

THOUGHTS ON THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

As A Thief In The Night

The last days and Jesus' second coming are presented by so many in Christianity as the most complicated period and event in the history of the world. According to these supposed end times' experts, Jesus' return is so complicated that the regular Christian can't even understand it unless you buy some extra-biblical timeline or DVD from some preacher for \$19.95 to explain it to you. The only way you can understand it is by reading some extra-scriptural literally "fictional" book to supposedly explain what scripture does not get around to telling you about the most important event remaining in this world. Friends, the second coming of the Jesus Christ is a very simple event. Jesus will come suddenly as a thief in the night, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, all the dead shall be raised, and so shall we ever be with the Lord! Granted, scripture is clear there are events in the last days that will lead up to that pinnacle of human history. We hope to consider those events from the scriptures to where we can be aware of the events surrounding those last days. However, the focus of those events is not to be afraid of what might occur but to recognize these "birthing pains signs" to know that Jesus' return is imminent and to lift up our heads because that means our redemption is drawing nigh.

There is a tremendous amount of speculation around not just the date of Jesus' second coming but also the exact timeline of events leading up to that in the last days. There are many prognosticators in Christianity that predict Jesus will return on a set date, and then have to revise their predictions once again after that date passes and they are proven wrong. Jesus clarified for every overly imaginative preacher in the future that absolutely no one knows the time of Jesus' return! *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."* (Mark 13:32) Jesus is not saying that this particular event is hidden from his perfect omniscience of all things as the second person of the Godhead. No, Jesus Christ still has perfect knowledge of all events as God along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Instead, in his statement, Jesus is simply deferring to the will of the Father in this event. Christ is also alluding to the Jewish wedding tradition that the groom's father (not the groom) would determine the date that the groom was to return to bring the bride back to the father's house to consummate the marriage. No one knows the exact day and hour of Jesus' return except God the Father in heaven, when the bride will be fully adorned and ready and the Father will tell the perfect Bridegroom to go bring his bride (the church) into heaven for all of eternity.

Jesus further clarifies right after affirming that no man knows the hour, that *"ye know not when the time is"* (Mark 13:33). The apostles didn't know when the time was and no other man knows either. Therefore, since Jesus says that angels, the Son of God, and "no man" knows the hour of Jesus' return, we can simply ignore these men who ignore Jesus' words and set a date for his return like they have some divine knowledge. These men do not have more knowledge than the angels or the Son of God; they are just trying to make a name for themselves by contradicting the words of Jesus Christ. No man knows the day or hour of Jesus' return but that is reserved for the will of God the Father.

Guessing when Jesus might return should not be our concern anyway. Right before his ascension back into heaven, when Jesus told the apostles about the coming day of Pentecost, their response was to ask, *"Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:5-6) Jesus told them he was going away, but they thought when he returned he would set up a natural kingdom, overthrow the Roman oppression of the Jews, and restore again the kingdom to Israel. Instead, Jesus told them, *"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power"*. (Acts 1:7) In other words, Jesus' tells the apostles that the timing of when this event will occur is none of your concern. It's not for you to know the times or the seasons of when this will happen in the future. Your responsibility is just to wait

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patiently and vigilantly until the times manifest themselves. The same is true for God's children regarding waiting for Jesus' second coming. It's not for us to know the times or season of his second coming. No man or angel even knows the hour – simply put, when it occurs is none of our business. We don't need to be naïve; we need to examine the world around us for signs of his return, but we don't need to be concerned about guessing when it might occur. Instead, be sober, be vigilant, and simply *"occupy till I come"*, regardless of how long that is.

"42) Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43) But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24:42-44)

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Pet. 3:10)

"2) For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thess. 5:2-4)

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Rev. 3:3)

