

Having started the Olivet Discourse last week, I suggested, in response to the disciples' question in vv3, our Savior describes two events. The first is the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans, the other is the destruction of the world at His second coming.

Thus, as we come to examine vv1-14 this morning, keep in mind these two events. Our Savior is describing something that would happen in the relative future (AD70), and the distant future—the first event shadowed the second.

But, and this is very important to also keep in mind, our Savior doesn't merely describe the destruction of Jerusalem, but the years that led up to it (He describes what would take place over the next 40 years). So too, He doesn't merely describe the destruction of the world, but the years that lead up to it (He describes what will take place from the first century to His second coming).

Thus, let me say at the outset to make things clear—everything our Savior says in vv1-14 describes the time that led up to AD 70, and it also describes the time that will lead to His second coming. And this is how I will interpret this passage.

For example, we read in v13—"But he who endures to the end shall be saved." This applies to the disciples, who needed salvation from the destruction of Jerusalem, and it's true of all Christians, who need salvation from the destruction of this world. Both had and have need of endurance. The Greek word rendered "endure" in v13, means "to continue or persevere"—it refers to endurance through opposition.

Our Savior describes a fivefold opposition: deception (vv4-5, 11), turbulence (v6-8), persecution (v9), betrayal (v10), lawlessness (vv12-14). These are things the disciples needed to endure, and they are things every Christian has to endure.

#### I. Deception (vv4-5, 11)

1. Verses 4-5—"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many"
2. This means, there would be many people who denied Christ, and actually portrayed themselves as the true Christ.
3. And as we read later in the NT, we find this is exactly what happened—many deceivers came claiming to be Christ.
4. Acts 5:35-39 (words of the Pharisee named Gamaliel to the Jewish council concerning the apostles)—"Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing, but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God."
5. 1Jn.4:1-3—"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world."
6. The preposition "anti" in the word "antichrist" means "in the place of"—these are people who either claim to be Christ or else sent from Christ.

7. V11—"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many"—that is, deceive many about the truth.
8. This happened in those 40 years prior to AD 70, and it will happen in every generation until Christ returns.
9. (1) The Pope of Roman Catholicism—from as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Popes referred to themselves as Vicars of Christ.
10. A Vicar is someone who represents someone—at first Popes merely represented Christ but eventually they took to themselves the attributes of Christ.
11. This means, they spoke without error, and everything they said had to be obeyed as if Christ Himself said it.
12. Brethren, don't be deceived, the pope is an antichrist, and is in the business of deceiving multitudes of people.
13. (2) The leader of the Nation of Islam—this is a sect of Islam that began in the 1930s—it largely targets black people.
14. Its present leader is Louis Farrakhan who's main temple is located in Chicago—it has hundreds of thousands of members.
15. They believe that Christ was a mere man, a prophet, similar to Abraham, Moses, David, and Muhammad.
16. Yet, they believe the Elijah Muhammad one of their early founders was the true promised Messiah or Christ.
17. After a bloody battle for authority, Louis Farrakhan arose in 1978 as the leader of what's now called the Nation of Islam.
18. Louis Farrakhan—"I represent the Messiah. I represent the Jesus and I am that Jesus. If I am not, take my life."
19. But brethren, these are just two of many examples of those, who through the ages, have claimed to be Christ.
20. Think in addition to these, of the many false prophets who are scattered throughout each and every nation.

## II. Turbulence (vv6-8)

1. Within these verses, our Savior speaks about various causes of turmoil or unrest that all of His people must endure
2. Wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, these are the beginning of sorrows.
3. This means, the turmoil caused by these things is but a miniature preview of the turmoil that's to come.
4. And again, we must understand these verses in two ways—first as they describe the 40 years prior to Jerusalem's destruction, and secondly, as they describe the years up to the destruction of the world.
5. Kim Riddlebarger—"Not only will there be political upheavals, but the very ground under our feet will quake and at times fail to produce sufficient food to feed us. These signs are not only the beginning, since they are birth pains, but they will come in greater frequency and more intensity, all interspersed with periods of peace and prosperity. The creation travails until it, too, is renewed, when the curse is taken away at our Lord's return."
6. Thus, we must not listen to those who point to national, political, and social upheaval as a sign the end has come.
7. All these things happened in the first century and they will happen in every century until Christ returns.

