

Olivet Discourse Commentary

Commentary on Matt. 24

Verses 1-3

During the last week of His ministry, after coming to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, Jesus went up to the Temple Mount daily and taught the people. Worshipers had come from all over Israel, and many from foreign lands, to observe the most important festival of Judaism.



Model of the Temple looking toward the South. Solomon's Porch is on the Southern end. [Copyright: BibleSoft Computer Bible]

The Chief Priests, scribes, and Pharisees, listened intently, as Jesus taught, for some cause to accuse Him. They were increasingly agitated by His claims, as well as His condemnation of them, the religious leaders. The tension was building daily. The final straw came in the form of parables, designed to publicly convict the Jewish leaders as unfit shepherds of God's people.

Matt 21:33-43 33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (KJV)

It was clear to these religious men, that Jesus was referring to them as the wicked husbandmen who had been entrusted with God's vineyard under the Law of Moses. But, Jesus was putting them on notice. The Kingdom of God was about to be taken away from them, and given to someone else. The "faithful husbandmen," who would soon take the place of the Jewish leaders as the caretakers of God's vineyard, were the disciples. Jesus had clearly told them this.

Luke 12:32 32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (KJV)

The idea of these rag-tag followers of this self-appointed "Messiah" replacing them, made the Jewish leaders furious. How dare Jesus speak of their eviction from the Temple, and all it represents. They wanted Him dead, no matter what. And, they began to conspire how to kill Him. Jesus knew what they were up to, and continued to aggravate the situation by openly condemning them in front of the crowds. He began to publicly instruct His disciples, as the new "faithful husbandmen," who were being appointed charge of God's flock, and the crowd of worshipers. He told them how to act, and in doing so, condemned the actions of the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees.

Matt 23:1-12 1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (KJV)

These are pretty strong words. But, not as strong as what followed. Jesus next turned directly to the Scribes and Pharisees and continued with an intense condemnation of them. I can picture Jesus standing there under Solomon's porch, pointing to them, reprimanding them publicly, while the crowds watched silently, and the disciples stood with their mouths open.

Matt 23:13-36 13 *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. 16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! 17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. 23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. 25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye 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 unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (KJV)*

Notice, in verse 34, Jesus said He was going to send "prophets, wise men, and scribes" to Israel, but that the Jewish leaders would persecute them also. This prophecy finds its fulfillment in the book of Acts. The Apostles and others, like Stephen, are among the ones who were going to be constantly persecuted by the Jewish leadership. This is an important point, that will become clear as we discuss who the Olivet Discourse was intended for, the Church or Israel.

Following this, Jesus began to lament over Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. Their blindness would cause them great pain and suffering. But, eventually, they would repent.

Matt. 23:37-39 37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (KJV)*

With this statement, Jesus turned His back on His own nation, resigned to the fact that they would have to endure the judgment of God before they could be restored to fellowship with their God. This had been prophesied by several Old Testament prophets, most notably by Hosea.

Hosea 5:14-6:3 14 *For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early. 6:1 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. (KJV)*

Here we see that there was a gap predicted, when Israel would be desolate, without God's care. This is what Jesus referred to when He said, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Having pronounced judgment on Israel, in a cloud of turmoil, Jesus turned and began making His way through the crowd, leaving the Temple complex, with the disciples following.

Matt 24:1-3 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. 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 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? (KJV)*

Something occurred, between verses 2 and 3 that is not recorded in Matthew, but is included in Luke 21. While still within the Temple grounds, Jesus gave a rather lengthy discourse about the coming destruction of the Temple, [which was fulfilled in great detail in AD. 70]. For a thorough understanding of the Olivet Discourse, I suggest you read Luke 21 in its entirety. While this discourse focuses mostly on the destruction of Jerusalem in AD. 70 [in verses 12-24], it also briefly mentions the second coming of Christ after the tribulation to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

After hearing Jesus describe the total destruction of the Temple, Jesus and the disciples made their way out of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley, and up the Mount of Olives. No doubt, they were thinking about the events of the day, with Jesus' condemnation of the Jewish leaders, Jesus' prophecy of the disciples replacing the Jewish leaders, as well as the coming destruction of the Temple. However, it seems that the thing the disciples were most interested in, was the second coming of Christ, that Jesus had only briefly described in His discourse on the Temple mount. This is seen in the question they posed to Jesus, as they sat overlooking the Temple, on the Mount of Olives.

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?

Since Jesus had only briefly mentioned the details surrounding His second coming in the Temple discourse, [not even mentioning the tribulation], and since the disciples were mostly interested in the coming of Christ's Kingdom, they asked a rather straightforward question. How would they know when this day was approaching? What signs exactly would precede Jesus' coming in power and glory to set up His Kingdom? The disciples recognized, from their training in the Old Testament, that after the period of Israel's judgment, Messiah would appear in glorious splendor to set up His Kingdom. This was known as the "Day of the Lord," [See: Joel 3:9-17 & Zech. 14]. They were anxious to rule and reign with the Messiah. They wanted to know what signs would accompany this event, so they could know when it was approaching. They expected to live to see it. Little did they realize, that as a prelude to Christ's Kingdom being established on earth, they first had a great task to accomplish, spreading the gospel among all nations.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 4-8



View of the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives, where Jesus gave His Olivet Discourse [Copyright: BibleSoft Computer Bible]

*Matt 24:4-8 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. 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. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. (KJV)*

Let's make a couple of observations before we proceed. First of all, Jesus' discourse was directed to His disciples. He addressed them separately from Israel. Earlier, Jesus had publicly condemned the Jewish leaders, and pronounced judgment on Israel as a nation, which would not be lifted until they said, "blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." In other words, until they recognized Him as Messiah. He considered His disciples, the ones He personally called from Israel, His "little flock." They were seen in contrast to the Israel that rejected Jesus. They would be the new "husbandmen" who would receive the care of God's vineyard in place of the Chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees. And, they are the ones Jesus was soon to send out to preach His gospel to all the nations.