Jesus gave three parables in the conclusion of his Olivet Discourse to be sober and vigilant to not be caught unawares when Jesus returns. First, in Matt. 24:45-51, one servant was made ruler of all his lord's goods, but then he assumed *"My lord delayeth his coming"* so he began to abuse his fellow servants and be drunken on the job. Then, that wicked servant is caught unawares when his lord returns because *"the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of"*. Second, in Matt. 25:1-13 the bridegroom is set to return to get his bride, but the ten virgins do not know the time of his return. Five virgins were wise and brought oil and were prepared to wait for a longer time period. Five virgins didn't bring any oil to replenish their lamps. All the ten virgins eventually fell asleep in watching for the bridegroom – *"while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept"*. Then the bridegroom arrived at an unexpected and inopportune time, at midnight, and the foolish virgins had no oil and are not allowed in the house for fellowship with the bridegroom. Third, in Matt. 24:14-30, a man travelled into a "far country" and was gone a "long time" and when he returned, he reckoned the stewardship of his three servants. Two good and faithful servants doubled their master's talents from wise business dealings. One wicked and slothful servant was not working diligently while his master was gone and also was not prepared when his lord returns to inspect his work. All three of these parables teach that the master and the bridegroom will return at a moment and hour that is unexpected to the servants and to the virgins. Therefore, we need to be watchful and diligent to be expectantly looking for Christ's return and not be ashamed of our stewardship when our work is inspected by the Lord in that day.

The second coming of Jesus Christ will generally be unexpected and sudden to the world. Scripture is clear that in the last days, there will be a tremendous increase in scoffers who question that if Jesus will even return at all. *"3) Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4) And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."* (2 Peter 3:3-4) In these scoffers' mind, everything is

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continuing on just like it always has since the beginning of the world. When the general consensus of the world – and even lukewarm Christianity – says that Jesus probably isn't returning soon ("peace and safety"), that's an indication that sudden destruction of this world is imminent. *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."* (1 Thess. 5:3). Just like a woman with child, she knows her delivery date is nearing, but the labor pains of travail will typically show up suddenly, when she is not expecting it and going about her daily activities. This will be the circumstance in this world as well. Jesus' return will be sudden and unexpected.

When the world has given up on Jesus' second coming, and is not looking for it at all, that's when we need to look up for the skies to part for Jesus' return.

The Olivet Discourse

Jesus' sermon to Peter, James, John and Andrew on the Mount of Olives – commonly known as the Olivet Discourse – is not only important to understanding events surrounding Jesus' second coming but also dispelling some false notions that have come from a very myopic interpretation of verses in this sermon. The Olivet Discourse is found in Luke 21, Mark 13, and Matthew 24 (with additional parables and lessons continuing through the end of Matthew 25 in the same sermon). After his apostles bragged upon the beauty of the temple in Jerusalem, *"Jesus 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."* (Matt. 24:2) Naturally, his apostles desired further explanation of this extraordinary statement, so these four apostles came to Jesus privately on the Mount of Olives and asked him 3 questions: 1) *Tell us, when shall these things be?* (the destruction of the temple); 2) *and what shall be the sign of thy coming?* 3) *and of the end of the world?* (Matt. 24:3) It's important to understand that Jesus answers these 3 questions from the apostles throughout this sermon. He tells them signs and events that would occur when the temple would be destroyed, and he also tells them of signs that would occur prior to and just before Jesus' second coming and the end of the world.

In this sermon, there are some of these signs and events that would be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD by the Romans. There are some signs, wonders, and events that will not occur until Jesus Christ's second coming at the end of the world. It is important to understand that not all of these events were fulfilled in 70AD destruction as some believe. There are components of this prophetic sermon that are not yet fulfilled. However, it is important to understand that biblical prophecy is oftentimes "cyclical". There are signs and events that occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586BC by the Chaldeans that should have given the Jews lessons for the coming judgment in 70AD. There were also events of the 70AD destruction of the temple that give an object lesson for similar occurrences near the end of the world just before Jesus' second coming. In the Old Testament, there are many events that are real events but they give a type for what would happen in the New Testament, especially in the first coming of Jesus as his sacrificial death on our behalf. Therefore, the first and second destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586BC and 70AD give us a type for similar judgment that will occur prior to Jesus' second coming. That is why Jesus speaks of the judgment of 70AD and the judgment at the end of the world so interchangeably in this message. They are separate and distinct, but the earlier judgment gives a type and lesson for the later future judgment we will see at the end of the world.

We need to be watchful and vigilant to be aware of the signs that will be precursors to the Lord's second coming. We can better understand some of those signs by looking at the real events that occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus tells the apostles to *"take heed that ye be not deceived"* (Luke 21:8). Jesus

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did not give them this message to make his saints fearful and afraid of the end of the world. Instead, the message of the end of the world should provide *“comfort”* (1 Thess. 4:18) to the suffering child of God in this world, knowing the wickedness of this world is not our final home. We need to earnestly consider this message in the Olivet Discourse and take heed and be watchful that we are not deceived when all these false Christs and false prophets will eventually come on the scene and deceive many. We should not be as the foolish virgins who not only didn't bring any oil for their lamps. However, by the end all of those virgins fell asleep on the job because they were not watchful for the bridegroom's return (Matt. 25:1-14). We also need to use the talents that God has given us, not to waste them by hiding in the ground like the wicked and slothful servant, because we do not know when the Lord shall return to judge us for our stewardship (Matt. 25:15-30). We need to assess this lesson by Jesus and be watchful and vigilant to be expectantly looking for Jesus Christ's second coming.

