



MBS028

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE OLIVET DISCOURSE



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*And they asked him,
saying, Teacher,
when therefore shall
these things be? and
what shall be the
sign when these
things are about to
come to pass?
Luke 21:7*

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

The famous Olivet Discourse of our Messiah occurred between two significant events. Immediately preceding the Olivet Discourse, the Messiah spoke the final words of His public ministry found in Matthew 23:1-39, which contain the denunciation of the leadership, especially for their guilt in leading the nation to reject the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus). With these words, the public ministry of the Messiah as a Prophet came to an end, and for the remainder of His last few days on earth, He would deal exclusively with His disciples.

Immediately after the Olivet Discourse came the preparation of the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper. These events came just before His death. During the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper, the famous Upper Room Discourse occurred, in which there was a transition in the Messiah's ministry from Prophet to Priest.

Between these two significant events, the famous Olivet Discourse is recorded in three of the Gospel accounts: Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; and Luke 21:5-36. The basic purpose of the Olivet Discourse is to answer the question: When and how would the Messianic Kingdom come into being? Since Israel rejected the Kingdom offer of the Messiah, it was impossible to set up the Kingdom at that time, and it would have to be set up at a later time. However, in light of His denunciation of the leadership of Israel in Matthew 23, and in light of His closing words in Matthew 23:37-39, revealing the fact that He will not return until Israel requests His return: When, then, will the Kingdom be set up? The Olivet Discourse answers this question.

To get a complete picture, all three Gospel accounts must be studied. Not one Gospel writer recorded everything Yeshua said on that day, and each one recorded only the information most relevant to the theme of his own Gospel account. For that reason, it is necessary to study all three accounts, because only then is it possible to get a total picture of what Yeshua said during the closing days in His office as Prophet. This study will be in the form of a synthesis, with all three Gospel accounts being examined simultaneously. The basic presentation of the Olivet Discourse parallels the chronological order; if Jesus breaks the chronological order, He indicates it in some way.

This topic will be studied in four sections: the historical setting, the three questions, the parable of the fig tree, and the judgment of the Gentiles.

I. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The historical setting is recorded in Matthew 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; and Luke 21:5-6.

The Matthew account reads: *And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

After His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees, and after announcing the coming destruction of the Temple, Jesus and His disciples moved out of the Temple Compound for the last time. On the way out, the disciples pointed out the magnificent buildings of the Jewish Temple Compound. Actually, at that time, the Temple buildings were not yet completed. The Temple Compound was begun by Herod the Great in 20 B.C., but it was not finished until A.D. 64, only six years before its destruction. The words of the Olivet Discourse were spoken in the year A.D. 30, so the building of the Temple Compound had been going on for fifty years. They would continue the building for another thirty-four years. The stones, which so impressed the disciples were indeed magnificent, and some of them are still visible in the walls of the Temple Compound to this day. These “Herodian Stones” are huge, each measuring ten to twelve feet in length and weighing several tons.

Nevertheless, Yeshua reiterated the fact that this Temple was doomed for destruction; the Temple itself would not have one stone left upon another. This prophecy of the Messiah was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed the City of Jerusalem and the Temple was set on fire. Because there was so much gold in the building, a great amount of it melted and seeped into the crevices between the stones of the Temple. When the ruins cooled down, the Romans

systematically removed everything, stone-by-stone, in order to get to the gold that had solidified inside the crevices. However, this prophecy of the Messiah left the disciples perplexed.

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II. THE THREE QUESTIONS

The second section concerns the perplexity of the disciples with the prophecy of the Messiah. When they arrived at the Mount of Olives, the prophecy raised three questions on the part of four of His disciples. The questions are recorded in Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3-4; and Luke 21:7.

The Matthew account reads as follows: *And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?*

The Luke account reads: *And they asked him, saying, Teacher, when therefore shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?*

Altogether, three questions were asked which, at the same time, included requests for three signs. The first question in the Matthew passage was, “Tell us, when shall these things be?” These things refer to the destruction of the Temple that He had prophesied in the previous two verses. In the Luke passage, this first question is phrased as, “Master, but when] shall these things be?” and what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass? In other words, the first question was: When will the Temple be destroyed, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?

The second question was, “What shall be the sign of your coming?” This question does not concern the Rapture of the Church because the Rapture is imminent and can happen at any moment, having no warning sign preceding it. However, the Second Coming will be preceded by a sign, and the disciples asked what the sign would be.

The third question was, “What shall be the sign of the end of the world?” The Greek word translated world actually means “age.” They asked for a third sign, and that was, “What will be the sign that the end of this age has begun?” In rabbinic theology of that day, the rabbis spoke of two ages: “this age,” meaning the age in which we now live, and “the age to come,” meaning the Messianic Age. So the question is, “What is the sign that the last days of this age have begun and will lead to the Messianic Age?”

Altogether, then, there were three questions in which the disciples asked for three signs to watch for. Yeshua answered these questions, but not in the same order as they were asked. Nor are all three answers found in all three accounts. While Matthew and Mark recorded the

answers to the second and third questions, they ignored the answer to the first question. It is Luke who recorded the Messiah's answer to the first question.

NOTES**A. The General Characteristics of the Church Age**

Before the Messiah began to answer any of the three questions, He first provided some general characteristics of the Church Age in Matthew 24:4-6; Mark 13:6-7; and Luke 21:8-9.

