

THE HARMONY OF THE OLIVET

DISCOURSE – PART 1

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Matthew 24:1-8

Olivet Discourse – Part 1

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The Lord Jesus gave some of the most detailed prophecies of future events just a couple days before His crucifixion. This teaching by Jesus was recorded in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Theologians refer to these sections of scripture as the *Olivet Discourse* because Jesus spoke these prophecies while on the Mount of Olives.

There has been much confusion and debate about this discourse over the centuries. Much of the mystery has been removed with the rebirth of the nation of Israel, but views about who is being addressed and the timing of the events are still debated by sincere Christians.

After 35 (now 51) years of pondering the different views and arguments, I feel it is time to contribute some thoughts in the form of this commentary. I have put the three passages from the three Apostles' writings side by side (using the New King James) so the entire context of Jesus words can be more easily compared and discerned.

MATTHEW 24	MARK 13	LUKE 21
1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."	1 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" 2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."	5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see-- the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."
<p>This prophecy (and the one of Daniel 9:26) was literally fulfilled when Titus and the Roman legions under his command burned and destroyed the Jewish 2nd Temple and city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.</p> <p>The fire that destroyed the burnable material in the temple also melted the gold into the gaps between the stones. In order to recover the wealth, Roman soldiers, and others seeking the spoils of the now destroyed temple, pushed every massive stone of the temple over so that they could recover the gold. <i>See Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapters 4-6.</i></p> <p>Some of the stones were thrown over the southwest portion of the wall of the temple mount. The stones landed on the road below and are there to this day.</p>		

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3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, [1] when will these things be? And [2] what will be the sign of Your coming, and [3] of the end of the age?"

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately,
4 "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And [4] what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"

Jesus spoke to the crowd about the destruction of the Temple, but only four of the 12 Apostles came to Him for greater understanding. Today, many Christians have read or heard about the prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Jesus, but many just listen without trying to understand. There is a blessing for those who seek to understand what Jesus said.

As we study through the three accounts of Jesus' answer, we must remember that the four Apostles asked four questions:

1. When will these things [casting down of the stones] be?
2. What will be the sign of your coming [Second Coming]?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age (Matthew)?
4. What sign will there be when these things [destruction of the Temple] are about to take place (Luke)?

When we read the Olivet Discourse, we must be careful to discern where Jesus' explanations fit in relation to the four questions asked. In other words, some of Jesus' answers will address the things leading up to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, while other passages will deal with the things leading up to His Second Coming and the end of the age. It is also important that Jesus audience for this discourse was His Jewish disciples, and the context of His answers are clearly directed to the Jewish nation, then and now, and not to the church.

In addition, some of Jesus' answers could actually apply to both of these questions. For example, Josephus records (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapters 4-10) that false prophets and professing Messiahs were in Jerusalem during the siege of the Romans leading up to A.D. 70 and afterwards. These false prophets were assuring the Jews not to fear the Romans, nor to leave the city, since God was going to destroy the Roman legions and set up the throne of the Messiah.

<p>Therefore, when Jesus warned that they should not be deceived by false prophets who would say the Messiah is coming (see verses below), he was clearly speaking to those who would be living in Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, we also know from 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 2 (<i>which was not fulfilled in 70 AD and thus must be future</i>), and the book of Revelation (<i>written after 70 AD</i>), that the Antichrist and his false prophet are also going to deceive the Jewish people with the Antichrist declaring himself to be the Messiah. Therefore, Jesus' warning also applies to a future Jewish people living in Jerusalem in the last days.</p>		
<p>This dual understanding was very difficult for prophecy teachers of the past to understand, since it seemed impossible that the Jews would ever be in the land of Israel and in possession of Jerusalem again. But it is now clear that some of Jesus' answer had near (A.D. 70) and far (yet future) fulfillment.</p>		
<p>4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."</p>	<p>5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many."</p>	<p>8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them."</p>
<p>As stated above, I believe these verses, which are almost identical in all three gospels, applied to the time immediately before A.D. 70, and will also apply to the future Jewish people who will be deceived by the Antichrist. Jesus alludes to this last-days embracing of a false messiah when He said in John 5:43 "<i>I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.</i>" This prophecy by Jesus was not fulfilled in 70AD and therefore awaits a future false messiah that will be embraced by the Jews in Jerusalem who do not heed Jesus' warnings here in the Olivet discourse.</p>		
<p>It is also clear that Jesus was not talking to Christians when He voiced this warning. By definition, a Born-Again Christian KNOWS that Jesus is the Messiah and therefore it is impossible for a Christian to search for another Messiah who comes in his own name. Instead, Jesus is warning His chosen people (the Jews), not to be fooled by an imitation Messiah (both in A.D. 70 and in the future).</p>		
<p>Tragically, many Jews then and now have missed the first coming of their true Messiah because of the blindness over their eyes (Romans 11:25). We mustn't forget that the first Christians were Jews who did believe in Jesus as their Messiah, but most of their countrymen rejected Him. The scriptures say this blindness will for the most part continue until the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:25), which will be when the church age is over (the rapture) and the Jews are again placed front and center as God's witness people during the tribulation period. The Jewish blindness will be completely removed when the Lord Jesus returns in glory. Then (when He does) the Jews who are still alive will see that Jesus was their Messiah, and all Israel will receive Him and be saved (Isaiah 59:20, Zechariah 12:10, Romans 11:26).</p>		
<p>In Matthew 24, Jesus is warning anyone who would have ears to hear that they must not fall into the deception of the Antichrist and his global government which will promise the last-days Jews peace and the ability to build their temple and reestablish animal sacrifice. So to the Jews in our day, Jesus is answering the question, "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age." – Answer: a false messiah who deceives the Jews.</p>		
<p>6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against</p>	<p>7 "But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. 8 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be</p>	<p>9 "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." 10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.</p>

