

Summary and Conclusions on the Olivet Discourse

The following summarizes the understanding of the Olivet Discourse given in six messages during the summer of 2008. The messages are available from the Sovereign Grace Bible Church (SGBC) media ministry. More detailed explanation and defense of these conclusions, along with other related subjects, are given in the messages. SGBC understands that Christians have struggled over understanding our Lord's teaching on His second coming and the end of the age given in the Olivet Discourse. We strongly believe that we ought not divide over differing views of the end times, as long as the essentials are believed and cherished. We consider the essentials to be down these lines: The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to our world again, visibly, bodily, and in glory beyond our imaginations. By His power and at His command there will be a bodily resurrection of the just and unjust. The Lord will preside over a final judgment of all those resurrected and living that will forever determine their eternal states, either being in glory with him or in hell condemned and separated from His presence. When He comes he will establish a new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells and God will dwell with His people forever. At His coming all the saints will be made perfect in body and soul, they will be conformed to Christ's resurrected humanity and worship and serve Him forever. This paper should not be considered a "position paper" of SGBC.

The Disciples' two questions and Jesus' answers

| Mark | Luke | Matthew |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Q1 - "Tell us, when will these things be?" (13:4a)</p> | <p>"Teacher, but when will these things be?" (21:7a)</p> | <p>"Tell us, when will these things be," (24:3a)</p> |
| <p>Q2 - And what <i>will be</i> the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" (13:4b)</p> | <p>"And what sign <i>will there be</i> when these things are about to take place" (21:7b)</p> | <p>"and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (24:3b)</p> |
| <p>A1 - "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." (13:34)</p> | <p>"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place." (21:32)</p> | <p>"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." (24:36)</p> |
| <p>A2 - So 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. (13:15)</p> | <p>"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains," (21:20)</p> | <p>"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand) "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.</p> |

Conclusions Relating to the Disciples' Questions

1. There were only two questions as indicated by Mark and Luke.
2. The "these things" of Mark, Luke and Matthew refer to the destruction of the temple *of which Jesus spoke*, "Do you see these great buildings" (Mark 13:2, Luke 21:6).
3. In the disciples' minds the, "when all these things will be fulfilled" of Mark (13:4b) happens at the same time as "Your coming, and the end of the age" of Matthew (24:3b). The disciples assumed that the destruction of the temple and Jesus' coming at the end of the age *were the same event*.¹
4. However we understand "the abomination of desolation" referred to in Matthew and Mark these events occurred during the 1st century associated with the Roman invasion of Judea and destruction of Jerusalem under Vespian and Titus, as is clear from Luke 21:20-24.

Regarding Conclusion #3

Since Jesus knows that the disciples have lumped together the two separate events (destruction of Jerusalem and His coming at end of the age), in His response he gives, what *appears* to be, another set of answers to the two questions. These are not really a second set of answers, but clarification regarding the fact that His coming at the end of the age is distinct from the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The "apparent" second set of answers to the original two questions goes like this:

Q1. - “Tell us when will these things be?” (Matt. 24:3a) **A.** - “But of that day and hour no one knows” (Matt. 24:36, Mark 13:32). “That day” being the end of the age and coming of the Son of man, distinct for the destruction of Jerusalem assured to come in their generation.

Q2. - “What will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age” (Matt. 24:3b) - When this question is viewed as separated out from the destruction event - which it wasn’t in the disciples minds but should have been - Jesus’ answer, seen in the larger context, is - There will be no signs that will be clear enough so that anyone will have time to prepare or flee. That coming will be sudden, unexpected, like lightening flashing from north to south, like the unexpected destruction the morning fire rained down on Sodom and Gomorah, like the day Noah went into the ark and shut the door behind him.

