

# Pentwater Bible Church

*The Olivet Discourse 2*

*August 6, 2023*



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## BROAD OUTLINE OF THE DISCOURSE

We will be studying The Olivet Discourse in 14 sections. The basic format is chronological. However, Jesus will break the chronology periodically and when He does, He will tell us.

- ~~1. The Historical Setting~~
- ~~2. The Three Questions~~
- ~~3. The General Characteristics of The Church Age~~
4. The Sign of The End of The Age
5. Personal Experiences of the Apostles
6. The Sign of the fall of Jerusalem
7. The Great Tribulation
8. The Sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah
9. The Regathering of Israel
- ~~10. The Exhortation~~
- ~~11. The Parable of the Fig Tree~~
- ~~12. The Rapture of the Church~~
- ~~13. Parables urging Watchfulness, Readiness and Laboring~~
- ~~14. The Judgment of the Gentiles~~

## THE SIGN OF THE END OF THE AGE

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; Luke 21:10-11.

The Matthew Account Reads:

Matthew 24:7-8

*<sup>7</sup>For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. <sup>8</sup>All these [are] the beginning of sorrows (KJV).*

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 (sorrows). 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 pictures the last days as a series of birth pangs

before the birth of the 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. It is important to find out just exactly where this idiom is used in the Bible. It is used in at least two passages. First it is found in:

Isaiah 19:1-4

*<sup>1</sup>The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. <sup>2</sup>And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, [and] kingdom against kingdom. <sup>3</sup>And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. <sup>4</sup>And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts (ASV, 1901).*

Here the land of Egypt is in view and the idiom points to a conflict all over the land of Egypt as the nation is engrossed in a civil war.

Second it is found in:

II Chronicles 15:1-7:

*<sup>1</sup>And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: <sup>2</sup>and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. <sup>3</sup>Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: <sup>4</sup>But when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. <sup>5</sup>And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. <sup>6</sup>And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. <sup>7</sup>But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded (ASV, 1901).*

In this passage it is the Middle East that is in view, and the idiom points to conflict all over the Middle East. In the Olivet Discourse it is the whole world that is in view. This is clear from Matthew 24: 14;21;30 and

31. Hence the idiom refers to a worldwide conflict and this world-wide conflict is the first birth pang., signifying that the end of the age or the last days had begun.

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

To gain a fuller understanding of what the idiom “nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” means, it is necessary to turn to the Jewish usage of these statements. Clearly the Bible passages we just read show the usage and context of that usage. This expression then used in the

Olivet Discourse is a Hebrew idiom for a world war.

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 worldwide conflict would signal the coming of the Messiah. Jesus 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 He talked about are the same as the footsteps the rabbis talked about. The “footsteps of the Messiah had to do with a series of events that led up to the coming of the Messiah

World war I, 1914-1918, was the fulfillment of this particular prophecy, for that was the first time the entire world was at 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 rise to the growth of the Zionist movement, and World War II led to the re-establishment of the Jewish State. Since WW 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. However, Jesus does describe these calamities as the beginning of sorrows, which is literally the beginning of labor pains; the idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities leading up to the birth of the Messianic Kingdom.

The worldwide conflict was to be coupled with famines and earth quakes. As far as famines are concerned, here are a few of the large ones since the time of the first World War.

Chinese Famine of 1928-1930-Over 3 million perish in northwest China

Chinese Famine of 1936-5 million Chinese die in what is called the “New Famine” Chinese Drought 1941-1942-Over 3 million perish from starvation

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; posted December 13, 1999.

Rudolph J. Rummel, Death By Government

Non-Democidal Famine (often including famines associated with war and communist mismanagement): China (1900-87): 49,275,000

Russia: (1921-47): 5,833,000

(Matthew White, Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century, 2001):

Man-made Famine: 44,000,000

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE APOSTLES

The Messiah just provided an answer to the third question regarding the sign of the end of the age. Then He turned back to His own time to detain some of the experiences that the Apostles would have to undergo. The Luke account says:

Luke 21:12-19

*<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>It shall turn out unto you for a testimony. <sup>14</sup>Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer: <sup>15</sup>for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. <sup>18</sup>And not a hair of your head shall perish. <sup>19</sup>In your patience ye shall win your souls (KJV).*

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:

1. In verse 12a, the Jews will reject them.
2. In verse 12b, the Gentiles will reject them.
3. In verse 13, they will undergo persecutions, but these persecutions will provide opportunities for testimony.
4. They will succeed in proclaiming the gospel everywhere (Mark 13:10); this is verified by Romans 10:8 and Colossians 1:6, 23.
5. In verses 12-15, they need not worry about preparing defenses before their trials, because they will be given divine utterance when they are brought before judgment.
6. In verse 16, their own family members will reject them.
7. In verse 17, they will be hated by all men to the point that some will be martyred. In verse 18, nevertheless, their salvation is assured.
8. 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.

## 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 having a successful ministry did Christ go on to answer their first question concerning the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The answer is recorded only in Luke 21:20-24

Luke 21:20-24

*<sup>20</sup>And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. <sup>21</sup>Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. <sup>22</sup>For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. <sup>23</sup>But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. <sup>24</sup>And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (KJV).*

In answer to the 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 discourse was written to Jewish believers. The church had not yet been established and the Gentiles were not included at this time.

Matthew 10:5-6

*<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not: <sup>6</sup>But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (KJV).*

Matthew 15:24

*<sup>24</sup>But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (KJV).*

These verses show that at this particular time in human history Christ was working exclusively with the Jews. Later the Gentiles would be brought in to the church. After the Gentiles came into the church the order of presenting the gospel would not change though.

Romans 1:16

*<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (KJV).*

Someday the Jews will all be saved.

Romans 11:25-28

*<sup>25</sup>For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (cf. Luke 19:42) <sup>26</sup>And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: <sup>27</sup>For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (cf. Leviticus 26) <sup>28</sup>As concerning the gospel, [they are] enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, [they are] beloved for the fathers' sakes (KJV).*

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. 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 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 back to Caesarea. On the way, he was attacked by Jewish forces and killed. Temporarily, the armies no longer surrounded the city, so every single Jewish believer was about 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. Jewish believers from Judea, Galilee and the Golan joined them. There they waited for the prophecy to be fulfilled.

In the year A.D. 68, a new Roman general named Vespasian and his son, Titus, again besieged the city, and in the year A.D. 70, the city and the Temple were destroyed. Altogether, 1,200,000 Jews were killed in the 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 by 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 of the three to be answered; the sign of the second coming.

Next message: OLIVET DISCOURSE CONTINUED

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