

# THE HARMONY OF THE OLIVET

## DISCOURSE – PART 5

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 Matthew, [Matthew 24:32-51](#), and Titled: *Olivet Discourse – Part 5*  
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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 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. This handout picks up where Part 4 left off.

MATTHEW 24	MARK 13	LUKE 21
32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-- at the doors! 34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."	28 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near-- at the doors! 30 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."	Luke 21:29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 "When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

There has been much controversy about this prophecy. Some (Preterists) believe that Jesus was saying that the prophecies of the Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled during the lifetime (generation) of the Apostles. Thus, all these global cataclysms, the Antichrist committing an abomination in the temple, etc. were fulfilled prior to and during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. However, the actual events of the Roman army's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple do not fit with the prophecies of Jesus. For example, the Romans did not cause an abomination in 70 AD. In fact, Josephus, the Jewish historian, records (War of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter IV, paragraphs 6-7) that the Roman General (Titus) ordered his soldiers to put out the fire in order to preserve the temple which Titus considered a wonder of the world. His orders could not be heard over the slaughter of the Jews that was taking place and the temple continued to burn (but was not defiled with an abomination). Therefore, those who hold the "Preterist" view have to twist the scriptures to try and make them fit. They also have to do the same to the book of Revelation which they also claim was fulfilled in 70 AD, even though the evidence is very strong that the Apostle John wrote Revelation 30 years **after** the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

Those who hold to the premillennial, dispensational view of the Olivet Discourse believe that since the events which Jesus prophesied have never literally taken place in the past, then they must still be future. The following interpretations of the above scriptures fit into this "yet future" frame of reference.

Some teach that the fig tree is symbolic of Israel, and the budding of the fig tree was the reestablishment of Israel in 1948. Those who hold this view use Jeremiah 24 and Matthew 21:19 as examples where God used the figs or the fig tree to symbolize Israel. Therefore, they believe that when Jesus said, "When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves" he was saying when Israel puts forth leaves – that is, becomes a nation again. The next statement by Jesus, "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation..." is then interpreted as a reference to a generation period of time applying to Israel becoming a nation (variously interpreted).

This understanding has given rise to many speculations about dating the second coming of Jesus. For example, some have taught that a biblical generation is 30 years long. Therefore, if one adds 30 years to 1948 (the budding of the fig tree), we have Jesus returning to set up His kingdom in 1978. In order to date the rapture, subtract 7 years, and the rapture should have occurred in 1971. When 1971 passed, a generation was reinterpreted as 35 years. Then a generation was assumed to be 40 years, and the time of the budding of the fig tree was reinterpreted as 1967 when the Jews gained control of most of Jerusalem. But again, the expected dates of the rapture and Second Coming have come and gone. Reinterpretation of the above passages based on the birth of the nation of Israel, or Israel taking control of most of Jerusalem (1967) continues to this day, but it appears this interpretation of Jesus' teaching is incorrect and has resulted in much confusion. There are two alternative views offered below.

Both alternate views believe Jesus' reference to the fig tree is not a symbolic reference to the birth of the nation of Israel. Jesus was simply pointing out a fact about a fruit bearing tree; that is, when a fig tree is in bud, people can know that summer is near. In the same way, when the Jews of the past saw the events leading up to A.D. 70, they would know that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed, but that the Jewish people would survive.

The first view holds that Jesus was also telling a distant future audience that the events leading up to His Second Coming (birth of the nation of Israel, rebuilding of the temple [allowing the abomination of desolation], global earthquakes, etc.) would reveal that the prophecies pertaining to His visible return would soon follow. Therefore, the generation seeing the signs leading up to the tribulation period (all of them, not just the birth of the nation of Israel) would also be the generation seeing the visible return of Jesus.

In the second view, some also believe that when Jesus said, "This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place" that He was not talking about a generation of time. The Greek word for generation is "genea," which, according to Thayers Greek Dictionary can refer to, "what has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family."

In other words, Jesus was saying the “Jewish” stock would not pass away until all the prophecies of the Olivet discourse come true. If this view is correct, then this statement by Jesus is the third time He is encouraging the Jewish listener not to be discouraged into thinking the Jewish people will be destroyed before their Messiah returns to set up His kingdom.

I have non-believing Jewish friends in Israel who are lamenting, at this moment, the current strategic conditions of their country. They realize that the increasing strength of the surrounding hostile Muslim nations could result in the destruction of the Jewish nation.

