

The Olivet Discourse

An Interpretation of Matthew 25 and 26

Including a Brief Discussion of Daniel's 70 Weeks

by

Garland H. Shinn

The Olivet Discourse

Table of Contents

Chapter One – Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two – The Tribulation.....	5
Chapter Three – The Second Coming of Christ.....	11
Chapter Four – The Requirements of the Faithful.....	14
Chapter Five – The Judgment of the Gentile Nations.....	18

The Olivet Discourse

Chapter One Introduction

Matthew 24 and 25, called the Olivet Discourse because the Lord Jesus Christ was on the Mount of Olives across from the Temple Mount when He delivered it, is the most important prophetic portion in the Gospels. It is second only to the Book of Revelation in detail dealing with the culmination of Israel's dispersion throughout the nations.

While both Mark and Luke deal with some of the same teachings (See Mark 13 and Luke 21 especially), Matthew is more detailed in his presentation, and is more doctrinal in his approach.¹

Background

The Rejection Theme of Matthew

A major theme of the Gospel according to Matthew is the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth by the nation Israel. The Lord had presented Himself to Israel as Messiah, and Israel, desiring a different kind of Messiah, rejected His person and His ministry.

In 23:37-39, to set up the Olivet Discourse, Matthew presents these words of Jesus:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!

Here the rejection theme is presented and its immediate consequences expressed. Jerusalem, representing the nation of Israel, is shown to be a rejector of the prophets. "Those who are sent to her" include the Lord Jesus Himself, who is being rejected by them.

The Lord desired to gather Israel and establish the kingdom of God on earth, but Israel was unwilling. Therefore, her house "is left . . . desolate," indicating now His rejection of Israel. He is preparing to depart, as His death, resurrection and ascension are drawing near. Israel will not see Him again until He "comes in the name of the LORD," a reference to the second advent when the Lord will again restore His people Israel to their land.

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27

²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand, *That* from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, *There shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

The Olivet Discourse details the events of the last seven years prior to the return of Christ. The seventy weeks of Daniel are associated by the Lord Jesus with His return to the earth. Therefore it is necessary that the student begin with an understanding of the passage having to do with "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15).

¹ Unlike Matthew, which is primarily doctrinal in its approach, both Mark and Luke are primarily historical documents. Therefore they are rightly more concerned with the circumstances that lead up to and follow the teaching of Jesus than with a well laid out presentation of those teachings.

The Olivet Discourse

The Meaning of “Week”

The term “seventy weeks” is more accurately expressed “seventy sevens.” This is a Hebrew short-hand method of saying “seventy periods of seven periods each.” All scholars, liberal and conservative, agree. This is a prophecy of seventy sets of seven year periods. Seventy times seven is four hundred ninety. In other words, the entire period of the prophecy is 490 years.

However, even the term “year” can be misleading. In ancient times years were calculated using a lunar calendar, and each month was exactly 30 days long. Periodically, the calendar would need to be revised, because the rotation of the earth does not exactly coincide with 12 months of 30 days each. Nevertheless, it is on this year of 360 days that the prophecy of the 70 weeks is based.

The Beginning of the 70 Weeks

The statement “from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince” determines the two termini of the 70 weeks. The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem begins the time-table. The command must be identified. Four different official decrees have been suggested:

1. The Decree of Cyrus that the Temple be Rebuilt (2 Chron. 36:20-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-5)
2. The Decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:6-12)
3. The First Decree of Artaxerxes to Rebuild the Temple (Ezra 7:11-26)
4. The Decree of Artaxerxes given in Nehemiah authorizing the rebuilding of the city (Neh. 2:1-8)

As can be seen by a careful reading of Scripture, the first three decrees deal with the temple only, not with the city itself. The decree of Nehemiah 2:1-8 fulfills the conditions of Daniel’s prophecy. The actual building of the city and the wall did not begin until Nehemiah’s time.

The Structure of the 70 Weeks

The First 69 Weeks, or 483 years, is divided into two parts of 7 weeks (49 years) and 62 weeks (434 years). The first 49 years is the period during which the city and wall were being rebuilt.

The subsequent period of 434 years is that long period during which no prophecy occurred referring to the coming of Messiah. Those post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi bring to a close the prophetic statements dealing with the nation of Israel. In a real sense, the historical narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke express the events lead-

The First Sixty-nine Weeks of Daniel

According to the Ancient Calendar

360 days per year
 $7 \times 7 = 49$ years
 $62 \times 7 = 434$ years
 $49 + 434 = 483$ years
 $483 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 173,880$ days

According to the Modern Calendar

365 days per year
 $444 \text{ BC to } 33 \text{ AD} = 476$ years
 $476 \text{ years} \times 365 \text{ days} = 173,740$ days
Add 116 days for leap years
Add 24 days from March 5 – 30
Total 173,880 days

Note: There are only 116 leap days in this total because the first year of a century is not a leap year. Therefore instead of 119 leap days, three must be subtracted, making 116 leap days.

Note: That the ancient calendar used 30 day months is confirmed by the statements in Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6; 13:5, where 1,260 days is equated with 42 months. $1,260 \text{ divided by } 42 = 30$.

ing up to the culmination of Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 weeks, to which Jesus alludes during His earthly ministry (Matthew 24:1ff; Mark 13:1ff; Luke 21:5ff).

The Olivet Discourse

Further, the 70th week is itself divided into two parts, as is seen by the term “in the middle of the week.”

The End of the Sixty-Ninth Week

The most likely event which terminated the 69th week was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. See the Chart for the mathematical calculations which result in this conclusion.²

The Gap between the Sixty-Ninth and Seventieth Weeks

After the 69th week, Messiah is cut off. This refers to the death of Messiah. By application we understand this to refer to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note that the crucifixion is not part of the time-table, but is in a gap period between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Daniel 9 does not say that the Messiah is cut off DURING the 69 weeks, but AFTER the 69th week.