The Matthew passage reads as follows: *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet.*

Rather than immediately answering all three questions, Jesus decided first to give some general characteristics of the Church Age, none of which meant that the end had begun. Jesus wanted to make sure that the disciples would not jump to certain conclusions because of various events, and so He chose to tell them of things that would not mean that the end had begun. There were to be two general characteristics of the Church Age.

1. The Rise of False Messiahs

The first general characteristic would be the rise of false messiahs. Historically, Yeshua was the first Person who claimed to be the Messiah. After Him, many came claiming to be the messiah. From the time of Yeshua until about the middle of the 1850s, a great number of Jewish men—from Simon Bar Cochba to rabbetel Tzvi and Jacob Frank—arose claiming to be the messiah, and indeed led many astray. Gentiles have also claimed the messianic title. But this was to be a general characteristic of the Church Age, and the existence of false messiahs in no way meant that the end had begun.

2. The Existence of Local Wars

The second general characteristic of the Church Age would be local wars. Jesus stated that when they heard of wars and rumors of wars, these things also would not be signs of the end. The existence of local wars here and there would in no way indicate that the end had begun. Even if such local wars take place in the Middle East, it is not necessarily prophetically significant.

Concerning both false messiahs and local wars, in verse 6 Yeshua said, “for all these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet.” Luke emphasized this point in his passage when he wrote, “for these things must needs come to pass first; but the end is not immediately” (Lk. 21:9). In other words, the rise of false messiahs and long periods of local wars will necessarily come first. But neither of these things would in any way, shape or form be signs that the end had begun.

B. The Sign of the End of the Age

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Having provided for His disciples certain characteristics that would in no way indicate that the end had begun, Jesus next proceeded to answer the third question, which concerned the sign that the end of the age had truly begun. It is recorded in Matthew 24:7-8; Mark 13:8; and Luke 21:10-11.

The Matthew account reads: *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail.*

According to all three Gospel writers, the sign of the end of the age is said to be when nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. This act will be coupled with famines and earthquakes in various places, and then Yeshua clearly stated that this would be the beginning of travail. The term travail means “birth pang.” It refers to the series of birth pangs that a woman undergoes before giving birth to a baby. The prophets pictured the last days as a series of birth pangs before the birth of the new Messianic Age. The beginning of travail, the first birth pang, and the sign that the end of the age has begun is when “nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”

Jesus had already clearly stated that local wars between a few nations would not indicate that the end had begun. But then He said that when there is “nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom,” this will mean the end of the age has begun.

To understand what the idiom “nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” means, it is necessary to return to the Jewish origin of these statements. This expression is a Hebrew idiom for a world war. Yeshua’s statement here is that when a world war occurs, rather than merely a local war, that world war would signal that the end of the age had begun.

This is quite in keeping with the Jewish writings of this same period. One Jewish source known as the Zohar Chadash states:

“At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world. Nation shall be against nation and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites.”

Another Jewish source known as the Bereshit Rabbah states:

“If you shall see the kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah (XLII:4).”

The rabbis clearly taught that a world-wide conflict would signal the coming of the Messiah. Yeshua corrected this idea slightly, for He said that when the world war occurs, while it does not signal the coming of the Messiah, it will signal that the end of the age has begun. These birth pangs that Yeshua talked about are the same as the “footsteps” that the rabbis talked about. The “footsteps of the Messiah” had to do with the series of events that will lead up to the coming of the

Messiah. The title of the 500-page prophecy book, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, is based on this Jewish concept, reflected in the Matthew account concerning nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom.

World War I, 1914-1918, was the fulfillment of this particular prophecy, for that was the First World War. As virtually all historians agree, World War II was merely a continuation of World War I. Furthermore, both world wars had a decisive impact on Jewish history. World War I gave impetus to the growth of the Zionist movement, and World War II led to the re-establishment of the Jewish State. Since World War I, history has entered the last days of the Church Age. However, the last days are an extended period of time.

The sign that the end of the age has begun is the world-wide conflict fulfilled by World War I and World War II.

C. Personal Experiences of the Apostles

Having provided an answer to the third question regarding the sign of the end of the age, the Messiah then turned back to His own time to spell out some of the personal experiences that the apostles would have to undergo. This is recorded in Mark 13:9-13 and Luke 21:12-19.

The Luke account reads: *But before all these things, they shall lay their hands on you, and shall persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. It shall turn out unto you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. But ye shall be delivered up even by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience ye shall win your souls.*

The Luke account clearly states that what is about to be described is going to occur before the sign that the end of the age has begun, as the passage begins with the phrase, *But before all these things*. Jesus then described some personal experiences that the apostles were to go through after He departed from them. Altogether, He listed nine things. First, in verse 12a, they will be rejected by the Jews. Secondly, in verse 12b, they will be rejected by the Gentiles. Thirdly, in verse 13, they will undergo persecutions, but these persecutions will provide opportunities for testimony. Fourthly, they will succeed in proclaiming the gospel everywhere (Mk. 13:10); this is verified by Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:6, 23. Fifth, in verses 14-15, they need not worry about preparing defenses before their trials, because they will be given divine utterance when they are brought before judgment. Sixth, in verse 16, they will be rejected by their own family members. Seventh, in verse 17, they will be hated by all men to the point that some will be martyred. Eighth, in verse 18, nevertheless, their salvation is assured. And ninth, in verse 19, they will succeed in winning many souls.