Conclusions On the Overall Structure of the Discourse

5. After “this generation”, i.e. Jesus’ generation, and the destruction of temple the disciples are not to look for specific signs which will tell them that the end of the age is about to come because, *of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father* (Mark 13:32, Matt. 24:36).
6. The practical *application* of #5 for all of Christ’s disciples, given in the remainder of Matthew (vss. 24:37 - 25:30) and Mark (13:33) is: *After this generation stop looking for signs and you must always be ready*. This is the point of the latter part of the discourse. The people in Noah’s day weren’t ready (Matt. 24:37-39). One man working in the field was not ready and is taken (Matt. 24:40). One woman grinding at the mill was not ready and is taken (24:11). Jesus summarizes the application of these examples in Matthew 24:42, “*Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming*”. But He gives still more examples - a master of a house simply does not know when a thief will try to break in, thus he needs to ready all the time (24:43-44). And, just because a master delays returning home, don’t be duped into thinking He could not suddenly arrive, so Jesus gives two more parables; that of the servants who say “my master is delaying coming” (24:45-51) and the parable of the foolish virgins who fell asleep and when the bridegroom came there was no time left for them to go and buy oil and the door was shut (25:1-13).

Anyone who promotes an eschatology *which undermines all these warnings* (six!) regarding the end of the age, for any generation *living after the destruction of Jerusalem*, has an incorrect eschatology. When someone has the “end time events” determined so well that people gain confidence that the Lord cannot come today because that person’s eschatology is broken and dangerous, for it undermines our Lord’s practical application of *His* eschatology given in the *six* warnings and illustrations - i.e. you don’t know when, so you cannot say “not today”, and if you think you can you are mistaken.²

Neither do the teachings *in the latter part* of Matthew 24-25 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., because Jesus indicated that in the 70 A.D. case *there would be a sign*, which if heeded, one *would have time to flee*. But for the events described in the *latter part* of the Discourse there is no time to flee, it is too late.

7. The understanding advocated here is: except for the signs associated with the second coming itself (Matt. 24:29-30), at which time *it is too late*, all things that Jesus referred to in this discourse have occurred within the first generation (the destruction of Jerusalem, false christs, deceptions, wars, earthquakes, persecutions, plagues, the gospel going to all nations), *and will continue to occur for an unknown length of time*, then unexpectedly and unpredicted by anyone, the end will come.

Conclusions Regarding Four Significant Questions

8. **First question:** Is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (described in Luke 21:20-24) the same event as “Christ’s coming at the end of the age” referred to in Matthew 24:3? No, for the following reasons:
 - a. Jesus’ *descriptions* describe two *different* events. There is a definite sign that the 70 A.D. destruction is about to take place but of that day no one knows. Regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, since there is an *observable* sign that it is about to take place *there is enough time to escape*, so Jesus warns His followers to flee the city and the entire region. But of “that day”, of which Jesus speaks, there is no opportunity to escape.
 - b. In Luke 21:27-28, associated with the sign of the Son of man and His coming, Jesus tells His followers “to look up and lift up your heads because your redemption draws near”. It is unlikely that Jesus can be here referring to the time of the 70 A.D. destruction of the city, for that event would be an unlikely sign that the redemption of Jesus’ persecuted followers is about to take place. They were called to face many persecutions after 70 A.D.
 - c. To understand, “for it will come as a snare on *all* those who dwell on the face of the *whole* earth” (Luke 21:35)

to refer to Israel's destruction seems highly artificial. Notice the difference between Luke's language in verse 23b, "for there will be great distress in *the land* and wrath upon *this people*", clearly referring to Israel and the land of Judea, compared with the "all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth". Two different events are being described.

Also, a world wide understanding of the expression, "all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth" forms a good parallel with "but as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." We know the Noahic event was a world wide, whole earth event.

- d. In this discourse, and in Luke 17, Jesus teaches what has been termed the "public nature" of His coming. Expressions like, "All the nations of the earth will see Him", "it will be like lightening flashing from the east to the west", "He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet", describe a world wide event. It can't be missed and you don't need to be looking for it, it will find you!

For these reasons the case is strong that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and Jesus' coming "at the end of the age" referred to in the disciples' questions as recorded in Matt. 24:3b are two separate events, even though they didn't think so when they asked their questions. Jesus describes the two events distinctly so they could begin to separate them in their thinking.

9. **Second question:** - Do Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. or are they referring to the destruction of a future Jerusalem in some way associated with the end of the age?

Some futurists have said that the only part of the Matthew 24 that refers to Jesus' generation is verse 2. Everything else refers to the distant future, giving signs that will lead up to the great tribulation and the second coming. There appear to be insurmountable difficulties with this interpretation.