Also during the Gap between the 69th and 70th weeks, Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed. This destruction is accomplished by “the people of the prince who is to come.” This destruction took place by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD. General Titus was not “the prince who is to come” as some have it, but one of the “people of the prince who is to come.” Therefore, the “prince who is to come” refers to a subsequent Roman leader. He is the one called the “little horn” in Daniel 7:8, and has not yet come as of this writing.

Note the following:

1. The people of the prince who is to come do the destroying, NOT THE PRINCE HIMSELF. The best explanation for this peculiar wording is that the people refer to the ethnic group from which the prince comes. These people were the Romans under Titus, who destroyed the city and the temple in 70 AD.
2. It is clear that “the prince who is to come” is not Messiah the prince, but another prince who is antagonistic to God and His program for Israel. “The prince who is to come” is to be identified with the “little horn” of Daniel 7, commonly called the Antichrist. He is also seen represented in the second beast of Revelation 13. He is a Roman prince, who will lead the “revived Roman Empire” during the period of the 70th week. (See the discussion below dealing with the Gentiles in prophecy for more information concerning this prince.)

The gap continues today. The prophetic program for Israel is held in abeyance until the present prophetic program for the church is completed.

The Beginning of the 70th Week

The 70th week of Daniel begins with the confirmation of a covenant (Heb. *berit*). This event has not yet taken place. Therefore, we are still in the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks.

The statement “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week” indicates a 7 year covenant to be confirmed.

The word *he* refers to the Roman prince who is to come. This *man of sin* generates the covenant.

The covenant is probably best understood as a treaty of some kind, perhaps guaranteeing the safety of Israel. This covenant is time limited as it is confirmed for 1 week only. However, the covenant is violated by the prince in the middle of the week, that is, after three and one half years.

² According to a number of authorities, the triumphal entry occurred on March 30, 33 A.D.

The Olivet Discourse

The word *many* is a term that often refers to Israel, especially in prophetic passages. It appears that during the first half of the week, Israel is in the land, but in unbelief. However, sometime during the first part of the 70th week God begins to bring Israel to faith. Scripture indicates that this is but a remnant of the original people. The synagogue system will be in effect, and many will reject the messianic message (Luke 21:12).

Many Jews will betray their own kin (Luke 21:16). Yet the 144,000 Israelites from the 12 tribes will truly serve God and remain pure (Revelation 7). The gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world to the gentile nations (Matthew 24:14). This may be partly accomplished by the fact that beginning at the middle of the 70th week believing Israelites will be led captive into Gentile nations (Luke 21:24).

The Middle of the 70th Week

In the middle of the week, the Roman prince violates the covenant by bringing an end to sacrifice and offering. Using the 30 day calendar as a basis, this is 1260 days after the signing of the covenant.

The word *wing* is used in Scripture to sometimes indicate swiftness. Probably, the phrase “the wing of abominations” refers to swift actions that bring about the destruction of Israel.

“The one who makes desolate” refers to the Roman prince who will bring about the terrible infliction of suffering. Israel will be desolated. The Lord Jesus told Israel to flee to the mountains when they saw the abomination of desolation standing in the Holy Place. Revelation 12:6 indicates that Israel will be hidden in a place prepared by God for her, and she will remain there for 1,260 days, or three and one half years.

The Culmination of the 70th Week

“The consummation which is determined is poured out on the desolate” refers to the bringing to an end of the activities of the Roman prince, that is, the end of the 70th week. Israel, as mentioned previously, will be desolated.

The Lord Jesus Christ in the Olivet Discourse and related passages discusses the events which lead up to the end of the 70th week.

The Olivet Discourse

Chapter Two The Tribulation³

The Setting – Matthew 24:1-2

¹ Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

It is important for the student to recognize that throughout Matthew 24 and 25 the church is not mentioned. None of the prophetic events in these chapters are to be identified with the body of Christ. Normal interpretation recognizes that the church is distinct from Israel. Only confusion results when one attempts to put the church into these chapters.

The Prophetic Importance of the Temple

The temple in Jerusalem is central to prophetic truth. The temple of Jesus’ day, built by Herod the Great and often called the second temple, was a replacement for the temple of Solomon that had been destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian.

As the people of God, Israel needs the temple to fulfill the Mosaic requirements place upon them as God’s nation. However, the temple of the future kingdom revealed in Ezekiel is clearly not the second temple, but a completely different structure with different dimensions. Not only that, there appears to be a temple that will exist during the 70th week of Daniel, as Daniel 9 makes it clear that the sacrifice of the Jews will be carried on at the time of the future abomination of desolation.

The Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple

The Lord’s reference is to the destruction of the temple under Titus in 70 AD. This destruction took place in the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel⁴ and is not to be confused with the prediction of the later destruction expressed in Zechariah 14:1-2.

Later Christ in this discourse makes it clear that the abomination of desolation had not yet occurred in His day. Some have attempted to relate this abomination to the destruction of Titus, but the prophecy of the 70 weeks simply will not fit into this scenario. No covenant was made with *the many* for 7 years, in the midst of which Titus destroyed the temple, established himself as God in the temple and further fulfilled the predictions that the Bible presents concerning the man of sin, the details of which cannot be simply swept aside. Therefore, Christ expected His disciples to recognize that the temple program has a subsequent stage to His prediction of the destruction of Titus.

The Beginning of Sorrows – Matthew 24:3-8

³ 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? ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many. ⁶ 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. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

³ The terminology *the tribulation* and *the great tribulation* is not used in the Bible as *titles* for this period of time. In fact, no actual title is used by anyone, as far as I can tell. A more descriptive title might be *Daniel’s Seventieth Week* but it seems that we are stuck with *the tribulation* or *the great tribulation* in popular jargon.