That the apostles did, indeed, experience all these things is well-known both from the Book of Acts and from other historical records that trace the activities of the apostles beyond that which is recorded in the Book of Acts. While the Messiah had already answered their third question concerning the sign of the end of the age, before proceeding to answer their other two questions, He chose to predict some of the personal experiences that they would have to undergo before the sign of the end of the age would come. They were not to expect the end of the age to come too soon. In fact, Jesus predicted that many of them would die before the end of the age ever began.

D. The Sign of the Fall of Jerusalem

Only after having spelled out clearly that the apostles would have to undergo a period of suffering as well as have a successful ministry did Yeshua go on to answer their first question concerning the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The answer is recorded only by Luke in 21:20-24: *But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. Then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains; and let them that are in the midst of her depart out; and let not them that are in the country enter therein. For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

In answer to their first question, the Messiah gave them the sign that would mark the fact that Jerusalem was about to be destroyed. The sign was the surrounding of the City of Jerusalem by armies. The Jewish believers were told that, when they saw this sign, they were to leave Jerusalem and Judea and flee outside the Land. This sign would mark the coming desolation of Jerusalem and, from that point on, Jerusalem will be continually “trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

This prophecy was fulfilled in a very marvelous way. In the year A.D. 66, the first Jewish revolt broke out against the Romans. When the revolt first began, the Roman general in the Land, Cestus Gallus, came with his armies from Caesarea and surrounded Jerusalem. The surrounding of the city marked the sign that Jesus had promised, and the Jewish believers knew that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed. Jesus had commanded the Jewish believers to desert the city when they saw this happening. However, it was impossible to do so while the Romans were surrounding the city.

Then Cestus Gallus noticed that his supply lines were not secure. He did not have enough supplies to maintain an extended siege, so he lifted the siege of Jerusalem in order to go back to Caesarea. On the way, he was attacked by Jewish forces and killed. Temporarily, the city

was no longer surrounded by the armies, so every single Jewish believer was able to leave Jerusalem. They crossed the Jordan River and set up a new community of Jewish believers in the town of Pella in the Transjordan. They were joined by Jewish believers from Judea, Galilee, and the Golan. There, they waited for the prophecy of Yeshua to be fulfilled.

In the year A.D. 68, a new Roman general by the name of Vespasian and his son, Titus, again besieged the city, and in the year A.D. 70, the city and the Temple were destroyed. Altogether, 1,100,000 Jews were killed in this final onslaught, but not one Jewish believer died because they obeyed the words of their Messiah. Since that time, Jerusalem has indeed been trodden down of the Gentiles and continues to be so to the present day. Jerusalem will not be free of Gentile nations treading upon her until the Messiah returns.

With these words, the Messiah answered their first question, the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. That left one more question to be answered.

E. The Great Tribulation

In preparation for answering the second question, the Messiah turned to the Great Tribulation itself. His words concerning this period are recorded in Matthew 24:9-26 and Mark 13:14-23. In this section, the Messiah spoke of the events of both the first half and the second half of the Tribulation.

1. The Events of the First Half of the Tribulation

The events concerning the first half of the Tribulation are recorded in Matthew 24:9-14: *Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.*

Although these verses are very similar to those recorded in Mark 13:9-13 and Luke 21:12-19, the differences show that Matthew is not dealing with the same thing. Luke clearly stated that the events he was describing came before the sign of the end of the age, when nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. However, in the Matthew account, the passage begins with the word, Then, pointing out that the Messiah is now describing what will come after the event of nation rising up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. While the words tend to be similar, these similarities do not prove sameness. Mark and Luke described events that will happen to the apostles before the sign of the First World War, while Matthew dealt with events of the first half of the Tribulation that would come

after the sign of the First World War.

Altogether, the Messiah pointed out five events that will occur during the first half of the Tribulation. First, in verses 9-10, there will be tremendous persecution of the saints, a fact also given in Revelation 6:9-11. The one-world religious system, known as Ecclesiastical Babylon, will be doing the persecuting and will be responsible for the death of the saints during the first half of the Tribulation (Rev. 17:1-6).

Secondly, in verse 11, the first half of the Tribulation will be characterized by the rise of many false prophets. This point is also brought out in Zechariah 13:2-6.

Thirdly, in verse 12, there will be a tremendous rise of sin and iniquity, because evil will no longer be restrained (II Thes. 2:6-7).

Fourthly, in verse 13, those Jews who survive to the end of the Tribulation will be saved.

The fifth event of the first half of the Tribulation will be the world-wide preaching of the gospel in verse 14, which will be conducted by the 144,000 Jews of Revelation 7:1-8. The results of the ministry of the 144,000 are recorded in Revelation 7:9-17, where it clearly states that a great multitude of Gentiles will come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

2. The Events of the Second Half of the Tribulation

Having given some events of the first half of the Tribulation, the Messiah next turned to the events of the second half, recorded in Matthew 24:15-28 and Mark 13:14-23. More detail is given concerning the events of the second half of the Tribulation; altogether, the Messiah said eight things in the Matthew account.