- a. If this is the case, then Jesus did not answer the disciples' question, "Teacher, but when will these things be?" The disciples were referring to the destruction of the temple which Jesus had just pointed out.
- b. It seems clear that from Luke 21:20-24 that Jesus is describing the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under Vespasian and Titus.

Luke 21:20-24 is clear and note especially that Jesus predicts that there will be "great distress in the land and wrath on *this people*" and that "these are the days of vengeance". Luke 21:20-24 should be compared with Matt. 23:34-38 which was spoken at most only hours earlier and Jesus states, "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation." He then laments *the Jerusalem then standing* which He knows will be destroyed within His generation, as he tells his disciples when they call His attention to the temple buildings.

Nor are Matthew 24:15-21 and Mark 13:14-19 separate expressions from Luke 21:20-24 leading to a conclusion that Jesus described two temple destruction events. If this is the case then no gospel writer has captured all of the main points of the discourse and Matthew and Mark, who still record the disciple's question about the first century temple, leave out Jesus' answer, while Luke alone includes it? ³

- c. We should use Luke 21:20 (armies surrounding Jerusalem) and Matt. 23:34-38 (all this upon this generation and Jesus' lament over Jerusalem) to properly interpret Matt. 24:15, and Mark 13:14 (when you see the abomination of desolation). Luke 21:20 identifies the event *when* "the abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel will occur. That event given in Daniel is associated with the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., not with something that occurred during the intertestamental period, nor some event 1000s of years into the future. Why did Luke leave out the reference to Daniel, and instead include Jesus' statement that, "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies know that it's desolation is near"? Likely because he is writing to Theophilus, and has a Gentile readership in mind. He wants to make it clear that Jesus is referring to a destruction of Jerusalem by Gentile armies *and that Jesus predicted such*. This is apologetic material, Jesus is who He claimed to be.
- d. Should we understand that the passage refers to a 70 A.D. destruction *and* a future destruction? There is nothing in the immediate context that would even hint of such ideas. And it should not be forgotten that *it was Jesus who introduced the subject of the destruction of the Jerusalem of His day*, He said: "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

There appear to be no indications in the context that Jesus expects his hearers to realize He is speaking of a temple destruction in the distant future or of two separate temple destructions, one in his generation and one at a future end of the age.

10. **Third question:** How should we understand Jesus' statement, "Assuredly, I say to you, *this generation* will by no

means pass away till all these things take place” (Matt. 24:36.)?

D.A. Carson writes: “This generation” can only with the greatest difficulty be made to mean anything other than the generation living when Jesus spoke”. Even if the Greek term has a *slightly* larger semantic range, to make “this generation” refer to all believers in every age or the generation of believers living at the time of the second coming, is highly artificial. True, the term is infrequently used for family or kindred in the LXX (Gen. 31:3, 43:7, Num. 10:30), and rarely used with the idea of race or kind (Luke 16:8?, Num. 10:30, 13:22) and sometimes refers to descendants (Josh 22:28?). However, if the synoptic authors intended that their readers were to understand Jesus’ words to mean, “this race”, “this nation”, or “Jewish descendants”, there were other terms they undoubtedly would have used, which are not strongly associated with the time span of a generation as *genea* is (*sperma* for descendants, *phule* for tribe, *genos* for family or race, *laos* as in “this people”). Examining *how Jesus uses this phrase* confirms that we should understand it in its normal sense; see Matt. 11:16, 12:41-42, 16:4, 17:7, 23:34-36, Mark 8:12, Luke 11:29-30, 17:25, 9:41.

This expression has created such difficulty because many of us cannot see how *all events* Jesus described prior to this statement could be *completed* in His generation, especially the events associated with his coming (vs. 29) and the sign of the Son of Man (vs. 30). The approach recommended here is to 1) understand “this generation” in its normal sense, 2) reconsider what the phrase, “all these things” in verses 33 and 34 refers to, and 3) consider if there is another sense, other than “completed”, in how we should understand, “all these things *take place*”. Must all these things taking place mean, all these things are completed? Items 2 and 3 are discussed in section 17 below (sections 12 - 16 establish the context for the understanding expressed in 17).

11. **Fourth question** - In Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10 Jesus refers to the gospel of the kingdom being preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Was this fulfilled within the time of Jesus’ own generation?