⁴ See the discussion of the 70th week of Daniel in this presentation.

The Olivet Discourse

The Three-Fold Question (Matthew 24:3)

1. When shall these things be?

This question deals with the prediction concerning the destruction of the temple. The Lord Jesus Christ does not answer this question, as it had no direct bearing on the subject that He desired to discuss.

2. What is the sign of Your coming?

This question is answered in detail in verses 29-31.

3. What is the Sign of the End of the Age?

a. What is an age?

An age is a period of time with a specific beginning and a specific ending. Ages relate to, among other things, the revelation of God and His program for mankind.

b. To which age was Jesus' disciples referring?

There is only one possible answer to this question. The disciples knew nothing of the present age. To them, *the age* was the period of time during which they were living. They believed themselves to be living at the end of the period of time just prior to the establishment of the Davidic kingdom on earth. Therefore, *the age* must be associated with the second coming of the Lord Jesus to establish that kingdom. It is best, therefore, to consider the *completion of the age* to refer to the age that ends with the second coming of Christ, just after the ending of Daniel's 70th week.

The Description of the First Half of Daniel's 70th Week

The doctrine of the coming of Christ is open to deception. Christ's warning is that His disciples be not deceived. During the 70th week of Daniel this will be a real problem. As Israel observes events among the Gentile nations, she will certainly desire the coming of Messiah. The Lord makes it clear that there are certain prerequisites to His coming as Messiah for Israel.

This description is from a Jewish point of view during the time when Israel is in the Land. Many false messiahs will arise during the first half of the 70th week. These false messiahs will deceive "many," certainly a reference to Jews living in the land at that time. (Note that the "you" in this passage is plural, referring to the disciples as representatives of believing Israel.)

Israel is in peace in the land. The events of the first half are "heard" by the Jews, but they are not participants. This passage is consistent with Ezekiel 38:11, which refers to Israel as living in "unwalled cities," undoubtedly referring to the idea that Israel will not be in a highly defensive mode. This is certainly not the case today, but is consistent with a covenant having been made with the Roman prince.

There will be warfare among the Gentile nations. Various types of governments will vie with one another for supremacy. Again, this is consistent with the predictions concerning the state of the Revived Roman Empire expressed in Daniel 2.

The term "beginning of birth pangs" indicates that the problems for Israel are at their initial stage. These series of events must take place before the series of events beginning in verse 9 commence.

These events line up remarkably with the first six seals of the book of Revelation beginning in Revelation 6.

The Middle and 2nd Half of Daniel's 70th week – Matthew 24:9-14

⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another."

The Olivet Discourse

other. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The nations will be persecuting Israel (vs. 9).

The *they* of verse 9 must refer to Gentiles. Note that *you* (Israelites) will be hated by all *nations* (Gentiles) on account of Christ's name. It therefore appears that many Israelites have accepted the fact that the Christ of the New Testament is in fact the Messiah of the Old.

The middle of Daniel's 70th week is identified in Daniel by an event dealing with the Roman prince called *abomination of desolation*. The second half of Daniel's 70th week is therefore inaugurated by an attempt by Gentiles to destroy believing Israelites.

Jews will betray one another (vs. 10).

Also *at that time* (in the middle of the week) *many will fall away* referring to a rejection of Christ's Messiahship. Some Israelites will then have hatred of believing Israelites.

False prophets will arise (vs. 11).

During this time many false prophets will arise and many will again be deceived. The *many* again most likely refers to Israelites who have not believed the gospel of the Kingdom.

Lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold (vs. 12).

Because lawlessness increases probably refers to the incursion of gentile governing bodies into the land. The Roman prince is himself called *the man of lawlessness* by Paul (2 Thess. 2:3). Because of the lawless situation "many people's love will grow cold."

This last is a difficult statement. Does it refer to believing or unbelieving Israelites? As we examine the context, it appears to be referring to believing Israelites, not to those who betray believing Israelites in verse 10. Why? The reason is found in the next verse, which indicates that not all believing Israelites will survive the second half of the week.

Some will endure to the end (of the age) and be saved (vs. 13).

This endurance cannot refer to anything other than remaining in a live state during this period. The *end* must refer to the end of the age, as it is the only end mentioned in the previous context. Therefore, those Israelites who survive the second half of the tribulation will be saved. But in what sense? This salvation cannot refer to spiritual deliverance, as that depends not at all on enduring, but on believing. This salvation is of the same type as that mentioned by Paul in Romans 11:26, which refers to the national salvation of Israel.

The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the Gentile nations (vs. 14).

The gospel of the kingdom is not to be confused with the *gospel of salvation* for the current age, nor the *gospel of the edification* of the believer which consists of the mystery revelation.

The gospel of the kingdom is summarized earlier in Matthew as "Behold the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand (lit. *near*)." See Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. This summarizes clearly the rest of Jesus teaching concerning the coming kingdom. It is near because He is on earth presenting Himself as the Messiah who will bring in the kingdom when Israel believes.

During the tribulation period again the Kingdom will be near. During this time, however, the nearness will be temporal because Christ will not return until it is time to impose the kingdom on earth. At that event, the world system which consists of gentile world rule will come crashing

The Olivet Discourse

down. See Daniel 2:31-35 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream) and Daniel 2:36-45 (Daniel's interpretation of that dream).

This preaching is throughout "the whole world to all the nations." Many Gentiles will come to faith in the Messiah of Israel during this time. Matthew 28:19-20 appears to be a commission for Kingdom bound Israelites to preach this gospel.

The end (of the age) will come (vs. 14).

Verse 14 culminates the matter. The end is, of course the end of the age. When the 70th week is over, the age comes to an end as well. All Israelites who survive until that time are guaranteed to survive until the kingdom is actually set up, some 75 days after the end. See Daniel 12:11-13.

