

# OpenTheo

## Olivet Discourse (Part 4)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses several debated interpretations of the Olivet Discourse. He addresses questions of literal versus hyperbolic statements, the meaning of "the end," and the interpretation of the abomination of desolation. Gregg argues that the Discourse is primarily about the destruction of Jerusalem rather than a future end-times scenario, and that hyperbole is a common rhetorical device in the Bible. He also suggests that biblical writers often used hyperbole to emphasize the severity of events, as seen in the comparison of locusts to a strong army in Joel chapter 2.

### **Transcript**

I don't know whether he did or not, but in Matthew 24, verse 14, when Jesus said, This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. That's not a more sweeping statement than Paul makes when he says the gospel has come into all the world and has been preached to every creature under heaven. If it's hyperbole in one case, it might be in the other.

That's what I'm saying. I don't know if it is or not. Because it's possible that when he says, then shall the end come, he does mean the end of the world and the second coming of Christ.

He may be looking beyond that. What he may be saying here is, before the destruction of Jerusalem comes, you will be persecuted by all nations. And then later, Jerusalem will fall.

But, as a result of you being persecuted by all nations, the gospel will be spread to all the world. And ultimately, before the end of the world comes, the gospel will reach every nation. He may just take a glimpse here, you know, to what's happening before 70 A.D. and see, from this, however, is going to be projected this project, which will continue on long afterwards, namely the evangelization of the world, as a result of your persecution being scattered and so forth, as you will be.

I do not know which he means. I can see it either way. He could be saying that every literal ethnos is going to be evangelized before the end of the world.

And this is, of course, a favorite verse of modern missions movements. And I like it too, for that reason. I think it's great that way.

But I'm not sure he meant that. They had asked, when will be the end of the age? And if, by the end of the age, we are to understand the end of the Jewish age, then his mention of the gospel being preached to every nation must be as much a hyperbole as Paul's statements on the same subject are. If, however, Matthew in verse 3 here has said, what is the sign of your coming in the end of age? If he really means the second coming of Christ, then we would have here a projection of the view beyond 70 A.D., what begins before 70 A.D., continues beyond it.

The evangelization of Gentiles began long before 70 A.D. Paul's whole ministry to the Gentiles was before 70 A.D. And he preached to all the parts, he said, from Jerusalem to Illyricum. That's Yugoslavia. And he said that in Romans chapter 15.

He preached to all the parts between there and there. So, it's clear that the gospel is in the process of being preached to every nation before 70 A.D. And it's possible that this verse takes a glimpse to its ultimate, you know, continued progress for the 2,000 years of church history and before the end of the world, it will have reached literally every nation. It could be seen either way, but it certainly in no way militates against the general approach of this chapter being about things that happened before Jerusalem fell.

And that brings us to verse 15, a key verse. Because they ask two questions, you remember. When will these things be and what will be the sign that these things are about to happen? He now gives the sign that these things are about to happen.

When you see this, then you know it's about to happen. Now, the sign according to the way it's recorded in Matthew and also in Mark, it goes like this. It goes, therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand.

Then, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. As we know, they did when Jerusalem was besieged. Now, the abomination of desolation standing, what's it say, in the holy place.

Look over at the parallel in Mark 13, if you have that handout I gave you. It has the four columns. It's in the second column.

Mark 13, 14. Here's the same statement there. But when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, let the reader understand.

Then, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Now, interestingly, Matthew and Mark both probably record the actual words of Jesus when you see the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about. But both of them put in parentheses, let the reader

understand.

Now, Luke did not expect his readers to understand what the abomination of desolation was, so he explained it. He spelled it out. He was writing to a Gentile, a Roman probably, named Theophilus, and he knew that guy wouldn't be familiar with Daniel, and he wouldn't be familiar with the abomination of desolation.

He couldn't make heads or tails out of that expression. So, Luke, in writing this man, paraphrases in order to clarify what Jesus said. And that clarification is found in Luke 21, 20.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. That's the sign that it's about to take place. When it's surrounded by armies, its doom is near.

The desolation, it's the abomination that causes desolation. Its desolation is near. When you see the armies surrounded.