Secondly, Jesus addressed their concerns about what signs they could watch for, as though they might live to see it. This fact has confused many people, because the disciples are long since dead, and Jesus has not returned yet. Some even use this to say that the Olivet Discourse does not apply to the "Church" because those Jesus was addressing would obviously see the events He

described, which will occur in the tribulation, many centuries later. But, this objection makes havoc of the grammatical - historical rule of interpretation, [which says that Scripture must be understood in its original setting, and with the original audience in mind]. This discourse was spoken to the disciples, and Jesus repeatedly used the personal pronouns "you," "ye," and "yourselves." He clearly had the disciples in mind. However, this need not be a problem, when we take into consideration that the entire New Testament is written with the understanding that Jesus **could** have returned in the first century. All of the commands in the Epistles instructed first century Christians to watch for Jesus' return. We could raise the same objection to these commands. However, we understand that "watching" for Christ's coming implies that it could indeed occur in the lifetime of those watching. Therefore, since the New Testament repeatedly instructed Christians in the first century to be watching for Christ's coming, we conclude that Jesus **could** have come in the first century. Even Paul expected to live until the second coming. This is clear in several passages, most notably in 1 Thess. 4:13-17, where Paul repeated referred to those who "sleep in Jesus" in the third person, while including himself with those who will be alive at the second coming.

John was the longest living of the disciples, surviving almost until the beginning of the second century. He wrote his Gospel near the end of his life, probably after all of the other Apostles were dead. Notice how he deals with this issue.

John 21:18-24 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. 20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, **If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.** 23 **Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?** 24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. (KJV)

Here, several decades after Jesus ascended to heaven, John, knowing that he is now an old man, and the last living Apostle, and knowing that he doesn't have a lot of years left, seems to be finally putting to rest the rumor that Jesus would return within his lifetime. John clarified for all, that Jesus did not definitely say that He would return before John died. The early Christians had apparently made this incorrect inference.

The point I want to emphasize is that the Olivet Discourse is written in the same manner as the Epistles. It's instruction assumes that the original audience would live to see the second coming of Christ, and that all of the things included in this discourse, including the tribulation, could have occurred in the first century. This makes the Bible applicable to every generation, regardless of how long Jesus takes to return. With this in mind, it is quite clear that Jesus intended His instructions, about watching for the signs of His coming, to be observed by Christians of this age.

When Jesus sent these men out to evangelize the gentiles, He intended that His teaching to the disciples be also taught to the gentile nations.

Matt 28:18-20 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.** (KJV)

The Olivet Discourse contains instructions for the disciples to be watching for the signs of Jesus' coming. Therefore, the Great Commission, if followed exactly as Jesus gave it, must include teaching the new converts from all nations to also watch for the signs of His coming, that He gave in this discourse. Now, lets proceed with verses 4-8 of Matt. 24.

The very first thing Jesus told His disciples, in response to their question, was a warning against being deceived. He said: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." There are two ways of looking at this warning. First, traditionally, Christians have interpreted this to mean that false "christs" would pretend to be the true Messiah. And, we can see from numerous examples in history, that this has occurred. But, when Jesus said these deceivers will say, "I am Christ," it could mean that they acknowledge Jesus to be Christ, yet they will still deceive many with false doctrine. This has also occurred on a massive scale. Later in this discourse [vss. 23-27], Jesus warned against "false Christs." Clearly this means those who make a false claim of "Christhood." With this in mind, it seems that, in verses 4 & 5, Jesus meant false teachers who acknowledge that Jesus is Christ, and thereby deceive many. [Otherwise, verses 23-27 would be redundant].

This means that the deception will be very subtle, since "Jesus is Lord" will be proclaimed by these false teachers. I can think of several "ministries" who proclaim loudly that "Jesus is Lord," yet spew out false teaching that will result in apostasy, and Christians abandoning the Gospel of Jesus Christ when real persecution comes.

Next, Jesus began to list disasters and wars that would increase as a prelude to the "great tribulation." He said there would be wars, and rumors of wars. It is clear, that the 20th century has been the century of war. There have been more people killed as a result of war in this century than in all of recorded history. This is primarily due to the advancement in the technology of war. A pilot can kill hundreds or thousands of people with the flip of a switch. Missiles can be launched to wipe out entire cities with the push of a button. Jesus said "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." He is not being redundant here. There is a big difference in the Greek text between "nations" and "kingdoms." Nations is "ethnos" from which we get "ethnic." Jesus was saying there would be race wars. "Kingdoms" means political entities, that we call "countries." We are also witnessing the huge increase in the other things Jesus mentioned, earthquakes, famines, and pestilence.

Notice in verse 6 that "the end is not yet." In other words, Jesus was informing the disciples that these things must come, but they are NOT the immediate signs of His coming. They are only "the beginning of sorrows." The word "sorrows" means "birth

pains," as it is translated in most modern versions. This term is in contrast to the term "great tribulation" which implies intense labor, such as a woman has while actually giving birth. So, the wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilence, are only the initial birth pains, which will be followed by great travail. All of the definite signs that announce Jesus' coming are found during the time Jesus calls "great tribulation," as we shall see as we progress. In my opinion, we have already entered the "birth pains," and can expect the "great tribulation" shortly.