The Detailed Description of Great Tribulation – Matthew 24:15-28

¹⁵ Therefore when you see the *abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For 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. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, Look, here *is* the Christ! or There! do not believe *it*. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ Therefore if they say to you, Look, He is in the desert! do not go out; or Look, *He is* in the inner rooms! do not believe *it*. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

Verse 15 reverts to the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. This kind of recapitulation is common to prophetic utterances. In fact, it is one of the major characteristics of both the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation in the New Testament.

It is related to the "abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (vs. 15)

The *breaking of the covenant* of Daniel 9:27 is designated the *abomination of desolation* in this passage. The specific event must be that of which Paul spoke in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Israel will be in general flight (vs. 16-20)

The geographical location of these events is clearly stated. Those in Judea are to flee. The reason is undoubtedly because of their proximity to the temple in Jerusalem, which appears to be the center of the abomination that takes place.

The immediacy of the situation is indicated in that the Israelites are to flee to the mountains. The closest mountains to Judea are due east in what is today Jordan. While some have thought that they might flee north to Mt. Herman, or south into the rugged mountains of Sinai, both these destinations seem unlikely, the first because of its relative great distance, and the second because of the difficulty of the terrain.

The importance of speed is indicated clearly in verses 17-20. Because of their nearness to the events of the abomination, those in Judea are most likely to feel the soon wrath of the man of sin.

The Olivet Discourse

Israel will be under the worst tribulation in her history (vs. 21)

The intensity of the tribulation is expressed by the statement that this will be the worst tribulation the world has ever seen. The statement must be with reference to the Israelites as a nation. It is upon their geographical territory that the great events of the 2nd half of the 70th week come. This will be a greater holocaust than any previous.

The daylight hours will be shortened (vs. 22)

The statement that “the days will be cut short” has been interpreted in two distinct ways: 1) that there will be fewer number of days, and 2) that the day itself will be shorter.

If there are to be fewer days, one must ask, “Fewer than what?” Certainly not fewer than the 1260 days predicted! Some have speculated that they are fewer than they could have been, that they are not interminable. (See the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*.) But this seems to beg the question. The Greek verb means they will be shortened. Therefore the question remains, from what will they be shortened?

A more likely interpretation is that the day itself will be shorter. This could be performed in either of two ways: 1) the earth could be sped up on its axis, or 2) the number of daylight hours could be shorter. The first seems unduly difficult, as no Scripture seems to indicate any such thing. However, we know that the 2nd will in fact happen. The sun loses 1/3 of its light, perhaps meaning that it is only up 1/3 as long, but more likely that it is only 2/3 as bright as it was. In addition, the land of Israel particularly will be darkened by the much smoke that appears to be generated during the second half of the 70th week.

False messiahs and false prophets will perform miraculous works (vs. 23-26)

Spiritual discernment will be necessary – Vs. 23. Satan will be allowed to energize religious leaders who will perform miracles and wondrous works.

Both false messiahs (Christs) and false prophets will arise – Vs. 24. Since the gospel of the kingdom is being preached, which includes the nearness of Messiah, false messiah’s will appear. False prophets will attempt to blunt the message of true prophets during this period.

These pseudo messiahs and prophets will give forth signs and wonders (miraculous works). Even during a time when there are true miracles being performed people will be misled by the falsity of their works.

Some have wondered whether these are true miracles. Every indication is that they will be, which is possible up to a point using Satanic methods. However, even if they are slight of hand or misdirection such as done by the modern magician, they will be sufficiently credible to mislead many.

It is not possible for the elect to be led astray by these deceivers. The phrase *if possible* is probably a shortened (truncated) 2nd class condition indicating the impossibility of the act.

The word *elect* is used of those who will become believers during the 70th week, not church saints. It will include both Jews and Gentiles, but they will not become members of the body of Christ. On earth during this time, God’s prophetic program for the two great groups of non-church peoples will be in effect. Today in the body of Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:27 & 28, where the word *Greek* refers to all non-Israelites.) But at that time, God will distinguish spiritually between Jews and Gentiles, and has a prophetic program of salvation for both groups.

The Lord repeated His previous message at this time. Some will evidently claim that Christ is in the desert, and others that He is in the inner rooms of the temple. Such false claims are not to be heeded. – Vs. 25-26.

The Olivet Discourse

The Lord's return will be visible to all, like the coming of lightning. – Vs. 27. The direction also seems to be indicated. In the same way that the glory of God went from west to east when it departed the temple in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 9 & 10, especially 10:19 and following), so the Messiah will return from the east to the west at His second coming.

Vs. 28 seems to speak of the judgmental aspect of the coming of the Lord. Some believe this refers to a spiritual corruption, followed by the judgment of the tribulation period:

Wherever there is a carcass (physical corruption), vultures will go there to eat it. Similarly, where there is spiritual corruption judgment will follow. The world will have become the domain of Satan's man, the Antichrist, the lawless one (2 Thes. 2:8), and many people will have been corrupted by false prophets (Matt. 24:24). (Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., *Bible Knowledge Commentary*.)

Toussaint believes that the vultures or eagles are specifically the false prophets,

The King vividly portrays the state of Israel by referring to it with the word "corpse" (πτῶμα). It is lifeless and hopeless and going unto putrefication. . . . Thus the nation is and will be in such a spiritual condition that false prophets will be able to feast on it as vultures consume the flesh of a dead and decaying body. Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, page 276.

Most likely, the corpse-vulture reference is to the result of judgment, physical death, which produces vultures as scavengers. There is no need to make the reference non-physical in this context.

The Olivet Discourse

Chapter Three The Second Coming of Christ

The Coming of the Son of Man – Matthew 24:29-31

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The time of the 2nd coming of Christ is specific (vs. 29).

