
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Matthew 24: 1-28 “The Olivet Discourse” Part I

This is part one of a two part study as a prelude into The Book of Revelation. It is essential we understand the events that are to come and not bow to false teachings or sensationalism, and the best way to do that is see what our Lord Jesus Christ taught on the matter.

General Idea: This passage is referred to as the *Fifth Great Discourse of Jesus*, and called “The Olivet Discourse” (Matt. 23:37-24:-35; Mark 13). It is a template to knowing the signs of the times, or what will occur in the “Last Days.” Jesus is giving us a glimpse into the future and things to come for Jerusalem, most of which was fulfilled in the destruction of the Temple, and He tells us why it will be destroyed (Jer. 13:27; 49:22). The Jewish leadership fell to hypocrisy and personal agendas and the people followed like dumb sheep (Matt. 23). The Temple was physically destroyed by the Roman army in 70 A.D.; the Romans were the means but not the reason. This passage also gives us a glimpse of what happens when we fail spiritually and refuse to repent, so that our sins accumulate and escalate, while God’s grace is seeking to resolve, heal, and reconcile us to Him.

Jesus is explaining to us the events in the first part of the Tribulation symbolically in this passage, and the rest in the next (Matt. 24:29-35), the Judgment of Jerusalem. This is not about one event but many to come when He returns to earth in power and glory! Jesus gives us some of the signs that will be warnings of things to come. The call is to watch and to be ready, but not be consumed or worried, for He is still in control. We are to look to Him (Phil. 3:20), not just the signs. We are to trust in Him, not in the times; our faith is in Him, not what will or may happen!

Vs.1-5: Show Him the buildings. The disciples were excited to see the splendor of man’s creations and saw God’s glory in them. The Temple, considered by some to be one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was the central symbol of Judaism, and believed to be invincible and indestructible. Jesus refocuses them on God and away from things that soon would all be rubble!

- *Do you see?* Jesus’ primary audience and challenge is to Israel.
- Most Greek philosophers considered even the most extravagant building as unimpressive, though it was of more value to them.
- *Not one stone shall be left.* This was fulfilled in 70 A.D. The Qumran was one of the few first century Jewish groups to see the impending fall because of hypocrisy and apostasy. Other groups said the Temple represented God, and since God would not destroy Himself, they felt safe (Jer. 4:7-15)! All things in

this world will be meaningless and destroyed eventually; only God will remain, along with those whose faith is in Him!

- *Tell us when.* Jesus responds to the disciples with the “Olivet Discourse,” named for the place where it was spoken. Jesus groups together two questions as one (in meaning, not necessarily in chronological order), the time of the destruction of the Temple, and the End of Ages.
- *Wars...*are signs of Jesus’ coming, but also of life in a fallen world. The emphasis is on not being negligent toward such things! If we knew the exact time and day, Christians would probably be callous, lazy, and unproductive, as history has shown with such groups who think they know.
- *When.* Most scholars, over the centuries, have stated it will be when the Gospel has been preached to all nations (Matt. 28: 16-20).
- *Take heed.* People with various intentions—from deliberately deceiving others to being deluded individuals—will claim to be the Christ. We are called to be discerning so we will not be deceived! We are to always evaluate everything by the Word, while being sensitive to the Spirit.
- *Many will come.* And, many did in Jesus time, attracting large crowds and followers, according to Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. No one claiming to be Jesus would ever contradict the Bible (Isa. 8:20; John 16:13-15; 1 John 2:18-29)! The key to knowing who is real and who is fake and their motivations is that false prophets seek political and self-fulfilling aspirations; real followers of Christ seek to glorify Him and Him alone (Psalm 69:30; Rom. 15:5-9; Rev. 16:8-9).

Vs.6-14: *Are not troubled.* Suffering is a part of life; it will happen; we have to learn to cope, seek Him, and prepare for it so we can help others and ourselves through it.

