

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 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
15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 "then let those who are in Judea	14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	Luke 17:31 "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in

<p>flee to the mountains. 17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.'</p>	<p>15 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his garment. 17 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19 "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.'</p>	<p>the field, let him not turn back. 32 "Remember Lot's wife. 33 "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.</p>
<p>Notice that Luke does not record this portion of Jesus' teaching in his chapter 21 record of the Olivet Discourse. It appears that God wanted Luke to concentrate on the near destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies (covered in Luke 21:20-24 and fulfilled shortly after in 70 AD), but Matthew and Mark were commissioned to record what would happen in the distant future – yet future to us. In chapter 17 of Luke, Luke does record a very similar teaching that Jesus gave in Jerusalem to those asking him about when the kingdom was coming. The Luke 17 teaching could have been immediately before Jesus left Jerusalem and gave the Olivet Discourse, and is included here for completeness.</p>		
<p>A background of the book of Daniel is critical to understanding this portion of the Olivet Discourse. Jesus refers to the <i>abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel</i>, found in Daniel Chapters 9 and 12. The following are the applicable verses from Daniel 9 and 12, with my interpretation/comments in bold brackets or indented. For a more detailed teaching on the reasoning behind this interpretation, the reader can go to our website (calvarypo.org) and listen to the complete teaching of Daniel, Chapters 9 and 12, in MP3 format.</p> <p><i>Daniel 9:24 - "Seventy weeks [in Hebrew literally reads, "seventy sevens" interpreted to be 70 times 7 years, or 490 years] are determined for your people [the Jews] and for your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.</i></p> <p>In other words, there will be a total of 490 years of prophetic time dealing with the Jews and Jerusalem until the Jewish Messiah comes to rule on Earth. As we will see, this is not a continuous time frame. Instead, the 490 years are broken into a 483-year and a 7-year time block, separated by hundreds of years.</p>		

Daniel 9:25 - "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

A total of 483 years out of the 490 years will be used up in the time between a commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah of Israel comes. Dr. David Reagan makes a strong case for how to calculate the starting and stopping point of this prophecy (<http://raptureready.com/featured/reagan/dr31.html>). He contends that the commandment (457 BC) to rebuild Jerusalem is recorded in Ezra 9:9:

Ezra 9:9 — "God has not forsaken us, but has extended loving kindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem".

Then, exactly 483 years later, Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth declaring that He was fulfilling the prophecies of the Messiah.

Luke 4:17 And He [Jesus] was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written [Isaiah 61:1] : 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (NKJ)

The commandment to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem is the starting point, and Daniel says the end point of the 483 years is defined as "until Messiah the Prince" meaning the beginning of Jesus' three years of ministry before He was crucified and risen from the dead on our behalf. Then Daniel continues with his prophecy.

Daniel 9:26 - "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off [killed], but not for Himself [Jesus did not die on His own account, but for the sins of the world]; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Daniel clearly prophesied that the Jewish Messiah would be killed; then a people would destroy the Jewish Temple and the city of Jerusalem, which was fulfilled by the Romans in A.D. 70.

Daniel prophesied these events about 530 B.C., when the Medes and Persians were ruling the world. The Roman Empire did not exist and could not be named. Since "the people" who destroyed the city were the Romans, we can know "the prince who is to come," a reference to the future Antichrist, must come out of a revived Roman Empire.

9:26---The end of it [the city and sanctuary] shall be with a flood [literally = dispersion] and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

Again, this was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 and continues to this day as the Jews continue to be in dispersion and wars.

In the next verse, the prophecy skips to the future. None of the Old Testament prophecies deal with the time of the Church; instead, they deal with the Jewish nation and people. During this period of time (since Jesus was crucified, risen, and ascended into heaven), the progression of the 490-year prophecy has been put on hold. Verse 27 records the event that starts the last seven-year period of history until the Messiah comes to rule and to be “anointed as the Most Holy” (verse 24), which means when Jesus returns in glory.