Some have attempted to place the second coming of Christ at the end of Daniel's 70th week. Some have attempted to make it the final day of the second 42 month period. However, according to the Lord Himself, the return of Christ is post-tribulational. It is after "the tribulation of those days," that is, after the 70th week of Daniel.

This event is not to be confused with the coming of Christ for His church, which is not judgmental in character. Passages such as this confuse the non-distinctive theologian. It is common to confuse this event with the event mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. But the second coming of Christ relates to the program for Jew and Gentile, not to the program for the body of Christ.

Heavenly events will accompany Christ's 2nd Coming (vs. 29).

The darkening of the sun and moon, and the elimination of the stars from an earthly perspective make a magnificent backdrop for the events of the context.

The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven (vs. 30).

Three popular views of this sign have been given: 1) some church fathers held that the sign was a supernatural display of the cross in heaven, 2) some modern students (English, Gaebelein), hold that this is a shining light, the Shekinah of the Old Testament, and 3) some (Darby, Kelly, Lenski) believe that the sign is the coming of Christ himself.

This event appears to be the actual coming itself. No previous signs are in view and this event coincides with the prophecy found in Daniel 7:13,14. Thus, the Lord gives the ultimate answer to the question posed in Matt. 24:3.

Christ sends angels to gather those saved during the 70th week (vs. 31).

The elect appear to be the same as those in 24:22. They are, in this context, the elect of Israel. See Colossians 3:4.

Many expositors take this to be a reference not to Israel but to the gathering of the church. For several important reasons it is evident that the *faithful of Israel* are in view. First of all, the word "elect" is used in the Old Testament of Israel (1 Chronicles 16:13; Psalm 105:6, 43; Isaiah 41:8, 43:20; 45:4). It was not only used of Israel as a nation but also of the faithful ones in that nation (Isaiah 65:9, 15, 22). It is in this latter sense that Christ uses it here. When he comes again, the believing remnant of Israel will be regathered from the corners of the earth to be placed in the land. This is prophesied clearly in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 16:14-15; Isaiah 11:11-16; 27:13). Herein is the second evidence that the church is not in view in this passage. A third is found in the Jewish context of the discourse from Matthew 24:3-25:30. Such terms as the gospel of the kingdom (24:14), the holy place (24:15), the sabbath (24:20), and the Messiah (24:23-24) indicate that Israel as a nation is in view. Fourthly, the discourse relates to the end time described in Daniel's prophecy of the seventieth week (Matthew 24:15). Finally the

The Olivet Discourse

church cannot be in view since it will not go through the tribulation period (Revelation 3:10; Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:9). Toussaint, *Behold the King*, page 277. Italics added.

The Parable of the Fig Tree – Matthew 24:32-35

³² 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. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

See also Mark 13:28–31; Luke 21:29–33, where this parable is also given.

A major error in interpreting this parable indicates that it refers to the return of Israel to the land. This is even seen to have been fulfilled in 1948 by some.

In fact, this passage does not refer to the return of Israel to the land for several reasons:

1. Matthew views Israel in the land as an uninterrupted continuity; Israel's return is not mentioned.
2. No specific fig tree represents Israel here, as can be seen from the parallel account in Luke 21:29, where Christ says "Behold the fig tree and all the trees."
3. The contextual subject is the second coming of Christ, not the return of Israel to the land.
4. The phrase "recognize that he is near, right at the door" refers to the coming of Christ.
5. The phrase "all these things" refers to the various events mentioned in the previous context that take place during the second half of the 70th week.

The parable of the fig tree relates to the generation that will go through the 70th week of Daniel. The *this generation* of vs. 34 does not relate to the contemporaries of Jesus, but to those who are the "elect" of verse 31.

The Conditions at the End of the Age – Matthew 24:36-44

³⁶ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Through much fanciful interpretation, this passage is often erroneously taken as a description of the rapture of the church. However, it is actually a discussion of the conditions that will prevail on the earth just prior to the second coming of Christ after the tribulation. The age refers to the end of the tribulation period.

That it cannot refer to the rapture of the church is obvious on several levels. First, the church had not yet been revealed. It was, according to Ephesians 3, a mystery, which was not made known until the revelation to the New Testament apostles and prophets. Second, the rapture is an aspect of the resurrection of the church. This resurrection was also a mystery, and not revealed until after the church itself was made known. See 1 Corinthians 15:52-53. Finally, the issue at hand is the end of the prophetic age of Israel, and not the church. To revert to a discussion which

The Olivet Discourse

refers to the church is to insert a meaningless context from the perspective of the Lord's original audience into the discussion.

Verse 36 is a segue between the previous parable of the fig tree, and the discussion of verses 37-44. This statement refers to the fact that no one knows when the 70th week will come, and therefore when it will end, and therefore no one knows when the actual coming of Christ will be.

The "coming of the Son of Man" refers to His post-tribulational coming mentioned in the previous passage, not the rapture of the church. In fact, the conditions prior to the rapture are in no way to be identified with the conditions mentioned here.

