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Olivet Discourse (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this discourse on the Olivet Discourse, Steve Gregg explores the context and meaning of Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the end of the age. While acknowledging the existence of the idea of a seven-year tribulation, he highlights the lack of reference to it being that long in the Bible. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the context and audience of each gospel account when interpreting Jesus' teachings and advises Christians to be prepared for persecution and martyrdom in any age.

Transcript

In this lecture we're going to begin, but we will not be able to complete, a consideration of the so-called tribulation period. I say we won't be able to complete it in this lecture because it historically has taken me about three or more lectures to cover the material we have to cover. There are a number of things to consider, including what's called the Olivet Discourse, which is the discourse Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives, hence the name, Olivet Discourse.

He gave that discourse there and it's recorded in Matthew 24 and in parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21. And we need to cover that verse by verse in the course of this study. Also, we want to cover a bit of material in the book of Revelation and a number of other prophetic passages in the Old Testament.

And we also need to, in the course of this time, talk about the Antichrist. What does the Bible say about the Antichrist? Much less than you might think. You might be surprised to learn that the word Antichrist is only used by one author in the Bible, and that's John, and he only uses it in 1 John and 2 John.

The word Antichrist is not found elsewhere in the Scripture, and it's interesting to see how John uses the expression much differently than modern, popular Bible prophecy teachers would suggest. It's interesting how much light the Bible throws on the commentaries, someone has said. And it's interesting how much light reading the Bible will throw on commentators and teachers.

And it's supposed to be the other way around, I thought, that the teachers are supposed to be throwing light on the Bible, but many times they're throwing a great deal of darkness upon it. And if you just look at what the Bible says and see what it does and doesn't say, life gets a lot less confusing. And anyone who's tried to become an expert in biblical prophecy has had to read a plethora of conflicting ideas in different books and so forth, and it gets very confusing until you put all the books aside and say, let's read the Bible and see if it says anything about this.

And so many times it says nothing about many of the things that are in the prophecy books. Let me read to you a list of things that are very typically said to belong to the last 7 years of Church history, not Church history, but history prior to the coming of Christ. It is the view, of course, of dispensationalists, whose viewpoints rule the roost, more or less, in the Church world today, at least in the Western world.

Dispensationalists believe that the last 7 years before Jesus returns will be a time of unprecedented evil and calamity and judgment on the world. And they call it the Tribulation Period. And the last half of that, the last 3 1/2 years, is usually called the Great Tribulation Period.

So, get this terminology straight so we won't be confused. The last 7 years before Jesus comes back is sometimes called, by dispensationalists, the Tribulation. And the last 3 1/2 years, the second half of that, is sometimes called the Great Tribulation.

It's in the second half of that that they say this man called the Antichrist will rule the world and persecute the Jews and do many other things and lead the world to World War III or the Battle of Armageddon and so forth. Now, I'd like to examine this popular view. Because even if you are not a prophecy buff, even if you're not one of these people who really digs reading Bible books about Bible prophecy, it is almost certain that if you have lived in the Western world and been a Christian for more than a few years and listened to any Christian radio or read any books that touch on any prophetic themes, that your viewpoint will be colored by dispensationalism.

Tell me how many of these things you have not heard of before. These things are features of the dispensational program for the Tribulation for the last 7 years. It will be a time of purging for Israel, sometimes called the time of Jacob's trouble, from a verse in Jeremiah chapter 30 which uses that term, time of Jacob's trouble.

So it's a time where God's dealing specially with Israel. By the way, that's one of the arguments for a pre-Trib Rapture. Since the Tribulation is said to be a time when God's dealing with Israel as his chosen people again at that time, there's no need for the Church, which is presently his chosen people, to be here.

He'll rapture the Church out and then he can deal with Israel, his first love, again. Now, of course, that doesn't in itself argue for a pre-Tribulation Rapture as strongly as some

would suggest, because there's no obvious reason why God couldn't deal with the Church and Israel as separate chosen peoples if he chose to, even during the Tribulation period. I mean, he wouldn't have to remove the Church in order to start dealing with Israel.

After all, most dispensations say that God started dealing with Israel again back in 1948 when they became a nation. The Church is here, too. So, I mean, if God could work with Israel and the Church simultaneously from 1948 until the present time, why couldn't he do so for seven more years in the Tribulation? Yet, people who, like myself, did not always think clearly about these subjects, have often thought these are arguments in favor of pre-Tribulation Rapture.

