

# OpenTheo

## The Olivet Discourse (Part 1)



### When Shall These Things Be? - Steve Gregg

In this session, Steve Gregg discusses the Olivet Discourse and questions whether or not the Bible teaches a future seven-year tribulation. He explains that the discourse contains seven to eight parables given by Jesus and that it is organized by Matthew into five lengthy discourses. Gregg further examines the historical background of the period and argues that the great tribulation discussed by Jesus is not future but has already occurred, citing the destruction of the temple in 70 AD and the wars throughout the empire as evidence.

### Transcript

We have spent two sessions discussing the question of whether or not the New Testament or the Bible, let's just say the Bible as a whole, teaches that there will be a future seven-year tribulation. I cannot say that there will not be a future seven-year tribulation. All I can say is if there is going to be one, the Bible doesn't tell us so.

Therefore, there's not really much reason to affirm that there will be one. Of course, the Bible doesn't tell us everything about what the future holds. There might be a one-year, two-year, three-year, four-year, five-year, six-year, seven-year, eight-year, nine-year, ten-year, twenty-year, fifty-year tribulation for all we know.

But as far as biblical statements informing us about the future, there is no place that I can find that tells us there will be a seven-year tribulation in the future. The assumption of a seven-year tribulation comes from two passages primarily. That is, if we're thinking of the seven-year feature of the tribulation, it comes from the identification of a future tribulation period with the 70th week of Daniel, which demands the assumption that the 70th week of Daniel is still future.

Which is not likely to be the case, given the way the scripture talks about the 70 weeks of Daniel. We would expect that the 70th week would have run out a long time ago, and most Christians throughout history, and I would have to side with them, feel that it did. That it ran out very early in church history, within the first few years after the crucifixion of Christ came the end of the 70th week.

Therefore, we do not need to look for a future 70th week of Daniel, since it's already in the past. The other indicator of a seven-year tribulation comes from imposing the first assumption, that is, that the 70th week of Daniel is a future tribulation. Imposing that assumption, I should say superimposing it, upon our reading of the book of Revelation.

So that when we read repeatedly of three and a half years, and three and a half years, and three and a half years, and three and a half years, and three and a half years, five times in the book of Revelation, the assumption is then made that these three and a half years are not necessarily all the same three and a half years, but there are two such periods. And each time you read of three and a half years, you are either reading about the first half, or the second half of a seven-year tribulation. I have sought to point out that, first of all, Revelation never puts any two periods of three and a half years together in sequence, as if to say there is a seven-year period.

And most Christians throughout history, and I would say probably all Christians who are not dispensationalists today, believe that the three and a half years is always the same three and a half years, whenever it's mentioned, so that you would not get a seven-year period at all. Now, as far as what the meaning of the three and a half years is, that is certainly open to question. And as I pointed out, the assumption that it is future, that the three and a half years in Revelation is a future period, is an assumption that does not rest necessarily on very strong biblical foundations.

After all, the first person to suggest a futurist viewpoint of Revelation was a Jesuit who was responding to the Reformers, because the Reformers said that the beast was the papacy. And in order to defend the papacy from the claims of the Reformers, a Catholic monk, a Jesuit named Francisco Ribeiro, came up with the idea, and by the way, all scholars of Christian history know this. I mean, I've seen it confirmed in book after book after book.

There's no question about it. The first person to suggest that the Antichrist will appear in a later period of time, just as an individual, before the Second Coming of Christ, that was suggested first by Francisco Ribeiro in order to refute the Reformers' view. So the futurist view of Revelation doesn't really have an extremely worthy beginning.

It doesn't make that untrue. It could be that the first person to really understand Revelation correctly was a Jesuit priest in the year 1592 or whatever that year was, and that no one understood it correctly before that. That's a possibility.

We can't rule out. But I would say that the internal evidence of Revelation, especially the frequent times that it says, this will happen shortly, the things that are here predicted will shortly come to pass. The book of Revelation affirms this again and again.

It certainly sounds as if it was to be fulfilled shortly after it was written. And if we were literalists, at least in the parts that are not visionary parts, but simply statements of fact

in the book of Revelation, we would have to say that the book of Revelation revealed things that must have come to pass shortly after it was written. And many believe that is the case.

Now, many people, when they think about their view of a future tribulation, they get much of their imagery from what's called the Olivet Discourse. This discourse is found in Matthew 24 and in parallels in Mark 13 and in Luke 21. And I have given you something in your handouts.

It's really two pages in your handouts, but they go together. I didn't paste them together for you, but you can find in your handouts a place that says the Olivet Discourse in parallel columns. And there's two pages in a row in your notes, and I've got mine all together in one sheet like this, so it's like a double-sided sheet.

And you can put your two sheets together like that if you want to. But what we have is the entire Olivet Discourse basically in Luke, Mark, and Matthew's version set in parallel columns so that they can be compared. And the reason I've done this is because it is by comparing the way that Matthew records these statements with the way that Luke and others have recorded them that we might get a little more information or insight as to what is meant in some of the harder statements to interpret.

Now, it is in Matthew 24 and the parallels, Mark 13 and Luke, it is in this discourse that we find much of the common imagery. Many people today say, well, you know, there's more earthquakes today than there have been. In the past ten years there have been more earthquakes than in all recorded history previous.

I've heard this many times over the past thirty years. And that is supposed to be significant, you know, because after all there are supposed to be earthquakes in diverse places in the end times. So, we are told.

When we read of wars and rumors of wars, we think, oh, this is certainly a sign of the times because Jesus said there would be wars and rumors of wars. When we read of false cults and false messiahs appearing in our time, we think, oh, certainly this is a sign of the times because in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus said there will be false messiahs and false christs and false prophets. Actually, although a few of these things are also found in Revelation, the idea of nation rising up against nation and wars and rumors of wars and pestilence and famines and earthquakes in diverse places, this imagery that many people associate with the Great Tribulation is all taken from the Olivet Discourse, which is a discourse Jesus gave just a few days before his crucifixion.

In fact, it might have been only one day before his crucifixion, depending on when it was given. It might have been given on Thursday of the Passion Week and he was crucified on Friday. In any case, this discourse was given just to his disciples.

In fact, not even to the whole company of the disciples, only four disciples. This we are told in Mark's version. In fact, I would like for you to have the handout ready at hand because we are going to be looking at that today.

But before you do, please look at Mark in your Bible, chapter 13. I would like to look at Mark's version of this and we will also cross-reference that to Matthew and Luke at certain points in our discussion. I would just like to read the discourse or a significant portion of it so that you can know what we are talking about.

Beginning at Mark, chapter 13, verse 1. Then as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here. Referring to the temple. 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, Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name saying, I am he and will deceive many. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled, for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles.

These are the beginnings of sorrows, or possibly birth pains, another translation. But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues, and you will be brought before the rulers and kings for my sake for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given to you in that hour, speak, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and father his child, and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

And you will be hated by all men for my name's sake, but he who endures to the end shall be saved. 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, and let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house nor enter to take anything out of his house.