- *Sorrows* literally means, “the spasms from giving birth;” troubles are like being pregnant, with the possibility that the birth will give us both opportunity and pain.
- We are called not to be discouraged when bad things, troubles, disasters, and tribulations happen in the world (2 Chron. 15:6; Isa. 13:8; 19:2; Jer. 51:46; Hos. 13:13). We live in a fallen world where sin has corrupted everything and everyone, so disasters will come. We are called to prepare, plan ahead, and look to Christ as the Deliverer. He is in control!
- *They will deliver you* was a forewarning that knowing and making Christ known is dangerous; we will face persecution both overtly and/or covertly.
- Persecution was what distinguished the early church from other groups, even many zealous ones who were not persecuted.
- *Tribulation* means “The Day of the Lord” which will come about in the last days. (This term has been wrought with controversy in the last 100 years. I, for time sake, will not explore all the theories; however we will when we get further in the book of Revelation).
- *He who endures.* This is also a call, a call to keep you from being spiritually or emotionally defeated when tough times come. We are to always see our Lord

and not our situation (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:31-39). This is an aspect of the character of faithfulness, as it will help you persevere under stress and chaos. Christ keeps us secure, not our environment!

- *Offended, betray.* Under cultural, family, and physical pressure, many early Christians gave up on the faith; some betrayed others, and some reverted to paganism or Judaism.
- *Deceive.* This leads to and comes from Apostasy—a blatant disregard for God and His truth as well as the forsaking of His love and acceptance! Love cannot function where God is not honored, sought, and glorified! We cannot be deceived when our eyes are on Christ and His Word!

Vs. 15-28: *Abomination of Desolation*, refers to the most vile reasons (apostasy and sacrilege) causing the desolation of the holy place of the Temple. Daniel predicted this would happen after the death/rejection of the Messiah, which was also fulfilled at the crucifixion and the Temple's destruction in 70 A.D. (Dan. 9:25-27; 11:31).

- A lot of prophecy, such as this example, is fulfilled in stages! The Temple was defiled (*Abomination*) and became empty (as the Romans took all the sacred things) and useless because it was destroyed as a result (*Desolation*). Some have said this is a name for Satan; it is not, although he uses this tactic.
- Most Jews thought this was fulfilled when, in 168 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes built a pagan altar to Zeus on the altar of the Temple and slaughtered pigs on it, which was, according to God, the most disgusting and revolting thing that could be done to the Temple! A warning for us today is not to become apostate, so to mess with God or His Holy people and places (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 9:27; 13:14- 15)!
- Zealots stormed the Temple in 66 A.D., killing priests and Romans and starting the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! They also desecrated the altar by shedding human blood on it. This was the ultimate sacrilege before God, and possibly the “straw that broke the camel’s back,” causing judgment to commence.
- *Flee.* Jesus basically says, *when it comes, leave, and leave fast* (1 Sam. 23:26; 1 Macc. 2:28)! Early church fathers said the Christians fled to Pella in the Judean hillside.
- *Housetop.* Houses then had flat roofs, and people entertained, slept, and lived there when it was too hot to be inside. Also, it was considered the best place for prayer by reverent Jews and early Christians.
- *Clothes.* This refers to the outer garment worn by field workers when it was cold, and then taken off when it was hot, but not referring to being naked.
- *Pregnant* referred to being expectant when traveling is difficult. My wife says, “Imagine what it must have been like before modern conveniences and in the midst of persecution!”
- *Winter* makes anything a source of exasperation, from severe cold to rushing rivers without bridges, especially before industrialization!

- *Sabbath* referred to the “Sabbath Year.” Because of food regulation, they would run out of food quickly (Lev. 25:1-7).
- *Shortened* referred to Daniel’s 1,260 days; maybe the time would be shortened to preserve life (Dan. 12:11-13).
- *Look, here is the Christ.* This was a call to be aware of false prophets and false teachers, even when they seemingly perform miracles! People are easily deceived; just watch a good magician!
- *I told you* referred to advance warning and the need to heed it (Isa. 48:5).
- *Lightening*, produced on command, was something a false prophet could not do; only God could (Zech. 14:3-8). Jesus’ second coming will not be as subtle as His first; it will be spectacularly noticeable!
- *Carcass for the eagles.* Being eaten was considered the worst fate for a dead Jewish body; the best was to be buried (Duet. 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44; Psalm 79:2; Ezek. 32:4-6; 39:17-20).