Well, at the time of Jacob's trouble, not the Church's. Therefore, the Church should be gone so God can deal with Israel. Now, according to these same people, he's been dealing with Israel for a long time while the Church is here.

So, he doesn't really make a very strong argument. But, in addition to the time of pruning for Israel, this seven years is said to be the time of the Antichrist. Somebody named the Antichrist comes along and makes a seven-year covenant with Israel.

However, well, before he breaks that covenant, the Jews actually build their temple again in Jerusalem. This is often thought to take place under the auspices of a peace plan proffered by the Antichrist that he gives the Jews a false hope of peace. They feel that security is now theirs.

They can now go about building their temple again, as they've wanted to do for a long time. But then, after three and a half years, that is in the middle of this seven-year period, the Antichrist breaks his covenant. And the breaking of his covenant is characterized by his taking an image of himself and setting it up in the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt temple, which is a supreme act of insult to God, obviously, of irreligion.

And this is the beginning of the Great Tribulation, when most of the plagues of the Book of Revelation begin to fall on the earth because of the Antichrist putting his image in the temple. In fact, this act of putting this image of the Antichrist in the temple is sometimes said to be called the Abomination of Desolation. This is the term that is used in Daniel and also by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse.

Now, when the godlier Jews see this Abomination of Desolation in the temple in Jerusalem, it will be across the Jordan River to Petra, according to most accounts. Petra is the former capital of the Edomite nation, which has been extinct since the time of Christ, almost. And then there will be great plagues and havoc on the earth from God, characterized by the judgments found in the Book of Revelation, during the latter part of that tribulation period.

There will be international havoc, there will be wars and rumors of wars, between nation and nation, and kingdom against kingdom. So it will be a time of great warfare. However, during that time, God is going to evangelize the world through 144,000 Jewish people who will be converted during that period.

144,000 Jews, the remnants of Israel, will be converted during this tribulation period and will become evangelists and will begin to convert many millions of people throughout the world. In fact, some have said they will be more successful in three and a half years of evangelism than the Church has been in 2,000 years. Even though the Church and the Holy Spirit with it have left the earth at this time.

So the Jews are doing a great job without the Holy Spirit converting the world. Now, in addition to this, the period is characterized by persecution of the righteous. The righteous would be those Jews who have not worshipped the Antichrist and any Gentiles who get converted by those Jews and decide that they will not take the mark of the beast either.

So there is tremendous persecution and martyrdom characterized in the period. Then at the end of that comes Armageddon, sometimes identified with World War III. It's amazing how much is written about Armageddon, although the word only appears once in the Bible and not in a context that would justify most of the things that are written about it.

But that's just the way with authors. If you're going to write on something the Bible doesn't say much about, you've got to make up a lot of things to make a book-length treatment. And that has been done by more people than we could count whose books are on the shelves and who have radio programs.

During that time there will be tremendous slaughter, tremendous bloodshed. So much blood will be shed that in the Valley of Megiddo the blood will flow to the horses' bridles in depth, it is said. And of course that is interrupted by the Second Coming of Christ.

This is the dispensational scenario. Seven-year covenant that the Antichrist makes with Israel. They build their temple again, start offering their animal sacrifices again, but in the middle of that seven years he breaks his covenant, puts an image of himself in the temple, godly Jews flee to Petra, 144,000 godly Jews begin to evangelize the world, God pours out his plagues on the world, as described in the Book of Revelation.

The Antichrist is persecuting the godly during this time, and he leads the world against Israel in the final battle of Armageddon, but Jesus delivers Israel by his Second Coming and destroys the Antichrist by the brightness of his own appearing, and so forth. Now, I imagine that for many of you that scenario sounds very familiar. In fact, on my radio program where people call in with questions from the Bible, they commonly assume that most of these things are going to happen, and that this is what Christians have always believed.

Of course, this is not what Christians have always believed. All of these ideas were introduced in the early 1800s. John Nelson Darby is the one who gave us this scenario when he created dispensational theology in 1830.

This idea of a future Antichrist came up a few years earlier. We'll talk about where that view came from, but it came into the Protestant churches in 1827 through Samuel Maitland, the librarian for the Archbishop of Canterbury, the first Protestant to teach that the Antichrist was not the Pope. And that was in 1827.

