

Olivet Discourse One

11/12/2023

Hymns: 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 58 Rock of Ages

Scripture: Psalm 90:1-12

Big idea: God Knows the Future

Our scripture text for today is: **Matthew 24**

Wouldn't it be nice to know the future? We've all driven past small places usually with gravel or dirt driveways advertising "Fortune Teller." Of course, if these people actually could tell the future, they would have no need to scam customers out of \$50 a pop. You may recall the classic movie *Back to the Future, Part 2* and the Sports Almanac – a book of records of sporting events taken from the future that assured perfection with wagers on the outcomes of future events – which made the villain of the story fabulously rich.

Our study today is moving to future prophesy. The Bible is the only book that predicts the future with 100 percent accuracy (John 17:17). The reason is that it is the Word of God. God exists outside of time, created it, and is not bound by it (Psalm 90:2-4).

We're looking at the Olivet Discourse first. As the name implies, this sermon was given on the Mount of Olives. If you've ever been to Israel, this was likely your first stop to view Jerusalem. Today, there's still an olive grove there but also a huge, very exclusive, ancient cemetery in an open area. Perhaps Jesus and his little audience gathered in that same open area to hear His prophesy.

Some other interesting facts about the Mount of Olives are:

1. The Garden of Gethsemane is there.
2. Jesus made His Triumphal Entry there (Luke 19:37)
3. Jesus ascended into heaven from there (Acts 1:9-12).
4. Jesus will return there and the mountain will split in two (Zechariah 14:4).

The Olivet Discourse is the most extensive prophesy given by Jesus of future events. The most complete record of this discourse is found in the book of Matthew. This book frames itself with two great sermons of Jesus (5-7 [Sermon on the Mount]; 24-25 [Olivet Discourse]).

That explains the *where* – the Mount of Olives, but what about the *when*? For that, we look at what surrounds Matthew 24 and 25. Back in Matthew chapter 21, Jesus made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:8-11) – the time celebrated traditionally as Palm Sunday.

When Jesus finished His Olivet Discourse, we learn the Passover was soon approaching:

Matthew 26

[1] And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

*[2] Ye know that after **two days** is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.*

The time of the Olivet Discourse was just two days before that fateful Passover when Jesus was crucified.

Our next question is which of the gospels include an account of the Olivet Discourse? It turns out that each of the Synoptic (a fancy word for summary or synopsis) gospels include the account. Those gospels are Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Since we have three accounts, we will use a merged version of them to direct us through this important passage of scripture. The account in Matthew contains the most information, so it will serve as the base with accounts of Mark and Luke used to supplement it. Let's get started.

In Matthew 23, Jesus excoriated the religious leaders. He then lamented the future fate of Israel and its people. Let's drop back to the end of Matthew 23 to get a bit more context:

[33] Y[ou] serpents, y[ou] generation of vipers,

speaking of the scribes and Pharisees (v. 27)

how can y[ou] escape the damnation of hell?

[34] Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes:

Notice He asserts His deity here.

*and some of them y[ou] shall **kill and crucify**;*

They were going to crucify and kill Jesus in just two days.

*and some of them [you] shall **scourge** in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:*

[35] That upon you may come

*all the righteous blood shed upon the earth,
from the blood of righteous Abel*

the first martyr

*unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias,
whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*

Perhaps this refers to the last martyr recorded in the Hebrew Bible (II Chronicles 24:20-22).

[36] *Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*

[37] *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [y]ou that*

kill the prophets, and

stone them which are sent unto [you],

how often would I have gathered [your] children together,

even as a hen gather[s] her chickens under her wings, and y[ou] would not!

[38] *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

When he leaves, the LORD will no longer be present there.

[39] *For I say unto you, Y[ou] shall not see me henceforth, till y[ou] shall say, Blessed is he that come[s] in the name of the Lord.*

Next, He predicts the destruction of the temple. History tells us that the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. by Titus of Rome. With that background, let us now launch into Matthew 24.

Matthew 24

[1] *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple:*

He was headed to a place where he would spend the night which was over the hill in Bethany.

and his disciples came to him ... to sh[o]w him the buildings of the temple.

Mark 13

[1] And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples sai[d] []to him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

[2] And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

*[3] And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,
the disciples*

Mark 13

[3] ... Peter and James and John and Andrew ...,

came unto him privately, ...,

Luke 21

[7] And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be?

Mark 13

and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

and what shall be the sign of [your] coming, and of the end of the world?

These questions are important. Here they are again:

1. When shall these things occur?
2. What sign will precede these events?
3. What sign will precede His coming?
4. What sign will precede the end of the age?

In the next eleven verses, Jesus paints with a broad brush regarding the events leading up to His second coming and the end of our current dispensation (the church age, also called the age of grace). Be aware, the church age was a mystery to the Jews of Jesus' time, but the end of that age – the time of great tribulation – does come into view in this prophesy.

[4] *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

[5] *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

Luke 21

[8] *...and the time draw[s] near: go ye not therefore after them.*

The most famous false Christ of my lifetime was Sun Myung Moon. Perhaps you remember him. Among many others, Charles Manson also made that claim.

[6] *And y[ou] shall hear of wars [and commotions Luke 21:9] and rumours of wars: see that y[ou] be not troubled [terrified Luke 21:9]: for all these things must come to pass,*

but the end is not yet.