As Jesus answers the 3 questions from the disciples in the Olivet Discourse, it's important to understand that he answers the last 2 questions first: *2) and what shall be the sign of thy coming? 3) and of the end of the world?* Then he uses the answer to the first question of when the destruction of Jerusalem would occur as a type lesson to teach them also about his coming and the end of the world. For the church today, which is primarily a Gentile audience, the gospel of Luke is the easiest account of this message to consider because it was originally written primarily directed at Gentile Christians. The gospel of Matthew was written with a Jewish audience in mind, so it emphasizes events of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD in more detail because that was utmost importance to the Jews. For us today, Luke's account of this message is the easiest to consider, so we will focus primarily on that account.

Jesus reassures his disciples that these things must come to pass, but the end is not imminent: *“these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.”* (Luke 21:9) Therefore, what shall be the signs of Christ's coming and of the end of the world (answer to the apostles' final two questions)? These events will occur AFTER *“the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”* (Luke 21:24) and BEFORE the second coming of the Lord. There are things that must occur prior to the second coming of the Lord:

- A) *“for many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many”* (Luke 21:8, Matt. 24:5, Mark 13:6); *“many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many”* (Matt. 24:11)
 - *“23) Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24) For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25) Behold, I have told you before. 26) Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”* (Matt. 24:23-26, Mark 13:21-22)
 - This severe increase in false Christ's and false prophets will indicate that *“the time draweth near”* (Luke 21:8). This increase will culminate in the man of sin and the false prophet being revealed in the last days, but there appears to be other false professors that will come even before them. That is why we have to be so vigilant and watchful to take heed and not be deceived by all these false teaching that will occur at the end of time.
- B) *“when ye shall hear of wars and commotions”* (Luke 21:9); *“wars and rumors of wars”* (Matt. 24:6, Mark 13:7); *“nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”* (Luke 21:10, Matt. 24:7, Mark 13:8); *“upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity”* (Luke 21:25)
 - There will be wars and perpetual rumors of wars and commotions. It's true that there have always been wars between individual nations and kingdoms, but there was never a truly “world war” until the 20th century. Then, we had 2 world wars in the same century. These unprecedented world wars and the media's perpetual rumors of wars are precursors to the second coming and have just occurred in the last century.

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- C) *“great earthquakes shall be in divers places”* (Luke 21:11, Matt. 24:7, Mark 13:8)
 - There have always been earthquakes in the world from time to time. There was not a real means to measure the magnitude of earthquakes prior to 1900, so all earthquakes prior to that time are only estimated in their severity. However, the 4 largest recorded earthquakes in history have all occurred since 1960 and all on different continents (divers places): 1) Valdivia, Chile (1960); 2) Alaska, United States (1964), 3) Indian Ocean, Indonesia (2004), 4) Pacific Ocean, Japan (2011)
- D) *“the sea and the waves roaring”* (Luke 21:25)
 - The sea and waves roaring will lead to severe hurricanes and tsunamis. Like earthquakes, there were not good means of measuring severity before the 20th century, but the worst hurricanes and tsunamis on record have been in the last century. The worst tsunami on record was in 2004 in Indonesia where 230,000 people were killed and caused \$10 billion of damage.
- E) *“and famines”* (Luke 21:11, Matt. 24:7, Mark 13:8)
 - There have always been people in this world who have struggled for food and have died due to starvation and famine. There have been severe famine in many centuries past that far exceed what we see today, where the food supply chain has allowed us to have good more readily available in the most of the world than ever before. However, there will be severe famines worldwide near the end of time.
- F) *“and pestilences”* (Luke 21:11, Matt. 24:7)
 - There have always been severe pestilences and diseases in this world. The Black Death in the 14th century was estimated to have killed half of Europe’s entire population. The Spanish Flu of 1918 is estimated to have killed 500 million people worldwide. We have many new global diseases like AIDS, SARS, and many others that have killed millions in the last century. With international airline travel being so easy and prevalent today, our world is primed for a global outbreak of a pestilence to spread very quickly at the end of time.
- G) *“and troubles”* (Mark 13:8)
 - There has definitely been trouble in this world since Adam’s sin in the garden. The world “trouble” here primarily means “sedition”. There will be people who are trying to overthrow law and order and governments in the last days, trying to lead anarchy and sedition against the God-ordained order and authority. In Daniel 12:1, we are told in the last days *“there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time”*. Don’t fret over the unprecedented trouble of those last days though because it’s *“at that time, thy people shall be delivered”*.
- H) *“and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven”* (Luke 21:11); *“there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars”* (Luke 21:25); *“the powers of heaven shall be shaken”* (Luke 21:26)
 - *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun 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:”* (Matt. 24:29, Mark 13:24-25)
 - There will be very unique signs and wonders in the heavenly bodies. If these verses are to be taken literally, the sun and moon will not shine for period of time in the last days; stars will fall from heaven; possibly some asteroids will strike the earth during that period.
- I) *“men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth”* (Luke 21:26)