If the Jews were to again be dispersed to the nations, it would be very likely that the Jewish race would soon after cease to exist as a “generation” or family that was distinct from the other nations of the world. However, the prophetic scriptures do not allow for the Jews to be dispersed again. Ezekiel, Zechariah and others make it clear that when the Jews are brought back into the land in the last days, they are there to stay until the Messiah comes. The prophet David (Psalms 2) makes it clear the nations plot IN VAIN against the Lord and His anointed, Jesus. As Jesus said, heaven and earth will pass away but His word will not pass away, and He will return before the Jewish nation and people would otherwise be destroyed.

I have discussed this last view (“generation” meaning the Jewish people rather than a period of time) with Dr. Tommy Ice. He disagrees with Dr. Thayer’s dictionary stating that the Greek word “genea” can refer to a people group rather than a period of time. Therefore, he holds to the first view that the generation (of time) that sees the beginning of the events described in the Olivet Discourse will be the generation that sees the second coming of Jesus.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.  
37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  
38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,  
39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.  
40 "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.  
41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.  
42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.  
43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.  
44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.  
33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.'

Luke 21:34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.  
35 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.  
36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke alone includes Jesus’ promise that anyone who watches and prays will be allowed to escape all these things that will come to pass.

If the listeners had watched the news and prayed with believing hearts about the warnings of Jesus prior to A.D. 70, then they would have escaped the Roman slaughter in Jerusalem. If the future Jewish reader who is caught in the Tribulation reads this passage, watches the news, and prays with a believing heart, he/she will flee Jerusalem when the Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation. Some will not flee and will be caught in the Antichrist's cleansing campaign. Those who take heed and flee will be protected by God in the wilderness of Jordan.

But how can one watch and pray to avoid global earthquakes and famines and other cataclysms written about in the Book of Revelation and here? Why does Jesus warn the reader to "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming"? Is He talking to Christians before the Tribulation? Or is He talking to believers during the Tribulation? Maybe He is talking to non-believing Jews during the Tribulation.

These are difficult questions to answer. The prophet Daniel records that the Messiah will come 1,290 days after the abomination of desolation (Dan 12:11). Therefore, anyone who is aware of the day that the Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation, and also lives through the remaining 3.5 years of the tribulation, and who is aware of Daniel 12, will also know the day when Jesus will physically return (as the lightning flashes across the sky).

But Jesus said to "watch", because we don't *know* the day of His coming. If we can know the exact day of His glorious Second Coming, then Jesus must be referring to His coming for the Church in the rapture. Paul said a future believing people will not die, but will be caught up to be with the Lord in the air (1 Thes 4:17). When Jesus returns in glory, the scriptures record the saints are **with** Him (Zechariah 14:5, Revelation 19:13-15). Therefore, the unknowable day of the rapture (where the Saints go to meet the Lord in the air) must precede, and be separate from, the knowable day of the Second Coming, where the saints are seen returning with Him.

Therefore, since two comings remain, it must be that the day no one can know is the day of His coming for the saints in the Rapture of the Church, when those who, "watch and pray will be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?  
46 "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.  
47 "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.  
48 "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'  
49 "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,  
50 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,  
51 "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

34 "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.  
35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming-- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning--  
36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.  
37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Today, many Americans who have professed to be Christians in the past are turning away from the faith (which is another sign of the last days - 2 Thes 2:3). Their professions of faith were made with ulterior (hypocritical) motives. Some profess faith in Jesus so they can enjoy the company of “good” people while enjoying life on Earth, not because they truly believe in Jesus as their savior. Many count on the Christian “rapture” to get them to heaven before any hardship and persecution comes. But as “the Lord delays His coming,” and as the persecution is worsening in the Western world, many are beginning to turn against true Christians and join in the drinking, drugs, and carousing of this wicked world, thus revealing their hypocrisy. They are like Judas, who appeared to be a sincere follower of Jesus, but was actually motivated by the financial benefits he thought he would enjoy with Jesus as the Messiah (John 12:6).

I believe this is the final sifting phase, as Jesus prepares to take the true believers into heaven with Him, before plunging the unbelieving world into the tribulation period.

Jesus said He would spew the lukewarm out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16), and it appears that this is happening now, soon to be followed by the rapture of the Church. I pray you are watching and praying, so that you “may be counted worthy to escape **all** these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).”