John Nelson Darby, a leader in the Plymouth Brethren movement, picked up that idea and included it with his pre-Curb Rapture and other ideas in his dispensational system, and since 1830, this idea has been catching on like wildfire throughout Europe and America and Australia and the rest of the English-speaking world. And so much has it succeeded that we almost all assume that it's biblical. One of the things I'd like to say is that of all the things that I just read to you, none of them are prophesied in the Bible as happening in the last days.

None of them. And that's why it's going to take us a few sessions. We're going to have to look at all the scriptures in the entire Bible that are said to talk about these things, and we'll try to do our best to exegete them.

Let's talk about the Tribulation itself, first of all. What is the Tribulation? Where does the term come from? The term, the Great Tribulation, comes from two passages of scripture. One is in Matthew 24, and the other is in the Book of Revelation.

In Matthew 24, in verse 21, Jesus said, Matthew 24, 21, Jesus said, For then there will be great tribulation, that's where they get the word, the great tribulation, then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. Sounds like unprecedented, global tribulation. And it's called great tribulation.

It's mentioned one other place in the Bible, and that is in Revelation chapter 7. We find the same expression. In Revelation chapter 7, and when John sees this vision of an innumerable multitude from every kindred people and tongue in heaven, he's asked, in verse 13, One of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from? And I said to him, Sir, you know. So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation.

They've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Here we have it again, the great tribulation. Although Jesus just said great tribulation, in Revelation it's the great tribulation.

No doubt as a result of Jesus using the term, it becomes a technical term ever after. Jesus spoke of there being great tribulation. Someone spoken of later, they called it the

great tribulation, namely the great tribulation of which Jesus spoke.

Now, of course, if we take a futurist view of the book of Revelation, and of the Olivet Discourse, then this great tribulation must be future. Although I would note to you, there's no reference to it being seven years long, anywhere in the Bible. We will talk a little later where this idea of a seven year tribulation has come from.

It does not come from any statement in Scripture where the tribulation is said to be seven years long. It comes from certain other deductions which are of questionable validity. But, I mean, let me just say this.

I don't care whether there's a seven year tribulation or not. I just want to know. I'm a Bible teacher.

I'm just stuck with the task of explaining what the Bible says as honestly as I can, and as responsibly as I can. And if there turns out to be a seven year tribulation, more power to it. But I don't really see what difference it makes, to tell you the truth.

I can't imagine what difference it would make to the believer if there is a seven year tribulation. I'll tell you why. If there is, there's three possibilities.

One, is that we'll be raptured out before it. In which case, who cares? I mean, in a sense, if there is a rapture before a seven year tribulation, all the Christians leave, it's questionable why Jesus would have told the Church so many things about it, just for our curiosity. Why give us whole books of the Bible about something that's going to take place after we're gone and we won't observe it, we have nothing to do with it, it has no bearing on us.

What's the point? God just like to write extra pages of the Bible because he's, you know, got an itch to write, or what? No, I think not. But, one of the possibilities would be, of course, that we wouldn't be here for the tribulation. Another possibility would be that we would be here for the tribulation and would suffer, or let's put it this way, would not suffer the wrath of God in it.

And we wouldn't suffer at all because God's people are never exposed to God's wrath even when they're among those who are. God does, God is selective in his judgment. He knows who are and who are not his people.

We judged the Egyptians, we did not judge the Jews who were in the same country. As it says in Psalm 91, a thousand shall fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you. Only with your eye shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked.

So it is possible that we could be here during the seven year tribulation and be spared from those judgments. But the third thing to consider is that we could be persecuted.

Now, the very worst thing and the thing that would matter most to Christians about this whole deal would be the persecution.

Because if we're raptured or if we're spared from God's judgment in the tribulation, there's really no great terrors that it holds except for this third possibility and that is we'll be persecuted, maybe martyred. However, we don't need a seven year tribulation to tell us that we need to be prepared for persecution and martyrdom. Christians have been persecuted and martyred from time immemorial, from the time of Jesus on.

There have been martyrs ever since Stephen. During the Dark Ages, there were 50 million Christian martyrs, it is believed, through martyrs of the Spanish Inquisition and other inquisitions like it. In communist countries, again, millions of Christians have been put to death.

