

THE HARMONY OF THE OLIVET

DISCOURSE

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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 47) 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) 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.</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.</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>		
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 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 kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.
 8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows."

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 earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."

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.
 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."