Many preterists assert that this was fulfilled prior to 70 a.d. with the gospel spreading throughout the Roman empire. They point out that it was normal to speak this way during Paul’s lifetime. He writes in Colossians 1:6 that the gospel has come to the Colossians, “as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit” (see also Rom. 1:6). The meaning given to the phrase, “all the world” in Col. 1:6 is, “all the [then known] world”, which is likely correct *in the Colossian context*. But, is that what Jesus meant when He said the gospel will be preached to “all the nations”? Did Jesus mean, “all the [then known] nations”? I don’t think so for two reasons.

- a. **First:** The meaning we should give to the expression (in Matt. 24:14) is the same meaning we would give to similar expressions made by Jesus, such as; Matt. 28:19-20, and especially in Matt. 25:32 understanding that the “witness to all the nations” referred to in 24:14 establishes the conditions for the judgement of “all the nations” of 25:32, Mark 14:9. Also Jesus’ statement “and this gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations” appears as a parallel with the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The good seed are the sons of the kingdom, the field is the world, or all nations. So limiting Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:14 to, “all [the then known] nations” is not persuasive.
- b. **Second** - It is likely that in these words Jesus is referring to His Messianic mission, expressed by the OT prophets, which He will accomplish through His people in all the world. Passages as Isaiah 49:5-6 most likely form the biblical and historical context to Jesus’ statement that, “this gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations”.

Conclusions Regarding the Interpretation and Structure of Matthew 24:1 - 25:46

(Sections 12-18 are a verse by verse walk through of Matthew 24:4-42
based on the understanding expressed above in sections 1-11)

12. Matt. 24:4-8 (Mk. 13:5-8, Lk. 21:8-11) - Jesus describes the general state of the world in which the disciples will live. These conditions are “the beginnings of sorrows” (vs. 8). All the things Jesus mentions will *begin* to occur before His generation passes away and *will continue to occur* until the end of the age. Jesus cautions the disciples of *His generation* against assuming the end will come soon with the words, “See that you are not troubled; ... but the end is not yet.” (vs. 6), “but the end will not come immediately” (Lk. 21:9). This expectation that the present age would end and the kingdom would be established immediately in its glory was a perennial problem for the first generation of disciples (see Acts 1:6).

13. Matt. 24:9-14 (Mk. 13:9-13, Lk. 21:12-19) - Jesus describes the persecution his followers can expect while living in the world of verses 4-8. In verses 4-26 Jesus *is not giving a chronological sequence of events*. The “then” of verse 9 should not be understood as, “after the events of verses 4-8 occur ... then the events of 9-13 will begin” (note Lk. 21:12, “but before all these things”). Instead, Jesus is describing *different aspects* of what will occur during the entire interadvent period. *In the midst of the world of verses 4-8* His disciples will face persecutions, betrayals, and false prophets. In spite of all these “sorrows” the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. These “sorrows” actually provide opportunities for the spread of the gospel and Jesus promises a special blessing of the Holy Spirit to enable His disciples to endure this period (see Mk. and Lk. parallel). The persecutions described in Acts and those under Nero and others, all in their generation, are clear fulfillments of Jesus’ words.

14. Matt. 24:15-21 (Mk. 13:14-19, Lk. 21:20-24) - During this period (4-14) Jerusalem will be destroyed as described in verses 15-21. Verses 4-14 describe the beginnings of sorrows and the tribulation (vs. 9), verses 15-21 describe the great sorrow. Jerusalem’s fall will become the scene of, “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (vs. 21). The end of the age doesn’t come with this tribulation, for Jesus says, “nor ever shall be”, indicating that the age continues *after* this period of “great tribulation”. The “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 corresponds with Luke 21:23b-24, “for there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations.” The accounts of the Jewish historian Josephus chronicle the horror and suffering of those years. D.A. Carson writes: “there have been greater numbers of deaths, but never so high a percentage of a great city’s population so thoroughly and painfully exterminated and enslaved as during the fall of Jerusalem.”

In this section of the discourse Jesus answered the disciples second question, “And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?” (Lk. 21:7b), “when you see the abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place” (Matt. and Mk.), and “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies” (Lk.), “then know that its desolation is near” (Lk.), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matt.).