Here is one final thing to keep in mind, for those who think this discourse does not apply to us. It is quite clear that the events described in verses 4-8 are occurring right now. So, it is safe to say that we have entered the "beginning of sorrows." When Jesus placed the disciples within these prophesied events, by using the personal pronouns, "you," "ye," etc., His teaching necessarily applies to those of us living during this time. We are the ones that are the results of the disciples obeying the Great Commission. Jesus continued to use the same personal pronouns, thereby indicating that the same group of people He referred to in verses 4-8 would also be present in the remainder of the events described in this chapter. This is common sense. To divide the chapter up, making part of it applicable to us, and denying that the remainder applies, violates sound grammatical rules. It makes nonsense of Jesus' words.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 9-14

One conspicuous feature of the Olivet Discourse is the absence of any mention of the beginning of the 70th week, commonly referred to as the "tribulation." As we saw in the previous article, Jesus spoke of earthquakes, wars, famines, and pestilence, as increasing prior to the "great tribulation." As we will see when we study verses 15 and following, the "great tribulation" does not actually begin until the mid-point of the 70th week, and lasts for 3 1/2 years. The length of the period of "birth pains" is not indicated. Some have speculated that the "birth pains" are limited to the first 3 1/2 years of the 70th week. However, there is nothing in the text to suggest this. Perhaps it is born out of the need by pre-tribblers to isolate this passage from the "Church age." However, if you are comfortable with the idea that Jesus was predicting events that the Church will see, there is no reason to suppose that the "birth pains" might not cover a substantial period of time. My opinion is that we have already entered the "birth pains," which will continue to increase until the mid point of the 70th week.

In verses 9-14 Jesus addresses the condition of the Church in the last days. We should sit up and take notice, because what He says here concerns you, me, and our loved ones.

Matt 24:9-14 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (NASB)

As we approach the mid point of the 70th week, persecution of Christians will become rampant. We shouldn't think that this is far into the future. Christians are being persecuted right now. In fact, according to the "Voice of the Martyrs," there have been more Christian martyrs in this century alone than in all of the centuries since Christ combined. There are hundreds of thousands of Christians suffering in prisons in many countries around the world. Just because we have not seen this kind of persecution yet in our little corner of the world doesn't mean this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. It will come to where you are. By the time the mark of the Beast is implemented, persecution of Christians will be world wide.

For those who try to confine this prophecy to the nation of Israel, notice that persecution will be on account of Jesus' name. No doubt, Jesus is speaking of Christians here.

In verse 10 He says that when this persecution comes, many will "fall away." Of course, this goes against the Calvinistic theology of many Christians who think that once you have said a "sinner's prayer," you are home-free. However, the Scriptures teach, in no uncertain terms, that a genuine believer can forsake God, and be lost. It is a matter of the will. Believing the gospel is necessary to salvation, and one chooses to believe or not to believe. Likewise, continuing to believe the gospel is necessary for continued salvation. And, one still has a free will after he is saved to continue in Christ, or forsake Him and be lost forever. The persecution mentioned by Jesus will cause many to abandon the Christian faith. Apparently, this "falling away" will be on a massive scale. Paul also mentioned it occurring prior to the mid-point of the 70th week.

II Th 2:1-3 1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: **for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;** (KJV)

No doubt Paul was referring to Jesus' words. He listed the "falling away" as a sign, along with the revelation of Antichrist, that could be easily recognized, and which would precede the coming of the Lord. Apparently, there is going to be a mass defection from the Christian Church. We can already see the beginnings of this, with the push for ecumenism, and the churches returning to Rome. The Roman church is also actively involved in trying to bring other religions into her fold. The apostasy has already begun, and soon true Christians will be compelled to join the new world religion, or suffer persecution. Many will turn away from Christ rather than suffer. When this occurs, according to Jesus there will be households divided, and friends and family members will betray one another. In another passage, Jesus elaborated on this.

Matt 10:21-22 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. (KJV)

This is probably the most difficult thing for Christians during this time. Family members and loved ones will abandon the faith, and then turn in husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and children. We must be prepared for this possibility. Our faith in Christ

is going to be tested severely. Only those who pass the test, and remain committed to Christ until either they are killed, or they survive until the coming of Christ, will be saved.

In verses 11 and 12, Jesus gave two reasons for this mass apostasy. First, many will be deceived by false doctrine, which will lead them to accept the false gospel, and false Christ. I believe that much of the groundwork has already been laid by "ministries" that teach things like the "prosperity gospel," and the "laughing revivals," etc. Christians are being opened up to demonic influence, and taught that materialism is their right. Also, I am sad to say, certain other doctrines that are commonplace among Evangelicals, like "once saved always saved," and the "pre-trib rapture," are going to reap a devastating harvest when the time of testing arrives for western Christians.

The second reason for the mass apostasy, is the increase in iniquity. Rampant unchecked sin among God's people is also laying the foundation for the "falling away." We tolerate so much in our lives, our families, and our churches, that is clearly in opposition to the Word of God. These things have a corrosive effect on our faith. When the time of testing comes, we need faith like Abraham. What will be our condition if we have not been faithful to Christ prior to the time of testing? Notice that Jesus said because iniquity will abound, MOST people's love will grow cold. The "love" mentioned here is "agape." This word is only used in the Bible in reference to God or believers. It is God's love shown through true believers. According to 1 John, it is the true test of whether or not we are genuine believers. Yet, Jesus said that MOST people's love will grow cold. Only those who endure to the end will be saved. Do you see the picture here? **Most Christians today are not going to remain faithful to Christ, but will fall away from the faith, and be lost**, either because tolerated sin has so weakened them, or because they will be deceived by false teachers. I don't know about you, but that scares me. Most of the people in your Church are going to forsake Christ, and take the mark of the Beast when it comes. Wow. What are you doing to prepare your family spiritually to stand firm in faith no matter what comes? I know this convicts me, and it should convict you as well.

Paul gave us instructions on how to go about preparing for this situation described by Jesus.

Eph 6:10-13 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (NIV)

No doubt, many Christians might suppose that I have misapplied this passage, thinking that the "evil day" is referring to trials and tribulations in general. However, the Greek text is quite clear that Paul was referring to a particular "evil day" in the future that Christians knew was coming. This is seen in the fact that he used the definite article twice in the Greek. Actually, he said, "in **the** day, **the** evil one." Since he is speaking in the future tense, he must have been referring to something that was prophesied beforehand. Most likely this is a reference to the "great tribulation" Jesus mentioned in the chapter we are studying. Also, the Early Church Fathers understood this passage as referring to the tribulation, too. Below is a quote from Cyprian.