And let him who is in the field not go back to get his garment. But woe to those who are pregnant and those who were with nursing babies in those days, and pray that your flight may not be in the winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation, which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.

And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved, but for the elect's sake, whom he chose, he shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, he is there, do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

But take heed, see, I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. The stars of heaven will fall and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send his angels and gather together his elect from the four winds from the farthest parts of the earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now learn this parable from the fig tree.

When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near at the very doors. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the sun, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is.

It is like a man going to a far country who left his house and gave authority to his servants and to each his work and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning. Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping, and what I say to you, I say to all, watch.

Now, this is actually a little shorter version of the discourse than you find in Matthew. Because Matthew actually extends the Olivet Discourse about twice as long. Matthew's version of the Olivet Discourse is two chapters long.

Most of what we just read in Mark is paralleled in Matthew 24. Almost all of it is found in Matthew 24. Matthew has some additional parables at the end.

In Matthew 25, the very next chapter, there are three lengthy parables which Matthew presents as part of the same discourse. Those are the parables of, respectively, the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and the story of the sheep and the goats. Those three parables are found in Matthew 25 and make up the remainder of the discourse in Matthew.

But neither Mark nor Luke record those three parables. Let me just tell you what Matthew has sometimes done. You will find this to be true in any study of the book of Matthew.

Commentators are well aware of this. Scholars who study the Gospels cannot miss this fact. And that is that Matthew typically takes statements that Jesus made on various occasions and gathers together them into topical discourses.

That is to say, Matthew does not necessarily always record what Jesus said in its exact context. And this is not a problem. A person may, if they wish, tell a story about their life, for example.

Let's say you were writing about your own life. And let's say you thought something very significant existed in your involvement in sports. And so you maybe have a chapter in your book where you talk about yourself and you talk about how you got into sports when you were a kid at the Sandlot, with the other boys in the neighborhood.

And then in junior high, you excelled at baseball or softball. And then when you got into high school, you played on the team and so forth. And you might spend a whole chapter talking about how baseball was important to you.

Now, the next chapter might talk about something entirely different in your life and start at an early point and work through your life looking at it from another angle. This would be a topically arranged telling of your story. That is, instead of just telling, you know, I was born on this day and when I was one year old this happened, two year old, and tell everything about your life in sequential order.

That's one way that a story can be told. But it's not the only way a story can be told. Things can be gathered up topically.

And if Matthew wanted to say, now here's what Jesus taught on this subject, and gathered from the life of Jesus things he said on various occasions and put them together in one block of material, then that is a legitimate thing to do. So long as Matthew is not representing himself as saying Jesus said all these things on this one occasion. And Matthew does not necessarily say that about the discourses.

But what you'll find in Matthew's gospel is that the teachings of Jesus are organized in the gospel of Matthew into five lengthy discourses. None of these discourses are found in their entirety in any of the other gospels, but almost all of the information in these five discourses is found in the other gospels scattered about in smaller chunks. I just need to give you this information before we look at Matthew 24 and his version, therefore, of all of the discourse.

But the first major discourse in Matthew is the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew, this sermon occupies three whole chapters. Matthew 5, 6, and 7. In Luke, what appears to be the same discourse occupies half of one chapter.

The difference in length has made many people think that maybe Jesus gave the discourse twice. However, in Luke 6, verse 20 and following, we have a discourse uttered

by Jesus to his disciples. And in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, we have what looks like the same discourse, only fatter, longer, given to the disciples.

And it doesn't seem as though Jesus would give the same exact discourse more than once to the same audience. He might. But you find that the discourse in Luke and the discourse in Matthew start the same and end the same and have basically much of the same material in the middle.

What you find additionally, though, is that Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount is much longer, six times as long, as Luke's version. But this is made longer by including other related statements of Jesus, which Luke records in other places. Luke doesn't include them in the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6, but he does record Jesus saying the majority of these other things in other places, chapter 12 and chapter 10 and other parts of Luke, which gives the impression that Luke agrees with Matthew that Jesus said all these things, but Luke puts them in different settings and Matthew puts them all together, giving the impression that Matthew has taken a topical arrangement of the sayings of Jesus on these subjects and made a sort of an expanded discourse in what we call the Sermon on the Mount.

Every word of it is true. Every word of it was spoken by Jesus, but very possibly not all on one occasion. And the second discourse in Matthew, the second major discourse in Matthew, is chapter 10 of Matthew.

And in that chapter, it is a missionary discourse when Jesus is sending out the Twelve on a short-term mission. What's interesting about that is you can tell by reading Matthew 10 that it's not all uttered on one occasion because it starts out telling them what they should do on this short-term outreach and go only to the cities of Israel and don't go to any of the lands of the Gentiles and so forth, but as the chapter progresses, he talks about how you'll be persecuted by kings and the Gentiles and you'll give a witness to all the kings and the Gentiles and all these things, which didn't happen on this short-term outreach. He ends up talking about something more related to after Pentecost and describing their activities then.

Now, it's not impossible that Jesus could have given that all on one occasion, but it would certainly be confusing if he told them in the same discourse, don't go to any of the cities of the Gentiles, only go to the cities of Israel. And then before the discourse was over, he says you'll give testimony to the kings and the Gentiles and all the lands and you'll be hated by all the nations, etc., etc. But what you find is that that material in Matthew 10 is found once more in different places in Luke.

You have a short version of the missionary discourse in Matthew 10. You can find that in Luke chapter 9, but it's much shorter. However, the other material that Matthew includes in it is found other places in Luke and in Mark, as if Jesus said those same things on other occasions.

Matthew has gathered them together into one topical sermon, it would appear. The third discourse in Matthew is Matthew 13. We usually call that the parables discourse because it contains seven or eight, depending on how you count them, parables that Jesus gave.

And they're all put together in one chapter, all these parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. Once again, if you compare this with Luke 8, I believe it is, and Mark 4, you'll find that all these chapters start with the parable of the sower. But then beyond that, the chapters differ from one another.

Notably, Mark records, I think, only three parables in Mark 4. Two of them are found in Matthew 13, one is not. Luke records, I forget, one or two, I don't remember how many parables in Luke chapter 8, but the point is, it's much fewer. Matthew includes quite a few parables that are not found in the same setting in the other gospels, but some of them are found in other settings in the other gospels, which again suggests that Matthew has taken parables Jesus uttered on several different occasions, as the other gospels testify, and has basically collected them into one chapter to give the parables of the kingdom that Jesus told.

In Matthew 18, we have the fourth discourse in Matthew, and this is a discourse about forgiveness and about humility, and we don't have too much that we can say about the parallels in Mark and Luke, but the point is, this is another major discourse, and it also has the appearance of possibly being a collection of Jesus' sayings on the subject. But more to our present concern, the fifth discourse in Matthew is the Olivet Discourse, and as I said, the Olivet Discourse in Matthew is twice as long as that found in Mark or Luke. Mark contains it in Mark 13, Luke contains it in part of Luke 21.