That was the signal that the Christians in Jerusalem looked for and saw, and fortunately they understood it this way because it saved their lives. If they'd understood it as dispensationalists do, they would've just hung around and not seen any reason to flee because they'd figure out, what the heck, it's thousands of years off. But fortunately they took Jesus' word seriously.

When you see it, when they saw it, they fled to the hills. Just like Jesus told them to. Now, you may have heard that the abomination of desolation is actually referring to something still future.

Obviously that comes from a futurist approach to this very passage. And the thing that it is, according to many commentators, dispensationalists, is it is when the Antichrist, whom we will discuss in a separate lecture in detail, when the Antichrist sets up an image of himself in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, in the Holy of Holies, and when he does that, it will be the abomination of desolation. And how many of you have heard that explanation of the abomination of desolation before? Some of you haven't been around as much as I give you credit for.

It's a very common thing to hear that. The abomination of desolation is the setting up of the image of the Antichrist in the rebuilt temple in the last days. Well, Luke doesn't apparently agree with that interpretation.

And Luke is a biblical writer, so I trust him more than Darby, who is not an inspired writer. Luke thinks that when Jesus said the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet, he means when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, because that's how Luke paraphrases those words. And I agree with him.

And fortunately, the first century Christians in Jerusalem agreed with him too. Save their skins, believing it that way. Now, where in Daniel does Daniel talk about this? Look at Daniel chapter 9. Here in the last four verses, which are all lengthy verses, it's a long part of the scripture, even though it's only four verses long.

In Daniel 9, verses 24 through 27, there is the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks. It is from this prophecy, and almost entirely and exclusively from this prophecy, that people have the impression that the tribulation will be seven years long. I don't have time to go over this in detail now.

I will later when we talk about the seven years as a time limitation for the tribulation. But let me show you this. In verses 26 and 27, it says, and after the 62 weeks, the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself, and the people of the Prince who will come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Sound familiar? The Romans will come and destroy Jerusalem and the temple. And the end of it will be with a flood. Most understand that to mean a dispersion.

The Jews were dispersed after that. Until the end of the war, desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.

But in the middle of the week, he shall bring to an end the sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one that makes desolate. That's where the expression abomination of desolation comes from.

On the wing of abominations shall be one, that is one abomination, that make it desolate. There will be an abomination that brings desolation. Now, the dispensationalists agree that this is the passage that Jesus is referring to.

And he says, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of in the prophet Daniel, but they believe that between verse 26 and 27 of Daniel 9, there is a gap of almost 2,000 years. I told you before the dispensationalists are fond of invisible gaps. They believe that the 69th week of Daniel, which each, just in case you know nothing about that prophecy, each week represents seven years in the prophecy.

Okay, we'll talk about that in more detail some other time. But they believe that the last of the 70 weeks, which is a seven-year period, each week is seven years, was put off. That when the Jews killed Jesus, the 69th week was over, and the 70th week has not yet begun.

The entire church age intervenes in between the 69th and 70th week. And then when you get to verse 27, you have the 70th week, which is the final seven-year tribulation period, the final 70th week of Daniel. That's where they get the seven years from.

Now, here's the point then. When they see in verse 27, he shall confirm a covenant with

many for one week, the he there, they say, is the Antichrist. And it goes on to say, and in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to the sacrifice and offering.

They say that's when he sets up the abomination of desolation. He puts his image in the temple. The Jews will recoil in disgust and will stop offering sacrifices there because, just like they did when Antiochus Epiphanes did the same thing, when he sacrificed a pig on an altar to Jesus in the temple, the Jews wouldn't sacrifice in the temple.

It was desecrated. And so the dispensational scheme is this. The Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel for one week, namely seven years.

But in the middle of the week, that's after three and a half years, he sets up his image in the temple and that brings an end to the restored sacrifice and offering. And that's how they understand this. That's where they get a seven-year tribulation.

It's this last week. That's where they get the abomination of desolation being yet future. The Antichrist putting his image in the temple.

The problem is this gap. This gap between the 69th and the 70th week. If you read the whole prophecy, it essentially says this.