Hitler himself persecuted and killed many millions of Christians as well as Jews. Mao Tse-Tung did the same thing and the same thing is going on in Muslim countries. Anyone who has not reckoned with the fact that being a Christian means you might have to be martyred is simply out of touch with church history and out of touch with the world.

Living in some little bubble of western civilization saying, it can't happen here, we don't deserve to suffer, I can't believe in a God who would call his people to suffer. I've heard Christians say that. I say, where in the world have you been? You can't believe in a God who would let his people suffer.

What do you think the church has been doing in the world for the past 2,000 years? They've been being slaughtered, fed to lions, burned at the stake, tortured on the rack, killed in hideous ways. This is the norm in church history, this is the norm. Now, suppose we're here for a 7 year tribulation at the end of the age and the Antichrist is doing all these same things to us.

Although the dispensational view is since it says these were beheaded because they didn't take the mark of the beast, the worst thing the beast then does is behead people. That's a nice way to go to tell you the truth compared to what some martyrs have had to go through. To tell you the truth, I'd choose that.

A firing squad or a guillotine, either one would be some of the nicest ways to go. I mean, if you read Fox's book of martyrs you'll know that not everyone had the luxury of a quick death. Many of them were tortured day in and day out in hideous ways and then killed murderously and violently.

So actually, if the idea is the great threat of the tribulation is that Christians might have to die for their faith, I say, what's the difference between that and any other time in history? The only difference would be that we know it's only 7 years, that'd make it a little easier since the church had to go through 200 years of incessant persecution from

200 AD to 303 AD when Constantine came to power and brought an end to it. 200 years of martyrdom as a rule. And yet, someone saying, well God certainly wouldn't let us be in a 7 year tribulation where Christians are put to death.

I can't believe the narrow-mindedness and ethnocentricity and the absence of knowledge of history that permeates Western Christians. The worst conceivable thing that anybody has ever suggested would happen to believers in the tribulations is, you know what? You can die anyway. Everybody's going to die.

Dying for Jesus is a privilege because a lot of people die other ways and don't get to die for Jesus. Everybody dies. It's amazing to me that people say, I can't believe God would let Christians be persecuted by the Antichrist.

I just don't understand where these people are thinking. They're obviously not reading their Bibles or church history. The fact of the matter is, I couldn't care less if there's a 7 year tribulation.

At least I'd know if I was in it, it's only going to be 7 years. That'd be a lot better than living under the Clinton administration. That might be 8 or more.

And we don't get to die. We have to live with it. It's not torturous, of course, compared to what a lot of Christians are going through.

But the point I'm making is, 7 years is really a short time. And to think that that's somehow something beyond the mercy of God to allow Christians to go through. I guess I'm too far removed from that mentality.

But the point here is, I'm not coming here to say there's no 7 year tribulation. All I'm saying is, if there is, the Bible hasn't told us so. And if the Bible hasn't told us so, I don't know who we're going to get our information from.

Hal Lindsey, I suppose, or someone else. But the idea here is, if the Bible did say there was a 7 year tribulation, I'd have no problem with it. If it says there's none, I'd have no problem with it.

The fact of the matter is, as I read the Bible, Let's take a look at the passage in Matthew 24 and see what the great tribulation is that Jesus spoke of. This will take us a fair amount of time. It'll certainly take us beyond the limits of this lecture.

So we'll have to have at least two lectures on it, if not more. I have handed you a page, a large page that has four columns on it. Three of them take up the entire page and the left-hand column is Luke 21, almost in its entirety.

Only a few verses are left out that are not of value in this particular analysis. The next column has Mark 13. The next column has Matthew 24.

And the final column, down at the bottom, has Luke 17. Now, the reason I've given these is because there's tremendous parallel between these various passages. We're mostly familiar, probably, with Matthew 24.

Of the three versions that parallel on this point, Luke 21, Mark 13, and Matthew 24, Matthew 24 is the most useful for dispensationalists because of the wording of verse 3. Let me read the first three verses for you. You can read along if you want. Now, it happens that the handout, I think, used the King James Version, so it'll read just a little different than our new King James that we've been using.

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. And he said to them, Do you not see all these things? Surely I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down. Now, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? Now, notice the first question they ask is, When shall these things be? What things? We presume the things last mentioned.