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- In the last days, when men see perpetual wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, pestilences, sedition, the sun not shining and stars falling out of the sky, it's understandable that men's heart will be very fearful and terrified when all those things begin to occur on the earth. Also, heart attacks and heart disease are already the number one cause of death in the world. There will literally be a lot of heart attack deaths in those last days.
- J) *"iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"* (Matt. 24:12)
 - Iniquity shall be prevalent and abounding in the last days. They will be very "dangerous" times because *"in the last days, perilous times will come"* (2 Tim. 3:1). There will be increased wickedness at large similar to Noah's day where *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually"* (Gen. 6:5). That will cause many of God's children to succumb to persecution, and their love and devotion to the Lord will wax cold. This will be the *"falling away"* (2 Thess. 2:3) from the faith of many as the love of many will wax cold in those perilous days.
- K) Persecution of the believers, betrayed by family and friends, even being killed as martyrs, hated of all nations for Jesus' name sake, just like the apostles (Luke 21:12-19, Matt. 24:9-10, Mark 13:9-13)
 - Throughout all time, but especially in the New Testament church, there has always been persecution for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. In those last days, there will be severe persecution of sincere disciples of Christ. The beast (the man of sin) will *"make war with the saints and overcome them"* for a time (Rev. 13:7) and persecute them who do not worship him (Rev. 13:14-18). The kingdom of this world, led by the man of sin, will even encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city before Jesus comes back to defeat them (Rev. 20:8-10). It's no doubt there will be great tribulation for God's sincere disciples in those last days.
- L) *"this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations"* (Matt. 24:14, Mark 13:10)
 - The apostles were given the commission to go and "teach all nations" and baptize and establish churches in all nations. The gospel was brought to the Gentiles in Acts 10 and Peter declared that *"in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him"* (Acts 10:35). The gospel was restricted to the Jews in Jesus' ministry (Matt. 10:6), but now the gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world, in all nations. This spread and advancement of the gospel would occur before the Lord's coming, and with the availability of the internet and digital means we can preach the gospel to people in all nations in a very ready way now today.

These are the signs and worldwide events that would signify the coming of the Lord is coming very near. It's important to remember that many of these things are natural events in this fallen world – false prophets, wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, persecution, etc. Therefore, we can't think just because have a bad earthquake that Jesus is coming back tomorrow. Instead, we need to be watchful and vigilant, evaluate the events of the world around us, and when these events become not only more frequent but also greater in intensity, we need to be watchful that Jesus' return might be near. We need to evaluate the "fig tree fruit" of this world and when we see these things, that is indication that the summer is nigh. We don't know the exact day of Jesus' return, but we can know we are in that season when we see these event occurring frequently and intensely in the world around us.