8. They are all but the "beginning of sorrows"—they are the beginning or foretaste of sorrow that will come.
9. The imagery is that of birth pangs—when contractions first begin, they produce a measure (degree) of pain.
10. But that is only the beginning, for when the actual event happens, the child is born, far greater pain will be experienced.
11. So too, all of these things, wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes, are only the beginnings of sorrow.
12. The pain and sorrow caused by all of these things combined, is but a preview of the pain and sorrow the world will experience at Christ's return.

### III. Persecution (v9)

1. V9—"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."
2. Again, this verse must be first applied to the first generation of disciples following Jesus' ascension until the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. Mk.13:9—"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues."
4. In other words, a primary source of persecution for the first century church was the apostate Jewish nation.
5. The apostate Jews hated Christians because they hated Christ, and they hated Christ because they hated God.
6. Matt.10:40—"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."
7. But if you notice, our Savior speaks about being hated "by all nations for My name's sake"—wherever the gospel goes it has two effects—it either makes friends of Christ or enemies.
8. Thus, this tribulation or persecution would be "for My name's sake"—because they identify with Christ.
9. The hatred they would receive, would actually be directed at Christ Himself and His word; but because they are unable to get to Christ Himself, they redirect it towards His people (who are within their grasp).

### IV. Betrayal (v10)

1. V10—"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another"—again, this has a direct reference to the Jewish disciples of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
2. Mk.13:12—"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death."
3. Lk.21:16—"You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost."
4. Again, this had its first fulfillment in the first century, where Christ often brought a sword to households.
5. Matt.10:34-35—"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'"
6. But this tragedy has been duplicated every generation since, and will continue until Christ's second coming.

7. The word rendered "offended" in Matt.24:10, literally means "to stumble" and refers to someone who falls away.
8. They are offended at the truth and thus turn away from it—they stumble at the offense of the cross (the need to suffer for Christ's name).
9. Matt.10:38-39—"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."
10. Matt.13:20-21 (stony ground hearer)—"But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles."
11. He stumbles over the cross, or the need of denying self in the face of tribulation or persecution because of the truth.
12. Thus, our Savior foretells that the time prior to Jerusalem's destruction would be characterized by betrayal, and so, every generation until He returns, will be characterized by apostasy, betrayal, and hatred.

#### V. Lawlessness (vv12-14)

1. V12—"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold"—as wickedness increases, love decreases.
2. This is a necessary result—if you remember, love fulfills the law, and thus lawfulness results in more love.
3. In contrast, lawlessness results in lovelessness—a lawless people are a loveless people—it's a certainty.
4. But I believe our Savior's words apply more directly to Christians—because lawlessness will abound in society, the love of many professing Christians will grow cold.
5. The imagery is that of something cooled by blowing—for example, a mother might blow on her child's food.
6. Here it's the tragic effects of lawlessness that cools our love—we have to persevere through a lawless world.
7. Just as the 40 years prior to Jerusalem's destruction was characterized by lawlessness, so every generation prior to Jesus's return will be characterized by lawlessness.
8. And Christians of every generation must keep their love hot—we must not allow it to grow or wax cold.
9. Now, "love" is here put for the whole of religion—love to God, to the truth, to saints, and to our neighbor.
10. For love to grow cold means, our religion grows cold, and it grows cold because lawlessness abounds.
11. This brings me to verses 13-14, which are in many ways our Savior's practical applications to verses 1-12.
12. (1) The need for endurance, v13—"But he who endures to the end shall be saved"—I understand by "saved" is meant "eternally saved."
13. This was true for that generation of believers prior to AD 70, and it's also true of every believer in every generation.
14. Simply put—no person goes to heaven who does not endure to the end—that is, does not believe to the end (or does not love to the end).
15. Lk.21:19—"By your patience possess your souls"—by your endurance you will possess or gain life.