15. Matt. 24:22-28 (Mk. 13:20-23) - The phrase, “those days” of verse 22 is referring to the entire period Jesus has been describing beginning at verse 4, and should not be restricted to the period of the great distress associated with the destruction of Jerusalem. Those days were “shortened for the elect’s sake”. This is not a reference to only the “elect” during the destruction of Jerusalem but to all of the elect during the interadvent period. Verses 23-24, referring to false christs, are a restatement with additional emphasis of what was introduced in verses 4-5. The *entire period* will be one of spiritual deception and falsehood, Jesus returns to that theme in verse 23. Since the deceptions are so great the days must be shortened to ensure the perseverance of the elect.

Verses 4-26 are not a sequence of events, but a description of what will happen, and continue to happen, during the interadvent period. The short period of the “great distress” of Jerusalem’s fall (Lk. 21:23b, Matt. 24:21), which is a singular event during the interadvent period, is mentioned to address the disciples’ specific questions regarding the temple’s destruction.

16. Matt. 24:29-31 (Mk. 13:24-27, Lk. 21:25-28) - But, the current age, with all its persecutions, wars, deceptions, and gospel being spread throughout the world, will suddenly be brought to an end when the Son of Man comes. The phrase, “the tribulation of those days” refers to the entire period (verses 4-26) and not just “the great tribulation” (verse 21). The tribulation of Christ’s followers is not primarily associated with the destruction of Jerusalem, this they could flee since Jesus warned them to flee while there was still time. But, they must be prepared to face the tribulations to which they would be delivered up to described in verse 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.” This tribulation began first under Jews like Saul of Tarsus, then under Nero, *before* the Roman armies marched through Israel and laid siege to Jerusalem. And this tribulation for the disciples continued after Jerusalem’s destruction. Jesus didn’t say, “after the *great tribulation* of those days”, but “after the tribulation of those days” which refers us back to Verse 9. This is the period in which Jesus’ followers will be hated by all nations for His name’s sake. The events associated with the destruction of Jerusalem during 67-70 A.D. were a period of tribulation never to be equaled again, but not an end to the “tribulation of those days” of which Jesus speaks in verse 29. The “tribulation of those days” occurs amongst all the nations and is associated with the gospel going to all the nations. This tribulation occurs during the days of the *entire* interadvent period and ends with His second coming.

The phrase “*immediately* after the tribulation of those days” most likely should be understood to mean that there is no extended period of peace and deliverance from the tribulation of those days prior to His coming. Jesus said that “those days were shortened” - the tribulation rages - the days for it to rage are shortened as the Lord decides to come and bring it to an end. The disciples’ are told, when they begin to see the signs of His coming, to “look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28). The tribulation is about to end.

17. Matthew 24:32-35 (Mk. 13:28-31, Lk. 21:29-33) - Beginning with verse 32 and through chapter 25:46 Jesus gives applications and exhortations regarding His coming. The description of His coming, begun in 24:30-31 resumes at 25:31-32. All the material from 24:32 through 25:30 are exhortations and warnings regarding the fact that people will not know when He will come.

Verses 33 and 34 should be understood together. The “it” of verse 33, “when you see all these things, know that *it* is near - at the doors” is a reference to either Christ, i.e. He is near, or His coming is near. Both essentially mean the same thing. That Jesus says they can “see *all* these things” and the coming is near, *but not yet here*, means that, *the events directly associated with His coming are not part of the* “all these things” which they can see. Thus the events of verses 29-30 are not part of the “all these things” which may be observed *prior* to His coming.

Coming to verse 34 we don’t need to put a highly artificial interpretation upon the phrase, “this generation” if we define “all these things” as it is used in verse 33, to refer to all the events described in verses 4-26, but not including the events directly associated with the Lord’s coming, those described in verses 29-31. Jesus assures the disciples that this generation will not pass away until “all these things”, which they can see, will occur. The wars between nations, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, false christs, deceptions, persecutions, the destruction of Jerusalem, the gospel spreading among the nations. These will all “take place” in their generation, and continue to occur for an indefinite period of time.