The thing last mentioned was that the time would come when the temple would be left without one stone standing on another. Now, many Christians are not very familiar with the history to know that that happened. Forty years after Jesus uttered it, in the year 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

They removed every stone. Not one stone was left standing on another. Josephus tells us this, although Josephus was not at all familiar with Jesus' words, Josephus was not a Christian, but he was a contemporary writer who witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and left us massive writings, which, as I have said before, I think have almost providentially been preserved for us, so we know something about the fulfillment of these prophecies.

But he is just a secular historian. He happened to be Jewish, but he was not a Christian, and he worked for the Romans. But he wrote the story of the fall of Jerusalem.

I've given you a handout that describes it. I'd like you to read that on your own tonight, not now. It's too lengthy to read right now, but Jesus said not one stone of the temple would be left standing on another.

The first question the disciples asked was, when shall these things be? In other words, when will Jerusalem be destroyed? When will the temple be thrown down like this? But then Matthew has them asking a second question. What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? The King James says, at the end of the world. That's a little misleading.

The Greek word *aeonius* is age. The end of the age. What you need to do is look at Luke 21 and Mark 13.

Look at Luke 21 in the first column there of your handout. Verse 5 through 7. Then as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, he said, As for these things which you see, the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down. Verse 7. And they asked him, saying, Teacher, but when will these things be? Did you notice the similarity and yet the dissimilarity between this question that they asked in Luke 21 and the question as it's phrased in Matthew 24? Both questions begin with the words, When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign? And after that they're different.

In Luke, it's what shall be the sign that these things are about to come to pass or to take place. In other words, in Luke, both questions have to do with to alert us that it's about to happen. What sign will there be that these things are about to take place? There's not the slightest reference to the second coming of Christ as one reads in Luke 21, although in Matthew 24, 3, after it says, And what will be the sign? It reads a little different.

Of your coming in the end of the age. Now look at Mark's version, Mark 13, verses 1 through 4. Then as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Do you see the number of stones and what buildings are here? And Jesus answered and said to him, Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down. Now as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately.

Now that's detail that wasn't given in Matthew or Luke. Mark tells us that this was a question asked privately by these four disciples, Peter and James and John and Andrew. And their question is in verse 4. Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled? Now notice they have two questions and so does Luke 21, verse 7. And they're the same two questions.

When will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place or will be fulfilled? Notice in Mark and in Luke, if you had only those Gospels, and by the way, the Gospels are bound in a book. It took some centuries before all the writings of the New Testament were put together for the church to use as a whole. Some Christians only had the Gospel of Mark, some only had the Gospel of Luke, some only had the Gospel of Matthew.

Those who were left with only the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke would have only had reason to believe that this question was about Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple. Because in Luke and in Mark, they say, when will these things, when these things are about to be fulfilled? So one would expect Jesus' answer to be about those things and answering their question, when will it happen? Now historically we know that it happened 40 years after he uttered the words. But they didn't know that and Jesus gives his answer and we should expect his answer to resemble that period of time that took place as the temple was soon to be destroyed within a generation or a

generation.

Let's look a little further down here. In Luke 21, look at Luke 21, 32 and 33, especially verse 32. Luke 21, 32.

Jesus said, Surely I say to you, this generation will by no means pass until all these things are fulfilled. Notice, all these things, that's what they asked about. When shall all these things, when shall these things be fulfilled? When shall all these things be accomplished? He was right by the way, it was 40 years later they were accomplished.

But look at the next column, Mark 13, just verse 30 will do. Jesus said, Surely I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place. And then in the next column, Matthew 24, all these things are fulfilled.

Now, if you read simply the question asked by the disciples, especially in Luke and Mark, and Jesus' answer in the verses we just read, you would say, well, Jesus predicted the doom of the temple, they asked him when it would be, and he said it would happen within that generation. And there's no problem with that. It would all be 100% true.

Jesus just uttered the words. So, there should be no problem in interpreting this passage. The problem comes with Matthew 24, and the way that he rephrases the second part of the disciples' question.

Now you can see that he does that. In Matthew 24, 3, it says, Now as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, his disciples, four of them at least, Mark tells us, came to him privately saying, Now here we have our great problem in interpretation. First of all, where the other Gospels have the disciples asking the second question, what will be the sign that these things are about to happen? Matthew rephrases it.