Matthew takes two full chapters, Matthew 24 and 25, and of course the contents of Matthew 25, those three parables, the parable of the ten virgins and of the talents and of the sheep and the goats, is not found anywhere in the other Gospels at all. And Jesus may well have spoken it there on the Mount of Olives, those three parables. But given Matthew's proclivity to gather things that Jesus on various occasions put in one place, it is possible, in fact I believe it can be demonstrated, that Matthew has taken things Jesus said on more than one occasion and put them here to make this lengthy discourse.

Most notably, we find that Matthew has combined two different discourses we know of in Luke. And Mark seems to do the same thing. We read Mark 13, we did not read, but we will look in a moment at Matthew 24.

But first I want you to look at what Luke has. If you look at Luke chapter 21, beginning at verse 5, Luke 21, 5, it says, Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, Jesus 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. And they asked him, saying, now Luke does not tell us this and neither does Matthew, but Mark tells us they are four people, Peter and James and John and Andrew,



these are they, four disciples who asked him privately without the other eight apostles nearby.

And so this discourse that Jesus gives was witnessed by four men. They asked him, Teacher, but when will these things be and what sign will there be when these things are about to take place? And then we have the discourse essentially as we read it in Mark 13 up to a point, up to the part about the fig tree and the importance of watching. Now, if you look over at Luke chapter 17, beginning at verse 20, we'll find another discourse of Jesus, another setting, but you'll find that much of this gets brought together in Matthew 24 with the material from Luke 21.

In Luke 17, 20, it says, Now when he was asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, See here or see there. For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you, or could be translated, in your midst. 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 lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines the other part under heaven, so also shall the Son of Man be in his day.

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, 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 also 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 when one is on the housetop, he who is on the housetop and his goods are in the house, let him not come down and take them away. And likewise, the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

Then he goes on, skip down to verse 34. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed. The one will be taken in the other left.

Two women will be grinding together. The one will be taken in the other left. Two men will be in the field.

The one will be taken in the other left. And they answered and said to him, Where, Lord? So he said to them, Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together. Now, I want you to notice this.

That in Luke 21 and in Luke 17, we have these different discourses given on different occasions. In Luke 21, the discourse was given, After Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed, not one stone left standing on another. And four of his disciples asked him, When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign that these things are about to happen? So he gave the discourse in Luke 21.

However, in Luke 17, the setting is very different. In Luke 17, Jesus has made no prediction about the destruction of the temple. The Pharisees, in fact, initiate this discussion.

In Luke 17, the Pharisees say, When will the kingdom of God come? And he gives them a brief answer. Then he turns to his disciples and gives them a short discourse about the future. Now, if you look at the handout I gave you, you'll find there are, initially at the top of the sheet, three columns.

But by the time you get to the second sheet, there's four. And this is because I've put the material in the three Gospels parallel to each other. And between the columns of Scripture, I've put some categories or some headings.

As you'll see, for example, between Luke 21 and Mark 13, in the first verse, it says, The setting. And if you look between Mark 13 and Matthew 24, it says the same thing, The setting. And as you go down those two columns that I put between, you will find that the subject matter follows point by point in all these discourses.

So you can see they're parallel. And, let's see here. You'll find that if we get down to Matthew 24, which we have not looked at yet, but you'll see that Matthew 24 basically follows Luke 21 down to verse 36 of Matthew 24.

Can you see that? Look at the bottom of the first column, Luke 21. You'll see verse 35. Luke 21, 35 says, For it will come to pass.

Or, let's see here. Basically, verse 33, Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. Let's look at that.

Then look at the next column, Mark 13 and verse 31. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. And the next verse in Mark, But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven or the sun, only the Father.

Now look over at Matthew 24, verses 35 and 36. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

You can see exact parallel there in Matthew 24, verses 1 through 36. Beyond that, however, there is a lot of material in Matthew 24. I shouldn't say a lot.

There's a little bit there that's not parallel to either Mark nor to Luke 21. But it is parallel to Luke 17. Down at the bottom of the second page, you'll see that I have given you a fourth column there, and that is Luke 17.

And you'll find that Luke 17, verses 26 and 27, are about the days of Noah. You'll find that also in Matthew 24, verses 37 through 39. You'll also find that in Luke 17, verses 34 through 36, you have this business about one is taken and the other left.

You'll find that also in Matthew 24, verses 40 and 41. Which means that Matthew 24 includes material that is not found in Luke 21 or in Mark 13, which that chapter largely parallels. But there is some additional material in Matthew 24 that is taken from a different discourse, which is recorded in Luke 17.

Does everyone understand that? Can they tell by looking at that? Now, if anyone listening to this tape who doesn't have the handout will be probably far more confused, but if you have the handout, I'm... Yes. Not very much. Not very much.

You can see that there are some statements in Luke 17 that resemble some in Luke 21. Luke 17, 22 through 24 predicts that there will be false Christ. Well, those are not... Those verses aren't actually found in Luke 21.

And they do... They are found in Mark 13 and in Matthew 24. So, it's not... It's not real neat. It's not a real neat mix.

But what you find, generally speaking, I mean, just as a general rule, we need to acknowledge one thing at the beginning, and that is that Matthew and Mark, to a certain extent, incorporate information not only from Luke 21 and the actual discourse given on the Mount of Olives, but also seem to incorporate information from another discourse of Jesus, which is recorded in Luke 17. Mark incorporates a few verses from Luke 17, but Matthew includes considerably more. Now, what that means is that when we are reading Matthew 24, we have to realize that not everything in that chapter really is necessarily all about the same subject.

It seems clear to me, although I must say there are people who do not find this to be clear, it seems clear to me that Luke 17 is about the second coming of Christ. Now, I know some people who would refute this and would not hold to this, and I respect them, but they have not yet convinced me of their views, so I'm going to still hold to what I believe in this case. In Luke 17, I believe we have reference to the second coming of Christ, the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.

In the business of one shall be taken and the other left, one shall be taken and the other left, I understand these verses to be relevant to the second coming of Christ. But what about the material in Luke 21, which of course, Matthew 24 and Luke 13 largely parallel that discourse, not the one in Luke 17. The majority of the material in Mark 13 and the

majority of the material in Matthew 24 runs parallel point by point, and even in the setting is the same, as Luke 21.

Therefore, we need to ask ourselves, what is Luke 21 about? If Luke 17, which we mentioned a moment ago, is about the second coming of Christ, then it makes perfectly good sense to say that the verses in Mark and in Matthew that parallel Luke 17 are also about the second coming of Christ. But, it seems clear that the verses in Mark 13 and Matthew 24, that parallel verses in Luke 21, are about whatever Luke 21 is about, whatever that may be. I'd like to suggest to you that there are many scholars who believe that nothing in Luke 21 is relevant to the end times, as we usually use that term.

That nothing in Luke 21 is about the second coming of Christ. Now, you do read in Luke 21, verses 27 and 28, then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now, when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.

I'm going to talk about these verses. Those verses may in fact be about the second coming of Christ, as our first impression might be to so understand them. But, there's a possibility they do not.

Now, let me first of all go with context, because most people assume, when I say most people, most people I hear on the radio, most people who write books, or who just off the cuff make comments about the end times, they seem to assume that these chapters are all about some future tribulation period. I certainly thought so. I was taught that early on.