First in verse 15, the Messiah dealt with the specific event that will mark the beginning of the second half of the Tribulation, *“When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand), ...”*

The abomination of desolation will involve two stages. The first stage will be when the Antichrist will take over the Jewish Temple, sit down in the Holy of Holies, and declare himself to be God (II Thes. 2:3-10). The second stage of the abomination of desolation will be when the False Prophet will make an image of the Antichrist and stand it up in the Holy of Holies (Rev. 13:11-15; Dan. 12:11). This act of the abomination of desolation will signal that the second and worst half of the Tribulation has begun.

Secondly, the Abomination of Desolation will be the signal for the Jews to flee out of the Land in verses 16-20: *... then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take*

out the things that are in his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath:

...

This flight is also recorded in Revelation 12:13-17. This passage reflects a sense of urgency in Israel's flight. In fact, the whole emphasis is on speed and quickness. This emphasis is especially evident in the Messiah's listing of the three difficulties that may be encountered in this flight. The first difficulty is for women who are pregnant or have nursing infants. In both cases, this makes quick flight difficult as any woman in that condition can certainly verify. The second difficulty is in relation to the Sabbath. And the third difficulty is in relation to the winter.

Why not in winter since it seldom snows in Israel? What could possibly be the problem with winter? The reason for this prayer request lies in a situation as things exist in Israel. There are several differences between the U.S. and Israel. One of these differences is the manner in which weather patterns occur. In the U.S., the land receives rain during all four seasons, but this is not the case in Israel, which follows a specific rainy season. Between April and October, not one drop of rain will fall throughout the country. Israel receives all of her rain between October and April. When it does rain during the winter months, it often comes down heavily, creating flood conditions at times. Another difference between the U.S. and Israel is the manner in which highways are built. When Americans build their highways and come to a dry water gully, although it is dry, they will still build a bridge across it. That is not the case in Israel where the roads are paved into the water gullies and out again. Technically, these water gullies are known as wadis. Wadis are dry all summer and also most of the winter. However, during the winter rainy months when rain falls along the mountain ranges of Israel, water rushes down the wadis with tremendous speed and force, washing out the highways. On more than one occasion while driving around Israel, we would have to turn back or make a wide U-turn because a flooded wadi had destroyed the road. From other passages, we realize that when the Jews escape from Jerusalem they will have to go by means of these wadis. If this event takes place during the winter months, it will make escape that much more difficult.

The second prayer request is that it should not happen on the Sabbath day either. Why not on the Sabbath day? On the Sabbath day in Israel, all public transportation closes down because the busses and trains are all locked up. Unless one owns his own automobile, it will be extremely difficult to make an escape from the country. Only one-third of the Israeli population own their own cars; two-thirds are without cars. The majority of the population is heavily dependent upon public transportation, which is non-existent on the Sabbath day. If this event happens on the Sabbath day, it will make escape that

much more difficult.

For these two reasons, they are advised to pray that this abomination of desolation, which will indeed come to pass, will not come on the Sabbath day or during the winter months, during the rainy season.

The third thing mentioned is the reason for such a flight in verse 21: *... for then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be.*

At this time world-wide anti-Semitism will break out in all its fierceness. Satan's attempt to annihilate the Jews once-and-for-all will have begun in earnest.

Fourthly, Israel will survive this terrible period, though greatly reduced in number according to verse 22: *And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

Fifth, the second half of the Tribulation will be characterized by a false messiah, as typified in the counterfeit son, the Antichrist in verse 23: *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Here; believe it not.*

Sixth, the latter half of the Tribulation is described in verse 24: *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

The latter half of the Tribulation will be characterized by many false signs, miracles, and wonders for the purpose of world-wide deception. These false signs will be performed by both the Antichrist (II Thes. 2:8-10) and by the False Prophet (Rev. 13:11-15).

Seventh, the Messiah gives a warning in verses 25-27: *Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, he is in the inner chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning comes forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.*

The Messiah warned that there will be people saying that the Messiah has returned here or that the Messiah has returned there, and that the Second Coming has secretly occurred. The Messiah warned His disciples not to believe any such rumor or statement and come out of hiding because, unlike His First Coming, the Second Coming will not be in secret. When the Messiah returns the second time, all men will see it, for it will be like a flash of lightning surrounding the world.

And eighth, the Messiah gave a hint as to the place of His Second Coming in verse 28: *Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

He said that where the body is, there will the eagles better translated as "vultures" be gathered together. The "body" refers to Israel while the "vultures" refer to the Gentile nations coming against the body of Israel. The place of the Second Coming of the Messiah will be in that place where the body of Israel is located, and where the Gentile

nations are gathered together. The exact place is known in Hebrew as Bozrah or as Petra in Greek. That is where the body will be (Mic. 2:12-13); that is where the “vultures” will be gathered to come against them (Is. 34:1-7; 63:1-6); and that will be the place of the Second Coming (Hab. 3:3).

To summarize this passage, the Messiah presented the events of the second half of the Tribulation, showing it to be an especially difficult period for Israel, which will culminate in the Second Coming of the Messiah. But He has not yet answered the second question concerning the sign that will signal the Messiah’s Second Coming. Next, He turned to this question.