There are 70 weeks that are determined upon God's dealings with your people, Daniel, the Jews. And he goes on to say, from the going forth of the decree, in verse 25, the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince. There shall be seven weeks, that's 49 years, seven times seven years.

And 62 weeks, put those all together, that's 69 weeks. Seven plus 62 weeks is 69. That makes 483 years.

And the street shall be built again, the wall, even in troublesome times. This is after the Babylonian captivity, it would be built in the days of Nehemiah. Then after the 62 weeks, that is, those followed the first seven, so that's after 69 weeks total, after 483 years.

Lost yet? Not trying to lose you, it's just, it's never easy to talk about this quickly and simply. But basically, most agree, this means after 483 years, after the 69th week, the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself. And the people of the Prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

The end of it will be with a flood. So they agree, this is a reference to Jesus dying and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. But they say the 70th week, the last seven years, is postponed until the rapture of the church.

And then you have the last seven years. Now, in essence, you know, I don't know why dispensations are so fond of these gaps, except that their theology demands it. Think about it.

The angel said to Daniel, this is the total length of time that God's going to be dealing with your people, 490 years, 70 weeks. But one little thing I didn't tell you, there's a gap of 2,000 years between the 69th and the 70th week. Well, what's the point of giving the information at all then? It communicates nothing.

Why say it's going to be 490 years, or 70 weeks, if it's really going to be 2,490 years? What you've done is, you'd be better off telling us nothing, because now you've given deception. You've given the Jews an opportunity to think it's only 490 years, and it's really five times that long. Consider this.

Suppose we were leaving here and I said, by the way, could you give me a ride home? And you say, well, where do you live? I say, well, about 10 miles from here. And you say, okay. So we get in the car, and you're driving me.

10 miles, 20 miles, 30 miles, 50 miles, 100 miles. Eventually you say, didn't you say you only live 10 miles from here? I say, well, yeah, but I forgot to mention that between the 9th and the 10th mile, there's a gap of 400 miles. Would you think that you'd been deceived? Now, the angel says it's 490 years, determined on your people, but he nowhere mentions, and no one ever dreamed that there was a gap until 1830 when Darby found it, or invented it.

He doesn't mention there's a 2,000-year gap between the 483rd year and the 484th year of that period of time. To me, that is astounding that people could execute the Scripture this way. Why do they do that? Because they believe that he that makes a covenant with Israel for seven years is the Antichrist.

Let's look at the passage. Where is the Antichrist in the passage? When you find the word he in verse 27, you are naturally set to looking for an antecedent to the word he. What is the noun? Who is the he? Well, the last person who was specified was the Messiah in the previous verse.

The Messiah shall be cut off. Now, they say, no, no, it's not talking about the Messiah. It's talking about, it mentions there, right, in verse 26, the people of the prince that shall come.

The prince that shall come is the Antichrist. And he's the one who establishes a covenant for seven years. That's what they say.

Now, this is very interesting. They agree that the people of the prince that shall come are the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. They agree about that. How could you miss it? It's obvious in the passage.

The fulfillment is unmistakable. They admit that. But they say the prince that shall come is not Titus who led the Romans, but he is a future Antichrist who will also be a Roman.

They say, well, he'll head up a revived Roman empire, which is nowhere spoken of in Scripture, but they formulate it by some additional gaps elsewhere. But the point is, they say the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. are really the people of the future Antichrist. They're the Romans, and he's going to be a Roman.

Well, there's no indication whatsoever in the passage that Daniel knew or the angel knew of an Antichrist. All he says is the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Well, that was the Romans.

Their prince was Titus. And he literally was the prince, because his father Vespasian was the king. And the most natural way to understand that, and there's nothing compelling us to look at it otherwise, is that the prince that shall come is Titus.

Now, furthermore, suppose we even allow that the prince that shall come is the Antichrist. What reason would we have for saying that he, in verse 27, is a reference to that prince rather than to the Messiah? The Messiah has been prominent in verses 25 and 26. The prince that shall come in verse 26 is not even the subject of a sentence.