And, it seems like I'm continually hearing people make reference to wars and rumors of wars, and false messiahs, and earthquakes, and so forth, as if these are signs of the end times. And, what they're using is Matthew 24, or one of these parallels, to make their point. There is no other place that applies these things to the end times, unless it's the book of Revelation.

But, I've already suggested that the book of Revelation is not best understood that way either. But, rather than take a negative approach, rather than say, well, these are not about the end times, let's just take a positive approach, and say, what is this about? What is this predicting? And, we can get the answer reasonably easily, I think, because if you look at Luke 21, verse 5, it says, Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, he said, 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. So they asked him, saying, Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place? Now, Jesus has come out of the temple.

Some of them who are with him are pointing to the temple, looking at the magnificent stones from which the temple is constructed. Impressed, obviously, with those beautiful,

ornate stones, and Jesus comments that they will be thrown down, that the temple will be destroyed. The fulfillment of this, by the way, is not future.

The fulfillment of this, of course, happened after he said it. It happened in 70 A.D., when the Romans came and destroyed the temple and the city and deported all the Jews out of Jerusalem. It was the destruction of the city.

The temple met its doom, as Jesus predicted that it would, in 70 A.D. We do not have to look for a future fulfillment of this. It has already happened, as he said it would. Now, when the disciples asked him about it, they asked him, Teacher, when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place? Now, the important question here is, what is meant by these things? Because they asked two questions, both of them are about these things.

Now, for some reason, we have been instructed to understand these things refers to the end times. But if you'll simply look at the context, that Jesus has just commented that the temple is going to be destroyed. The next comment we read is that when will these things happen? What things? Well, when will these stones, not one left be standing on another? When will these walls be thrown down? Jesus, you've just made a prediction.

When will these things be? Jesus has made no prediction about the end of the world. He has made no prediction about a future tribulation. He has made no prediction about the second coming in power and glory.

He has only predicted at this point that the temple will be destroyed. And that is what the disciples asked him about. When will this happen? And what sign will there be that this is about to happen? There's two questions here.

One is they're looking for a time frame. When will these things be? They want to have a general time frame for it. And the second is, will there be any indicators, any signs that we can see that we know it's about to transpire? They know that the destruction of the temple would be cataclysmic.

It would be probably in an act of war or some other horrible judgment on the city that the temple would be thrown down. Therefore, they'd like to not be nearby when it happens. They'd like to have some advance warning.

So the two questions they asked are very reasonable. When will it be? That is, what is the time frame? And what sign will there be? Now, these two questions are recorded in all three of the Gospels. Mark 13, verse 4, has the question also.

Mark 13, verse 4 says, Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled? Almost the exact same two questions. When will it be? What sign will it be that is about to happen? And if you look at the context in Mark 13, 1 and 2 and 3, you'll find it's the same location on the Mount of Olives. It's the same

occasion of Jesus predicting the destruction of the temple.

So Mark and Luke give the same two questions. Now, there's an interesting twist in Matthew 24 because in Matthew 24, 3, it looks like there's three questions. Now, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, that's why it's called the Olivet Discourse because it was uttered on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be? That parallels, of course, the first question in Luke 21 and in Mark 13.

And what shall be the sign, or what will be the sign? Now, up to that point, the wording is essentially identical in Luke 21, Mark 13 and Matthew 24. When will these things be and what will be the sign? Now, there's a change here in Matthew 24 because in Luke and in Mark, they say, What is the sign that these things are about to take place? But in Matthew 24, they say, What is the sign of your coming? And of the end of the age? Now, it is this wording in Matthew that has led many to assume that Jesus is now going to give a discourse about the end of the world. In fact, the King James Version actually says, What shall be the sign of your coming and the end of the world? However, the word in the Greek is aeon, age.

What shall be the sign of the end of the age? Now, let us remember several things. About the disciples here. A. They did not know Jesus was leaving yet.

He had not told them he was going to go up into heaven and be gone for a long time and come back. Okay? They did not have, at this point, any information given to them from Jesus about a second coming. We understand the second coming as something to look forward to because we live after the ascension.

When Jesus ascended, that was the first clue the disciples got that he was going to be gone. And then two angels in white apparel said, This Jesus whom you saw ascended to heaven is going to come back. That was the first clear announcement of the second coming.

And I dare say the disciples had no inkling of this idea of the second coming as we think of it today until that point. Because just before Jesus ascended, they were still asking, Are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel? They thought Jesus was going to, now that he's back from the dead, it's time for him to start on his messianic career of driving out the Romans and give Israel back the kingdom and so forth. They didn't have any concept of him going away and coming back.

Now we might say, Well, in Jesus' teaching there had been some hints of this. Maybe there were, maybe there weren't. But the point is, they didn't understand it if there were.

The disciples, we must say, did not know when they asked on the Mount of Olives with him that he was going away. That took them entirely by surprise at the ascension. And

therefore, they did not know he was going to be gone a while and come back.

We cannot read our after-the-fact awareness into their question because they didn't live after the fact of the ascension and did not know what we know. Now, if the disciples said to Jesus, What will be the sign of your coming? At the end of the age, did they mean the second coming? Is that the question they asked? Well, let me ask, What is the end of the age? Well, that's an ambiguous word, age, because there have been more than one age. We are now living in what we would call the age of the church.

But there certainly was the age of Israel, the age of Judaism, the age of the Sinaitic agreement and of the law. And it seems likely that when Jesus said that the temple would be destroyed, the disciples would have intended to be the end of the Jewish religious system, the end of that age. And even now, in retrospect, we can agree that was the end of the Jewish system.

That was the end of an era. That was the end of an age. You see, for 1400 years before that, there had been one revealed way of pleasing God, and that was through the sacrificial system, following Jewish ritual.

God established it through Moses. It was followed for 14, 15 hundred years. And then that came to an end, totally, in 70 AD, when the temple was destroyed, the Jews were deported.

That system has never been reinstated. There's not a temple there still. That age came to a striking, dramatic end.

Now, that the disciples, when they said the end of the age, might have thought it would be the end of the world, is a possibility, but we don't know that they thought that. From the information they already had, they knew this much, the temple would be destroyed. They understood that to be the end of the Jewish age, or the end of the age of... Let me put it this way.

The Jews believed in two ages. The age that now is, and the age to come. And the age to come was the age of the Messiah.

Many of the Jews believed, in fact most of them believed, the Messiah's age would be a political kingdom on earth. We now know that the age of the Messiah began with Jesus' death and resurrection, and it's a spiritual reign of Christ over his saints. And the age of the Messiah has in fact come.

But with the introduction of the age to come, which has come, was the end of the older age. And the disciples knew they were living in the older age. They knew Jesus had not set up the new system yet.

And therefore they knew, if the Messiah was to bring in the new age, if I can use that

term, it's been unfortunately co-opted by pagans, 24-3 their question is, what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age? Now remember, we read that and say, oh that's the second coming of Christ. Was it? Were they thinking of the second coming of Christ? Or were they referring to his coming as simply the judgment on the temple? Did they even have a concept of what we call the second coming of Christ? I don't think so. Therefore it's not likely they asked a question about it.