16. The word for "soul" is the same for "life"—and so our Savior says, only those endure to the end will have life.
17. Thus, I want to answer this important question—How does our love grow cold? Or put another way—Why do people fail to endure to the end in love?
18. (a) We allow it to be cooled by intimidation—that is, we are intimidated by a lawless and wicked world.
19. It's very difficult to continue in our love to Christ, when it means parting ways with our friends and family.
20. Being a Christian is relatively easy when those around you love you, but when they turn on you that's another story.
21. Let me ask you this question—would you follow Christ if it meant hating father, mother, brother, and sister.
22. Would you or I, love Christ even if this means we face the hatred and opposition of our friends and family?
23. Would we follow Christ if this meant we endured persecution from the rulers and governors of this world?
24. You know what, to be honest, I don't think most professing Christians would, and do you know why?
25. They're not able to endure the little bit of opposition we've faced in this country over the past few years.
26. Many professing Christians have given in on so many matters, afraid to run contrary to the opinions of men.
27. Matt.10:16-17—"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues."
28. Matt.10:22—"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."
29. Matt.10:27—"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops."
30. (i) Because of God's judgment, v28—"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
31. (ii) Because of God's sovereignty, v29—"Re not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will."
32. (iii) Because of God's special love, vv30-31—"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."
33. Matt.10:37-38—"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is riot worthy of Me."
34. (b) We allow it to be cooled by participation—that is, we begin to participate in the wickedness ourselves.
35. Brethren, I trust it's an evident fact—the more we participate in lawlessness the more our love will grow cold.
36. If love would be a flame, then sin would be water, which seeks to put the flame out and thus cool its heat.
37. (c) We allow it to be cooled by distraction—by this I mean, we fail to do anything to keep our love hot.
38. This is the most common way our love grows cold—we simply stop doing the things necessary to keep it hot.
39. Rev.2:4-5—"Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works."

40. If you read the prior verses, you will find that our Savior actually praises them for their doctrinal fidelity.
41. They had tested those who say they were apostles and are not, and have found them to be liars (vv2-3).
42. Thus, v4 begins with the word "nevertheless"—"Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love"—that is, they no longer longed Christ as they once did.
43. Their love for Christ was beginning to grow cold—oh, they still went through all motives, but their love was growing cold.
44. Notice the remedy our Savior provides—"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works."
45. There are two related remedies—remember and repent—remember better days when your love for Christ was hot.
46. (2) The certainty of success, v14—"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."
47. Again, in the first place, this verse has to be applied to the first generation of Christians and the destruction of Jerusalem.
48. For the apostles, as with every other person in that time, Rome was viewed as the ends of the civilized world.
49. Col.1:23—"the gospel which you heard, was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul became a minister."
50. Here Paul doesn't mean to say, the gospel has been preached to every creature, without exception, on the face of the planet, but only that, it's been preached throughout the none civilized world.
51. In other words, our Savior is saying—even though there will be great opposition up to the destruction of Jerusalem, I will ensure My gospel is preached and My kingdom advanced.
52. But surely brethren, I trust most of us would agree, that this promise of our Savior exceeds that of the first century church.
53. Matt.28:18-19—"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. God therefore and make disciples of all the nations."
54. Acts 1:8—"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
55. Yes, it's possible, I would even suggest probable, that by "all the nations" and "end of the earth" the apostles thought in terms of known civilized nations.
56. But brethren, surely, we understand our Savior was not merely given 1<sup>st</sup> century civilized nations as an inheritance ('all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth').
57. While the kingdoms of this world will abound in lawlessness and opposition, the kingdom of Christ will also abound and advance.
58. This is why there are Christians who believe the world will get worse, and there are those who believe the kingdom will advance.
59. Which one is right? Well, there is a sense in which both are right—lawlessness will abound and Christ's kingdom will advance.
60. Matt.24:14—"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."
61. Yes, the end of Jerusalem came in AD 70 when the Romans laid waste the city, killed hundreds of thousands, and took captive a multitude.
62. And yes, it shall also come to pass, that when the last elect sinner is saved, Christ will return, and this world as we presently know it, will end.
63. This world, with all of its deception, turbulence, hatred, betrayal, and lawlessness, will end, and a new earth will take its place (an earth wherein righteousness dwells)—thus hold on dear Christian soldier—for he who endures to the end will be saved.