*"For you ought to know and to believe, and hold it for certain, that **the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of Antichrist to draw near**, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle; nor consider anything but the glory of life eternal, and the crown of the confession of the Lord; and not regard those things which are coming as being such as were those which have passed away. A severer and a fiercer fight is now threatening, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with uncorrupted faith and robust courage, considering that they drink the cup of Christ's blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ. For this is to wish to be found with Christ, to imitate that which Christ both taught and did, according to the Apostle John, who said, "He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." Moreover, the blessed Apostle Paul exhorts and teaches, saying, "We are God's children; but if children, then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."... The Apostle Paul teaches us to be armed and prepared, saying, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, and the princes of this world and of this darkness, against spirits of wickedness in high places. Wherefore put on the whole armor, **that ye may be able to withstand in the most evil day**, that when ye have done all ye may stand; having your loins girt about with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." **Let us take these arms, let us fortify ourselves with these spiritual and heavenly safeguards, that in the most evil day we may be able to withstand, and to resist the threats of the devil:** [The Epistles of Cyprian, LV, 1,7-10]*

Peter also gave us instructions regarding this, which we would do well to heed.

*2 Pet 1:5-11 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: **for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:** 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (KJV)

2 Pet 3:17,18 17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (KJV)

Are you serious about remaining faithful to Christ in the tough time to come? Then I suggest you get busy implementing these Scriptures into your life, and the lives of your family members.

Finally, Jesus made a profound statement in verse 14. He told the disciples the reason for the long delay in His coming back to earth. It is the completion of the task He assigned to the disciples, and to us as well. The gospel must be preached among all nations before the end will come. Peter also confirmed this in his second Epistle.

*2 Pet 3:8-9 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; **but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.** (KJV)*

The Christian Church has in its power the ability to hasten the coming of Christ. Remember, in an earlier article, I spoke of the fact that the Olivet Discourse is written in such a way that it seems the coming of Christ could occur in the first century? Here is the reason this is so. If the true Church had completed the task, then these events would have come to pass at any point in the history of the Church. In Daniel 9, where the famous passage describes the 70 weeks which will end with Christ's Kingdom, it says the 70 weeks are "determined." This word means that these periods of time are fixed, and nothing can change them. But, we also know that there was a gap predicted, between the 69th week, and the 70th week. The 69th week ended at the crucifixion, and the 70th week begins the final countdown to the second coming. We are living in this gap, which is NOT DETERMINED according to the prophecy of Daniel. It is not "fixed." Why? Because it depends on us, and our work of completing the Great Commission.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verse 15

Matt 24:15 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:) (KJV)

In verses 3-14, Jesus gave the disciples a series of events that must occur before His coming. But, these events are not definite signs of His coming. Jesus simply said these must come first. What is the difference between these events and "signs?" The events in the previous verses, wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and the Gospel being spread to all nations, have been going on for many years. Each of these are simply increasing in intensity as the coming of the Lord approaches. We have no way of determining just where we are in God's timetable, since all of these things are relative, [except perhaps the completion of the Great Commission]. Even that does not necessarily signal the immediate return of Christ, and, it is not likely that we can know when it has been completed in God's sight. Jesus clearly said, "the end is not yet," when referring to the wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilences. However, the disciples' question about what signs they could look for, so they would know when Jesus' coming was near, was directly answered by Jesus. In the above verse, Jesus gave them the first definite sign which linked the coming of Christ to the 70th week of Daniel, and established a timetable.

The "abomination of desolation" that was spoken of by Daniel, is a key element in Daniel's scenario of the last days. In Daniel, it is clear that this event will occur at precisely the middle of the 7 year "week" we call the tribulation.

*Dan 9:27 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate,** even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (KJV)*

In the middle of the 70th week, the Antichrist will commit an abomination that will make the Temple in Jerusalem "desolate." Daniel gives us further information in chapter 11.

*Dan 11:31 31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and **they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.** (KJV)*

Notice the "abomination" includes "placing" something. Mark's account of Jesus' prophecy also shows that an object will be placed in the Temple.

*Mark 13:14 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: (KJV)*

According to Matthew, the abomination of desolation will stand in the "holy place." Apparently, this is an object, most likely the "image of the Beast" referred to in Rev. 13. Paul also indicates that the Antichrist will take his seat in the Temple, and proclaim He is God.

II Thess 2:4 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (KJV)

In the same passage, Paul indicates that this is how the Antichrist will be "revealed." The implication is that prior to this event, while he may be in a position of prominence, we may not know for certain who the Antichrist is. Only when he commits the "abomination of desolation," in the Temple, can we know for sure who he is. And, according to Jesus, this is the very first definite sign which identifies exactly where we are on the prophetic calendar.

Many Christians today are looking for confirmation of an agreement with Israel that will make it possible for the Jews to resume sacrifices. This agreement, prophesied in Dan. 9:27, will likely have to do with the possession of the Temple Mount, and the rebuilding of the Temple. But, Jesus did not even mention this agreement, let alone imply that it was a "sign" of His coming. After all, the disciples asked for the signs. This indicates to me that the confirming of this covenant may not be generally known to the public. Yes, it is the trigger that launches the beginning of the 70th week. But, if we cannot know for certain if and when such a confirmation has taken place, we may not know we are in the 70th week until much later. The way I read Jesus' answer to the disciples, the "abomination" at the mid-point of the week is our first definite marker. From that point on, we know the Lord's coming is 3 1/2 years away. Sure, we might suspect that we have entered the 70th week, if we see the Temple being rebuilt, and sacrifices resume. But, there is nothing in Bible prophecy, as far as I can determine, that forbids this from occurring long before the tribulation begins. The beginning of the 70th week is just a confirmation of a covenant that was already in existence. So, to

conclude that the 70th week has begun if and when we see a covenant that allows for the rebuilding of the Temple, is not a reliable sign. We should stick to what Jesus told the disciples, lest we sound the alarm prematurely.

In Matt. 24:15, there is a curious statement, which is enclosed in "()" parentheses.

