

The Olivet Discourse

“General Signs of Jesus’ Second Coming (Part 1)”

The Big Picture: A sharp rebuke against the Pharisees and the Sadducees for their hypocrisy and their unbelief was delivered by Christ. This had come to a conclusion when Jesus lamented over Jerusalem for its long history of rejecting the prophets and killing those sent to them with the truth. He pronounced a solemn curse on Jerusalem, saying, “Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” A little later after he had left the temple, the disciples called his attention to the magnificence of the temple. Jesus came back, however, with a devastating prophecy, “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

The Setting: The prophecy had alarmed the disciples. Four of them, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, in a private meeting with Jesus asked, “Tell us, ‘They said, ‘when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?’” (Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:3-4, Luke 21:7). In answering the three questions, the answer to the first question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem was given in Luke 21:20-24. The second and third questions concerning signs of his coming and the end of the age were the same question because the age ends at the time of his coming. Matthew gives us the most complete answer to these two questions (Matthew 24:4-30)

The Text:

(Matthew 24:1-2) Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ²But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

(Mark 13:1-2) And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ²And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

(Luke 21:5-6) ⁵And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down

Some Terms: Scholars interpret Matthew from several different points of view. Usually, their interpretation of prophecy in general dictates the interpretation of this passage. There are three terms that will be helpful to understand to engage in our discussion: Millennium, Tribulation, Rapture

The Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3): Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

Amillennialism:	The teaching that there will be no literal millennium following Christ's return to the earth.
Postmillennialism:	The teaching that there will be a literal millennium on earth and that Christ will return after the millennium.
Premillennialism:	The teaching that there will be a literal millennium on earth and that Christ will return before the millennium.
Liberalism:	An anti-supernatural approach to Christianity and the Bible that arose because of rationalism. Liberalism denied the miraculous elements of the Scriptures, stressing the importance of reason; whatever disagreed with reason and science was rejected.

The Tribulation (Daniel 9:24): Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

The future seven-year period, described in Revelation 6-19. During this period God judges the unbelieving world and his disobedient people, Israel.

The Rapture (1st Thessalonians 4:17): Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Christ's return in the air (not the earth) for his church and the sudden catching up of the Church to be with him.

Post-Tribulation:	The Rapture of the Church occurs after the Tribulation.
Mid-Tribulation:	The Rapture of the Church occurs in the middle of the Tribulation.
Partial Rapture:	Only the Faithful will be Raptured and at Varying times.
Pre-Tribulation:	The Rapture of the Church occurs before the Tribulation.

The Church Position: Article III.N, The Second Advent of Christ:

"We believe in that "blessed hope," the personal, imminent, *pre-tribulation* and *premillennial* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones, and in His subsequent return to earth, with His saints, to establish His millennial kingdom.

The Tone of the Passage: The tone of this passage is decidedly Jewish. Jesus spoke about "Judea," the "Sabbath," the prophecies of Daniel concerning his people and his city. Not only that, but the full truth about the Rapture of the Church had not been revealed yet. These writings came later with 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 (50-52 AD), 1st Corinthians 15:51-58 (54-55 AD), and Ephesians 3:1-12 (63 AD). Most importantly, we need to keep Matthew's intended audience in mind. Matthew was writing to believing Jews, who were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ that he was who he says he was, Jesus the King, the Son of David, the Messiah. Although Jesus had given the Jews who asked him these questions a glimpse of the future Church (Matthew 16:18), they really had no idea what that was all about and were likely very unprepared for prophecy regarding this still mostly unrevealed mystery. Because of this, it is best to interpret Jesus' response in light of the fact that he was talking to Jews about the future of the Jews, and the one who was listening and later wrote about here was cut from that same cloth.

Next Week: "General Signs of Jesus' Second Coming (Part 2)"