

For the past few weeks, we've been engaged in an exposition of Matthew 24-25, and what is commonly referred to as the Olivet Discourse. As we learned 2 weeks ago, this discourse is basically an answer to the disciples' question in v3.

They showed Him the magnificent buildings of the temple (v1), to which He responded (v2)—"Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The disciples rightly understood Jesus to refer to the temple's destruction, but the wrongly thought that would happen at His second coming (v3).

Thus, our Savior describes two events, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the destruction of the world at His return—the first serving as a shadow of the second. And so, from v4 to v35, our Savior describes Jerusalem's destruction as it foreshadowed the destruction of the world.

This is how we interpreted verses 4-14 last week, and it's how we shall interpret verses 15-28 this week. But I want to come at it a little different. I want to divide the passage into four parts and largely explain it in light of AD 70, and then, under a fifth point, suggest five practical observations for all Christians in every generation.

- I. An Abomination (vv15-20)
- II. A Great Tribulation (vv21-22)
- III. A Satanic Deception (vv23-26)
- IV. A Glorious Coming (vv27-28)
- V. Five Observations

I. An Abomination (vv15-20)

1. V15—"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."
2. Dan.9:27—"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."
3. Beginning with v24, we have a blessed prophecy of the Messiah, v24—"Seventy weeks (sevens) are determined for your people and for your holy city."
4. The entire prophecy concerns "seventy weeks" or "seventy sevens" which means 490 years (Christ would come in less than 500 years).
5. Daniel not only prophesied the coming Messiah and His crucifixion, but also the destruction of Jerusalem.
6. V26—"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined."
7. Notice how Daniel weds together these two events—the Messiah would be cut off (crucified) and the city and sanctuary (temple) destroyed.
8. We find the same two events in v27—"The He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week"—this refers to Christ confirming the NC with His beloved people.
9. V27—"But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering"—He shall fulfill the OC sacrificial system.
10. And thus, having made the OC obsolete, the city and temple would be destroyed 40 years later by the Romans.

11. V27—"And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."
12. This is the phrase our Savior refers to and it obviously refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
13. Thus, the last half of v26 and v27 are foretelling the same events—the same event our Savior is foretelling in the Olivet Discourse.
14. Lk.21:20-24—"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near."
15. As Luke was written for Gentiles or Romans, not only does he not quote Daniel, but he provides a clear explanation.
16. When the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman armies, be sure, the abomination of desolation is near.
17. Thus, our Savior provides specific exhortations to His first century people as they prepared for Jerusalem's destruction.
18. Verses 16-20—"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those day! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."
19. In other words, leave everything behind—nothing is worth risking your live at the hands of the Romans.
20. They were to leave Judea (Jerusalem) and run to the mountains where they would be safe from the destruction.
21. Ladies who were pregnant or nursing babies would have a disadvantage, as they would have to care for their children.
22. Furthermore, things would be even more harsh (difficult), if this happened in winter or on the weekly Sabbath.
23. Because the Sabbath is a weekly day of rest, it would be best if they did not have to flee on that day.
24. BTW, here's prove that our Savior believed the weekly Sabbath would continue for the next 40 years.
25. Now according to extra Biblical history, most Jews entered Jerusalem and suffered greatly for doing so,
26. But, Christians, as they were warned by their Savior, fled Judea prior to the actual destruction of Jerusalem.
27. William Hendriksen—"As to the fulfilment, we know that the Jews in general rushed into Jerusalem, resulting in a horrible blood bath. But what happened to the Christians? Did they heed Christ's exhortation to flee to the hills? According to many commentators they did, and finally found refuge in Perea Pella."
28. Hendriksen then quotes Eusebius (Christian historian who died in 339 AD)—"On the other hand, the people of the Jerusalem church were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella."

II. A Great Tribulation (vv21-22)

1. There is little doubt that v21, has been hijacked and misused by man Christians over the past 120 years.
2. They've taken the phrase the "great tribulation" and have applied it to some supposed 7-year event in the distant future.