Matt 24:15 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:) (KJV)

Many people mistakenly believe that the statement, "whoso readeth, let him understand," was a comment inserted by Matthew, and it referred to whoever reads his Gospel. But, the same statement is found in Mark's account of this discourse. It is highly unlikely that both Matthew and Mark would place exactly the same comment in exactly the same place in the discourse. Consequently, it is most likely that this comment was actually spoken by Jesus, and both Matthew and Mark recorded it. But, since Jesus was not writing anything, but was simply speaking to the disciples, what could He mean by "whoso readeth?" I believe Jesus was referring to the book of Daniel. He was saying, that whoever reads Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks, now that Jesus has given His prophecy of the last days, could understand the 70 week prophecy. We now understand that there is a gap between the 69th week, when Messiah was "cut off," and the beginning of the 70th week, at the end of which Jesus will return. All of the events Jesus had previously described, the wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, and the gospel being spread to all nations, must occur between the 69th week and the 70th week. Prior to Jesus' prophecy in the Olivet Discourse, there was no indication that there was a real gap of time between the 69th week, and the 70th week. It appeared from this prophecy, as well as several others, that the Millennial Kingdom would be set up at Christ's first coming. Jesus' prophecy clearly places the 70th week at the end of the age.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 16-22

Matt 24:16-22 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 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. 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. (KJV)

Here Jesus instructed Christians living in Judea to flee the area when the "abomination of desolation" takes place. This is when the persecution will become most severe. As Revelation 13 says, all who refuse to worship the "Beast" will have a death sentence. When the Antichrist enters the Temple, in the middle of the 70th week, claiming to be God, and demanding worship, it is time to head to the hills.

Jesus' instructions concerns specifically those living in Judea, because this will be the center of persecution. However, since Revelation indicates that this persecution will be world-wide, we may have to leave the cities as well, finding refuge in "the mountains." No doubt, some places will be much worse than others, so we should seek God for wisdom regarding any evacuation plans. In any case, at this point in time, it will be decision time for many believers. Those with their roots in the materialism of this world will find it difficult to leave their homes, their "stuff," and their family members who refuse to go.

In Jesus' two discourses on this day, the Temple Discourse, and the Olivet Discourse, he twice instructed His followers to pray for something specific.

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

Luke 21:36 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. (KJV)

Why would He instruct them to pray that they would not need to flee in winter, or on the Sabbath? Regarding winter, the reason one would not want to flee to the mountains is because it would be very cold. It is bad enough to have to suddenly flee with basically just the shirt on your back. But, to go to the mountains without adequate shelter and provisions, during winter, when there is no food or shelter, will be extraordinarily difficult. Likewise, fleeing on the Sabbath from Jerusalem and Judea will be very difficult. Jerusalem comes to a standstill on the Sabbath. Borders are closed to some traffic, and retail stores are closed. Getting food and fuel would be very difficult, and a large number of people evacuating past check points will be next to impossible. So, praying for ease of evacuation seems quite practical for those living in the greater Jerusalem area. Of course, we can make this applicable to our situations, too, depending on where we live. We need to be thinking and praying about our own evacuation plans.

Also, Jesus instructed them to pray that they would be accounted worthy to escape **all these things**. In the context of Luke, where Jesus was instructing the disciples on the Temple Mount, it is clear that "all these things" from which they were command to pray for escape, included both the tribulation AND the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in AD 66-70. Luke 21:12-24 describes the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, with similar commands to flee when the Roman army surrounded the city. According to Church history, the Christians living in Jerusalem in AD 66-70 heeded Jesus' warnings to flee, and they were spared. But, the Jews, who did not believe Jesus, stayed behind, and were starved, slaughtered, and carried off as slaves by the Romans. But, the same discourse goes on to describe the things that will come on the earth in the tribulation just before Christ comes, in verses 25 and following. So, when Jesus said to "*pray that you would be counted worthy to escape all these things.*" He included their escape from both the destruction of Jerusalem, and the events of the tribulation. For us living in the last days, the Christians' escape from Jerusalem in AD 66-70 shows how we might escape the events of the tribulation. And, it was not by a "rapture," but by fleeing to safe areas. We need to be praying about our escape from the intense hardship that will immediately follow the "abomination of desolation."

Matt 24:21-22 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. 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. (KJV)

Here, Jesus made a direct reference to the book of Daniel for a second time. Earlier, in verse 15, He mentioned Daniel's prophecy of the 70th week, with the "abomination of desolation" in the mid-point. Here, Jesus was referring to the following passage.

*Dan 12:1 1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:** and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (KJV)*

Next, Jesus speaks of just how bad it is going to get. He said that unless the days had been shortened, no flesh would survive. That is pretty bad.

The shortening of the days of "great tribulation" has caused some confusion. In fact, the pre- wrath view relies heavily on this verse, claiming that the "great tribulation" that Jesus spoke of will be less than the 3 1/2 years of Daniel's prophecy. But, in my opinion, Jesus is not saying that this period will be shortened beyond the period of time predicted in Daniel. He is simply saying that the great tribulation will be so bad, that if it was allowed to go on beyond 3 1/2 years, nobody could survive. Therefore, it has been limited to 3 1/2 years.

One thing that is interesting about this verse, is that in Mark's parallel account of it, Jesus used the past tense, rather than the future tense, as in Matthew.

*Mark 13:20 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. (KJV)*

So, according to Matthew, God **will** shorten the days, but according to Mark, He **has** shortened the days. This implies to me that the 1260 days are already the "shortened" days. The reason Matthew uses the future tense, is because the tribulation has not arrived yet, but the "shortening" seems to already be figured into the numbers of days given in Daniel and Revelation, in my opinion.