Daniel 9:27 - Then he [The Prince who is to come, from verse 26 - the future Antichrist] shall confirm [enforce] a covenant [contractual agreement] with many [nations?] for one week [literally one seven = one seven-year period of time, the last seven of the 70 sevens of verse 24]; but in the middle of the week [3.5 years into the treaty] he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate [the Antichrist will bring global destruction – the event Jesus was referring to], even until the consummation [until the end – when Jesus returns], which is determined, is poured out on the desolate [Jesus brings wrath to those making desolation]."

What does Daniel mean when he says that the antichrist will confirm a covenant with many for one week (of years or seven years)? I think the answer is found in the words which immediately follow, when Daniel says the antichrist breaks the covenant by bringing an end to the reinstated Jewish sacrificial system coinciding with the rebuilt Jewish temple. Therefore, the covenant must have been an agreement between the rest of the world and Israel that the Jews would be allowed to reestablish Mosaic law animal sacrifice for the first time since their previous temple was destroyed in 70 AD. It appears the rest of the world is required to join the global religion which does not tolerate any religious fundamentalists (no one is allowed to say their god is the only god). If this is the case, the Jews alone will be allowed to return to the “fundamentals” of their faith, but only for a season of three and a half years, after which the antichrist rips up the contract.

There is one other place that Daniel speaks of a future abomination:

Dan 12:11 “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away [by the Antichrist, 3.5 years into a seven year peace treaty], and the abomination of desolation is set up [image of the Antichrist where he declares himself to be god – 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 13], there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days [Until Jesus physically returns to rescue the remnant]. 12 “Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days [possibly meaning those who survive the “sheep/goat” judgment of Matthew 25:32-46]. 13 “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” (NKJ)

Going back to Matthew 24:15-22 – Matthew and Mark record Jesus’ warning to the Jews who will be living in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas of Israel during the last days (during the seven-year “Tribulation” period). According to Daniel 9, three and one half years into a seven year covenant, the Antichrist will break his agreement with the Jews. He will also commit an abomination in the rebuilt temple (currently not possible since the temple has not been built). Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 2, that the Antichrist will go into the Holy Place of the future rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, where he will declare that he alone is god, and will force the world’s inhabitants to worship him (or an image of him) as god (Rev 13). It appears this is the abomination that Jesus was referring to. Some think the Antichrist will also sacrifice a pig, as Antiochus IV (the Seleucid ruler over Israel) did in 167 BC.

Whatever actually happens to fulfill the “abomination of desolation,” it is clear from the warnings of Jesus that those Jews living in Israel at the time will need to immediately leave Jerusalem and Judea in order to escape a slaughter. If they take the time to go to their houses, they will be killed. Therefore, the urgency is such that they are to pray that the abomination does not occur on the Sabbath. This would mean the Jews will become increasingly observant of the Sabbath law as the last days approach. Notice that in Luke 21:20-24, there is concern for those who are nursing children, but not that the Jews pray that their need for flight doesn’t fall on a Sabbath. Remember Luke was recording Jesus’ answer to the question of when the Temple of their day was going to be destroyed. Jesus said it would be when the Jews saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies. In the days and years leading up to the fall of Jerusalem, and destruction of the Jewish temple by the Romans in 70 AD, Jews living in Jerusalem would have had many days to flee the city; and thus there was no reason to pray that there need to do so would not come on a Sabbath. Matthew and Mark record the need for Jews to flee Jerusalem in a future judgment of the Antichrist where it will be critical to immediately leave the city as soon as they see the abomination of desolation, with no time to spare.