What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? Now there's two possibilities here. One, is that Matthew is paraphrasing or identifying the destruction of Jerusalem about which the disciples ask with the coming of Jesus and the end of the age. The other is that Matthew may be combining material from two discourses and making a composite question from the disciples.

Now, I'll tell you why I say that. Look at the fourth column, Luke 17. It's a shorter segment, but I'll put Luke 17.22 on.

Luke 17.22, Then he said to the disciples, the days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, look here or look there. Do not go after them or follow them.

For as the lightning that flashes out of the one part under heaven shines through the other part under heaven, so also will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things that they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the

ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was in the days of Lot.

They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

In that day, he who is on the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not come down and take them away from his wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life will preserve it.

I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed. The one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together.

The one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field. The one will be taken and the other left.

They answered and said to him, Where, Lord? So he said to them, Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together. And the Son of Man will be revealed. The Son of Man will be in his day, in verse 24.

For as lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part of heaven, so also shall the Son of Man be in his day. And then down at verse 30, Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. I am of the opinion, and most evangelicals would agree, that this is talking about the second coming of Christ.

But you will note something. That is in your first column. The first and the fourth columns in this handout are both from Luke, but from different chapters and different discourses.

As we have seen, Luke 21 is a discourse about 70 A.D. That is what the disciples are represented as asking about. Their question does not extend beyond 70 A.D. or the destruction of the temple, and Jesus says to them, This generation will not pass until all these things take place. So the question addressed in Luke 21 does not extend beyond that generation and what took place to the temple.

But in Luke 17, we have a discussion of an entirely different discourse on an entirely different occasion to a different audience even. Although he spoke to his disciples, this was occasioned two verses earlier by the Pharisees demanding of him when the kingdom of God would come. And this led to this talk.

But he seems to be talking about what it is that Matthew has combined elements of Luke 21 and of Luke 17. Two separate discourses. Matthew is combined into one.

Now, you can see that by following the little squiggly lines I made on their handout to show you which parts parallel which. You can see if you look at the Luke 17 column that Luke 17, 22 through 24 parallel Matthew 24, 23 through 27. Right? And so also the

passage about the days of Noah in Luke 17, verses 26 and 27 that parallels Matthew 24, 37 and so forth.

And there are other places. One taking the other left. That business also parallels Matthew 24.

Now, the rest of Matthew 24 seems to parallel Luke 21. Now Luke 21 is a discourse about 70 A.D. Luke 17, if I read it correctly, is about the second coming of Christ. Matthew has taken two different discourses and merged them into one.

Now, this is not unlike Matthew, by the way. Matthew's gospel is arranged as virtually all evangelical scholars who write commentaries on it have pointed out is arranged topically. Matthew has done this in many... He's arranged the teachings of Jesus around five discourses in Matthew.

The first is the Sermon on the Mount which is Matthew 5 through 7. The second is the missionary discourse of Matthew 10. Then there's the parable discourse of Matthew 13. After that, there's the relationships discourse of Matthew 18.

And then finally, the all of it discourse in Matthew 24 and 25. These are five discourses that Matthew builds his story of the life of Christ around. And each of them has evidence of being composite.

For instance, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew occupies three chapters, 5, 6, and 7. But the same sermon in Luke, chapter 6, takes up only half of one chapter and has many of the same features. Many of the same statements are in it. But the other parts of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew are found in other parts of Luke.

What I'm saying is that Jesus said everything that's in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew but he said it at different times and Luke records it in different settings and so forth. But Matthew has apparently taken all these sayings of Jesus about the same subject and put them into a topical arrangement. That's what has apparently happened.

Likewise with the missionary discourse in Matthew 10. There's at least elements of two or more different discourses of Jesus found elsewhere in Luke and Mark that are combined in Matthew 10. And this is clearly the case in Matthew 24 also.

Now I don't know whether that's enlightening or troubling to you or whatever, but the fact is anyone who studies the discourses in Matthew and compares the sayings in them with the same sayings of Jesus elsewhere in the other Gospels sees that Matthew has done us a favor by arranging Jesus' teachings topically around a theme. Apparently since the discourse that Jesus gave about 70 AD recorded in Luke 21 and the discourse Jesus gave about his second coming recorded in Luke 17 and the discourses where Jesus gave extensive teaching about the future Matthew decided to put them together. Now I'm not saying that Matthew thought they were both about the same subject.