- *"29) And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; 30) When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31) So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."* (Luke 21:29-31, Matt. 24:32, Mark 13:28)

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- We can evaluate these events and like the fig tree, we can see that summer is nigh when the fig tree begins to bring forth its fruit. We can see these events and expectantly look for Jesus' return – *“So likewise, ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand”* (Luke 21:31).
- The day of the Lord (Christ's second coming) will come as a thief in the night but also is compared to a mother beginning her labor pains – *“For when they say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child.”* (1 Thess. 5:3)
 - A woman will typically carry a child for nine months. She doesn't know the exact day that she will give birth, but when “travail” comes – when those labor pains of childbirth begins – that is evidence that the birth is nigh. When we begin to see the “birthing labor pains” of this earth described in this sermon, that tells us the birth is coming very nigh just like the mother. We don't know the exact time – a mother doesn't know if she will be in labor for one hour, ten hours, twenty hours – and we don't know the exact time of Jesus' return. However, we can know it is very nigh when we see the earth showing these signs of “travail”.
- When we see all these calamitous events occurring in the world around us *“then shall the end come.”* (Matt. 24:14)
 - *“So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”* (Matt. 24:33, Mark 13:29)
 - *“then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory”* (Luke 21:27) *“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* (Matt. 24:27)
 - Notice “they” in Luke 21:27 shall see the Son of man coming; not “you” (not the apostles); the apostles would not see all these events in their lifetimes, but the “final generation” that sees these things occur would be alive when the Lord returns the second time and see all these things fulfilled
 - *“32) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. 33) Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”* (Luke 21:32-33, Matt. 25:34-35, Mark 13:30-31)
 - This is not saying that all these things will be fulfilled in “the apostles' generation”. All these events had clearly not come to pass prior to the Apostle John's death as the final apostle to pass away.
 - Instead “this generation” that sees these final events before Jesus' return, that “final last generation” will not pass away but will be alive when Jesus return the second time.
 - *“30) 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 in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31) And he shall send 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.”* (Matt. 24:30-31, Mark 13:26-27)
 - Jesus' Olivet Discourse actually continues in Matthew's account beyond Matt. 24 through the end of Matt. 25, answering the questions of the apostles.
 - Jesus gives 3 additional parables in Matthew to be vigilant and not slack on the job in waiting for his second coming: 1) Parable of the slothful servant (Matt. 24:45-51), 2) Parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), and 3) Parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30).
 - Then, Jesus continues to answer the question of the apostles of what shall occur at the “end of the world” as he describes the general judgment by Jesus Christ

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(Matt. 25:31-46). When Jesus returns, then all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate his sheep from the goats. It is there that the sheep will be ushered into everlasting joy in the kingdom of God, but the goats will be cast into everlasting punishment.

In this sermon, Jesus also addresses the first question of the apostles: *Tell us, when shall these things be?* When would every stone of the temple be thrown down, and the temple destroyed in Jerusalem? Jesus gives them events that would occur prior to and at the time of the destruction of the temple, which we know to primarily to be fulfilled in 70AD. However, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem give us another lesson and type of similar events that will occur prior to the destruction of this world.

- *“But before all these”* – Before the events of the Lord’s second coming occurs (that we’re given just prior to this in Luke 21:8-11), the apostles would suffer persecution, be brought before rulers, be betrayed by family and friends, some suffer a martyr’s death, and be hated of all men for the name of Christ (Luke 21:12-19).
- *“And when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”* (Luke 21:20)
 - In 66AD, Roman General Cestius Gallus had surrounded Jerusalem and was about to breach the city. However, for some unknown reason to historians, he drew back and did not conquer or destroy Jerusalem.
 - We believe this was the providence of God, protecting Jerusalem one last time and allowing this to be a sign to the Jews in Jerusalem that you need to get out (flee to the mountains, v.21).
 - However, for those that did not take this warning sign from Jesus’ prophecy and remained in the city, they would either be taken or killed by the Romans when they sieged again led by the general Titus just a few years later in 70AD.
 - *“43) For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44) And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”* (Luke 19:43-44)
 - Jesus here (in a different place, not the Olivet Discourse) prophesies of the destruction of Jerusalem; when the enemies of the Jews would build trenches and encompass the city round about on every side; and would lay the city even with the ground and would slay their children and not leave one stone upon another, both at the temple and in the city at large.
- *“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:.)* (Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14)
 - The “abomination of desolation” is one of the “cyclical prophecies” in scripture.
 - Antiochus Epiphanes was prophesied to be a fulfillment of the abomination of desolation in Dan. 8:9-14 who defiled the holy place in the temple and set up an idol of Zeus in the temple and offered pigs on the altar of God. Read also Dan. 8:9-14 & 11:31-45 & 12:11 for prophecies of the future abomination of desolation. Antiochus Epiphanes was a strong type of the future coming man of sin, so read these passages to gain more insight into the coming man of sin as well.
 - Then, we see another fulfillment of the abomination of desolation prophecy by Titus in 70AD. In the destruction of Jerusalem, we also see the general Titus defile the holy place in the temple and offer abominations for worship in the holy place in 70AD.
 - When those Jews saw their city surrounded by armies, they were told to know the desolation was nigh. Then, when they saw the general Titus defile the holy place