F. The Sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah

The answer to the second question is recorded in Matthew 24:29-30; Mark 13:24-26; and Luke 21:25-27.

The Matthew account reads: *But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

The Luke account reads: *And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

In the Matthew account, Yeshua stated that just preceding the sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah, there will be a total blackout of the earth. No light will penetrate to the earth from the sun...the moon...and the stars (Mat. 24:29). Luke adds that there will be a great amount of perplexity on the earth as both physical and non-physical things are shaken in expectation (Lk. 21:25-26).

At this point, Matthew states that the sign of the Son of man will appear in verse 30a. As this sign is coupled with God’s glory, it is obviously the Shechinah Glory light that will signal the Second Coming of the Messiah. The answer to the second question, “What will be the sign of the Second Coming?” is: the Shechinah Glory. But immediately after the tribulation of those days, there will be a total blackout with no light penetrating at all, followed by a sudden, glorious, tremendous light that will penetrate through the blackout. This Shechinah light will be the sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah. The light will be followed by the return of the Messiah Himself in verse 30b.

The Messiah had now answered all three questions. The sign of the

destruction of the Jewish Temple was to be the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies. The sign that the end of the age had begun was to be a world-wide war. The sign of the Second Coming would be the Shechinah Glory light breaking through the world-wide blackout. The first sign was given in A.D. 66; the second sign was given in 1914-1918; and at the end of the Tribulation, the third sign will be given as well.

Although Yeshua had answered all three questions, He still wished to give more information regarding the last days.

G. The Re-gathering of Israel

Since the Jewish prophets had predicted in great detail the world-wide re-gathering of Israel, Jesus did not spend much time with this, but only specified that it will occur after His Second Coming. This re-gathering is found in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27.

The Matthew account reads: *And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

The Mark passage reads: *And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.*

Following the Second Coming, the Messiah will send his angels all over the world to re-gather every Jew and bring them back into their Land. The background to the Matthew passage is Isaiah 27:12-13, which prophesied that the final restoration of Israel will be signaled by the sound of a great trumpet. The background to the Mark passage is Deuteronomy 30:4, which also emphasizes that the final restoration will come from two localities: earth and Heaven. Those who are gathered from the uttermost parts of the earth will be living Israel, the one-third Remnant that survives the Tribulation. Those who are gathered from the uttermost part of heaven will be the resurrected Old Testament saints. This part of the Olivet Discourse summarizes many Old Testament prophecies, specifying that the final world-wide restoration will come only after the Second Coming, not before (Is. 11:11-12:6; 43:5-7; Jer. 23:5-8; 31:7-14; Ezek. 11:16-21; 20:40-42; 36:22-31).

H. The Exhortation

Having given an outline of things to come from their own day until the beginning of the Kingdom, the Messiah then presented an exhortation, recorded in Luke 21:28: *But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draws nigh.*

The exhortation is that when believers see these things begin to come to pass, then they are to look up—raise their heads—because it will mark the imminent redemption of the believers from this world. In

Luke's context, the expression these things refers back to Luke 21:20-24, which was the sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. Once Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 that fulfilled every and any prophecy that had to be fulfilled before the Rapture. Once the city and the Temple were destroyed, it fulfilled the judgment for the unpardonable sin. Once that happened, it rendered the Rapture of the Church imminent. Imminency does not mean "soon." It only means that it can now happen at any moment of time. It should be noted what Jesus did not say. He did not say that only when all these things have come to pass, then look up for your redemption draws nigh. He did not say we must wait until the end of the Tribulation before looking up. What He did say was, "When you see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, for your redemption draws nigh." The beginning part was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Once the beginning had occurred, the Rapture became imminent.

III. THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

The Olivet Discourse now comes to the third section known as the parable of the fig tree, recorded in Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-32; and Luke 21:29-33.

The Matthew account reads: *Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and puts forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

The Luke account reads: *And he spoke to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*

This section has often been misused by those who have attempted to date the Rapture or the Second Coming of the Messiah. The fig tree is often taken to mean the re-establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Then, within a generation, that is forty years from 1948, the Second Coming must occur. This would place the Second Coming in 1988. Because the Rapture precedes the Second Coming by at least seven years, it would place the Rapture by 1981. This is simply date-setting—something the Scriptures clearly forbid. Nevertheless, date-setters continue to revise their 1981 "prophecy" year after year. Since 1988 has now come and gone, the new focus is to start the forty years with the Six-Day War in 1967. So now, some are predicting the return of the Lord around 2006-2007.

There are two errors in this type of reasoning and its exposition. First, the Bible nowhere limits the period of a generation to simply forty years. The one place where the term “generation” is given a specific length of time, it is reckoned to be one hundred years (Gen. 15:13-16). Actually, the term “generation” can mean “twenty,” “forty,” “seventy,” “eighty,” and “one hundred” years. Sometimes it simply means “contemporaries,” much as we use the term today. That is the way it is used here. A second mistake made in this reasoning is assuming that the fig tree is a symbol of Israel and that this passage is speaking of the re-establishment of the Jewish State in 1948. This has not been mentioned anywhere in the entire Olivet Discourse. The re-establishment of Israel has merely been assumed and presupposed in the passage, but it has never been dealt with specifically. Furthermore, the usual scriptural symbol for Israel is the vine.