He's not prominent. He's the object of a preposition. It's not he, but the people that are the subject of the sentence.

The people shall destroy the city. The people of the prince that shall come. The prince that shall come is just the object of the preposition of.

He's not a prominent player in the way the language of the passage is written. But Messiah is very prominent. Therefore, until 1830, all Christians believed, when they read Daniel, that the prince that shall come was Titus, and that he, in verse 27, was the Messiah, who has been the subject of discussion in verses 25 and 26.

He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week, that is after three and a half years of ministry, he was cut off. And that brought an end to the sacrificial system. When Jesus died, that was the end of any legitimate animal sacrifices ever offered again at the temple.

Now, the Jews still continued to offer them until the temple was destroyed, but they were not legitimate. Hey, there's pagans offering in the jungles today, offering sacrifices to this day, and there's witches doing the same thing, and there's pagan satanists, but that doesn't make it legit. The Jews continued to offer sacrifices after Jesus died, but after that veil was rent in the temple, there was not one more animal sacrifice ever accepted by God from that temple.

And Jesus effectively brought an end, as far as God is concerned, or God's true worshippers are concerned, to all sacrifices and offerings of that type. In the midst of the week, that is after three and a half years of his ministry, he was cut off. It mentions in verse 26 he'd be cut off.

Now, here's how I then understand the structure of verses 26 and 27. You have to look carefully at them, if you would. Verse 26 has two parts, and so does verse 27, and they parallel each other.

The first part of verse 26 parallels the first part of verse 27. The second part of verse 26 parallels the second part of verse 27. Now, see if that doesn't work.

The first part of verse 26 says, and after 62 weeks the Messiah shall be cut off. Okay, he'll die. The first part of verse 27 says, he shall confirm a covenant with one week, but in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to the sacrifices and offerings.

That's by dying. Jesus brought an end to that. But then the second part of verse 26 says, and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

And the end of it shall be with a flood until the end of the war. Desolations are determined. So that's the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, desolations.

The second part of verse 27 also talks about that. On the wing of abominations shall be one that makes desolate, or that brings desolation. Now, the point here is, he's saying the same thing twice, but making more, giving information about it the second time.

In verse 26, he says, the Messiah is going to come and die, and then will destroy Jerusalem. Verse 27, he says the same thing. The Messiah is going to come and die and bring an end to the sacrificial system.

There'll be no more need for the temple after that. So after that, God's going to bring in the Romans and destroy them. An abomination that makes desolate.

That's what Luke thought it meant. Because Jesus talked about this very prophecy, and he said, when you see the abomination of desolation, then flee to the mountains. And Luke said, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

There can be little doubt that that is the correct way of understanding the passage in Daniel. That's how Jesus apparently understood it. That is how Luke certainly interpreted Jesus' words.

If we're going to let the Bible interpret itself, we have to reject dispensationalism on this point and go with Jesus and Luke and the rest of the biblical writers. Okay, now, having said that, let's read on and see how our problems multiply. In Matthew 24, we've been dealing with verse 15.

Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetops not come down to take anything



out of the house. Let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

That is, don't go back into the city. Just get out of there as fast as you can. But woe to those who are pregnant and those with nursing babies in those days, no doubt because of the famine and the siege and the difficulty of flight when you're pregnant and carrying an infant along.

We know from Josephus that at least one woman is recorded to have eaten her baby during the famine. And it says in verse 20, And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. Now, why? In those days, travel in the winter and travel in Jerusalem on the Sabbath would be very difficult.

The gates would be shut, it would be harder to get out of the city on the Sabbath, it would be harder to get out. Furthermore, you wouldn't be able to buy any provisions for your journey on the Sabbath because no one would be selling anything on the Sabbath. It would be the worst of all times to try to make a sudden departure.

Pray that it doesn't happen on the Sabbath, that would be the most inconvenient time, and or in the winter. I don't know what time of year the Christians actually fled from Jerusalem. It's not recorded in Josephus what time of year it was.

We do know that Jerusalem actually fell, however. I think it was besieged in June, if I'm not mistaken. I think it was besieged by Titus.