I don't know what Matthew thought but both of them were in fact discourses where Jesus predicted future things. In fact they're the only lengthy discourses we know of where Jesus did and Matthew combined them together. Now this being the case many have felt that Matthew has therefore, in order to introduce material from both discourses Matthew has modified the disciples' questions to include both questions.

When will these things be have to do with 70 AD and what will be the sign of your coming in the end of the age has to do with the material borrowed from Luke 17. Anybody lost? Okay, everyone's following, okay. Now, you didn't say you're following you just said you're not lost, right? Okay, well that's why I gave you this handout.

It's ten times worse. But as you can look Luke 17 parallels much of the material in Matthew 24. Luke 21 also does but they're about different subjects.

They're about two different subjects. One is about 70 AD the other is about the second coming of Christ and some scholars believe that at Matthew 24.3 what Matthew has done is rephrase the disciples' question to anticipate two discourses two answers about the second coming of Christ. So that he, instead of stating the disciples' question the way the other gospel writers do by instead of having the disciples say when will these things be and what shall be the sign that these things are about to take place which would limit the answer to a discussion of 70 AD he has it, when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming in the end of the age which would then, of course make two possible answers but there is one possibility and that's one explanation of why Matthew phrases the disciples' question differently than Luke and Mark do.

There's another possibility though. If you'll look with me at Matthew chapter 16 that's not on your handout so you'll have to get your Bible out here. Hard work.

Has it come to that we have to open our Bibles? What next? Okay, Matthew 16 and verse 28. Matthew 16.28 Assuredly I say unto you there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. You ever had trouble with that statement? Some of you standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

That is a troubling statement for many Christians. I must confess it's troubled me many years of my life and of course the reason is that I've assumed that the Son of Man coming in his kingdom is a reference to the second coming of Christ which is still future. We still look for it.

So how could he have made this prediction that some of them standing there would not taste death until they saw this event? Well, there's two possibilities. You see which one is acceptable to you. One, he was a false prophet.

That one is not acceptable to me. The other is that when he spoke of the Son of Man

coming in his kingdom he was talking about something that did happen within that lifetime but not what we naturally think. He wasn't talking about the second coming of Christ.

He was talking about something else though using language that sounds very similar to it. Now, you can make your choice. I don't know of a third choice.

Either Jesus was a false prophet and he thought his second coming was going to come a lot earlier than it did in which case we've got to change our whole Christology. We've got to change our whole opinion of who Jesus was. Instead of being the Messiah he has to be a false prophet because the Bible says any prophet who says something is going to come to pass if it doesn't, he's a false prophet.

Jesus should have been stoned in that case not crucified because the Jews were told to stone false prophets. But I do not accept that because my first impression is that he predicted the second coming within that generation but he couldn't have done that so I need to find out what it is he did speak of. Now, evangelicals are very familiar with this problem and there have been many explanations given.

There are three possibilities usually suggested. One is that when he said the son of man coming into his kingdom he meant the Mount of Transfiguration. That is three disciples went up on the mountain with him and saw him glorified there and it's in the very next verse chapter 17 of Matthew it goes on to tell about it.

In fact, all three of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke record this prediction of Jesus that some of you standing here will not taste death before you see it and then all three of the Gospels immediately follow it with the description of the Transfiguration so it happened about a week later. They skip over whatever happened during that week right to the Transfiguration. This is thought to be an evidence that Jesus saw the son of man coming into his kingdom.

Well, okay, that's one possibility. One of the problems I have with that interpretation is that when Jesus said some of you will not taste of death before you see it it sounds a little bit like an overstatement if he's referring to something that happened a week later and none of them tasted of death. To say some of you won't taste of death sounds like there will be a few of you still around but there is a second opinion.

By the way, you could hold that one and you'd be in good company. Lots of evangelicals feel he was talking about the Transfiguration. The second possibility is that he was talking about the day of Pentecost because in John chapter 14 in the upper room with his disciples Jesus was predicting the coming of the Holy Spirit and he says in verses 16-18 John 14 verses 16-18 And I will pray the Father and he will give you another helper that he may abide with you forever the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him but you know him for he dwells with you and will be in

you I will not leave you comfortless or orphans I will come to you.

Now where he says I will come to you here