Now, we come to a very important point. Who are the "elect" that Jesus refers to in this verse? No doubt, they are the same "elect" in verse 31, who will be gathered at the sound of the trumpet. The New Testament uses this term much more frequently than the Old Testament. And, in virtually every case, it refers to Christians. The only exceptions are one case where it refers to Jesus, and another to angels. Every other time it refers to Christians. In this context, it is quite apparent that it refers to the disciples, because Jesus repeatedly used the personal pronouns "you," "ye," and "yourselves" in this discourse, placing His followers [to whom He was speaking] in the tribulation scenes. So, in order to be grammatically correct, Jesus' followers, who were seen apart from unbelieving Israel, must experience the tribulation. Secondly, as we saw in the first article on Matt. 24, Jesus had just turned his back on the people of Israel. He spoke of the disciples replacing the Jewish leaders as the shepherds of God's people of faith. It was the disciples who assumed the role of Elders of the Church. They are the ones who Jesus commanded to take this very message to the Gentiles, [Matt. 28:19,20].

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 23-28

Matt 24:23-28 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 shall deceive the very elect. 25 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 cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. (KJV)

Here, Jesus warns them that during the Great Tribulation, there will be **false or counterfeit second comings**. The false Christs and false prophets will produce miracles, capable of fooling many. But, the whole point of Jesus' statement above, is that the false "second coming" cannot duplicate Christ's real coming. He [this same Jesus Messiah] will come in a blaze of glory, like lightening shooting across the entire horizon. The false "Christs" will appear "in the desert," or "in the secret chamber." In other words, false messiahs will want you to come to where they are, perhaps to an auditorium, where they might entertain you with magic tricks. Jesus says, don't believe it. He is not going to come in this manner.

New Age theology states that Jesus was just a man, and that he was born of Jewish parents. But, during His baptism, the "Christ Spirit" descended on Him. This was His "Christ anointing" that made Jesus the "Christ." ["Christ" means "anointed one."] Beware of Christian Ministries who teach "the anointing" of Jesus, as being available to others. This is a lie that is being taught by several Charismatic Ministries, like Kenneth Copeland, and several others. [[Click here](#) for more info on Kenneth Copeland.] This is pure New Age theology, and it is setting the stage for the appearance of Antichrist. New Agers believe that during His ministry, Jesus "the Christ" taught Divine truths. But, at His crucifixion, when Jesus "gave up the ghost," the "Christ Spirit" left Him, and he died like any other man. They do not believe in the resurrection.

They also believe that other great religious leaders have been anointed by this "Christ Spirit," including Buddha, and Mohamed. So, the "Christ Spirit" has been the originator of many world religions. Where the teachings of these religions are similar, they claim they are really parts of the larger cosmic truth. Where they differ, they have been perverted by their adherents down through the centuries. Being "the Christ" is sort of like an office that one holds, which, when vacated, is passed on to another. Hence, the blending of all religions into one, that is the trademark of the New Age, and will be the religion of the Antichrist, centered in the Roman Church.

When the Antichrist appears, He will claim to be the latest reincarnation of the "Christ anointing." Notice, Jesus did not say that anyone would come claiming to be Jesus Christ. But, that false "Christs" [or anointed ones] would appear, and deceive. The Antichrist will claim to be the latest successor to the "Christ Spirit." And, with the help of the False Prophet, will claim that all religions are one, and he will demand worship.

But, Jesus' warning, is not to be deceived by this imposter. He is NOT Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself will return, as was clearly stated by the angels at His ascension.

*Acts 1:10-12 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? **this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.** 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. (KJV)*

We are not looking for "a Christ." We are looking for the return of Jesus, the one and only "Christ." The false Christ, while he will be able to do many apparent miracles, cannot duplicate the second coming. Jesus was making it perfectly clear that His coming in power and glory must be taken literally, if we are to avoid being deceived.

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

Jesus is going to destroy this false Christ, and give his armies to the fowls of the air. You can read about this in Rev. 19. For further comments on the this topic, see the article; [As in the Days of Lot](#). This is a discussion of the parallel passage in Luke 17.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 29-31

Matt 24:29-31 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: 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. 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. (KJV)

Finally, we come to the climax of the Olivet Discourse. This is what the disciples wanted to know. Everything prior to this pointed to the main event, the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory. The final sign just before Jesus comes will not be missed by a single living soul. The sun and moon will be darkened, stars [meteors] will fall from the sky, and the powers [or normal cycles] of the heavens will be shaken. This is **THE SIGN** of Jesus' coming. When this occurs, it will be imminent.

This sign is found frequently in the Scriptures. It is seen repeatedly in Old Testament prophecy, announcing the "Day of the Lord." [See: Isaiah 13:9,10, Isaiah 24:23, Joel 2:10, Joel 2:30,31, Joel 3:14,15]. Revelation expands on this scene in chapter six.

Rev 6:12-17 12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (KJV)

Jesus said all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will finally realize that they accepted the false messiah, that the true Messiah is arriving, and they are about to be destroyed. The best they can do is try to save their own skins by hiding among the caves. How will all the nations of the world see Jesus' arrival? Verse 27 said that His coming will be like lightning, that goes from east to west across the sky. Well, you can go from north to south and arrive at the extreme poles. But, you cannot go from "the east, even unto the west" without going around the entire earth. The sun and moon will be dark, and no stars will be seen. Only Jesus will appear with his angels, in blazing glory, streaking across the sky, from east to west, encircling the entire earth, and stopping above the Mount of Olives, while the armies of the Antichrist below, surrounding Jerusalem, watch in horror.

Next, Jesus will sound the trumpet, and dispatch His angels to gather together His elect. Here is the rapture. Notice that the elect will be gathered from one end of the sky to the other. In other words, the whole sky will be filled with glorified saints. This is probably as viewed from the battle scene, the Jerusalem area. The landscape will be lit entirely by Jesus, the angels, and glorified saints.

I have no idea how long this "gathering" will take, but I doubt it will be instantaneous. Paul said the dead would be raised, and we will be "changed" instantly, at the last trumpet [1 Cor. 15:52]. But, he did NOT say we would be caught up in the same instant.