However, the real point of this passage is that the fig tree is being used literally as an illustration, not as a symbol for Israel. This is clearly seen from verse 29 of the Luke passage, which reads “Behold the fig tree, and all the trees.” If the fig tree represents Israel, what, then, do all the other trees represent? If they refer to other nations, and since a number of nations have risen—and keep rising—since 1948, then when would the forty-year countdown really begin? Neither the fig tree nor the other trees are used symbolically to refer to any nation or nations; rather, they are being used literally as an illustration.

The point of the illustration is this: When the fig tree, and all the other trees begin to blossom, it is a sure sign that summer is on its way, because blossoming occurs in the spring. Then, in application of the illustration, Jesus said, “Even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors.” Just as a blossoming fig tree means that summer is on its way, in the same way, when these events that Yeshua spoke about occur, then they can know that His return is near.

But what is it that signals the soon return of the Lord? It is not the re-establishment of Israel in 1948, because Jesus never mentioned that event in this passage. Rather, the event that He was speaking of was the Abomination of Desolation. When the Abomination of Desolation occurs, it will signal the soon return of the Messiah, namely only 3_ years later. More specifically, it will be exactly 1,260 days from the Abomination of Desolation until the Second Coming.

Then Yeshua stated that the generation that sees this event—the Abomination of Desolation—will still be around when the Second Coming of the Messiah occurs 3_ years later. The point of verse 34 is not that the generation that sees the re-establishment of the Jewish State will still be here at the Second Coming, but rather, the Jewish generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation will still be here at the Second Coming. Verse 34 is intended to be a word of comfort

in light of the world-wide attempt at Jewish destruction. It must be kept in mind that the Abomination of Desolation signals Satan's and the Antichrist's final attempt to exterminate the Jews. The fact that the Jewish generation will still be here when the Second Coming of the Messiah occurs shows that Satan's attempt toward Jewish destruction will fail, and the Jewish saints of the second half of the Tribulation can receive comfort from these words.

The "coming" referred to in this passage is not the Rapture, for which no signs are promised, but the Second Coming itself. This is evident from the Luke account, for he states that what the Abomination of Desolation signals is the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Millennial Kingdom will be a result of the Second Coming, not of the Rapture.

Again, the point of this section is not that the fig tree represents Israel in 1948, but rather, the fig tree is being used literally as an illustration. The point of the illustration is to provide a word of comfort that the world-wide attempt to destroy the Jews is destined for failure, for the Jewish generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation will still be around when the Messiah returns.

A. The Rapture of the Church

Now the passage turns to the issue of the Rapture of the Church, the timing of which cannot be known in advance. The discussion concerning the Rapture is in Matthew 24:36-42 and Luke 21:34-36.

The Matthew account reads: *But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord comes.*

Luke's version reads: *But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare: for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*

Within premillennial and pretribulational circles, the majority view today is that this passage is speaking of the Second Coming rather than the Rapture. Two main reasons are given. First, contextually, Jesus has been speaking about the Second Coming and since this passage follows that discussion then, logically, it would mean that He is speaking of the same thing. Secondly, the "taking away" of

Matthew 24:40-41 is taken to be the same as verse 39, which is a “taking away” in judgment. Hence, the “taking away” is in judgment at the Second Coming, not the blessing of the Rapture.

In answer to the first point, Matthew 24:36 begins with the word, But, which in Greek is *peri de*. The *peri de* construction in Greek is a contrastive introduction of a new subject; hence, it is often translated as: But concerning (I Cor. 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; I Thes. 5:1). The use of this construction points to the introduction of a new subject. So, yes, He has been discussing the Second Coming until this point. However, the *peri de* means that He is now introducing a new subject, and that is the Rapture. In answer to the second point, in Greek, the “taking away” in verses 40-41 is a different term than the one used in verse 39, and so it need not be interpreted as the same kind of “taking away.”

Concerning the issue of the Rapture, the Messiah makes four main points. First, in verse 36, as to the question of when; this is known only by one Person, and that is God the Father. It was not known by the angels, nor was it known by the Son in His humanity, but only by God the Father. If the timing of the Rapture has been hidden from both angels and the humanity of Jesus, how much more so is it hidden from mankind in general! For that reason, the only clue given concerning the timing of the Rapture is that it will occur some time before the Tribulation, and it may not necessarily occur just before the Tribulation. It might easily occur ten or twenty years before that time. As to the question of when the Rapture will occur, the answer is simple: no one knows. This is not true of the Second Coming of the Messiah, which will someday be a datable event; it will occur exactly seven years after the signing of the seven-year covenant and 3½ years—42 months or 1,260 days—after the Abomination of Desolation.

Secondly, according to verses 37-39, there will not be any signs preceding the Rapture as there will be signs preceding the Second Coming. When the Rapture occurs, it will happen while there are normal conditions on the earth. The Flood also came while there were normal conditions on the earth, while men were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. None of these things are sinful, but are necessary for human survival and propagation. While normal conditions existed on earth, the Noahic Flood arrived and swept them all away. In the same way, while there are normal conditions on the earth, the Rapture will suddenly occur, sweeping away all believers in verses 40-41. This will not be true of the Second Coming. When that event occurs, conditions on earth will be far from normal, as earlier sections of the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation clearly show.