<p>kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows [<i>birth pangs</i>]."</p>	<p>earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."</p>	<p>11 "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven."</p>
<p>When the Jews were hearing of wars and rumors of wars leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 , they would have been thinking, "This is the end of the Jewish people," and rightfully so. Josephus recorded the brutality of the Roman conquest. Every man, woman, and child was killed in Jewish cities that put up resistance. Most of the men were killed in cities that did not, and survivors were then taken from the land and sent into slavery throughout the Roman empire. Jesus promised the Jews who would see this coming destruction of the Jewish temple and city of Jerusalem that "the end" was not yet, nor would the end come "immediately" after this destruction.</p>		
<p>How perfectly His prophecy has been fulfilled. The Jews were dispersed for almost 1,900 years. They have been suffering wars and rumors of wars from the time of Jesus until now. However they have been able to miraculously maintain their distinctive heritage even after Hitler's holocaust. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and even during he holocaust, any hope of being in the land again would have seemed absurd to many. But Jesus promised the Jews they would survive until His coming, even though they would be dispersed to the nations for a long period of time before He brought them back.</p> <p>A final group of about 1,000 Jewish rebels were holding out against the Romans in the fortress of Masada in 74AD. They had turned one of Herod the Great's buildings into a Jewish synagogue. Under the floorboards of this synagogue they left a scroll of Ezekiel opened to chapters 36-37 which prophesied that the Jews would be coming back into the land after a long time. When the Romans finally breached the walls, they found that all the Jewish rebels (except 4) had committed suicide the night before rather than be taken as slaves of the Romans. The Romans then left and the scroll of Ezekiel remained hidden for 1900 years until October 1963, when the Jews were again in control of this area near the Dead Sea and discovered it. Today, the Jews have been faced with wars and rumors of wars that make some believe they could again be wiped off of the map of the Middle East and destroyed as a people. But Jesus assures them this is not the way it is going to end.</p>		
<p>Even though Jesus was addressing the Jews, this prophesy also applies to the entire world in the last days when He predicted that nation will rise against nation (literally ethnos against ethnos) and kingdom against kingdom. Global racial tensions and extreme nationalism have set the stage for this prophecy to be literally fulfilled in our day. This has been made possible by the technological revolution, global communications, and rapid travel. With the advent of weapons of mass destruction, it is quite conceivable that the wars and rumors of wars that are in the news every day could at some time in the future escalate until a world war could result in the loss of all human life – the end. But Jesus promised that this is not how the world "will end" and alludes to this later in His discourse: <i>Matt 24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.</i></p>		
<p>Consider the following article about how the Doomsday Clock has never been closer to midnight:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Human Race Is At Its Closest Point Yet To Destroying Itself, According To A Reset Of The Ominous But Symbolic "Doomsday Clock."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Doomsday Clock 2026 Update Says Apocalypse Is Closer Than Ever</p> <p>Doyle Rice , Janet Loehrke USA TODAY January 27, 2026 https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/01/27/doomsday-clock-announcement-2026/88365758007/</p>		