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- with abominations in fulfillment of this prophecy and another fulfillment of prophecy in Daniel, that should be the sign that those believing Jews need to leave town and flee to the mountains immediately.
- Then, the final fulfillment of this abomination of desolation will be the man of sin that will come to prominence prior to the Lord's second coming.
 - The man of sin that will be revealed in the last days will "*sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*" (2 Thess. 2:4). This might be a figurative temple of God, but if this is literal, then he will sit the temple of God and declare an abomination to be worshipped (himself), just like Antiochus and Titus did twice before in the temple in Jerusalem. The man of sin will be the third and final fulfillment of the abomination that maketh desolate.
 - "*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.*" (Luke 21:21) "*Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*" (Matt. 24:16, Mark 13:14)
 - When you see the armies surround Jerusalem (which would end up receding at first but were a precursor for the coming final judgment on Jerusalem), when you see the abomination of desolation in the holy place, then the believers in the Jerusalem church need to heed that warning.
 - When you see these things, let them which are in the midst of Jerusalem depart and flee to the mountains. Get out of the city before you suffer the horrible tribulation at the hands of the Romans.
 - If native Judeans are in other countries, they need to stay there and not return home at this time and be trapped in the city during this time of suffering.
 - The context here is the coming judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, not the end of the world.
 - Notice this instruction to flee is only given for those "in Judaea", not for the entire world. (If this is regarding the end times tribulation period, then the entire world should be trying to flee from the mountains, which won't do much good when Jesus returns.)
 - There is no need to flee to the mountains if Jesus' return is imminent because he will consume this entire world so being in the mountains won't help anything then, but it will certainly help these Christians in Jerusalem escape death and horrible suffering at the hand of the Romans if they took heed to this warning.
 - "*For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*" (Luke 21:22)
 - These events are the beginning stages of God's judgement upon Jerusalem and the nation of Israel for their rejection of Jesus Christ. These are "the days of vengeance" of judgment that had been prophesied many times in the Old Testament.
 - "*17) Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18) Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*" (Matt. 24:17-18, Mark 13:15-16) "*In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.*" (Luke 17:31)
 - When you see the armies encompassing Jerusalem, when you see the abomination of desolation in the temple, you need to flee Jerusalem immediately. This need to flee was so urgent that you don't even need to go down from your housetop to pack up your clothes; if you were in the field, don't even return home to pack up some clothes; flee with what you have on your back. The warning to these Christians in Jerusalem is "Get out of town immediately!"

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- Again, if this speaking of the second coming of Christ or some fictitious secret rapture, there is no need or even ability for you to be able to go back to your house to get clothes because that will happen so fast – in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye – that we wouldn't have time to do this anyway.
- *“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.”* (Luke 21:23) *“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!”* (Matt. 24:19, Mark 13:17)
 - Jesus pronounces a “woe unto them” that are pregnant and have nursing children during those days of fleeing and judgment in Jerusalem.
 - This is clearly not talking about the second coming because there is not a “woe” unto them if they are pregnant or nursing when Jesus returns. Instead, that little child won't have to suffer in this world but would go to the Lord immediately. That would be a source of great “excitement”, not “woe” unto them.
 - However, Jesus pronounces a “woe” unto these mothers because of the brutality of Titus' army towards these women and their children, with many of their children being killed. If Jesus was coming back, it would be joyous because the children would not have to suffer in the wickedness of this world!
- *“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:”* (Matt. 24:20, Mark 13:18)
 - Hopefully, when they took heed to flee Jerusalem, their “flight” from town to the mountains will not be in the winter where the weather would be very bad in the mountains during those months.
 - The season of the year would only matter if this “flight” (escape by fleeing) from Jerusalem was in the cold winter months. During that time it would be very cold and they would be exposed to the elements, especially since you were supposed to flee so quickly without going back down into your house to get clothes or even a heavier coat.
 - This “flight” is certainly not a secret rapture. It would make no difference if our eternal flight to heaven is in the winter or not. That would not matter if Jesus is returning, but it would matter if your escape (“flight”) from Jerusalem was during the cold winter months
- *“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.”* (Luke 21:24)
 - Those that are in the city of Jerusalem when Titus overran it in 70AD, would either: a) *“fall by the edge of the sword”* (be killed) or b) *“be led away captive into all nations”*.
 - History records that when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in 70AD that almost 1.1 million Jews were killed, and 98,000 Jews were taken captive and exiled to all parts of the Roman empire.
 - Jerusalem would be *“trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”*
 - Jerusalem was under the control of various Gentile nations for almost the next two centuries; this was the times of the Gentiles prophesied by Jesus.
 - Israel was declared as an independent state in 1948. While they do not have control over all the original “promised land”, it appears the “times of the Gentiles” has been fulfilled now that Jerusalem is no longer under Gentile control.