3. The only problem with this, is that our Savior actually applies it to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
4. When our Savior describes this tribulation as the greatest that has ever been or will be seen, He means, tribulation that falls upon a specific city.
5. No city in the history of the world, ever has or will endure the same kind of tribulation Jerusalem did.
6. CHS—"Read the record written by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem, and see how truly our Lord's words are fulfilled. The Jews impiously said, concerning the death of Christ, 'His blood be on us, and on our children,' Never did any other people invoke such an awful curse upon themselves, and upon no other nation did such a judgment ever fall. We read of Jews crucified till there was no more wood for making crosses; of thousands of the people slaying one another in their fierce faction fights within the city; of so many of them being sold for slaves that they became a drug in the market, and all but valueless; and of the fearful carnage when the Romans at length entered the doomed capital; and the bloodcurdling story exactly bears out the Savior's statement uttered nearly forty years before the terrible events occurred."
7. Thus, by a "great tribulation" is meant, that heightened or increased tribulation that predated Jerusalem's destruction.
8. The disciples had to endure tribulation that would increase in intensity, until the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed.

III. A Satanic Deception (vv23-26)

1. Verses 23-24—"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For False christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."
2. These deceivers who "show great signs and wonders to deceive"—this means, they will perform miracles.
3. That is, they deceive the people in believing they perform miracles, when in fact, they have no ability.
4. This is also true of the false prophets of our day—they are simply liars who are deceiving the people.
5. It's for this reason, their supposed miracles are often unprovable—there's simply no way to verify them.
6. This of course is in contrast to true miracles, which were manifest (event) for all to see and easily provable.
7. The blind saw, the lame walked, the deaf heard, and the dead lived, and this oftentimes, in great number.
8. And what was the primary purpose of these miracles—well, we find in the term "sign"—they were signs and wonders.
9. Miracles were signs that pointed to the power of God—they verified that the prophet or apostle was from God.
10. Mk.16:20—"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."
11. Notice the ability to perform miracles was from God, and it was intended to confirm the word preached.
12. In contrast—false prophets perform false signs and lying wonders to deceive people into believing they sent from God.
13. 2Thess.2:9-12—"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish,

because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

14. Now the identity of this "lawless one" has been debated (and it's not my intention to resolve all questions).
15. Let me point out, whoever or whatever this "lawless one" is, he acts "according to the working of Satan."
16. That means, he acts in harmony to Satan or as the mouthpiece of Satan—he's influenced by Satan himself.
17. Thus, here I want to suggest two things about those who become deceived (our Savior said many will be deceived, even the elect if that were possible).
18. (1) They refused to believe the truth to be saved—the plain and simply message of the cross isn't enough.
19. Such people want something extra—they want something miraculous—they want signs and wonders.
20. V9—"the working of Satan, with all power (miracles), signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception.
21. The word rendered "lying" (NKJV) means "false" and is attached by some translations to signs or wonders.
22. The point is this—these signs and wonders are false and not true—they are a deception—they are a lie.
23. (2) They are given over by God to believe the lie—what lie? The lie or deception of the false prophets (with their false signs and wonders).
24. When Paul says "God will send them strong delusion" he means, He will simply leave them to themselves.
25. God doesn't have to do anything for a man to be delusional or deceived—He only has to leave him to himself.

IV. A Glorious Coming (vv27-28)

1. V27—"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."
2. Just like the other verses in this passage, this too has it's first application to the destruction of Jerusalem (let show you this from two other passages).
3. Matt.10:23—"When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes."
4. I mentioned last week, that the discourse found in Matthew 10, is very similar to that found in chapter 24.
5. Here our Savior foretells His coming, in and through the Romans, to destroy His enemies in AD 70.
6. And notice, He speaks of this as a coming of the Son of Man—that is, as a revelation of His might and power.
7. The Son of Man would come in judgment, in and through the Romans, to pour out His righteous wrath.
8. Matt.26:64—"It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."
9. These are the word of our Savior to the high priest—it's likely our Savior is referring to the destruction of AD 70.