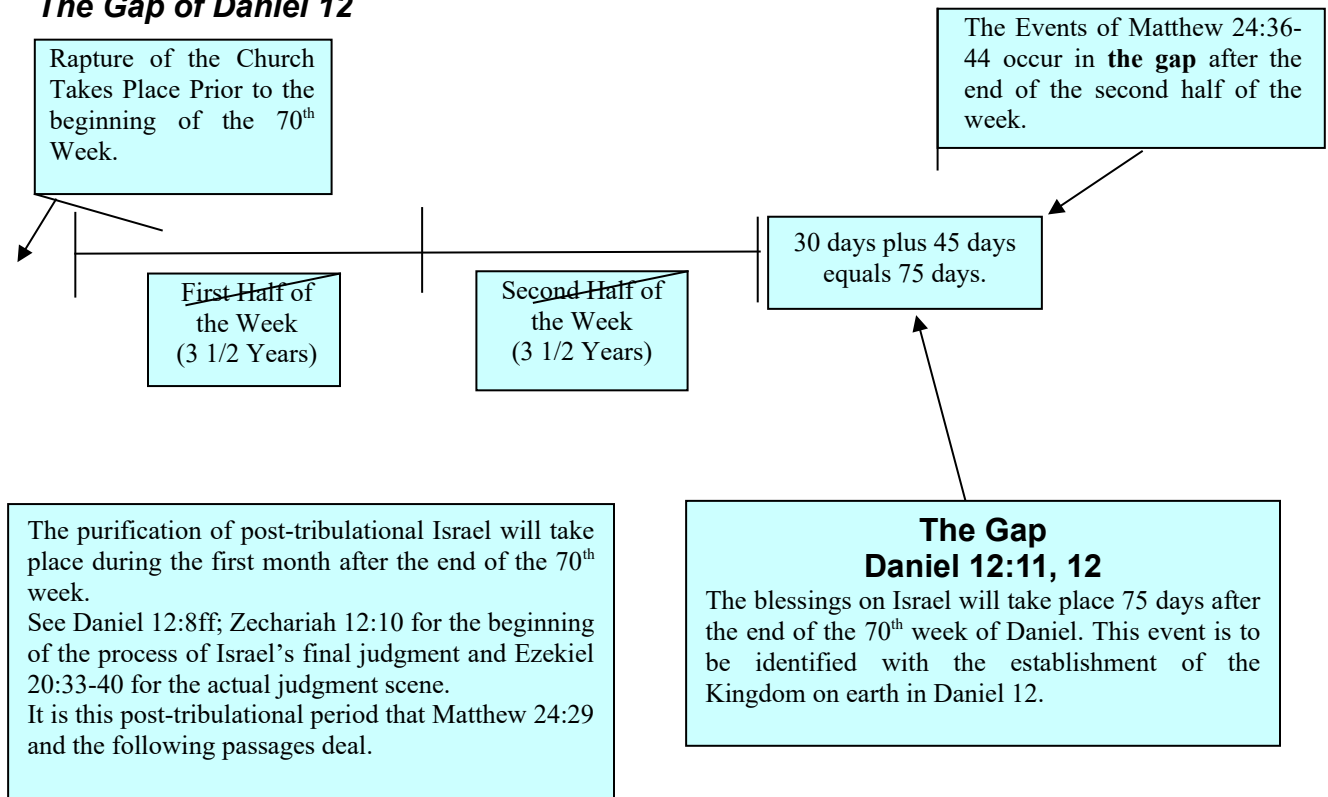
The period under consideration is not tribulational, but post-tribulational. It refers to the condition of Israel after the 70th week is complete. After the tribulation, Israel will immediately go back to its regular living situation. The nation has been preserved, but Messiah has not yet appeared.

The Days of Noah were similar in certain respects to the days after the end of the tribulation period. People were busy with the affairs of life, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. In Noah's day, the people were ignorant of the coming judgment.

The people who are taken away are taken in judgment like those who were destroyed in the flood. The ones who are left will enter into the millennial state. The judgment is the final division of Israel into believers and unbelievers. Believers will be eagerly awaiting His coming, while unbelievers will re-enter society as though nothing had happened. They will attempt to get back to normal as quickly as possible. Indeed, this is the normal reaction of people immediately after a disaster.

The point of the analogy with Noah's day is to warn those who survive the 70th week that all is not over. Believers will be looking for the coming of Christ; unbelievers will go back *en masse* to the lifestyle prior to the time trouble began. This will take place in the 75 day period prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. See the chart below.

The Gap of Daniel 12



The Olivet Discourse

Chapter Four

The Requirements of the Faithful

The Faithful and Evil Servants – Matthew 24:45-51

⁴⁵ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶ Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming, ⁴⁹ and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This section is a parable that deals with Jews who are awaiting the Second Coming of Christ in the 75 day gap after Daniel's 70th week. They are portrayed as slaves awaiting the coming of their master.

1. The faithful and wise slave is the believing Jew who follows God's program as appointed by Jesus during His earthly ministry.
2. The master is, of course, the Lord Jesus when He comes "after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29).
3. Vs. 47 indicates the rewards the surviving believers will receive. The time of the reward of verse 47 is the subsequent kingdom. The nature of the reward is the receiving of authority over the possessions of the king. This seems to indicate that those believers of that generation will be first in line for the highest of the kingdom rewards.
4. The evil slave of verses 48 and 49 is the unbelieving Jew who does not keep Christ's program during the 70th week and persecutes his fellow Jews who do believe. While both unbelieving as well as believing Jews survive the 70th week, the unbelieving Jew is pictured as the persecutor while the believing Jew is seen receiving the persecution. This is consistent with the teaching of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount concerning Jew-on-Jew persecution (see Matthew 5:10-12, which can only be applied to Jews persecuting Jews).
5. The clear statement is that the time of the coming of the master is unexpected. Those living at that time cannot know the exact hour of the coming of their master. This parable is consistent with the idea that the 2nd coming of Christ will be geographically centered in the land of Israel after the Jewish persecution is no longer in process.
6. The weeping and gnashing of teeth refer to the ultimate destruction of the unbelieving Jew. This is probably a reference to the place of the dead, to be identified with Hades, which is the place mentioned by Jesus in Luke 16:22ff.

The Wise and Foolish Virgins – Matthew 25:1-13

¹ Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ And at midnight a cry was heard: Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him! ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves. ¹⁰ And while they went to buy,

The Olivet Discourse

the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us! ¹² But he answered and said, Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you. ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

The wise and foolish virgins represent the same two groups of Jews as in the previous parable. The emphasis of this story is on the faithfully waiting and expecting the bridegroom (Christ at the Second Coming). Do not attempt to make symbols out of such elements as the oil, the trimming of the wicks, etc. The point to the story is found in vs. 13: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." As in the previous context, this refers to the post-tribulational coming of Christ, not the rapture of the church. The word "you" refers to Jesus original hearers, who were themselves the twelve Jewish disciples who had asked the question concerning the sign of His coming.