I think it was in June of 70 and it fell on September 8th of 70 AD. And so it was probably shortly before June that the Christians fled, which gives them a full springtime to make their flight. So probably they did pray that it wouldn't be in winter and God waited until the end of winter so they could fly in the spring.

And of course, I don't know whether it was a Sabbath that the city was besieged or not. I don't have those details, but the point here is that he tells them, pray that you don't have to do it at a time when there will be many obstructions to your flight. Just go as fast as you can.

Now, reading on in Matthew 24, verse 21, Then there will be a great tribulation. Now this is the whole reason for us reading this chapter. We're talking about the tribulation.

The great tribulation. What is it? When is it? The great question, when shall these things be? Still needs to be answered by modern Christians. When is or was the great tribulation? Jesus said, Then shall be great tribulation.

When? When Jerusalem is surrounded. Now anyone who's read Josephus knows that to call it great tribulation is no exaggeration. Although the expression great tribulation is not really a technical term because Mark, in the same passage, calls it, well it says tribulation also.

I think one translation calls it affliction. But Luke calls it, in verse 22 of Luke 21, These are the days of vengeance. And in verse 23, There will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

That's the parallel of Luke 21, verses 22 and 23. So the great tribulation of which Matthew speaks is distress in the land of Israel and wrath upon this people, that is Israel. And it is the days of vengeance upon them for their killing of the prophets and of their Messiah, according to Jesus.

Now, there's a bit of a problem with this identification. There's a couple of problems. One, is that the way Jesus describes this tribulation.

Look at Matthew 24, 21. Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved, but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.

Now here's the problem. The way Jesus describes it, sounds as if he's talking about something global and uniquely severe. He said it's tribulation like never has been from the beginning of time, nor ever shall be afterwards.

That sounds like it's the worst time in all of history, considering all times ever, since the beginning of time to the end of time, nothing could be worse than this tribulation. Furthermore, he says, if those days were not shortened, no flesh would survive. Sounds like it's global, rather than localized.

No doubt it is this wording that is given the most impetus to the dispensational view that the tribulation has not yet happened, of which Jesus speaks. Because they would say, although there have been terrible things that have happened many times in history, none of them stands out, first of all, as a global crisis, where all flesh is threatened with extinction, all human flesh, nor as uniquely severe above all others. And yet Jesus said the great tribulation will be that way.

Now, does anyone have any idea how I might respond to this? I think you've heard enough of me to get some idea. I believe that we have here hyperbole. Hyperbole.

Furthermore, I can demonstrate that these exact hyperboles were used in Scripture elsewhere. Language that makes something sound like it's unique in time, and yet it's not unique. There are other cases like it.

And language that sounds like it's global because it talks about all flesh or no flesh, as this passage does, and yet it's really talking about some local thing. Let's talk about the universality, first of it, of the all flesh, no flesh kind of stuff. By the way, this also is one of the main reasons that people have interpreted Revelation 3.10 as being about the tribulation.

What is that verse? Revelation 3.10. Jesus says, Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming to test those that dwell on the earth. That is coming upon all the world to test those who dwell on the land. Revelation 3.10. Now, I told you when we were talking about the rapture, I used to consider that a very strong pre-tribulation rapture verse because he said, I will keep you, church, from the great hour of trial that is coming upon the world to test those who dwell on the earth.

Therefore, since he talked about an hour of trial coming on all the world to test those who dwell on the earth, it sounded like it must be a global calamity identified with the worldwide tribulation under the Antichrist. And therefore, to be kept from it must mean a pre-trib rapture. I've already explained how I don't take that approach anymore.

But it was the very language of this kind. To have an hour of trial coming on all the world to try those who are on the earth, it sounds like it's worldwide. Yet, nothing worldwide happened in those days.

Well, first of all, let's talk about the stuff that sounds like it's worldwide. Let me turn your attention to Acts 2. Acts 2 is, of course, talking about the day of Pentecost, as you know. And in verse 5, Acts 2.5 says, And there were dwelling in Jerusalem at that time Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

Jews from every nation under heaven? Really? Was the Navajo nation represented there? How about the Australian Aboriginal nations? Were they there in Jerusalem that day? How about the Chinese? Obviously, Jews from every nation under heaven simply means from the wide world over. Actually, from the Roman Empire. Really? Because the Jews have been scattered throughout the Roman Empire, but not much beyond that.