What's more likely is that they were speaking of what he was speaking of, the destruction of the temple, the end of the present age, the beginning of the new age of the Messiah, all of that when he would come to power, when he would rise from his obscurity that he was at that time in, to his position of prominence as the Messiah. This is what they probably would have meant by his coming. And if they did, then they had good reason to.

Because if you look with me at Matthew 16, we find that Jesus had spoken to them before of his coming. Matthew 16 and verse 28, Jesus said to his disciples, Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Now he told his disciples that within the lifetime of some of them, they would see this event that he called the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Now many people apply this to the transfiguration as the fulfillment, but whether they do so or not, it's clear that they have to admit that his coming was not the second coming. If it was the transfiguration, then so be it. However, many believe it was not the transfiguration and it was not the second coming, but it was actually the destruction of Jerusalem that some of them lived to see.

It happened 40 years later and some of them were still alive. Now, Jesus himself, in the Olivet Discourse said, this generation will not pass till all these things be fulfilled. That sounds like a parallel statement to Matthew 16, 28.

Some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Whether we like it or not, whether it makes us uncomfortable, whether it robs us of one of our favorite views or not, we have to admit that Jesus described something that was to happen in their lifetime and he described it as the coming of the Son of Man. You will see it.

Some of you here will not die before you see this happen. Okay? So, Jesus, in fact, did predict something which was not, in fact, his second coming as we use the term today, but it was actually something that would happen within the lifetime of the disciples. He stated that emphatically.

And he called that the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. I will just tell you my view is that he was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the old Jewish age. And that would support well, that would be supported well by the fact that the disciples,



upon hearing of the destruction of Jerusalem, spoke of that and said, Oh, you're coming.

What will be the sign of your coming? Now, what's interesting here is that, again, while we look at that question in Matthew 24, 3 we say, Oh, they were asking about the second coming. In fact, in their minds, they didn't know anything about the second coming. They were thinking of the destruction of Jerusalem.

They were thinking of the end of the Jewish age. And they were calling that his coming. How do I know that? Well, for one thing, just look at the parallels in Luke 21 and Mark 13 where Matthew has them saying, What shall be the sign of your coming? And the end of the age.

Luke and Mark just have them saying, What shall be the sign that these things, that is the destruction of Jerusalem, are about to take place? Now, what I'm saying is, we learn a lot about the meaning of the statements by comparing these different gospel accounts side by side. What Matthew records as a question of what will be the sign of your coming, the other gospels just have them saying, What shall be the sign that these things, meaning what Jesus had just predicted, the destruction of the temple, will take place. Now, judging, let me put it this way.

If you'd never read Matthew 24, but you had read Luke 21 and Mark 13, you would find nothing in that question asked by the disciples to suggest that the disciples had any inquiry they were making about the second coming of Christ or about the end times or future time at the end of the world. There is no hint of it in Luke 21 nor in Mark 13. And what might look like a hint of it in Matthew 24 is probably just different wording of the same concept.

Let me tell you something Matthew does that Luke generally does not do. Matthew is writing to Jews. That is clear.

All scholars pretty much agree that the evidence in the Gospel of Matthew is that Matthew is writing to reach Jewish people. As such, he freely uses the language of the Jews, language that the Jews would understand and would frequently use, and he uses it the way that they would use it. Luke, on the other hand, was writing, as we know, to a man named Theophilus who has got a Gentile name, probably a Roman.

Therefore, many of the idioms of the Jews would be unfamiliar to him. Likewise, Mark is believed generally was writing to a Roman audience, not Jewish audience. Therefore, we find, for example, in Mark, explanations of Jewish customs.

When Mark tells about Jesus being criticized by the Pharisees for not washing his hands properly or the disciples not washing their hands properly, Mark tells his readers, he says, because the Jews have these customs about washing things all the time. Now, Matthew tells the same story, but he does not explain it. Why? His audience are Jews.

They know the customs. They do not have to be told what the Jewish customs are. They live them.

Mark's audience, though, are Gentiles, far removed from Jerusalem, and Mark has to explain what the background was of this. They criticize the disciples for not washing properly because the Jews have all these washings they have to do. We can see that Mark goes to pains to explain things to a Gentile audience, which Matthew does not bother to explain.

He assumes his Jewish audience will understand Jewish things. Luke also sometimes explains things. Look, for example, at Matthew 24-15.

Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, says, he quotes Jesus, I think verbatim, where Jesus said, Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, then notice in parenthesis, whoever reads, let him understand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Why does he say, whoever reads, let him understand? Well, abomination of desolation, that's an awkward expression.

What in the world does that mean? Well, I hope you readers understand, Matthew says. Mark does exactly the same thing when he treats that passage. In Mark 13 and verse 14, he quotes Jesus as saying, So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, let the reader understand.

In parenthesis. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Now Luke assumes that his reader, Theophis, has no clue what the expression abomination of desolation means and probably has never even seen or heard of the book of Daniel.

And therefore, instead of quoting Jesus precisely, Luke paraphrases and gives the meaning of what Jesus said. If you look at the parallel in Luke there, Luke 21-20. But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that it's desolation, it's the abomination of desolation, is near.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. It's the same statement. And you can follow point by point through all three chapters and find that this statement in Luke 21-20 falls in exactly the same position as Mark and Matthew's statement about the abomination of desolation.

What Luke is doing is clarifying for a Gentile reader who hasn't a clue what Daniel wrote or what Daniel meant. The Jews, Matthew hoped, might understand it. And he exhorts them to understand it.

Mark also, although he's writing to Gentiles, he doesn't paraphrase it. He just says, let the reader understand. But Luke doesn't expect his reader to understand.

So he just restates it in other words. Jesus' actual statement is when you see the abomination of desolation. Theophilus would not understand that.

So Luke paraphrases Jesus and says when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies. In other words, Luke gives us Gentiles who aren't quite as acquainted as Jews are with this kind of language from the Old Testament. Luke gives an inspired interpretation and paraphrase of what Jesus said.

And what this means, of course, is that when Jesus spoke of the abomination of desolation, he was in fact speaking about the Roman armies coming against Jerusalem. Now that shouldn't be too surprising because we saw in Daniel chapter 9 verse 27 in this prophecy of the 70 weeks that there would be armies coming against Jerusalem and the people of the prince that should come would destroy the city and the sanctuary. And it said, and on the wing of abominations there shall be one that makes desolate.

That is, there will be an abomination that makes desolate. An abomination of desolation. And in Daniel 9, that's applied to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

So not surprisingly, when Jesus said to his disciples, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, he was talking about the destruction of the temple. Not surprisingly, since that's what started this whole conversation. Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple and they asked him about it.

And it says there's going to be a sign that it's about to take place. Yes, there is a sign that it's about to take place. The abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of.

Oh, let me clarify that, Luke says. Jerusalem's surrounded by armies. When you see that, then you will know that it's about to happen, what Jesus predicted.

What? That the temple's going to be destroyed. When the Romans came, surrounded Jerusalem, then that was the sign. Remember, they asked for a sign.

