

17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

17:22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

17:23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

17:24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

17:25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

The key to understanding the Olivet Discourse is to realise that Jesus was speaking here about **two** catastrophes: firstly the sack of Jerusalem and burning of the second Temple, which took place in AD 70, **and then** the events which would follow His return to this world in glory to take vengeance on those who had refused to submit to His rule from Heaven, the return being currently still future. Luke first records a short preface which probably was spoken in the Temple area, then all three record the main body of teaching which Jesus later gave on the mount, probably on that part of it from which once gave a superb view of the Temple from which they had all just climbed up. The Pharisees were, as usual, asking Jesus questions which they thought would catch Him out. Fools! But there are many today who think exactly as they did, that the kingdom of God lies in the future and has still to arrive, because they cannot themselves conceive of any kingdom which lies beyond the range of their own limited vision. **It cannot be emphasised too strongly that no accurate eschatology is possible without an accurate chronology of the past.**

MATTHEW

MARK

LUKE

17:30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

17:31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

17:35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

17:36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

17:37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

It's true of course that the kingdom of God awaits the return of the King before it will become *visible*, nevertheless it's very much *here now* and the King has servants here now who carry out His orders pending His return. The stone "cut out without hands" (Daniel 2:34) was His *first* coming, *not* His second. Are we really asked to believe that the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, and the exaltation - the most important events in world history - were all ignored and passed over without mention by God when He gave Daniel the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? What gross folly! Jesus preached "the kingdom of God is at hand", and "at hand" does not mean "more than two thousand years away". In this prelude to His discourse on the mountain Jesus gives the Pharisees some details of the last day, when even they will see that He is the King.

MATTHEW

24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

24:2 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.

24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

24:10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

MARK

13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

13:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

13:4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

13:7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

LUKE

21:5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

21:6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

21:7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

21:10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

21:12 But before all these, 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.

21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Having left the Temple Jesus leads His disciples up the Mount of Olives (or Olivet) which is on the east of Jerusalem, and because the disciples are over-impressed by Herod's building work (which was intended to substantiate Herod's own claim to be the Messiah) Jesus sweeps His hand around and dismisses it all with a curt "not one stone shall be left upon another". Its destruction was effected by the Roman army under Vespasian and Titus, and Jesus puts aside briefly the far weightier matter of the end of the age to say here something about events which then lay less than forty years ahead. The discourse is recorded by all three synoptics and I have set out their records here in parallel columns for ease of comparison, because comparison is vital to an accurate understanding of what Jesus was teaching. Failure to carry out this simple exercise has been responsible for some appallingly widespread mistakes in basic eschatology.

MATTHEW

24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

24:14 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.

24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

MARK

13:10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

13:16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

LUKE

21:14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

21:15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

21:16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

21:17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

21:19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

The disciples seem to have confused the end of Jerusalem with the end of the age. Jesus did not, but certainly He began by speaking about Jerusalem. The gospel *was* preached in all the world following Pentecost; there were then in Jerusalem men from every nation under heaven and they took the gospel home with them (it reached England before the death of Tiberius in AD 37). Jesus was speaking here about the end of Jerusalem, not of the whole world. When people speak about "the end" they normally mean the end of whichever intolerable situation is currently most distressing to them, just as anybody who had spoken about "the end" in 1945 would have been understood to be talking about "the end of the second world war" and not the end of the world. The context makes this perfectly clear. Though AD 70 was a terrible holocaust for the Jews, the many references to Judaea clearly make it a parochial affair and not a global one. The **abomination of desolation** which Jesus mentions next was the entry by Titus into the Holy Place of the Temple, forbidden on pain of death to all but priests and Levites, and Jesus hints strongly at a mystery about this in the book of Daniel (it is certainly there, but is far too complex to go into here). But if the eye is allowed to move across to the parallel passage in Luke (above right), it will be seen at once that Jesus said that the abomination of desolation would occur **when the Roman armies were besieging Jerusalem**, and that happened in AD 70.

MATTHEW

24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

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

24:25 Behold, I have told you before.

24:26 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.

24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

24:28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

MARK

13:17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

13:18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

13:21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

13:23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

LUKE

21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

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.

The abomination is long past and no comparable event is prophesied to occur again. Please read the text. Likewise, the advice to those in Judaea to flee to the mountains was obviously given to those who would be in Judaea when the Roman army invaded and it has no application now. The **great tribulation** (meaning "threshing", which so many seem erroneously to imagine still lies ahead) also referred to the judgment **of Jerusalem** and it took place at the end of Daniel's "seventy sevens" in the seven years AD 64 - AD 70 (please see www.thain.com/bible/chronology/lookups/intro-countdown.htm). Gabriel told Daniel about this but the Olivet Discourse has the only mention of it in the New Testament, and Jesus said it would be followed by the treading down of Jerusalem until end of the "Times of the Gentiles". When was the treading down of Jerusalem? **It was AD 70**. Therefore **none** of the text in blue refers to the end of the age. Please read the text. Other trials lie ahead for Jerusalem but this one will not be repeated. **NO** great tribulation like that of Jerusalem in AD 70 is prophesied anywhere in scripture for our own day. Birth pangs ahead of the return of Messiah yes, but another great tribulation no. Therefore there is no pre-tribulation rapture. Please read the text!

MATTHEW

24:29 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, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

24:30 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 power and great glory.

24:31 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.

24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

MARK

13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,
13:25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

13:26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:

13:29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

13:30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

LUKE

21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;
21:26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

21:27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

21:29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

21:30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

21:32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

21:33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

But **now** Jesus moves away from the judgment of AD 70 and returns to the even more terrible judgment about which He had begun to speak in the passage previously recorded by Luke, and from here on (shown here in green type) He **certainly is** talking about the end of the age. Matthew 24:28 refers to Job 39: 27-30 and signifies that the slain of the Lord who will be taken away on the last day will be taken away to destruction. This is NOT the rapture! Luke has already recorded the warning so he does not repeat it here. The Greek word *euthus* translated *immediately* means "immediately in significance", not "immediately in time". The coming of Jesus in the clouds will be a sign to the whole world that the end has come, for there is nothing secret about lightning! The fig tree does not necessarily refer to Israel because Luke includes "all the trees"; it is just a simile taken from daily life such as Jesus often used in His teaching. Neither does the Greek word *genea* (translated "generation") denote any particular span of years. The word means birth, race, descent, or offspring, and is best thought of here as meaning the whole Israelite people "generated" by Abraham, that is *his descendants*, the people of *his generation*. That is not an idiom we use in English but it is so used in Greek. There have been many attempts in history to annihilate the Jewish people, but Jesus says they shall never succeed. The "generation" of Abraham will go through all these tribulations but will endure until the end of the age.

MATTHEW

24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

MARK

13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

13:34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

13:35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

13:36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

13:37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

LUKE

21:34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

21:35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Jesus here warns that the days before His return will be as the days were before the great flood at the time of Noah, and He repeats here what He had said a little earlier about "one shall be taken and the other left". He refers to Job 39: 27-30 and signifies that the slain of the Lord are taken are taken to destruction. The rapture spoken of by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 occurs **after** these have been removed and **when** Jesus finally appears. We are commanded to watch for the signs of His coming and to "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

The last day will come as a snare upon the rest of the world, a trap snapping shut, but Christians need not be taken unawares. Indeed we are commanded to watch, pray, and be ready for it!