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- *“21) For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22) And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”* (Matt. 24:21-22, Mark 13:19-20)
 - There was tremendous suffering in Jerusalem during those days, unspeakable atrocities that were prophesied hundreds of years before even back in Deut. 28.
 - Titus barricaded the city for months. There was starvation, death, parents resorting to eating their own children for food. Then, when the Romans came in they killed over a million people and babies, and destroyed the city and took the ones that were alive into captivity. It was a time of horrible suffering, and as Jesus’ prophesied here, as bad of tribulation as the world had seen up to this point.
 - God even generously shortened the time period of the siege and suffering. He generously shortened those days “for the elect’s sake” because if God had not shortened those days, it appears that no one would have been alive by the end.

- *“37) But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38) For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39) And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* (Matt. 24:37-39, Luke 17:25-27)
 - While both the example of Noah’s day and Sodom are used primarily as examples of the culture leading up to the Lord’s second coming, they are also very clearly teaching the “carefree, living life” culture in Jerusalem at large before their judgment as well, thinking that this destruction would never happen to them.
 - The environment of this world at the second coming will be very similar to two prior cultures who received severe judgments for their wickedness: a) the days of Noah when the whole earth was destroyed by a flood, and b) the days of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed Sodom by fire.
 - There will be increased wickedness at large similar to Noah’s day where *“the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil continually.”* (Gen. 6:5) God deemed the only remedy for Noah’s world that was so wicked was for it to be destroyed totally by a flood. That will be the case at the second coming of the Lord; wickedness will once again reach that depth of pervasive depravity just before the Lord returns.
 - In Noah’s day, they were living life – eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage – with no conviction over their wickedness. This was a world that was not looking for God’s judgment to come upon them; they did not believe it would ever come. It will be the same way at the end of time. People will live life, carefree with no regard that God’s judgment is imminent at the Lord’s second coming.
 - *“28) Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29) But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30) Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 32) Remember Lot’s wife.”* (Luke 17:28-32)
 - Jesus also – in a prior account in Luke 17 – compares the last days to the days and culture of Lot in Sodom right before that city was judged and destroyed by fire and brimstone. They lived normally daily life – ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, and built. They had no idea (and did not care) that God’s judgment upon their wickedness was imminent.
 - We also see sodomy and homosexuality was not only accepted in Sodom, but apparently public, mob gang rape was normal as well (Gen. 19:4-11). That level of

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wickedness and sexual sin appears to be prevalent just prior the Lord's second coming as well.

- *“40) Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41) Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42) Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”* (Matt. 24:40-42) “
 - During the destruction of Jerusalem, essentially everyone was either “taken” (killed by the Romans) or “left” (remained alive to go into captivity).
 - This is not speaking of someone being “taken” in a “secret rapture” that is so commonly believed today.
 - If this was teaching a “rapture”, then the word for being “caught up” (Greek *“harpazo”* – 1 Thess. 4:17, Acts 8:39, 2 Cor. 12:1-4) should have been used here to convey that teaching. Instead, here we find the Greek word *“paralambano”* which is translated as “taken” is used in both Matt. 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36.
 - In this context, Jesus uses Noah’s day as an object lesson to the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. The men in the flood were “taken” by being killed in the flood, just like how some Jews would be “taken” and killed by the Romans.
 - The men in Noah’s day were not aware of anything that any judgment was imminent until the flood came and “took them all away” (Matt. 24:39). How were these men “taken away”? They were killed (their natural life was taken away) by the flood. (The men in Noah’s day were not secretly raptured to heaven; they were killed in the judgment of God.)
 - In the upcoming destruction in Jerusalem, in like manner to the days of Noah, one person will be “taken” in judgment by a natural death, but another would be “left”, not killed but taken into captivity.
 - This demonstrates the “law (principle) of first mentions” – when a term is introduced in a given context, it means the same things all throughout that context
 - In this context, the same “taken” by natural death of the men in Noah’s day (v.39), is the same manner in which others will be “taken” and killed in the destruction of Jerusalem (v.40-41)
 - *“30) Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed... 34) I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35) Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36) Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37) And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”* (Luke 17:30-37)
 - In conjunction with the Olivet Discourse, Jesus teaches a similar lesson of his second coming (Luke 17:22-37) that one will be taken and another left. He implies that those that are taken will be eaten by vultures, showing that this “taken” is a natural death.
 - After Jesus tells them that one will be “taken” and another left (v.34-36), the apostles then ask “Where, Lord?” (v.37a), meaning “Where will they be taken to Lord?” Jesus answers that where the body is, there will the eagles (vultures) be gathered too (v.37b). This implies a natural death because the vultures would be drawn to a natural corpse when they died. Therefore, the same natural death is under consideration here in Matt. 24:40-41.