They said, when will it be? And his answer was, this generation will not pass before these things come to pass. And what should be the sign? Well, Jerusalem's surrounded by armies will be the sign. Or the abomination of desolation, if you want to put it in Jewish idiom.

Now, this is so much the clearer when we put the various Gospels in parallel columns, because you can see right across the page the parallel thought. You've got the same discourse. It's simply that Luke, in some ways, paraphrases.

Now, Matthew, on the other hand, has no qualms about just giving the Jewish wording that Jesus used or his disciples. Now, that being so, let's go back to Matthew 24.3. In Matthew 24.3, as I have already pointed out, the disciples are represented as asking, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? This, I presume, was

probably the disciples' actual words. But Luke and Mark, writing to Gentile audience, perhaps Gentiles not being able to quite fathom what is meant by his coming and the end of the age, the Jewish age, simply give a simpler version of the disciples' question.

The same meaning, but without the Jewish idiom. So that they simply have the question, what is the sign that these things are about to happen? These things are the destruction of Jerusalem. What I'm suggesting to you is that Matthew, excuse me, that Matthew gives the actual words the disciples use, and Mark and Luke, who render it a little differently, do so in order to clarify the meaning of those words.

That when the disciples asked, what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age, they were really asking, what is the sign that these things, namely the destruction of Jerusalem, is near? I'll give you a second to process that, because that may be new to many of you. But if this is true, then we would have to say that nothing that the disciples asked about had anything to do with the end of the world, or about the second coming of Christ. They were asking about the timing of the event that Jesus predicted, and that time, we know in retrospect through history, was 70 AD.

Therefore, when Jesus later says, this generation will not pass until all these things are fulfilled, we have a further confirmation of that, because 40 years is approximately a generation, and sure enough, it happened 40 years after he entered it. Within that generation, just barely. That generation did not pass, but came close to passing, before they were fulfilled, but he was right.

It happened just within that generation. Furthermore, it agrees with his statement that some of you standing here will not taste death before you see the coming, the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Once again, using an idiom that they did not understand of the second coming, and it's a good thing they didn't, because his second coming didn't occur while some of them were still alive, because he didn't intend it to be about his second coming.

He was talking about something else. The question is what? Well, here, this seems to answer the question. His coming is equated with the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the language of the disciples in Matthew 24-3, it is paraphrased in Mark and Luke as these things, which Jesus had predicted, the destruction of Jerusalem. I want to move along here, but I want to make sure that everyone has understood what I've said thus far. Not necessarily that you agree, but that you understand.

Is there anything unclear about what I've said? Okay, then let's move along here a little bit. The next question we would ask is is there any indication that these things happened? What did he predict? Well, he predicted that false messiahs would come. He predicted that wars and rumors of wars and kingdom rising up against kingdom would happen.

That there would be natural disasters, earthquakes and famines and troubles and so forth. That there would be persecution. That they would have to endure to be saved.

Then he predicted the abomination of desolation, which Luke called Jerusalem surrounded by armies. And then there is a tribulation. And this is the very important thing.

Because in Matthew 24 and in Luke 13, we have this word tribulation. Particularly in Matthew 24, 21. Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be.

This verse is the verse from which the expression the great tribulation comes. As I pointed out two sessions ago, there's really only two places in the Bible that speak of the great tribulation. This verse and one in Revelation 7, 14 where it simply says these are those coming out of the great tribulation.

Well, when is, was or shall be the great tribulation? Well, Jesus said it would be at the time of the abomination of desolation. Luke said that the abomination of desolation is essentially the Romans coming against Jerusalem. And notice how Luke phrases it about great tribulation.

Now, Matthew 24, 21 says there will be great tribulation. In Mark 13, the next column over to the left, Mark 13, 19 says for in those days there will be tribulation. But in Luke the parallel says in Luke 21, 22 for these are the days of vengeance that all things that are written may be fulfilled.

But woe to those who are pregnant in those days and those who are nursing babies in those days for there will be great distress. That's instead of tribulation. Great distress in the land.

That's the land of Israel. And wrath upon this people. That's the Jews.

And it goes on in verse 24 and they shall fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Now, I guess what we have to ask when we say the great tribulation of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24 is that future or is it past? Or is it present? Well, one thing we can certainly say it does not appear if you compare it with Luke 21 the parallel does not appear to be a future time. Because if you'll just read Luke 21 verses 20 through 24 you'll find that Jesus said when Jerusalem is surrounded by the Roman armies its desolation will be near.

Those who are faithful in Judea should flee from the city at that time because there will be great distress and desolation of the temple and a great wrath on this people the Jews who crucified Christ that generation. And what does he say in verse 24? They will fall by the edge of the sword. They certainly did.

Something like 700,000 of them if Josephus accounts should be trusted fell by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations that certainly happened too Josephus said they took about 2 million Jews into captivity in all nations by the way they're still there most of them have never returned and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles it was and is to a certain extent still because the Jews though they control Jerusalem they certainly are at the mercy of the Gentiles to a large extent there's a lot of Gentiles there a lot of terrorism there a lot of uncertainty there it certainly has not been secured from the Gentiles at this point it officially belongs to Israel but it certainly has not been it's not a secure holding not yet as long as the enemies are still fighting over it and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until when? the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled well that's I presume that hasn't yet occurred the times of the Gentiles are still being fulfilled but when did this happen? it was when were they slain with the sword? when were they taken into captivity? in 70 A.D. that happened in 70 A.D. just as Jesus said it would in that generation and that is the verses in Luke 21 that are parallel to Matthew 24 verse 21 there shall be great tribulation now what I'm saying to you is that if we want to just compare the three accounts of the same discourse and if we're going to credit Luke with knowing what he's talking about and with correctly representing the meaning of what Jesus said then according to Luke the abomination of desolation was the Roman armies coming against Jerusalem and the great tribulation was the horrors that came upon the Jews in consequence of the Romans coming against Jerusalem at least the great tribulation began then we don't know how long it lasted whether the destruction of Jerusalem was the end of it or whether it's still going on to this day through the times of the Gentiles the great tribulation is not there's no time limit set upon it so we could certainly say the Jews are still experiencing tremendous tribulation possibly from 70 A.D. until the present has been the great tribulation to the Jews of which Jesus spoke but whether it is just concentrated there around the destruction of Jerusalem or whether it's the whole time since included is a separate issue to concern ourselves with the point to make is that Jesus did not speak of a great tribulation that would begin in the end times in the last seven years until the second coming he spoke of a great tribulation that would begin with the Romans coming against Jerusalem in 70 A.D. once again I don't expect everyone to be able to swallow this if it's extremely different than what you've heard before but I want you to be able to convince yourself of it and that's why I've given you this handout by the way I've never seen this kind of a handout made before you've got a tremendous resource in this handout to do what could not as easily be done simply by flipping pages back and forth in your Bible because you can see at a glance right across the page the same discourse, the same subject matter the same predictions until you get to this different wording in Luke but the different wording is not different prediction it's the same prediction worded differently in Luke and worded in a way that's much clearer for those of us who are not as acquainted with the Hebraisms used in Matthew and even to a certain extent in Mark so on this view the great tribulation of which Jesus spoke is not future it occurred or at least began to occur when the Romans came against Jerusalem now what's interesting is that in Revelation