10. He, along with the rest of that generation, would behold God's judgment as it came in the form of the Roman army.
11. V28—"For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together"—this is a reference to Ezekiel 39:17.
12. Ezekiel 39:17 is a prophecy of destruction upon the enemies of God—the imagery is that of a slaughter.
13. Just as eagles feast upon a dead carcass, so the Romans would gather and feast upon the city of Jerusalem.
14. It's a graphic description of judgment—and again, in the first place it was reference to the events of AD 70.
15. Now, before I leave this passage and come to some observations, I need to make a quick clarification.
16. While I have argued that verses 27-28 have a direct application to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, they obviously exceed that event.
17. And the reason I say that is rather straightforward—they exact language found in vv27-28, is used elsewhere of Jesus' second coming.
18. Lk.17:24—"For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day (v37)."
19. Here it seems rather evident, our Savior is referring to His second coming at the end of the age to destroy His enemies and gather His people (vv25-37).
20. Matt.24:29-31—"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

V. Five Observations

1. Here I want to show you, that while this passage has a direct application to the events of AD 70, its practical application exceeds them.
2. And it's here I part ways with those Christians who only see AD 70 within chapter 24, and fail to see the destruction of the world at our Savior's second coming.
3. And so, before I come to these five observations, let me briefly suggest two reasons I think they are warranted (even necessary).
4. (a) If we interpret the whole chapter (Matthew 24) of only Jerusalem's destruction, nothing in the chapter has any significance to any generation outside of the disciples.
5. (b) We have to keep in mind how the OT prophets often blended or overlapped two or more events together.
6. For example, they often foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians as a foretaste of the destruction of the world (very similar to the way our Savior describes the same two events, only He foretells the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans not Babylonians).
7. Thus, if you go back and read those OT prophecies, they had a direct reference to that generation, but they also had equal application to every generation.
8. They foretold two events separated by a long time—the first event shadowed or typified the second event.
9. Thus, the prophet was able to speak directly to his generation and warn them of an impending event, and yet, speak in such a way that his warning has ongoing relevance.
10. (1) The reality of personal election—twice (and once again in v31) our Savior speaks about the elect, v22—"but for the elect's sake" v24—"to deceive, if possible, even the elect."
11. Who are these elect? Well, the word rendered "elect" simply means "to pick out, to choose, or to select."

12. It refers to an intentional choice of one thing or person over other things or persons—God has an elect people.
13. (a) When did He choose them? Well, Scripture teaches us that He chose them from eternity: from everlasting.
14. Eph.1:4—"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"—that is before He created the world.
15. This predates Genesis 1:1—"In the beginning He created the heaven and the earth"—eternity past refers to a time before time.
16. (b) What did He choose them for? He chose them to be saved, redeemed, and adopted—He chose them to be His.
17. Eph.1:4-5—"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Him."
18. (c) Why did He choose them? The only reason Scripture gives behind God's election of a people is love.
19. Eph.1:4-5—"In love He predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."
20. (2) The gracious providence of God—here I am again thinking of v22—"but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."
21. Now, if you remember, by providence is meant, God's ongoing work of sustaining and governing creation.
22. And I've called this observation "the gracious providence of God" because, while God's providence concerns all of creation, it has a special eye to His people.
23. Why did He shorten that time of tribulation that accompanied Jerusalem's destruction, but for the sake of His elect!
24. God sustains and governs all things within the universe, with a special eye to the salvation of His people.
25. 2LBC (5:7)—"As the providence of God does in general reach to all creatures, so after a most special manner it takes care of His church, and disposes of all things to the good thereof."
26. (3) The certainty of perseverance—here I am thinking of v24—"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."
27. If it were possible, even the elect would be deceived—but here's the point—it's not possible for the elect to be deceived.
28. Let me put it like this—it's impossible—there's no possibility—there's not even the slightest chance it could happen.
29. Thus, there's zero possibility of a Christian person being deceived by false christs and false prophets.
30. Last week, in examining vv4-14, we considered v13—"But he who endures to the end shall be saved."
31. (4) The reality of great tribulation—as I mentioned before, the phrase "great tribulation" has been misused by many.
32. Many Christians have been wrongly taught, that Christ comes in two stages—secretly and openly (for and with His bride).
33. This secret coming is what's called the rapture, and this leads to seven years of great tribulation on earth.
34. Acts 14:21-22—"And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'"

35. Rev.7:14—"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
36. (5) The certainty of Christ's coming—from vv27-28, we learn His coming is quick, visible, and deadly.