*1Thess 4:16-17 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. (KJV)*

Now, if the dead are raised, and we are changed incorruptible, instantly when the trumpet is sounded, but, the dead are raised BEFORE we are "caught up," we must be changed while still on the ground, and caught up later. That's right. We will see the sun and moon darkened, and Jesus streaking through the sky from the eastern horizon to the western horizon. We will hear the shout and trumpet blast, and instantly we will be "changed" right where we stand. At the same instant, the angels will be dispatched from the sky above the Mount of Olives to pick us up. We will know exactly what is happening, as we wait for the angels to arrive at our location to gather us together. That's why Jesus said in Luke 17...

Luke 17:31-34 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. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 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. (KJV)

When you see these things, and you hear that trumpet sound, when you are instantly changed, don't bother going back to your house. Don't bother checking on your stuff, or your loved ones. The angels are already on their way, brother. You are going for a ride! The wicked will try to hide to save themselves, but to no avail.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 32-36

Matt 24:32-36 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: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. 34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. 36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (KJV)

Verse 32 is often misunderstood. Many say that Israel is the "fig tree." And, that, when we see Israel "bud" Jesus' coming is near. They claim that the generation that sees Israel being reborn will be the generation that sees the second coming of Jesus. Well, Israel was "reborn" in 1948. Jack Van Impe believed that a "generation" was 40 years. So, he calculated that 40 years from 1948 meant that the second coming of Jesus would be in 1988. He then subtracted 7 years for the tribulation, and predicted that a pre-trib rapture would occur in 1981. Well, as you might have guessed, he was flat wrong. Subsequently, he decided that maybe the starting point should be 1967, when Israel recaptured all of Jerusalem during the six day war. So, even after being burned once, he set the date again. This time, calculating 40 years from 1967, placing the second coming in 2007. Then subtracting 7 years for the tribulation, he now thinks the rapture will be in 2000. Well, wrong again, Jack!

First of all, the ones who "see the fig tree putting forth leaves" are the same ones who will "see the abomination of desolation." In other words, we will see the tribulation. There is no pre-trib rapture, Jack.

*Matt 24:15 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:) (KJV)*

*Matt 24:32-33 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: 33 So likewise **ye, when ye shall see all these things**, know that it is near, even at the doors. (KJV)*

Secondly, the "fig tree" is not Israel. The "fig tree" is just a fig tree. Jesus was not giving them some kind of riddle here. He was explaining HOW we should watch for His coming, and He used the "fig tree" as an example. Notice the parallel passage in Mark and Luke.

*Mark 13:28-29 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: 29 **So ye in like manner**, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. (KJV)*

*Luke 21:29-31 29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold **the fig tree, and all the trees**; 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. (KJV)*

In Mark, it is clear that Jesus meant that the "fig tree" was just an example. In the same way we know when summer is approaching, by looking for the signs [the sprouting of the fig trees], **IN THE SAME MANNER** we will know when Jesus' coming is near, by watching for the signs He gave in this discourse.

In Luke, which records the Temple Discourse, Jesus included "all the trees" in His example. So, He was not using the "fig tree" as a symbol of Israel, or else what are all the other trees that also will sprout leaves?

The "fig tree" is a parable. It illustrates HOW we should be watching for the signs. Let's look at these verses again.

Matt 24:32-36 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: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (KJV)

When we see "all these things" we will know that Jesus' coming is "at the doors." This phrase means "imminent." Yes, the second coming will be "imminent." But, it is NOT imminent now. It will only be imminent AFTER we see "all these things." What things? Obviously, all of the signs that Jesus gave the disciples in this discourse. After all, the whole purpose of this discourse was to answer the disciples' question; "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the age?" This series of signs culminate in the final sign, the darkening of the sun and moon, in verse 29. Only after we have seen "all these things" will Jesus' coming for us be "at the doors" [or imminent]. So, don't be fooled by all the alleged "signs" that people throw around that are supposed to point to an imminent rapture. Jesus told us plainly that His coming for us will only occur AFTER **all** of these things have come to pass.

In verse 34, Jesus said "this generation" would not expire until Jesus returns. What generation was He speaking of? Many people think Jesus was saying that He would definitely return in the generation in which He lived. But, in the context of this chapter, that is clearly not the case. Remember, Jesus gave a series of events that must first come, but He said "the end is not yet." In other words, these things must come, but they are not the signs of His coming. There is no guarantee that the generations that see earthquakes, wars, famines, and pestilences, would also see the second coming. These things have gradually been increasing over a long period of time. But, the ones who see the definite signs, like the "abomination of desolation," and all the signs that follow, will definitely see the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is this generation that Jesus spoke of.

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

Isn't it funny that pre-tribbers frequently use this verse to show that the rapture could be "at any moment," yet the context clearly shows that Jesus was speaking of His coming "immediately after the tribulation?" When you see this verse in light of what Jesus had just said in verse 33, that only AFTER we see all the signs come to pass could we know His coming was imminent, this verse makes perfect sense. The reason no one knows the day or hour, is because the signs have not yet all been fulfilled. It is that simple. Once we see the first definite sign fulfilled, we can and will know that His coming is 3 1/2 years away. Once we see the final sign, we will know it is "at the doors." The words "no man knoweth" is present tense. It does NOT forbid people knowing once the abomination takes place. That is the whole point of Jesus' words. Until the "abomination" occurs, no one knows, or can know, the day or hour.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 37-44

Matt 24:37-44 37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 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,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 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. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (KJV)

In the days of Noah, people went on living in their sin, without paying heed to Noah's preaching that judgment was coming, and the end of the age was fast approaching. Jesus likened this to the situation in the tribulation. Despite all the apparent signs, people will refuse to believe that the end of this present world system is imminent. They will carry on with their lives oblivious to the fulfilled signs. They will refuse to repent despite all the disasters of the tribulation.

Rev 9:20-21 20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. (KJV)

It seems hard to imagine that this earth can sustain the series of plagues Revelation describes, and yet the vast majority of people will refuse to acknowledge the judgment of God. No doubt, they will devise all kinds of scientific reasoning for these plagues, in order to justify their continued rebellion against God. But, Jesus assures us that He is coming, right on schedule.