So, when it talks about every nation under heaven, really there's somewhat more of a restricted venue implied. And it's a hyperbole. It's a manner of speaking, but it's certainly not literal.

In Luke 2, if you turn there, same author as wrote Acts, Luke 2.1 says, And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. All the world. Caesar had the authority to tax the whole world? Did he tax the Mayas and the Incas in South America? Did he tax the East Indians and the Chinese and the Koreans? I don't think so.

The world meant the Roman Empire. Now, did they know there were other countries outside the Roman Empire? Yes. There were barbarian hordes that later even conquered Rome.

There were the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths and the Huns and so forth. They knew about those people. Rome had not quite conquered them.

And they certainly weren't going to tax them. The Huns were not going to be taxed by Caesar. They weren't under his thumb.

Yet, Caesar could speak of taxing all the world, and by that mean the whole civilized world or the whole Roman world, and that didn't strike anybody as a strange way to talk. Any more than it seems strange to Paul to say that the gospel, and we looked at this a moment ago in Colossians 1.6, means the gospel has gone out into all the world. Or to say in the same chapter, Colossians 1.23, that the gospel has been preached to every creature under heaven.

Well, the Book of Acts says there were Jews gathered from every nation under heaven. But that's a hyperbole. We might as well get used to it.

Middle Eastern writers of the first century did not write always the way we do, although we allow for hyperbole in our own modern English literature as well. But they just had different hyperboles they used. But they very, very commonly spoke in this manner, about the whole world or whatever, and just really meaning their venue.

So that when in Revelation 3.10 it says the trial that's coming on all the world could easily mean restricted to the Roman Empire. Do you know that when Nero committed suicide, the whole world, the whole Roman Empire, was thrown into disarray and chaos and civil wars and so forth? That was an hour of trial on the whole world, if you understand the world to mean the Roman world. And that was the way that it was commonly spoken of.

Now, what about the all flesh kind of idea? Well, the expression no flesh should survive is a bit reminiscent of a statement in Jeremiah 12.12 where the expression no flesh is also found. When we think of no flesh, we tend to think globally because we think like dispensationalists. But that doesn't necessarily mean so.

It says in Jeremiah 12, beginning at verse 10, Many rulers have destroyed my venue. That's Jerusalem and Israel. They have trodden my portion underfoot.

They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate. Desolate, it mourns to me.

The whole land is made desolate because no one takes it to heart. Now verse 12, Jeremiah 12.12 The plunderers have come on all the desolate heights in the wilderness for the sword of the Lord shall devour from one end of the land to the other end of the land. No flesh shall have peace.

Who's all flesh here? The land of Israel. He's talking about a judgment of sword coming on the land of Israel. No flesh will have peace simply means no flesh in Israel.

It doesn't mean globally. Within the perimeters of the discussed crisis, no flesh living in

that geographical area will have peace. By the way, the contrary expression, all flesh, is similarly used frequently in the scripture, meaning something else than literally all flesh.

For instance, in Joel, Joel chapter 2 quoted in Acts, says, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Does this literally mean every human being on the planet, God's going to pour out his spirit upon them? They're going to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? I'm not a universalist. I don't believe everyone's going to get saved.

But to say I'm going to pour out my spirit on all flesh means on a broader category than just the Jews in this case. The spirit is for all nations, for all peoples and all Gentiles and so forth. It's not necessarily going to be on every individual person, however.

It's not uncommon for that kind of language to exist. So for Jesus to say, if those days were not shortened, no flesh would survive, it doesn't require that he's thinking of anything larger than the geographical area of Israel. Israel was a bloodbath.

I mean, there's just blood running all over the place. Cities on fire everywhere. That any flesh survived is a miracle.