A lot of Christians, over the years, have seen this passage as a prelude to Jesus’ second coming, which it is. However, some take it to the point that this is all it means. However, many of the events have been fulfilled, such as the destruction of the Temple, while we still wait for Jesus’ second coming and more prelude signs of Him (Luke 21:20-24). We have to be careful that our interpretation of Scripture is accurate in word and meaning before we make an application to it! We are never to ignore His words, and absolutely never to replace them with ours! It is not about what we think or wish for; it is about His will and His timing! Jesus can come at any time; He is not bound by the limits of our understanding of Eschatology (End Times Theology). He is God, and His timing and control are sovereign! Our age will end and a new age will be birthed—the accumulation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The debates as to when and how are irrelevant; what is important is, we know it will occur. We are to be watchful and discerning that people do not deceive us falsely and that we do not give into despair when things get really tough. We are also to make sure we do not become complacent and ignore the signs, or we will be unable to flee them. Stress and tribulation will produce either panic or perseverance; this result can be in your control by surrendering yourself to His control! The possibilities are His also, even when we do not see them! Even in severe tribulation, there is hope—the hope of Christ (Psalm 19:7-14; 97:1-98:9; Rom. 8:28-39)! No matter what will or may happen, God will redeem those who are in Him!

Remember, if we feed our faith our doubts and problems will start to starve. If we feed our doubts with sensationalisms and lust, all we will do is distort ourselves away for our spiritual formation and in turn be glorifying Satan and not Christ!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?

3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What do you do and how do you feel when you hear about all the bad things—the troubles, disasters, tribulations—happening in the world? Do you ever feel like saying, *yes, I am living in the last days*?
2. Why was the Temple destroyed? What do you think Christianity and Judaism would be like now if it had never been destroyed?
3. According to this passage, what happens when we fail spiritually, then refuse to repent, and our sins accumulate and escalate?
4. Jesus gives us some of the signs that will be warnings of what will come. What are they? What are we to look for? What are we not to look for?
5. Why were the disciples so excited to see the splendor of the buildings?
6. Why do you suppose the Jewish groups, even in Roman occupation and impending doom, said the Temple represented God and God would not destroy Himself, so everyone was safe? Where was their trust? Why do people trust in things and not in God?
7. All things in the world will eventually become meaningless and be destroyed; only God will remain, along with those whose faith is in Him. How can your faith be strengthened in this knowledge?
8. If you knew the exact time and day Christ would come, would you be callous, lazy, and unproductive, as history has shown with such groups who think they know? Be honest!
9. How can you know who is real and who is fake? What are the motivations of false prophets? What do real followers of Christ seek?
10. What can you do to keep from being discouraged when bad things, troubles, disasters, and tribulations happen?

11. Why did many of the early Christians give up on the faith, betray others, or revert to paganism or Judaism? What would you do if, all of a sudden, it was against the law to be a practicing Christian, lead a Bible study, or go to church? What if you did, and the penalty for the first offense was that all of your property would be seized—and the second time, you would go to jail? That is the way it is in a lot of countries such as the Middle East, India, Pakistan, China, etc!
12. How would you define Apostasy? How would you recognize it? What will you do when you see it?
13. What would it take for “Abomination of Desolation” to come to your church? Keep in mind, this is not a good thing!
14. Do you think prophecy is fulfilled in stages? If not, how do you reconcile this passage, *things clearly fulfilled and things not quite yet?*
15. Why is this so important to God that you do not become apostate, not to mess with God and His Holy people and places (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15)? Why do some Christians seem to pursue being apostate rather than the Word and the Spirit-directed life?
16. Have you been easily deceived or tricked by a good magician? I know I have; sometimes it is hard to know! What can you learn from this passage, along with your experiences, to become more discerning?
17. The call Jesus gives us here is to watch and to be ready, but not be consumed or worried, for He is still in control. When and how will you do this?
18. Why is it important to be careful of our interpretation of Scripture, to determine what it actually says and means before we make an application to it? What happens when we do not?
19. Do you believe that Jesus can come at any time, and that He is not bound by the limits of our understanding of Eschatology? Why, or why not?
20. What can you do to make sure you and your church do not become complacent and ignore the signs? How is hope important here?