[7] *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines [and troubles Mark 13:9], and pestilences, and*

Luke 21

[11] *And great earthquakes shall be in divers places ... ; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.*

...

[8] *All these are **the beginning** of sorrows [literally: birth-pangs].*

Luke 21

[12] *But **before all these**,*

Note Jesus just made a big-time transition! This is a major red flag. He's switching **back in time** to pick up the answer to the first two questions regarding the destruction of the the temple which we know occurred in 70 A.D. We must follow these time markers carefully to keep from being confused.

Mark 13

[9] *... take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues y[ou] shall be beaten:*

they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

We can read about this in the book of Acts especially as we remember Peter, Stephen, Paul, and others.

[13] And it shall turn to you for a testimony [against them Mark 13:9].

Mark 13

[11] But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what y[ou] shall speak, neither ... premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak...: for it is not y[ou] that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

[12] Now ... brother shall betray ... brother to death, and ... father [his] son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Early Christians faced great persecution by Rome.

[9] Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and y[ou] shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

*[10] And **then** shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

Jesus now moves past that time of the apostles and the destruction of the temple and back to His focus on the last two questions regarding end times.

[11] And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

We have had false prophets throughout my lifetime and that of my parents. Cults also have played a prominent role in our time – deceiving millions.

[12] And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Throughout my lifetime, moral corruption has increased dramatically. In just the past twenty years, the percentage of U.S. citizens claiming to be Christian has fallen fifteen percent. And the very unnatural and horrific destruction of unborn babies by their own mothers remains a hot issue in our corrupt culture.

[13] But he that shall endure unto the end, ... shall be saved.

As the following verses are about to describe, there is a time of great tribulation coming to kick off the end of this age. The endurance and salvation referred to here is physical – not spiritual.

*[14] And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and **then** shall the end come.*

We will learn more about this future event as we study the book of Revelation. The gospel of the kingdom is what John the Baptist and Jesus preached early in His ministry. It's the gospel with an emphasis on turning to the King of Kings.

Next, Jesus transitions from His broad summary to give specific end-times signs.

*[15] **When** y[ou] therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand [where he ought not Mark 13:14] in the holy place, (whoso[ever reads this], let him understand:)*

This abomination is the Beast also called Antichrist.

Luke 21

*[20] And **when** y[ou] shall see Jerusalem [surrounded by] armies, then know that the desolation thereof is n[ear].*

Here we have a sign regarding the disciples' third question: What sign will precede His coming? This is the sign for when Jerusalem will fall yet in our future (Zechariah 14:1-3)

[16] Then let them which [are] in Judaea flee into the mountains:

The description goes on and on about the urgency of leaving quickly. It boils down to drop everything, do not go back to get anything and flee Jerusalem urgently.

Luke 21

*[22] For these [are] the days of **vengeance**, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

*[19] And woe unto them that are [pregnant], and to them that [are nursing] in those days! [...for there shall be **great distress** in the land, and **wrath** upon this people. Luke 21:23]*

Luke 21

[24] And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Notice the times of the Gentiles (this current age included) is coming to a close with the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory.

[20] But pray ... that your flight not [be] in the winter, [or] on the sabbath day:

[21] For then shall be great tribulation [affliction Mark 13:19], such as was not since the beginning of the world [the beginning of [God's] creation Mark 13:19] to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

[22] And except [that the Lord had shortened those days Mark 13:20] ..., there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

[23] Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

[24] For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they [would] deceive the very elect.

Perhaps the primary person in view here is the False Prophet of Revelation 13:11-18 who will perform fantastic miracles and demand everyone worship the Antichrist (or Beast).

[25] [But take ye heed: Mark 13:23]Behold, I have told you before.

[26] Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

[27] For as the lightning come[s] out of the east, and shine[s] even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

When Jesus comes in glory it will be the most public event in history. There will be no mistaking when it happens.

[28] ...

[29] Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, ...:

Luke 21

[25] ...; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

[26] Men's hearts failing them for fear, ...: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

There will be no doubt these cataclysmic events will be greater than have ever occurred in history.

*[30] And then shall appear the **sign** of the Son of man in heaven:*

and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,

and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with [great Mark 13:26] power and great glory.

Here we see the answer to the fourth question: What sign will precede His coming?

[31] And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other [...from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Mark 13:27].

Luke 21

[28] And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draw[s] nigh.

We need to stop here until after the holidays. But before we go:

Application

What about your future? Does the Bible have something personal to say about where you're headed? Yes, it does, and it's something left out of the Olivet Discourse. Those who are living but lost will have to go through the horrors of the great tribulation and then face God's judgment. But those of us who know the LORD need not concern ourselves with the time of the great tribulation also referred to as the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). Whether we've passed away or are still alive, we will be taken to glory in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye (I Corinthians 15:52) in the event called the rapture of the church.

I Thessalonians 4

[16] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

[17] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

And there's more! Remember how this fictional book made a fictional villain fabulously wealthy, well this book, the Bible tells us that we are God's children and joint-heirs (Romans 8:14-17) with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16) and that God the Father loves us as He loves His only begotten Son (John 17:23-26). Indeed, ours is a glorious future.

Benediction

*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)*

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