Jesus said, for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened, or else they too would not survive. Now, how is that? I personally believe he's referring to the fact that when Vespasian first besieged the city, that was the warning to the Christians, the elect. And he could have had them take the city at that time had he wanted to.

But he shortened that time by taking a middle piece out of it so the Christians could flee into the wilderness. And then Titus came back and then the crisis continued. The days were shortened for the elect's sake.

If not for that, even they would have been killed. Jesus said, except God should shorten those days, no flesh would survive. But for the elect's sake, he shall shorten those days.

But what about that language that talks about it being unique, such as nothing else before ever was, and so forth? Well, let's look at a few passages of Scripture. I think we have, unfortunately, only a few minutes for this. We're going to continue this subject tomorrow also in our lectures.

Look at Exodus chapter 11, or 10, excuse me. Exodus chapter 10. Moses is in the contest with Pharaoh with the plagues and everything.

This passage has to do with the plague of locusts that came on Egypt. Exodus 10, 14 says, And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. They were very severe.

Previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them. Now, do you recognize that way of speaking? There had never been locusts like that

before. There will never be locusts like that afterward.

But now, turn to Joel chapter 2. Do you know where that is? The line of prophets, Hosea, Joel. Joel chapter 2. Well, first of all, let me familiarize you with what Joel is about in case you're not familiar with this book. In Joel chapter 1, he is describing a locust plague.

In fact, the whole book is about that. It says in chapter 1, verse 4, What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust has left, the crawling locust has eaten.

What the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten, and so forth. Now, obviously the problem here is locusts. It's a locust plague.

Look at verse 2 of this very chapter. Joel 1, 2. Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it.

Let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. Now look at chapter 2, verse 2. Or 1 and 2. Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming.

This is a day of judgment in the form of the locust plague. A day of darkness and gloominess. That's what locust plagues do.

They darken the sky. A day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come.

These people are the locusts, great and strong, the like of whom has never been, nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. Now you might say, how do I know those locusts, that the strong people are locusts? Well, he's using an imagery here that compares the locusts with soldiers. For instance, they're described in verse 5. On the mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array.

They're not strong people, they're locusts, but they're like a strong people. They're not really people at all. It says in verse 7, chapter 2 of Joel, they run like mighty men.

They're not mighty men, but they run like they are. They climb the wall. This great army of locusts is described as if they were human.

Now, he does go on to say that he's going to take away the locusts when they repent. And if I can find it real quickly, I don't know if I can find it as quickly as I'd like because I didn't plan to bring this up, but there's a place where he mentions how he will take out, he'll remove verse 20, but I will remove far from you the northern army, and I will drive him away into the barren and desolate land with his face toward the eastern sea. That's

where the locusts were blown into, the eastern sea, also in the days of Pharaoh.

And his back toward the western sea. His stench will come up. The locusts always stink when they drown in the sea.

And the foul odor will arise because he has done these monstrous things. But somewhere down here, I wish I had it for you, and it's just not that much here. It should be able to be found.

He talks about these were the great army that God sent these locusts, were the great army he sent. I don't see it. Maybe someone else will find it, but I don't have time to keep... Is it verse 25? Yeah, this is it.

I will restore to you the years that the swarming locusts has eaten, the crawling locusts, the consuming locusts, the chewing locusts, my great army which I sent among you. So you can see that the locusts are the army. He's talking about them as if they were an army invading, but they're really locusts.

But notice what he's... Thank you for that verse. Who gave me that, John? Thank you. Notice in Joel 2 too, it says about them, A people, meaning the locusts, come like a strong army, great and strong, the like of whom has never been, nor will there ever be such after them for many generations.

Do you realize that's the same thing said about the locust plague back in Egypt? That the locusts were like none ever before, nor like any afterward? And yet here's another locust plague, the very same thing is said about it. Now, anyone who thinks logically knows you can't take that literally because you can't have two events at separate times in history that are both worse than anything before or after. Because only one of them can be unique.

Only one of them can be uniquely bad. Therefore, what we have here is, again, hyperbole. Look at 2 Chronicles 1.12. Now I'm really racing against time here.