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- There will be a lot of death in the last days as God's judgment comes upon this world. Indiscriminately, one person will probably die, and another be left. One person will face death and judgment and the other will be providentially spared.
 - At Christ's second coming, it will be same way. Two men are in the field, and one will be taken (the non-elect, in the second death) and another will be left (elect, caught up to be with the Lord).
 - "taken" death of the wicked at the second coming. Jesus said in Luke 17:37 that "eagles" would eat the carcasses of those who were taken.
 - In the return of Jesus in Rev. 19:11-21, Jesus is coming back as a conquering king with a sword taking vengeance and slaying the wicked. Then "fowls" are sent from heaven to "*eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*" (Rev. 19:17-18)
 - This also probably emblematic of what will occur at the final battle of the wicked, when they surround the saints, and then Jesus returns (Rev. 20:8-10).

What is the Christian's response to these teaching of coming judgment by Jesus – first judgment upon Jerusalem and then judgment upon the entire world at his second coming? We should be watchful and vigilant to not be deceived when the last days come. We do not need to be afraid but to be excited and joyful when we see these signs to know that our redemption is drawing very nigh.

- When we hear of wars and rumors of wars, "*see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet*" (Matt. 24:6, Mark 13:7) These are just "*the beginning of sorrows.*" (Matt. 24:8, Mark 13:8)
 - We don't need to be discouraged or troubled when this world continues to appear to spiral out of control. God told us these things would occur so that we can trust that God knows it would all come to pass; that God is still on his throne; and we can rest in the sovereignty of God and his love for his children that very soon we will be with our Lord in heaven.
- Take heed, pray diligently, and be watchful to where the day of the Lord does not come upon us unawares and we are not serving God as we ought when he returns.
 - "*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*" (Luke 21:34)
 - Be vigilant and watch, don't indulge in surfeiting, drunkenness, and cares of this life, so that day will not come upon us unawares (Luke 21:34)
 - "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* (Luke 21:36) "*But he that shall endure unto the end, shall be saved*" (Matt. 24:13, Mark 13:13)
 - "*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is*" (Mark 13:33)
 - "*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*" (Matt. 24:36, Mark 13:32)
 - Jesus gave 3 parables to conclude his Olivet Discourse that we need to be vigilant and not be slothful to not be prepared when Jesus returns
 - 1) Parable of the slothful servant who is judged for not expecting his lord to return is unfaithful in his stewardship (Matt. 24:43-51, Mark 13:34-37)

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- 2) Parable of the ten virgins, five foolish virgins who didn't bring any oil, but all ten virgins were slumbering when the bride groom returned (Matt. 25:1-13)
- 3) Parable of the talents, where one wicked and slothful servant hid his talent instead of using it to serve the Lord and was not prepared when his lord returned to inspect his stewardship (Matt. 25:14-30)
- *“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh” (Luke 21:28)*
 - Jesus did not tell us these things to scare his little children. He preached and left this message for us to “lift up our heads”. This world will make our heads heavy and make them hang low in this world. But the message of Jesus Christ's second coming makes our heads lift up high.
 - Our redemption draws more nigh every single day. Especially when we begin to see those event surrounding Jesus' second coming begin to transpire, we don't need to be afraid or have our hearts failing us for fear. Instead, the response for the child of God is be excited, lift up our heads, because our redemption from this wicked world is almost nigh!