

The First Section of our Lord's "Olivet Discourse"

Matthew 24:1-14

Matthew 24:1-14 - *"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."*

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?"*

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. 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,^[b] and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

⁹ *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."*

Background Notes

The Jewish Temple that stood in Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's ministry was a magnificent building, and the disciples pointed out the beautiful new buildings of the magnificent Temple complex. The Lord responded, *"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."* The Lord's prediction came true in 70AD, when the Romans conquered Jerusalem and destroyed this beautiful Temple and its associated structures. The evidence of this prophecy can be seen today in the archeological excavations surrounding the Temple Mount area in Jerusalem. Huge stones that were hurled down from the Temple Mount in 70AD can be seen lying on the excavated street pavements below. In fact, the damage to the Roman pavement from the impact of these large falling stones can be clearly seen in the excavations.

Now a question. The Western Wall (formerly called the "Wailing Wall"), where modern-day Jews come to pray, dates back to the time of Jesus Christ. Obviously the stones of this wall are still standing. Is this wall an exception to our Lord's prediction? The Lord said that "not one stone will be left upon another" - but the stones of this wall are still standing one

upon another! What's the answer? No, this is not an exception to our Lord's prediction. The Western (or Wailing) Wall was never part of the **Temple**. The Western Wall where Jewish people gather to pray today is the western wall of the **Temple platform**. You see, the Temple area is on the top of a hill, so a huge platform had to be built to give a level surface for building the Temple. Many of the foundation stones for this platform still remain intact, including the stones of the Western Wall. However, this wall is not an exception to our Lord's prophecy about the Temple. The Temple was completely destroyed, and not one stone was left standing upon another.

In verse 3 the disciples asked the Lord two questions: Tell us when these things will be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age? Beginning in verse 4, and right on through the end of Matthew 25, the Lord answered these questions about the future. Because the Lord gave these answers while He was on the Mount of Olives, this teaching is known as "The Olivet Discourse."

Doctrinal Points

1. There will be a beginning to the Tribulation.

In verse 4 the Lord began to mention some events that would take place in the future – false Messiahs (v5), wars and rumors of wars (v6), famines and earthquakes (v7). The main point that the Lord was making in these verses is that these signs are **not** the sign of the Lord's return and the end of the age. *"Take heed that no one deceives you" (v4). Verse 6: "for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (v4) [emphasis added]. "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (v6) [emphasis added].*

So now comes an important question: Have verses 4-8 already been fulfilled in history - or are they yet to be fulfilled? At first thought it seems that maybe these verses have already been fulfilled. Over the years there have been many "false Christs" (or false messiahs), or people claiming to be a teacher from God or a "messiah." And when haven't there been wars and rumors of wars? There have been plenty of earthquakes and famines around the world since the time of Christ! All this is true, but the Bible indicates that a time is coming in the future when all of these woes will increase and intensify. This time is known as the Tribulation period.

There has always been tribulation and trouble for believers, but in the future there will be a period of time on this earth known as the Tribulation. It will last for seven years, according to prophecies in the Book of Daniel and in the Book of Revelation. The Lord was talking about this period of time, the Tribulation Period. *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (v9).*

This verse does not refer to the Church. In this verse the Lord is speaking about believers of that end time period, the Tribulation. So we believe that, beginning in verse 4, the Lord was specifically thinking about the beginning of this future tribulation period, although the woes and troubles mentioned here have already taken place in history to a lesser extent.

When, specifically, will this future seven-year Tribulation period of intensified woes begin? We believe that the Bible teaches that two major events signal the beginning of this future Tribulation Period. One is the Rapture of the Church, when believers will be “raptured” (caught away) from this earth to meet the Lord in the air, and to forever be with the Lord. We read about this event in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

The other event is the signing of a seven-year treaty or covenant between Israel and a union or collusion of western nations, under the leadership of a world-renowned political leader. We read about this covenant in Daniel 9. Most likely the covenant will guarantee Israel’s security.

How close are we to these two events and the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period? We can’t say for sure, but conditions in the world today certainly seem like we’re nearing the “last days.” There has been trouble and tribulation down through history, but not the incredible disasters predicted for the Tribulation period. We are not in the Tribulation now. There will be a beginning to the Tribulation.

2. There will be an end to the Tribulation.

Look at verses 13-14: *“But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”* What is “the end” here? Is it the end of the world? Is it the end of life? No, it’s the end of the Tribulation Period! Remember that the disciples asked, *“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”* (v3). “End of the age” here is the correct translation - not “end of the world,” as in some translations.

The age that we are in now ends with the seven-year Tribulation Period, and then the Lord will return to this earth at His Second Advent. Look at verses 29-30: *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

So the Lord will return at the end of the Tribulation Period, and then He will set up His earthly kingdom that will last for a thousand years, according to Revelation 20:6. So “the end” mentioned here in verses 13-14 is the end of this present age, which culminates and ends with the Tribulation Period.

Throughout the Tribulation, not only will the terrible things in verses 4-14 take place, but the gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world (v14). What is this “gospel of the kingdom”? It is the good news that the Lord is going to return after the seven-year period of tribulation, and He will set up His earthly kingdom.

Who's going to preach the message of the gospel of the kingdom? Answer: the believers of the Tribulation Period, especially the Jewish believers of the Tribulation Period - the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of Revelation 7. These believers are the **"you"** of Matthew 24:9: *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."* The Lord is not speaking of the Church here. This is not about Christians, because the Church will have already left earth at the Rapture. The Lord was addressing His Jewish disciples here, and it will be the godly Jews of the Tribulation Period who will preach the gospel of the Kingdom worldwide.

Many of these Jewish believers will be martyred (v9), but many will not be martyred and will endure to the end: *"But he who endures to the end [end of the Tribulation Period] shall be saved" (v13)*. They will be delivered from the Tribulation, and enter alive into the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Therefore verse 13 is not talking about "earning" eternal life by endurance! No, it is talking about the preservation of those believers who are not martyred during the Tribulation Period. The end is when the Lord returns. There will be an end to the Tribulation.

Practical Application

Don't be misled by false teachers!

We see from verses 5 and 11 that many people will be deceived during the Tribulation Period. *"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (v5)*. *"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many" (v11)*. And 2 Thessalonians 2:11 says, *"And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..."*

There are many false teachers around, even today. Don't be deceived. Don't be taken in! Know your Bible, so you can discern what teaching is true, and what teaching isn't true. **Don't be misled by false teachers!**