Peter alluded to Jesus' teaching here in his second Epistle. Like Jesus, he used the attitude of the people of Noah's day to illustrate how it will be just before the Day of the Lord comes.

2 Pet 3:3-10 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (KJV)

The destruction that will come on the Day of the Lord will overtake the wicked totally by surprise. But, notice that this is also the **same coming** of Jesus that is our hope of rescue. There is only one coming of Jesus mentioned here. It will be a day of sudden destruction for the wicked, and a day of hope for Christians. This comes from Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse. This is the unanimous teaching of Scripture. It appears to me that Peter was simply reiterating what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse.

Next, Jesus referred again to the rapture.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

This was a brief reminder of what Jesus had previously taught them in Luke 17. The righteous will be gathered by the angels [Matt. 24:31], and the wicked will be left behind. [[Click here](#) to go to a separate article on Luke 17.] Jesus instructed them to be watching for His coming in glory "immediately after the tribulation."

Finally, Jesus used the famous parable about the "thief in the night."

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

The obvious point of this statement is that if one knows when a thief is coming, he can watch for him, and prevent a bad outcome. In the same manner, if we are keenly aware of the **signs Jesus gave His disciples**, we can prevent the surprise of Jesus' coming. In effect, if we are paying attention, we can know when His coming is imminent, and take proper action. In the mean while, we are to watch for the signs Jesus gave, because, until the signs are fulfilled, we cannot know when He is coming. It is clear then, that "watching" in this context means watching for the accompanying signs that Jesus gave His disciples. Paul carried this idea further in the following passage.

*1Thess 5:1-6 1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.** 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 **But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.** 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 **Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.** (KJV)*

Notice that Paul was alluding to Jesus' comments. The "thief in the night" statement was coined by Jesus in reference to His post-trib coming. Yet, Paul applied Jesus' warning to the Thessalonian Christians. He wrote that Christians will NOT be surprised by Jesus' coming, while the wicked will be totally surprised. Why? Obviously, because Paul expected that Christians will heed the warnings Jesus gave, and be watching for the specific signs that occur during the tribulation.

Commentary on Matt. 24 Verses 45-51

Matt 24:45-51 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? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a

day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (KJV)

Notice, the "servants" Jesus specifically referred to are those whom He has made "rulers over his household." Certainly, Jesus did not intend to include all Christians in this statement. He was referring specifically to His Apostles, and all others whom He would call to be the leaders of His Church. If you are a pastor, evangelist, teacher, or hold a position of authority in Jesus' Church, then you need to take notice of this parable. It is specifically for you.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus gave this same parable, but in much greater detail. I believe it is best if we examine the fuller version, in order to understand it's application to the Olivet Discourse. As you read this passage, pay particular attention to the four types of "servants," all of whom have been made rulers over the Church by Jesus Christ Himself. And, notice the four different rewards / punishments.

Luke 12:41-48 41 Then Peter said unto him, **Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?** 42 And the Lord said, **Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?**

#1. The Wise servant. 43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

Jesus described the servant who heeds Jesus' warning in this chapter. He "feeds the flock" as Jesus instructed. He is a watchman, looking for the signs of Jesus coming, and exhorting and equipping the sheep to be faithful to Christ. His reward will be much greater authority in Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

#2. The Wicked servant. 45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, **and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.**

This servant does exactly the opposite of what the Master commanded. Instead of "feeding the flock," he beats the flock. Instead of being sober, and watching for his Master's coming, he becomes a party animal, seeking to gratify the desires of his flesh. He ignores the signs of Jesus' coming. In this case, Jesus made a very solemn statement. This servant, whom Jesus had previously called and placed in a position of authority over His Church, will be cut in pieces, and will join the unbelievers. I am afraid that there are many of Christ's "servants" who will meet this end.

#3. The Lazy servant. 47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

This servant willfully ignored the Master's charge to him. Knowing full well that He was commanded to "feed the flock," and to be a watchman on the wall, looking for the signs of Jesus' coming, and exhorting the sheep to be ready, instead he got lazy. He thought it was not that important. Or, he let other things hinder his obedience to the Lord. He will be punished severely, but not cast out, as the "wicked servant."

#4. The Ignorant servant. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. **For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.** (KJV)

This servant honestly didn't know what His Lord's will was. Perhaps he had been taught wrongly by his mentors. Perhaps he did not study the Scriptures sufficiently. But, he is still responsible to find out his Master's will, and do it. He will be punished, but not severely. Notice the last statement in verse 48. It sums up this whole teaching by Jesus. Those who are given much, will be judged much more harshly than those given less.

But, why would such a parable be found in the Olivet Discourse? Because this passage is one of the most important teachings of Jesus, that He wants to be taught to His flock by the servants He has made rulers over His household. This passage is about watching for the coming of the Master. It contains all the signs. It contains warnings about watching for the signs. Yes, contrary to what many Evangelical preachers tell you, eschatology is crucial to the Christian walk.

Trying to live the Christian life, without knowing exactly where it is leading, is like starting to run in a race that you have no idea how it is supposed to end. One is easily discouraged, and it doesn't take much to turn aside after other things. God saw fit to lay out His plans in the Scriptures. Jesus gave clear teaching regarding the exact order of events leading up to His coming. And, He commanded the Apostles to take all of His teaching, to them, to every nation, until the end of the age, [Matt. 28:19,20]. A proper understanding of the events leading up to the second coming, motivates Christians to keep their minds on Christ's Kingdom, instead of this present evil age. A clear eschatology is a clear goal. A fuzzy eschatology is a fuzzy goal.

I John 3:2-3 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (KJV)

The Olivet Discourse was more than just something to satisfy the disciples curiosity. It is essential Christian teaching that motivates Christians to walk in such a way as to hear, "well done, good and faithful servant." Let me close this commentary with the following quote from the closing statements of Jesus in His Olivet Discourse, according to Mark.

Mark 13:33-37 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 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. 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: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 **And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.** (KJV)