

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (MT 24:1-41): JUDGMENT ON JERUSALEM AND THE WORLD

(ll Mk 13; Lk 21)

¹ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your **coming** and of the end of the age?”

⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of **birth pains**.

⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but **he who stands firm to the end will be saved**. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel— let **the reader** understand— ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and **never to be equaled** again. ²² If those days had not been **cut short**, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Destruction of the Temple (70 AD), marking the end of the old covenant. [CK]

Signs of the *parousia*, Gk for “presence” or “arrival”, as of a visiting ruler. They may be asking about his ascension onto the throne, rather than a reappearance at the end of the age.¹

Suffering with a redemptive goal

False messiahs, personal & international conflicts, natural disasters, etc. The signs in vv. 4-13 (and Blomberg argues v. 14 too; cf. Rom 10:18; Col 1:6) all occurred during the siege of Jerusalem in 66-70, when inhabitants were reduced to cannibalism, over 10⁶ Jews died and over 97,000 were taken captive. Also, a major famine struck in 46; earthquakes around 61. [CK, MG]

In 68 Nero died; the following year four vied for succession. The turmoil was so great that, Roman writers tell us, people were widely expecting the end of the world. [MG]

Instructions: *stand firm*; persistence=salvation

Hope: The spread of the Gospel

“The end” of Jerusalem, or prophetic time-mixing as in Joel 2:28-32?

Temple desecration à la Antiochus Epiphanes, who sacrificed pig’s flesh on the altar and turned the Temple into a brothel (1 Macc 1:54; 6:7) as prophesied in Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. [MG]

Titus desolated and razed the Temple. “The coming of Titus in retribution on Jerusalem will be a miniature of the coming of Christ in judgment at the final hour of human history.” [MG]

An upper limit for future tribulation

God cuts short the suffering; *God is in control*

¹ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 346.

²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. ²⁵ See, **I have told you ahead of time.**

²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there **the vultures will gather.**

²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days

“ ‘the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

³⁰ “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ I tell you the truth, this **generation** will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³⁶ “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴² “**Therefore keep watch,** because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

Forewarning to allow preparation for the trial

The 2nd coming will be sudden and unexpected, like lightning.

A public event. (May also be a mocking reference to the eagles on the standards of the Roman soldiers.) [MG]

Quote from Is 13:10+; 34:4 about the Day of the Lord (Is 13:9).

“with power and great glory”—cf. Zech 12:10; Dan 7:13-14; Rev 1:17

“Generation” probably means “generation” [CK]

Making his words equal to those of God through the prophets (Zech 1:5-6; Mt 5:18). [CK]

No one knows the time of his coming.

“It will come out of the blue upon a heedless world.” [MG] It will be decisive with no more chance to repent or change.

Instruction: Knowing what’s coming, *keep watch.*

Resources: MG: Michael Green, Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*. CK: Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*