417 714 in Revelation 7 verse 14 when John was asked, do you know who these great multinomials are, those who are coming out of the great tribulation the expression the great tribulation sounds as if it refers back to a particular great tribulation formally expected if so it would have to be that which Jesus predicted because it's the only other great tribulation mentioned in scriptures when Jesus said then should be great tribulation for the revelation later to say the great tribulation, to refer back to what Jesus called great tribulation would be sensible, which would then confirm that if Matthew 24 is talking about something that transpired in 70 AD I think there's no argument against this that makes any sense to me then Revelation probably is talking about the same thing if it is also about the great tribulation of which Jesus spoke anyway we're not too worried I'm not too worried right now about proving that Revelation is about 70 AD in fact I'm not so sure that all of it is but the all of it discourse, I think all of it is probably about 70 AD at least up to the point that we've read in Luke 21 now there are a few problems with this and we'll have to discuss these problems with this interpretation for a second lecture which will be the next one after this one but before that I want to acquaint you with some of the historical background of the period just so that you'll be divested of some of your concerns that this interpretation can't be true in Matthew 24 I'd like to go through Matthew 24 and show you basically what did happen and we establish this from Josephus and other contemporary historians like Tacitus and other historians of the first century even from the Bible itself we can confirm some of this in Matthew 24 and Jesus, of course we have the disciples question in verse 3 in verse 4 Jesus begins to answer, Jesus answered and said to them take heed that no one deceives you for many will come in my name saying I am the Christ and will deceive many did that happen before 70 AD were there many false teachers who came saying they were the Christ by the way you'll find the same kind of prediction a little later in the discourse and verse 11 of the same chapter then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many so you've got false Christ's and false prophets supposed to arise at the time Jesus is speaking of were there false Christ's and false prophets before 70 AD well yes we know of them in the New Testament we wouldn't even need historians to tell us because we'd have it in the New Testament itself in the book of Acts we find that Simon Magus Simon the sorcerer in Acts chapter 8 was deceiving people with signs and wonders in Samaria and they called him the great power of God there were some who saw him as a messianic figure and the book of Acts tells us so actually concerning Simon Magus we have reports from some of the church fathers about him too Justin Martyr reports that Simon Magus was worshipped as a god in Rome later because he left Samaria and went there and because of his magical powers during the reign of Claudius he was thought to be a god in Rome Jerome another early father quotes Simon as saying I am the word of God I am the comforter I am the almighty I am all there is of God that was Jerome quoting Simon Magus Irenaeus another early father tells us that Simon the sorcerer claimed to be the son of God and the creator of the angels now we have early witnesses therefore that Simon Magus was a false Christ a false messiah now Jesus said there would be others and there were others we have it from Josephus and Origen first of all reports that the claims of one Josephus

was that he was the Christ he claimed that he was the Christ foretold by Moses this is before 70 AD Josephus the historian describes the time of Felix the governor which is before 70 AD actually during the time of Paul Paul died around 67 AD and Paul stood before Felix so we know this is before 70 AD Josephus says in the time of Felix I'm quoting Josephus now quote now as for the affairs of the Jews they grew worse and worse continually for the country was again filled with robbers and imposters who deluded the multitude yet did Felix catch and put to death many of those imposters every day together with the robbers now imposters people pretending to be something they were not we know of many times in Jewish history that imposters who claimed to be the messiah came along Josephus seems to confirm that there were no shortage of those in the days of Felix before 70 AD people professing to be the messiah or professing to be a prophet or professing to be something they were not they were arrested many of them a day at one point there was no shortage of them when Jesus said there would be many false prophets and many false Christs he certainly was correct in fact John writing in the first epistle chapter 4 1 John chapter 4 he says beloved do not believe every spirit but test the spirits whether they are of God because remember how it goes many false prophets have gone out into the world John said that in 1 John 4 1 or 4 2 right around there many false prophets have gone out into the world he is basically saying Jesus was right Jesus said there would be many false prophets in fact there have been many John said in the first century there were many false prophets and false Christ so Jesus prediction came true now of course there have been some since then too but the point is Jesus is describing conditions as they will exist before the temple is destroyed and he was right on that count now what about this one Matthew 24 verse 6 and 7 or verse 6 through 8 and you will hear of wars and rumors of wars see that you are not troubled for all these things must come to pass but the end is not yet for nations shall rise against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms there will be famines pestilences and earthquakes in various places all these are the beginning of sorrows now what about wars and rumors of wars there certainly were shortly after this time there were quite a few wars throughout the Roman Empire and just before 70 AD in particular Rome was wracked with warfare because Nero committed suicide in 68 AD and three different emperor wannabes fought with each other civil wars that almost tore Rome apart throughout Rome and for about a year and a half and then it settled down when Vespasian became the new emperor but the Roman Empire was torn to bits by civil war and by different guys trying to raise up to they killed each other actually there were three emperors in a row I think one ruled for six months before he was assassinated another one ruled for a few more months and was assassinated but basically it was a time of turmoil and war and not only that not just in Rome but in Palestine because a war broke out between the Jews and the Romans in 66 AD and continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD during that time the Jews were persecuted throughout the empire and bloody massacres were taking place within Palestine some of the information we get from Josephus about this he says there was an uprising against the Jews in Alexandria Egypt in Seleucia 50,000 Jews were slain in Caesarea 20,000 Jews



were killed in battle by Syrians the hostility between the Jews and Syrians divided many towns and villages into armed camps constant rumors of wars kept the Jews in an unsettled state some even fearing to plow and cede their ground said Josephus so this is like from 66 to 70 AD 50,000 Jews slaughtered in Syria or Seleucia and in Caesarea 20,000 were slain and there were a lot of wars between the Jews and the Syrians and it was just a bloody time of war from 66 to 70 AD both in Palestine and in Egypt and in Seleucia and in Rome there were these wars for 18 months all this just prior to 70 AD there will be wars and rumors of wars kingdom against kingdom and so forth certainly the Jewish kingdom rose up against the Roman kingdom this happened what Jesus said would happen did happen but what about earthquakes and stuff like that well according to contemporary sources and that means historians of the first century just previous to 70 AD there were earthquakes in the following places Crete, Smyrna Miletus Chios spelled C-H-I-O-S Samos Laodicea Hierapolis Colossi Campania Rome and Judea also Pompeii was greatly damaged by an earthquake in February of 63 AD just 7 years before 70 AD so there were earthquakes all over the empire in the decade before 70 AD the disciples certainly heard of earthquakes in diverse places what about famines and pestilences well we already mentioned there were wars all over the place wherever there's wars and bodies putrefying there's pestilences, rats multiply you know flies and disease carrying insects, famine because people don't plow the ground because it's wartime they can't go out they can't go out and farm so they have food shortages Josephus describes all of these things as taking place in connection with the Jewish war so there's really none of these things we've read of yet that didn't happen at that time now if you look at Matthew 24 9 then they will deliver you notice he's talking to four disciples he says you to them up to tribulation and kill you and you will be hated by all nations for my namesake and then many will be offended and betray one another and will hate one another okay he said that there'd be persecution against the believers throughout all the nations did that happen before 70 AD did you ever read the book of Acts the entire book of Acts is everything that happened in the book of Acts is before 70 AD the book of Acts ends around 62 AD was there persecution of Christians did Paul experience persecution did Peter did James did John as a matter of fact we read of all of them experiencing persecution wherever they went wherever the gospel went there was persecution John and Peter were twice imprisoned on record together and they were beaten later Peter was imprisoned alone and almost executed except an angel let him out of prison in Acts 12 Peter I'm sorry Peter and then James the apostle was beheaded in Acts chapter 12 so James and John and Peter all we read of them being persecuted Paul and his companions were persecuted throughout the empire and all the apostles died as martyrs with the exception of John so I mean I dare say that when he says you'll be hated of all nations you'll be persecuted this is true did they stand before kings and governors we don't have much record of what most of the apostles did but we know that Paul did Paul stood before Felix and Festus and Nero so the things that Jesus said they would do they did and it happened to them just as he said in verse 12 he says and because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold did that happen in the