What then can Jesus mean in the parable of the fig tree by, “when you see all these things *it is near, at the doors!*” Here I must be on the side of the futurists and not the preterists. I would suggest the reference is not primarily to time, but sequence of events. Once they’ve seen all these things He can come at any moment because *no other major steps in the plan of God remain to be done*. It is near in that sense. After the destruction of Jerusalem there’s nothing you can look for and say, that’s not happened so I know He’s not coming yet. All the application beginning in 24:36 denies this way of thinking. Though the reference in “it is near” is not primarily a time reference, it is not hard to see that, in view of the attitude Jesus exhorts us to have in the following paragraphs, it just as well be a time reference since we are to live as if He could come at any moment.

18. Matt. 24:36-42 (Mark 13:32-33) Once all those things have been seen, from that point forward, no one knows the day or the hour and all those things will be seen before Jesus’ generation passes away. Thus, Jesus gave a “no sooner than” limit regarding His coming. Everything described in verses 4-26 must take place first, and it will take place within one generation. This answered the disciples first question, when will these things, referring to Jerusalem’s destruction, take place?

In the discourse from verse 36 forward, all the exhortations are directed toward those living after having “seen all these things,” when no one knows when He will return. In 24:36 to 25:30 Jesus gives *six* exhortations to live with the reality that, *He is coming back, but you do not know when*. However much you may know, you can not know enough so that you can feel confident that he won’t come today because To think you can be sure He won’t come today is to deny Jesus’ practical application (24:36-25:30) of what He has just said in the earlier part of the discourse (24:1-35). If we interpret Matthew 24:3-35 in a way that nullifies the application given in 24:36-25:30 we must be in error. Interpreters must interpret the earlier sections (24:1-35) in a way that is consistent with Jesus’ application of His teaching (24:36-25:30). Jesus says we don’t know He can’t come today; Matt. 24:36, 42, 25:13. If we think we do, we are mistaken.

The believer expects Him to come, but knows he does not know when, and deals with the situation with the attitude, “I know he’s coming so I best be about the business I’m called to be about.” Thus, the believer is not caught unawares. The unbeliever does not expect Him to come. He will be caught totally unawares when it is too late (24:37-39).

Endnotes

1. Though there is not explicit information in the wording of the text indicating that the disciples thought this way, it is reasonable to assume they did because most (all?) Jews conflated (mixed together) Messiah's first and second comings. As Jesus' disciples *correctly* came to believe He was the Messiah, they began to *incorrectly* believe the kingdom, *in its full glory*, would appear immediately (Luke 19:11, see also John 12:34 - they assumed the first coming was the final, i.e. forever, coming). Messiah has come, therefore He and the kingdom in all its glory must appear and remain. They thought this way because they did not understand that the kingdom would begin with Messiah's first coming, grow throughout the world during an extended period of time in which both Jews and Gentiles would be gathered into the kingdom, and then it would come in its full glory when the Messiah appeared a second time. Jesus' many parables on the kingdom of God sought to correct this "conflation" problem. Parables such as the mustard seed, the leaven, the wheat and the tares, the absent master, all teach that His first coming and the end of the age are two events separated by a period of time. Few, if any, Jews understood this, and neither did Jesus' disciples. Even after Jesus' resurrection the disciples still did not understand these things (see Acts 1:6). The Olivet Discourse becomes much more understandable when we realize Jesus is addressing both their questions *and* their wrong assumption.

2. This is the problem with much eschatology today which enables people to conclude that Jesus won't return yet *because certain events related to the middle east have not yet occurred*. The attitude has also grown up that anytime there is war, conflict, or natural disaster we must be very close. However, some of Jesus' descriptions mention the *ordinariness* of life as going on, as in the days of Noah, marrying and giving in marriage, grinding out a days supply of flour - then the end comes. It appears to me that Jesus' teaching ought to be understood down the lines that all these things, the extraordinary events and the ordinary events, will continue to occur, and then at an unknown time the end will come. It could be during some world wide upheaval. Or it could be when they are saying to each other, "peace, safety" (1 Thes. 5:2-3) - we don't know.

3. The point here is that many interpreters either ignore or greatly de-emphasize Luke which allows them to more easily push the events as described in Matthew and Mark into the distant future. When faced with Luke the testimony is so clear that a 70 A.D. destruction in Jesus' generation is in view, some have said Matthew and Mark describe one thing, and Luke another. This simply does not work for the reasons expressed.

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