

THE HARMONY OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

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**As used for the MP3 Study Posted Under Sermon Archives,
New Testament, Matthew, [Matthew 24:1-8](#), and Titled: *Olivet
Discourse – Part 1*
October 21, 2009**

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 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."

This prophecy (and the one of Daniel 9) was literally fulfilled when Titus, and the Roman legions under his command, burned and destroyed the Temple and city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

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.

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.

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and 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 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 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 parts will deal with the things leading up to His Second Coming.

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 5-10) that false prophets and professing Messiahs were in Jerusalem during the siege of the Romans leading up to A.D. 70. 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.

Therefore, when Jesus warned the future readers of His prophecy 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, and the book of Revelation, that the Antichrist and his false prophet are also going to deceive the Jewish people, and the Antichrist will declare himself to be God/Messiah. Therefore, Jesus' warning also applies to a future Jewish people living in Jerusalem in the last days.

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 will have near (A.D. 70) and far (yet future) fulfillment.

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."

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."

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."

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.

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. 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).

Tragically, many 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 believing Jews, but most of their countrymen rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah. The scriptures say this blindness will, for the most part, continue until 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 (Zechariah 12:10, Romans 11:26, Isaiah 59:20).

In John 5:42-43, Jesus told the unbelieving Jews of His day that although they were rejecting Him as their promised Messiah, they would, in the future, embrace a man who would come in his own name as their deliverer (who would in fact be the Antichrist).

John 5:42-43 "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. 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."

In Matthew 24, Jesus is warning anyone who would have ears to hear that they must not fall into the deception of the Antichrist

6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See

7 "But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do

9 "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not

<p>that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.</p> <p>7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.</p> <p>8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows."</p>	<p>not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.</p> <p>8 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."</p>	<p>be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately."</p> <p>10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.</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 cities that put up resistance. Most of the men were killed in cities that did not, and all were then taken from the land and sent into slavery throughout the Roman empire. Jesus was promising the Jews who would see this coming destruction of the Jewish nation 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. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, 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, with or without a homeland.</p>		
<p>As discussed above, portions of these verses could easily apply to the time of the Romans around A.D. 70. But some could only apply to the future signs of His coming. Although there have been famines, pestilences (40 percent of Europe died in the plague), and earthquakes throughout history, Luke records that Jesus said "great earthquakes."</p>		
<p>The book of Revelation (16:18-21) predicts a future great, global earthquake, which results in "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Since the time Jesus spoke this warning in Luke, there have not been "great earthquakes" of this magnitude. Therefore, it must apply to a future event.</p>		
<p>Evolutionary geology would say it is impossible to have a global earthquake. In doing so, they are fulfilling the prophecy of 2 Peter 3:5-7, refusing to realize that the world was once destroyed by the flood of Noah, and that the energy reserved in the crust and mantle from this cataclysm will someday burst forth to destroy again by fire (see Dr. Walt Brown's hydroplate theory of the flood at www.creation-science.com for an explanation of how the flood of Noah occurred and how global earthquakes are an event waiting to happen).</p>		

Josephus also records that there were fearful sights and great signs from heaven when the city of Jerusalem was under siege in A.D. 70 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5), and Jesus could have been talking about this event in A.D. 70. However, Jesus goes on to explain that the signs in the heavens will include the sun and moon being darkened. Because these things have never occurred in history, it is possible that this portion of His answer to the disciples had a near and far meaning.

As a final note, Jesus also talked of pestilence and famines in these passages. If the world ever experiences a biological weapons attack, the full weight of this prophecy will sink into the hearts of the survivors. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus said these things would be the “beginning of sorrows.” The Greek word for sorrows actually refers to the birth pangs of a woman in labor. Therefore, Jesus is saying that as the last days approach, earthquakes, pestilence, famines, etc., will grow in frequency and intensity, in the same way as the contractions associated with giving birth grow closer and closer together, with more and more intensity as the time of birth approaches.