first century yes it did in 2 Timothy 1 15 Paul said and this you know that all those in Asia have turned away from me among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes all the Christians in Asia all the my goodness all the seven churches in Revelation were in Asia before Paul died all those churches had turned away from Paul the love of many grew cold in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 10 Paul says Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world and he's departed for Thessalonica crescents for Dalmatia and Titus to Dalmatia crescents to Galatia Titus to Dalmatia in the same chapter verse 14 he says I don't know if it's verse 14 I want to give here what is the verse verse 16 excuse me at my first defense no one stood with me but all forsook me may it not be charged against him sounds like the love of many was growing cold well within Paul's lifetime even Demas a former associate of his had forsaken him having loved this present world and everyone else forsook him when he was really in a pinch when Jesus said the love of many will grow cold he was right even John said in 1 John many had gone out from us and so what Jesus predicted there did happen now how about Matthew 24 14 and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then shall the end come well was it the apostle Paul said in Colossians chapter 1 that the gospel had been preached in all the world now we know that's a hyperbole that Paul uses a slight exaggeration because he knew he knew it he and his readers both knew that wasn't quite literally true but if Paul used hyperbole we wonder whether Jesus did too use the same expression because in Colossians 1 6 Paul said that the gospel has come to you as it has in all the world and is bringing forth fruit so Paul knew that the gospel hadn't gone to everywhere in the world but he did know that it had gone widely throughout much of the world and by way of hyperbole he said the gospel has come to you as it has to all the world in fact by another hyperbole in Colossians 1 verse 23 Colossians 1 23 says if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard which was preached to every creature under heaven that is a hyperbole also the gospel has been preached in Paul's time to every creature under heaven well not quite exactly precisely but obviously we have to recognize the use of hyperbole apparently the apostles didn't mind hyperbole maybe Jesus didn't either we do know this that although there are still nations to whom the gospel has not been preached in our time the gospel was widely preached before 70 AD Paul reached all the nations known to him except maybe Spain depending if we don't know if he went there or not but I would even be I would not have any problem with saying that Matthew 24 14 still looks for a future fulfillment but Jesus is saying that to his disciples before 70 AD occurs they will begin to be witnesses to all the world then sometime later the end of the world will come but you know but not in the apostles lifetime but even before 70 AD they will become witnesses to all nations in any case we know that the bible does say that the gospel is preached in all the world in Paul's lifetime Paul said so I mean we might object to Paul using that kind of language but we can't deny that he did use that kind of language and if he used it it's hard to know why we could on what grounds we could say Jesus wouldn't use such language well then we have the prediction Matthew 24 15 of the abomination of desolation we already pointed out

that Luke renders that Jerusalem surrounded by armies we see Jesus then telling the disciples to leave Judea when they see this when you see Jerusalem leave Judea there is record from the earliest church historian except for Luke the earliest church historian was Eusebius who wrote in the year 325 AD he tells us that when the Romans came against Jerusalem the Christians in Jerusalem were apprised of it in advance by an oracle presumably a prophecy given by somebody in the church in Jerusalem and they were told they should flee because the Romans were coming so they did they fled from the city and every Christian in Judea was gone by the time the Romans laid siege to the city and Jesus had warned them when the Romans are coming get out of the city flee to the mountains according to Eusebius they went to a town across the Jordan in another country called Pella not to be confused with Petra but Pella was a town in Transjordan that the Christians from Judea fled to so that they escaped the Holocaust of 70 AD now what else is there predicted here anything well we know he talked about great tribulation and wrath on his people and so forth especially if you look at Luke's version one thing that I would point out to you and I did point this out we are going to look at this again tomorrow in more detail but I pointed out that Matthew 24 for the most part follows Luke 21 but there is a small portion of Matthew 24 that follows Luke 17 it is my opinion that the portion that follows Luke 21 is about 70 AD because Luke 21 is about 70 AD but that the portion that follows Luke 17 is about the second coming of Christ as we understand it because it follows Luke 17 which seems to be about that event as near as I can tell some people would say otherwise but that is my call on it my judgment on it there is still a slight problem and that is that you read in Luke 21 verse 27 and 28 and in Mark 13 verses 26 and 27 and in Matthew 24 verses 30 and 31 you read of the coming of the Son of Man this description sounds so much like the imagery of the second coming that we have come to anticipate that it is almost it is next to impossible for Christians to read these verses and think of it as anything other than the second coming Christians almost unanimously not quite, but almost unanimously think that when there is reference here to the coming of the Son of Man that this must be a reference to the second coming of Christ but I am going to suggest to you that it probably is not as I pointed out earlier in Matthew 26 excuse me, Matthew 16 and 28 Jesus said some of you standing here will not taste death before you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom and it is to my mind probable that he is talking about the same thing here but the language is difficult for us because of our unacquaintance with Jewish idiom what I am going to do next time we come back we are going to talk about that we are going to see what he means when he says this generation shall not pass before all these things come to pass my opinion is it means, here is the secret meaning it means this this generation will not pass before all these things come to pass in other words the secret hidden meaning is exactly what he said in other words I take it literally, that Jesus said that his generation was not going to pass until all these things happen the problem with that of course the biggest problem with that I would say the only problem with that is that we read of the coming of the Son of Man prior to his saying that the reference to the coming of the Son of Man falls within the portion that he said would happen within that

generation that presents a little bit of a problem unless the coming of the Son of Man is referring to something that did happen in that generation I am going to give you two options tomorrow, I am going to give you two possibilities I am going to show that the coming of the Son of Man could be a reference to the second coming, though I don't think it is and I will show you how that can be reconciled with the chapter generally but I am also going to show you why it is likely that it isn't a reference to the second coming and compare many scriptures with this so that you will become acquainted more than most Christians are with the wording of the prophets on such things but we are out of time for this session so we will call this part A next time we will have part B and we will finish up talking about the Olivet Discourse in that session