This parable is not to be applied to the Church. Believers today are not in the same dispensational situation as Israel will be when awaiting the return of Christ. Israel therefore is pictured as 10 virgins who are awaiting the return of the bridegroom.

In wedding customs in Jesus' day, the bridegroom would return from the house of the bride in a procession leading to his own home where a wedding banquet would be enjoyed. A number of unmarried women would be there, with lamps as the event tended to take place after dark. The bride and her family would accompany the procession. It was usually during this procession that the bride's veil was removed and laid upon her husband's shoulder.

It often comes as a surprise to note that marriage ceremonies were not religious but cultural events. The only religious aspect was the pronouncing of God's blessing on the couple. Otherwise, the actual ceremony consisted of drawing up and agreeing to a legal contract. No vows, rings or other artifacts were exchanged. The idea of a priest or rabbi officiating is a rather recent idea.

In Jesus' story, the procession is delayed, and the unprepared virgins ran out of oil. When they went to get some, the bridegroom came with the procession, which entered his home. After the feast began the late virgins were not allowed in. These virgins are those unbelieving Jews who were not really expecting the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some have wondered at the importance of the lamps and oil. This apparently has to do with the consummation of the marriage. Christians are often shocked to realize that in the darkened wedding chamber, the virgins were required to verify that sexual intercourse had taken place. Then, as now, no marriage was actually legal until the sexual act had been consummated and witnessed. (Prior to the middle ages in Europe, the idea of privacy for sexual activity was unknown in the world. It was certainly not part of the agrarian culture of the Jews. It was not until the development of large domiciles that could be divided into compartments where the idea of private sexual intimacy began. Eventually this idea was normalized, and as a result of the catholic and later puritan ideas of sexuality, codified as necessary to modesty.

Some have unfortunately extended this parable to include the church as the bride of Christ. Such is the view of Louis A. Barbieri, Jr. in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, "He as King will return from heaven with His bride, the church, in order to enter into the Millennium." This is based on the truth that Christ will return from heaven with the church. However, this is extending the parable beyond the bounds of normalcy since the church is not mentioned here. This certainly would not have occurred to those who originally heard the parable.⁵

⁵ In their zeal to make this parable relevant, Barbieri and others who hold to generally the correct Jewish view of the parable, make the blunder of inserting the church into the context. While it is supportable that the church will return to earth with Christ at the time of the second coming, it is not the purpose of this parable to teach that truth. In bring-

The Olivet Discourse

The Talents – Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.

²¹ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. ²²

He also who had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.

²³ His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. ²⁴

²⁵ Then he who had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁶ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.

²⁷ But his lord answered and said to him, You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁸ So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁹ So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

³⁰ For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³¹ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The man who travels to a far country is a parabolic reference to the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ in His ascension. The servants refer to the Jews who received the truths that the Lord had distributed during His earthly ministry. These truths are the talents.⁶ The kingdom believer had the responsibility of being faithful with these truths, and to use them wisely. The Jews who did not really believe that the owner of the talents would return squandered what they had.

The parable is teaching that at the second coming the Lord will hold responsible those Jews who had received the benefits of His ministry, but squandered their goods. It is truly a dangerous thing to wrongly handle God's kingdom program.

The ultimate application will be to those living after the 70th week who are equivalent to the five virgins with no oil in the previous parable or the evil servants of the parable at the end of chapter 24. These unbelieving Jews will find themselves in dire straits when the Lord returns.

Under no circumstances should this parable be applied to Christians or unbelievers living today. The parable emphasizes the responsibility of the Jew who lives following the 70th week. To attempt to gain general spiritual information from it and to apply it therefore to the church is to completely set aside the teaching of the Lord. Those who originally heard the parable would not have thought beyond the context of the message being given. To remove it from this context and

ing the church into this context, those who do so weaken the Jewish context of the passage. The church should not be brought into the discussion at this point. The proper place for that discussion is in dealing with prophetic passages concerning the believers of this age.

⁶ A talent of silver was an enormous amount of money in Jesus' day, equivalent to over \$2,000 dollars. At a time when a day's wage was approximately 16 cents, to have a talent belonging to another was an enormous responsibility.

The Olivet Discourse

reinterpret it in order to come up with some fanciful application as so many have done is to reject the normal communicative value of Scripture.

The responsibility of the Jew after the 70th week will be to fulfill God's program as God has given him the ability. Fulfilling this program shows that the individual believing Jew is actually expecting his master to return. He is not attempting to return to normal life and get rich. He realizes that his reward is in the immediate future.

It is interesting to note that both faithful slaves receive exactly the same reward regardless of the fact that one started out with more than the other. Those living during the end time will have various abilities and responsibilities. But faithfulness in carrying out the program is the issue, not one's abilities or resources. This thinking was quite contrary to the view of Israelites in Jesus' day, who believed that a person was more valuable to God based on his resources and abilities.

The individual who did not use the talent wisely was undoubtedly not expecting his master to return. This is exactly the position of the unbelieving Jew after the 70th week. The problem is not that he has only one talent. The problem is that he did not follow the master's program, and therefore did not really believe the required truth concerning the return of the master.

Note on the Three Previous Parables

All three of these parables teach similar things about the 2nd coming of Christ. All are situated in a Jewish setting. All emphasize some aspect of the responsibility of those who survive the 70th week of Daniel and who are to be expecting the return of the Messiah. But each has a slightly different emphasis. The parable of the evil and wise slaves emphasizes the need to actually be a believer looking for the soon return of Messiah after the 70th week. The parable of the virgins emphasizes the fact of preparedness and watchfulness of the true believer. And the parable of the talents emphasizes the fact of the responsible attitude and action of the believing Jew, versus the characteristic irresponsibility of the unbelieving Jew, who will act in a manner not consistent with true faith in the period after the 70th week.