I've got about six minutes to get this in. 2 Chronicles 1.12. This is speaking about Solomon. And it says, Wisdom and knowledge are granted to you, and I will give you riches and wealth and honor such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like.

Now, same kind of statement, isn't it? Solomon, your wealth, your honor, and your wisdom are going to exceed all the kings who were ever before you or all the kings who will ever be after you. Are we to take this absolutely literally? Well, what about his wisdom? Jesus indicated that he was one greater than Solomon. He even said so.

Certainly, we give Jesus credit for having greater wisdom than Solomon. So there was one after him that was greater in that respect. As far as riches go, it's true Solomon was

an incredibly wealthy man.

But it's hard to imagine, even with the difference in the purchasing power of money and so forth between then and now, it's hard to imagine that he is really more wealthy than the modern, you know, Rockefellers or Rothschilds or Trumps or whoever, you know what I mean? There's an awful lot of wealth these days, more than was known in those days, I think. But I'm not trying to find fault with that. I'm trying to identify the kind of language it's using and say this is a promise that is not an absolute, and it wasn't expected to be understood as absolute.

It basically means this thing is, you are so unique in the sense, or so unusual that it says, you know, if we could exaggerate a little, it's as if no one has ever been or ever will be like you in these respects. But that's not necessarily speaking in absolute terms. Look at Luke chapter 1, verse 69 and 70.

Luke chapter 1, 69 and 70. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is prophesying, he says, and that God has raised us up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been since the world began. Well, there haven't been prophets around since the world began, necessarily, but it's just a way of speaking, saying from time immemorial, from ancient times.

Also in John 9, another example of the same kind of expression. John 9, 32 says, this is the blind man who had been healed by Jesus, says, since the world began, it has been unheard of that anyone open the eyes of one who is born blind. Well, the man doesn't know everything that happened since the world began.

He's just making an emphatic statement. He's saying, who has ever heard of such a thing? And he emphasizes it with a hyperbole. Since the world began, no one has ever heard of such a thing.

Well, how does he know that? There were some astonishing miracles in the days of Elijah and Elisha, dead raised and so forth. Maybe, who knows? Maybe there were blind eyes open. You can't ever say.

There were lepers healed and so forth at that time. So, what I'm saying is, I think we need to recognize that in the Bible, the Jewish writers were not averse to using hyperbole a great deal of the time. And Jesus was one of them.

And he used the language of the people of the time. And when he said that this time of tribulation will be such as never was since the world began, nor ever shall be, and that if the days were not shortened, no flesh would survive, rather than taking this in our western way of taking things absolutely literally and saying, well, this must be uniquely bad in history and universal and worldwide and so forth. We need to see that it's, that's just a way of emphasizing what a terrible time it was.



By the way, Josephus records the words of Titus on this matter. Well, no, I'll read what Josephus himself said for himself. Josephus said about the fall of Jerusalem, It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity.

I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly that neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was from the beginning of the world. Typical Jewish hyperbole. There never was any city that suffered such things as this.

From the beginning of the world, there was never any generation more wicked than this. How does Josephus know that? Obviously, it's just a manner of speaking. He doesn't expect to be taken in an absolute literal sense.

But it's interesting that he's talking about the same thing Jesus is talking about and uses words that are very similar. Though he'd never heard Jesus' statement on it. That certainly the Holocaust, the 7 AD, was sufficiently horrendous to cause an onlooker like Josephus to say no city has ever suffered like this before.

Since the world began, no one has ever seen something like this before. That's essentially what Jesus said. And if you look at the parallels, as we did a moment ago, in Mark and Luke, and especially in Luke 21, where Jesus is saying then shall be great tribulation, Luke renders it for these are the days of vengeance which shall be that all things that are written may be fulfilled, but woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies, we're at verse 23, Luke 21, 23, in those days for there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

That happened. He's talking about that people Israel, that land Israel. And he goes on to talk about in verse 24, they will fall by the edge of the sword.

They will be led away captive into all nations. That happened. And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles.

It has been. How long? Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. That's to the present time, by the way.

We will talk more about these things next time. Just because we've run out of time today for more on it, I am eager to get into the...