who heard Jesus would be familiar with. If we were more familiar with OT prophets, we would be much less likely to misinterpret passages like Matt 24.
- b) One Dispensationalist argument is to say these verses about heaven bodies falling and dimming are all future because of a phrase "**the day of the LORD**" which appears next to many of them.
 - a) The problem here is that **Ezekiel 32** has no such phrase is included there.
 - b) **David Guzik's (Dispensational view) commentary** says:
 - a) "'It would be as if 'a great darkness covered the land' (Ezekiel 32:7-8), demonstrating that Egypt's great sun gods were impotent to help." (Alexander)"
 - b) "When I put out your light: "The term kaba, which is used concretely of snuffing out a wick or a lamp, is occasionally used figuratively of death." (Block)"

- c) Even a Dispensationalist/premillennial commentary reveals these heavenly light manipulations are not literal in this case.
Here we see a Dispensational acceptance of this prophetic Hebraism being interpreted correctly.
- d) "I will blot you out" at the beginning of the verse indicates God will eliminate that group of people.
The rest of the language is not expected to be literal.
I think most nations would love if God's judgment was only a few overcast days.
It's dubious/naive to think that was how God judged nations.

b) Back to Isaiah:

Isaiah 13:10

10. "For the stars of the heavens and their constellations
will not give their light;
the sun will be dark at its rising,
and the moon will not shed its light."

- a) Did the sun, moon, and stars cease to literally shine?

Isaiah 34:4 (Edomites judged)

- 2. Here is another example in the Old Testament of the destruction of a nation.

Isaiah 34:4 is an example, where God declares judgment the now-extinct Edomites.

4. "And all the host of heaven will rot away,
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
All their hosts will also wither away
As a leaf withers from the vine,
Or as one withers from the fig tree."

- a) This happened 600 years before Christ.
 - b) They are extinct, so there can't be a future fulfillment.
Herod may have been part Edomite, but the Edomite civilization was erased from the human genetic pool.
 - c) All the stars are said to fall as a leaf falls from a fig tree.
This is the language of the destruction of a nation.
They are not meant to be taken literally; they are Hebrew idioms.
- 3. The language used about the heavens going dark could be partially literal in the sense that when you see smoke above a city, the sky can look red (those in smog areas can attest to that even today), and the sky can become dark.

Amos 8:9 (586 BC Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem)

Amos 8:9

9. “And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord GOD,

“That I will make the sun go down at noon,

And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;

10. I will turn your feasts into mourning,

And all your songs into lamentation;

I will bring sackcloth on every waist,

And baldness on every head;

I will make it like mourning for an only son,

And its end like a bitter day.

11. “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD,

“That I will send a famine on the land,

Not a famine of bread,

Nor a thirst for water,

But of hearing the words of the LORD.

1. For an event in our past, for which the Babylonians conquered Jeruslaem, darkness of heavenly bodies indicated a time of great suffering.
2. This is unlike the plague of darkness on Egypt, which literally did happen.
Literal darkness alone does not cause a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.

Conclusion

1. Given how heavenly bodies falling does not mean the end of the world in the Old Testament passages, but instead refer to the destruction of the leadership that governs nations, we have no good reason to believe Jesus was speaking of heavenly bodies falling to the earth.
2. Does that mean Jesus is lying?
3. No. It's how the prophets spoke.
4. Why should we expect Jesus' words to mean something else than what we see in the Old Testament record for the language He uses here?
5. The AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem happened just as Jesus foretold it would happen.
No heavenly body hit the earth.