The Olivet Discourse

Chapter Five

The Judgment of the Gentile Nations

The Time of the Judgment – Matthew 25:31

³¹ When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

The event of Matthew 25 is not to be identified with the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. Here the judgment takes place at the time of the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, that is, at the beginning of the thousand year period. The Great White Throne Judgment takes place at the end of the thousand year period.

Here we have the Son of Man manifested in His glory. He is not yet today glorified, but at the time that He returns, not only will He be glorified, He will sit on the throne of His glory. This is to be taken as a literal throne, the Davidic seat which Messiah will occupy. His sitting there is in fulfillment of the Covenant God made with David in 2 Samuel 7:16.

The mention of the angels is significant. They are the servants of the Lord, sent forth to do His bidding. Here, they are associated with His judgment of the nations. Whether they will take an active part is not stated, but some believe they will be the instruments of judgment for the unbelieving Gentiles.

The Separation of the Nations – Matthew 25:32-33

³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

During the 70th week, the nations will be evangelized with the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 24:14). Many Gentiles will come to faith in the resurrected Christ as Messiah of Israel, and will understand that God's program for Israel has been reestablished, probably through a simple reading of Scripture. However, not all believing Gentiles will survive this terrible time of trouble, as it appears, from the book of Revelation that God deals with those nations very severely. Those Gentiles who do survive the 70th week of Daniel are the objects of Christ's judgment in this passage.

The Gentiles will be separated into two groups, the righteous and the unrighteous. These are designated by the metaphor of the shepherd. The sheep are the righteous Gentiles, while the goats are the unrighteous. Further, the Messiah will place the "sheep" Gentiles at His right, signifying, in the culture of the day a position of acceptance, while the goat "Gentiles" will be placed on the left.

The Approbation of the Righteous – Matthew 25:34-40

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?

⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

The Olivet Discourse

Barbieri points out:

The words the nations (*ta ethnē*) should be translated “the Gentiles.” These are all people, other than Jews, who have lived through the Tribulation period (cf. Joel 3:2, 12). They will be judged individually, not as national groups. They are described as a mingling of sheep and goats, which the Lord will separate. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, “Matthew”)

Since the gospel of the kingdom is presented in Scripture as first being offered to Israel, the Gentiles who come to faith will realize the nature of the program of God in dealing with Israel. Since during the 70th week Israel is attacked and Jews are roundly persecuted, those believing Gentiles will act in accordance with their faith, and come to the aid of persecuted Jews.

In Christ’s approbation of the righteous Gentiles, it appears that the ministration of those Gentiles to the Jewish people is viewed by the Messiah as a ministration to Himself. He credits them with such with the words “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

“These brothers of mine” (vs. 40) can only refer to the Lord’s Jewish brothers. During the difficult period of the 70th week, they will be persecuted terribly, and some righteous Gentiles will aid them in their suffering.

At first glance it might appear that these Gentiles are being saved by their works, namely their succor of Israelites. But the Lord’s designation of them as “the righteous ones” in verse 37 as well as later in verse 46 indicates that these individuals have been justified.⁷ And justification is always by faith, never by works.

The Condemnation of the Unrighteous – Matthew 41-46

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?

⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

This does not appear to be the same event as mentioned in Joel 3:1-16. The Matthew 25:31-46 judgment occurs after the 70th week is concluded, at the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ during the gap between the end of the 70th week and the beginning of the millennium. Robert B. Chisholm is correct when he says concerning the events of Joel 3:

So the event described here should be equated with Armageddon (cf. Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:11-21), rather than the judgment of the nations prophesied in Matthew 25:31-46. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, “Joel”)

⁷ Positional, or forensic, justification is the act of God whereby He declares righteous and individual who has placed faith in whatever object of faith the Lord has determined for that person or group. Abraham believed God about having a child, and it was “imputed to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:1-5; Genesis 15). This use of the word is not to be confused with the words “righteous” and “righteousness” when they are used in the New Testament referring to one’s daily walk. Under the law, such righteousness was met by keeping the law of Moses, and in the kingdom program, even more requirements were laid on the people by the Lord. But the keeping of this law did not forensically justify anyone. During the early transition daily justification was also by works, but as the grace provisions of the church program became revealed, the application of daily justification was no longer based on works, but on grace. Today, we do not need to apply those portions of the New Testament that encouraged believers in that day to experience “works righteousness” on a daily basis.

The Olivet Discourse

The judgment of Matthew 25 is the judgment of the Gentiles who survive the 70th week, while the Joel 3 event deals with the destruction of the Gentiles who come against Israel near the end of the 70th week..

Eternal life (vs. 46) is clearly associated with entering into the kingdom of God (vs. 34). See also Mark 10:30.

The *goat Gentiles* are those unbelieving Gentiles who have rejected Israel during the 70th week. They will be sent into *eternal fire* (vs. 41) and *eternal punishment* (vs. 46).

Conclusion

The Olivet Discourse deals with the events of the last seven years of Israel's prophetic program before the establishment of the kingdom of God. It also deals with that short period prior to the establishment of the kingdom during which Israel and the believing Gentiles will be awaiting the second coming of Christ, but not knowing precisely the time of that coming.

During the time of the 70th week, this portion of Scripture, as well as the book of Revelation, will be a source of information for those believers who come to the Lord as Messiah. The application of this portion of God's word will be directly to them

The detailed predictions presented in the Discourse are the most complete presentation of prophetic material by the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. The material, while not directly applicable to believers today, will encourage members of Christ's body that God is faithful in His dealings with Israel and His promises to them.