For the sake of conjecture, assume the following has occurred to get to this point (as history unfolds, any errors in the following are the result of my lack of understanding of God’s word and not on the prophecies themselves):

(1) The church will be raptured some time before global government is established (2 Thes 2). After the church is taken, God will be again dealing specifically with Israel (the Christian church is never mentioned after Revelation chapter 3). A future war in the Middle East results in the fulfillment of Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17. Psalm 83 talks about (using modern names) Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza and Saudi Arabia and Egypt being burned as “the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire.” Isaiah 17 speaks of a future war were Damascus is destroyed and ceases to be the capitol of Syria. Isaiah 17 also says that many other strong cities will be forsaken “because of Israel”. At the same time, Israel’s northern military bases are destroyed, and Israel’s strength is greatly weakened. This results in all of Israel’s **immediate**, Arab, Muslim neighbors being destroyed (apparently as a result of Israel using nuclear weapons). I suspect that this will be fulfilled in a widespread nuclear war. It is not hard to conjecture that such a global conflagration will result in a demand for global government and global nuclear (and other WMD) disarmament. Israel will then become defenseless against their other neighbors who come to destroy her in the next prophetic war.

(2) Then (possibly soon after the Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17 wars), the Arab/Muslim nations that surround the nations which were destroyed by Israel come to invade and destroy Israel behind the leadership of Russia, as prophesied in Ezekiel 38-39 (possibly as a result of Israel’s weakened military might after suffering the blows from Syria and because Israel has either expended her weapons on the immediate neighbors or has been disarmed). It is clear from Ezekiel 38 that the other nations of the world do not offer to come to Israel’s defense as the invading armies approach. This means something must happen to remove America’s pro-Israel influence in the Middle East. It might even mean that other nations have also been destroyed as a result of a larger scale nuclear exchange when the Nuclear Janie was let out of the Middle East bottle.

(3) As the invading armies approach the mountains of Israel, God intervenes on Israel’s behalf and destroys the armies, as described in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Ezekiel 39 prophesies that from that day forward, God will again pour His spirit on the house of Israel. It is possible that these wars will result in one forth of the world’s population being killed and will thus fulfill the first four horseman of the apocalypse (Revelation 6).

(4) As the world's survivors reel from the destruction caused by the fulfillment of Psalm 83, Isaiah 17 and Ezekiel 38-39, a man rises to power with a plan to put an end to wars in general and the Middle East conflict specifically. The globalization process is accelerated and culminates in a seven-year treaty where Israel is allowed to realize her millennia's long dream to reestablish temple worship, including animal sacrifices. This may be what Isaiah refers to as the covenant with death (Isaiah 28:17-22). I believe this compromise toward the Jews will be the result of a global recognition of Israel's miraculous preservation during two separate conflicts, each of which should have wiped her off the map. The world will know that this could only have happened as the result of divine intervention. Israel will experience a revival back to God but not toward their true Messiah, Jesus, yet.

The enforcement of this treaty will signal the beginning of the last seven-year portion of Daniel's 490-year prophecy, as discussed earlier. The plan will include allowing the Jews to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem (Revelation 11:1-2), to reinstate animal sacrifice (Dan 9 and 12), to enforce Sabbath observance (Jesus), and to recognize Israel land borders that are defensible. This plan will be so favorable to the Jews that they will be deceived into thinking that the man behind its inspiration is none other than the promised Messiah (but in fact, he will be the Antichrist whom Jesus warned them about). Jews from around the world will all flock to Israel to complete the fulfillment of the O.T. prophets about the re-gathering of Jews to the land, and the whole world will be saying "Finally! Peace and safety throughout the world!" But their joy and hopes will soon be dashed as the Antichrist brings death to the world at 3.5 years into the seven year Tribulation. Then 1Thes 5:3 will be fulfilled: "For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."

(5) Three and a half years into the seven-year peace plan; the Antichrist will show his true colors and will commit the abomination of desolation. Some think it is at this time that someone attempts to assassinate him, but he recovers from a deadly wound.

Rev 13:3 - And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast [**Antichrist**]. 4 So they worshiped the dragon [**Satan**] who gave authority to the beast [**Antichrist at this time will be possessed by Satan**]; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" 5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months [**for another 3.5 years, which is when Jesus returns and judges the antichrist (Revelation 19:20)**]. (NKJ)