Thirdly, in verses 40-42, when it comes, it will mean a separation. According to the key passages on the Rapture (Jn. 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:50-58; I Thes. 4:13-18), it will be a separation of the believer from

the unbeliever.

Fourthly, there is the supplication in Luke 21:34-36 to watch for the purpose of escaping the Tribulation. Throughout the Olivet Discourse, to watch means, “to be ready.” Watching is the equivalent of readiness, and readiness is equivalent to salvation. So the means of escaping the Tribulation is by means of salvation. Only those who accept the Messiah before the Rapture of the Church can be ready and watching.

Luke gives two reasons for watching: first, so that believers may escape all these things that shall come to pass during the Tribulation. What Luke states in verse 35 should not be missed. He points out that the Tribulation will “come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth.” In other words, no one living on the earth can escape the effects of the Tribulation. It will fall upon all earth-dwellers. In verse 36, Luke also states there is a possibility to escape all these things that shall come to pass. This possibility is not if one is on the earth. Hence, to escape all these things, one must be off the earth. The second reason for watching is so that the believer might stand before the Son of Man in Heaven. This will be the result of the Rapture: we stand before the Son of Man and by standing before Him, we escape all these things. Both of these things can only be accomplished by the Rapture, and that is why to watch is to be saved.

B. Parables Urging Watchfulness, Readiness, and Laboring

In order to reinforce His closing point in the previous section, the Messiah presented five parables, all having as their main point the urging of watchfulness, readiness, and laboring. These five parables are recorded in Matthew 24:43-25:30 and Mark 13:33-37. In all these parables, the distinctions are not between different kinds of believers, but between believers and unbelievers. They express differences of attitude in believers and unbelievers toward the Second Coming, not the Rapture; the former will be ready, while the latter will not.

In the parabolic method of teaching, a parable or a series of parables are given and then the application is made. The application of these parables will be made to the judgment of the sheep and goats.

1. The Parable of the Porter: Mark 13:33-37

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house comes, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

This parable refers to the Second Coming. The phrase, “for ye know not when the time is,” is further clarified by the phrase, “whether at

even, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.” Although the day of the Second Coming will be known once the Tribulation starts, the time of the day is not known.

The main point of this parable is the emphasis on watching for the Lord’s return. As was already noted, watching is always in the sense of readiness, and readiness is always in the sense of salvation; only those who are saved are going to be able to escape these things.

2. The Parable of the Master of the House: Matthew 24:43-44

But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man comes.

The emphasis of the second parable is on readiness. Again, being ready can only be obtained by means of salvation.

3. The Parable of the Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant: Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he had. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord tarries; and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expects not, and in an hour when he knows not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

The emphasis of the third parable is on laboring. In order to make sure that believers do not misconstrue the previous emphasis on watching as meaning, just to sit there and look at the sky, the third parable emphasizes the necessity of working while one is waiting. When the Messiah returns, it will be while believers are busy laboring. The believer will be found laboring; but the unbeliever will be found not laboring. What this laboring entails is discussed next.

Again, the parable refers to believers and unbelievers and to the Second Coming. The phrase, “a day when he expects not,” refers to the unbeliever who is not expecting the Second Coming. The next two parables provide a more extended treatment of the emphasis of the first three parables.

4. The Parable of the Ten Virgins: Matthew 25:1-13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they

all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.

The emphasis of this parable is again on watching and readiness. The virgins represent neither the Church nor Israel in this parable, but simply serve to illustrate a point. From the Old Testament, the contrast of wise and foolish is a contrast between believers and unbelievers.

The background of this parable is the Jewish wedding system. When the marriage was to be consummated, the bridegroom would go to the home of the bride to fetch her and bring her to his home. As he approached his own home, he would be met by a procession of virgins who would conduct the bride and groom to the marriage ceremony, which would be followed by the marriage feast.

When the bridegroom—the Messiah—returns to earth with His Bride—the Church—for the marriage feast, the virgins will be responsible for both watching for His return, and being ready to light the lamps upon His return. The five virgins who were wise will be the ones who are believers; hence, they will be both ready and watching. They are the ones who have the oil, a common symbol of the Holy Spirit. Only the wise ones enter the marriage feast, the common symbol for the Messianic Kingdom. Because the Messiah is pictured as already with His Bride—the Church, which had been, raptured—these who have the oil are people who became believers during the Tribulation. They are saved and invited to the wedding feast as guests. The five foolish virgins will be the unbelievers and, therefore, will be neither ready nor watching. They do not have any oil. It should be noted that the text does not say that the foolish virgins ran out of oil, but that they have no oil with them; they never had the oil or the Holy Spirit to begin with.

That is the whole point of this parable and it would be wrong to try to develop too many details from a simple parable. In this parable, there is an extended emphasis on watching and readiness, both of which are accomplished by faith in Yeshua the Messiah. Again, only the wise virgins enter the marriage feast.

5. The Parable of the Talents: Matthew 25:14-30

For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey.

Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants comes, and makes a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, you delivered unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter you into the joy of your lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter you into the joy of your lord. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter; and I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the earth: lo, you have your own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; you ought therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that has the ten talents. For unto every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not, even that which he has shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

The point of this parable is to reemphasize, in an extended way, the necessity to keep on laboring while watching and waiting. Again, the distinction is not between different kinds of believers, but between believers and unbelievers. The believers are servants who will keep on laboring while they are watching for the Lord's return; but the unbeliever cannot labor in the work of the Lord, and therefore will have nothing to show at the time of the Lord's return. He is declared to be the wicked one. The wicked servant ends up in the place of the outer darkness, the place of the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, the descriptive phrases of the Lake of Fire.

6. Summary and Application

Altogether, the Messiah presented five parables: three short parables and two extended parables. All emphasized the need for watchfulness, readiness, and laboring in the work of the Lord while waiting for His return. The first parable emphasized watching; the second one, readiness; the third one, laboring; the fourth one, watching and readiness; and the fifth one, laboring. The means by which believers will be watching, ready, and laboring is described in the next section. The application of these parables can be made both to the Rapture and the Second Coming. Concerning the Rapture, since no man can know the day of the Rapture of the Church, he cannot wait to receive the Messiah until just before He returns. The only way one can indeed be watching, ready, and laboring in the work of the Lord is by means of accepting Him now. Concerning the Second Coming, while it will be known when that occurs, nevertheless the way believers of the

Great Tribulation must also be watching, ready, and laboring will be seen in the concluding section of this study.

NOTES

IV. THE JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILES

The fourth section concerns the judgment of the Gentiles. The Olivet Discourse comes to an end with the judgment of the Gentiles in Matthew 25:31-46. The timing of the judgment will be after the Second Coming of the Messiah when the Throne of David will be set up according to verse 31: *But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: ...*

The place of the judgment is not given in this passage, but it is found in a parallel passage, Joel 3:1-3. This is a judgment that will take place just outside the City of Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which lies between the city and the Mount of Olives.

The subjects of the judgment are individuals in verses 32-33: *... and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

This will be an individual judgment rather than a national one. The Greek word translated nations has the primary meaning of “Gentiles” and is so translated elsewhere in the New Testament. All the Gentiles who survive the Tribulation and the Campaign of Armageddon will be gathered into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and will then be separated by the Messiah; some are brought to His left side and some are brought to His right side. Those brought to His right are called the sheep Gentiles, and those brought to His left are called the goat Gentiles.

The basis of this judgment is going to be anti-Semitism or pro-Semitism in verses 34-45. Individual Gentiles will be judged on the basis of their treatment of the Messiah’s brethren, namely, the Jewish people during the Tribulation. The term brethren here is used in the sense of “brethren in the flesh.” Some people have tried to make the term brethren in this passage refer to saints in general, but this would render the passage meaningless. There are three specific groups mentioned in this passage: the sheep Gentiles, the goat Gentiles, and the brethren. If the brethren are saints in general, then who are the sheep, since they, too, have eternal life? It would be very confusing to make both the sheep and the brethren as saints of the same caliber. From this context alone, it should be very evident that the brethren must refer to Jewish people because the saints are the sheep and the unsaved are the goats. Furthermore, the parallel passage of Joel 3:1-3 makes it without a doubt that these brethren are the Jewish people of the Tribulation.

The judgment of the sheep Gentiles is in verses 34-40: *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we you hungry, and fed you? or athirst, and gave you drink? And when saw we you a stranger, and took you in? or naked, and clothed you? And when saw we you sick, or in prison, and came unto you? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.*

The sheep, who are the pro-Semites, are clearly stated to be the righteous ones. Will they be saved, then, because of their pro-Semitism? This cannot be, for that would mean their salvation was purely on the basis of works. This passage is an example of James 2:14-26, proving one's faith by one's works. Because these Gentiles are already believers in the Lord Jesus the Messiah, they will refuse to join the policy of the Antichrist in his attempt to destroy the Jews. So while Jews will undergo a great persecution, these believing Gentiles will do what they can to help the Jews under these conditions. Their works toward the Messiah's brethren will prove their faith. In this manner, they are the ones who will be watching, ready, and laboring in accordance with the admonitions of the five parables. Because they are saved Gentiles, they will be allowed to enter into the Messianic Kingdom, and they will be the ones who will populate the Gentile nations during the Messianic Age.

The judgment of the goat Gentiles is in verses 41-45: *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we you hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto you? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me.*

On the other hand, the goats will be the anti-Semites who, because of their unbelief in Jesus, will join the ranks of the persecutors under the Antichrist's authority. They will show their lack of faith by their works. They are the ones who will not be watching, ready or laboring, in violation of the five parables. For this reason, they will be killed at this point and will be excluded from the Messianic Kingdom.

The ultimate and final result after the Kingdom is in verse 46: *And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.*

The believing Gentiles will enter into eternal life while the unbelieving Gentiles will enter into eternal punishment.

CONCLUSION

The Olivet Discourse is the most detailed teaching that the Messiah gave concerning future things. It was His last great discourse as a Prophet because, from this point, He went into a transitional period from Prophet to Priest as He offered a sacrifice—that of His own blood—and then began to function as our High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek. When He returns to fulfill the rest of the Olivet Discourse, He will come as King.

The Olivet Discourse contains words for believers today: to look up, for our redemption draweth nigh; and words for unbelievers today: to believe on the Messiah. And it has words for those who will be living during the Great Tribulation: for Jews to flee; and for Gentiles to watch, to be ready, and to labor.✠

NOTES

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