

Outline and Harmony of Jesus' Olivet Discourse in the Synoptic Gospels¹

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Section One: The Disciples' Misplaced Focus		
Matthew 24:1-2	Mark 13:1-2	Luke 21:5-6
"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not <i>one</i> stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."" (Mt 24:1-2)	"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings <i>are here!</i> " And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not <i>one</i> stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."" (Mk 13:1-2)	"Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "These things which you see—the days will come in which not <i>one</i> stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."" (Lk 21:5-6)

In **section one**, the disciples, with Jesus scathing rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees still fresh in their minds, call Jesus' attention to the temple buildings and boast about their grandeur. Jesus replies with a stunning prophesy of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Section Two: The Disciples' Questions		
Matthew 24:3	Mark 13:3-4	Luke 21:7
"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what <i>will be</i> the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mt 24:3)	"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what <i>will be</i> the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" (Mk 13:3-4)	"So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign <i>will there be</i> when these things are about to take place?" (Lk 21:7)

In **section two**, immediately after Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on Israel, the disciples (specifically Peter, James, John, and Andrew) ask Jesus, "When will all of this happen—the judgment on Jerusalem, your coming and the end of the age?" There entire focus is eschatological. There are not three questions here, rather there is one general question asked rhetorically three ways. Jesus answers the disciples' question in the verses that follow.

¹ Scripture quotations taken from the NKJV.

Section Three: General Signs Relating to the Entire Tribulation Period		
Matthew 24:4-14	Mark 13:5-13	Luke 21:8-19
"And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you." (Mt 24:4)	"And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you." (Mk 13:5)	"And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived." (Lk 21:8a)
"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." (Mt 24:5, 11)	"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many." (Mk 13:6)	"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them." (Lk 21:8b)
"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all <i>these things</i> must come to pass, but the end is not yet." (Mt 24:6)	"But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for <i>such things</i> must happen, but the end is not yet." (Mk 13:7)	"But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end <i>will not come immediately.</i> " (Lk 21:9)
"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places." (Mt 24:7)	"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles." (Mk 13:8a)	"Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven." (Lk 21:10-11)
" <i>All these are the beginning of sorrows.</i> " (Mt 24:8)	" <i>These are the beginnings of sorrows.</i> " (Mk 13:8b)	
" <i>"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."</i> (Mt 24:9)	" <i>"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them."</i> (Mk 13:9)	"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony." (Lk 21:12-13)
"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another." (Mt 24:10)	"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father <i>his</i> child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake." (Mk 13:12-13a)	"You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put <i>some</i> of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake." (Lk 21:16-17)

	"But when they arrest <i>you</i> and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." (Mk 13:11)	"Therefore settle <i>it</i> in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist." (Lk 21:14-15)
"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." (Mt 24:12)		
		"But not a hair of your head shall be lost." (Lk 21:18)
"But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Mt 24:13)	"But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Mk 13:13b)	"By your patience possess your souls [lives]." (Lk 21:19)
"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Mt 24:14)	"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations." (Mk 13:10)	

In section three, Jesus begins his response to their question by giving general signs that relate to the entire future tribulation period. That these events take place during Daniel's seventieth week and not the present age is seen by noting their similarity with the seal judgments in Revelation 6. Furthermore the phrase "birth pains" is characteristically used of the period of trouble that immediately precedes the Messianic age (Cf. Isa. 13:8; 26:17; Jer. 4:31; 6:24; Mic. 4:9-10). References to "the end" in verses 13-14 make it clear that this passage refers to the entire seven year period and not just the first half.

Section Four: Detailed Signs Relating to the Second Half of the Tribulation		
Matthew 24:15-26	Mark 13:14-23	Luke 21:20-24
"“Therefore when you see the ‘ <i>abomination of desolation</i> ,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place ” (whoever reads, let him understand)," (Mt 24:15)	"“So when you see the ‘ <i>abomination of desolation</i> ,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not ” (let the reader understand)," (Mk 13:14a)	"“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.” (Lk 21:20)
"“ 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 days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ” (Mt 24:16-20)	"“ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter 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 days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. ” (Mk 13:14b-18)	"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ” (Lk 21:21, 23a)
"For then there will be great tribulation , such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. ” (Mt 24:21-22)	" For in those days there will be tribulation , such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. ” (Mk 13:19-20)	" For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.” (Lk 21:22, 23b)

<p>"“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here <i>is</i> the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe <i>it</i>. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; <i>or</i> ‘Look, <i>He is</i> in the inner rooms!’ do not believe <i>it</i>.” (Mt 24:23-26)</p>	<p>"“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here <i>is</i> the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, <i>He is</i> there!’ do not believe <i>it</i>. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.” (Mk 13:21-23)</p>	<p>“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Lk 21:24)²</p>
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In **section four**, Jesus discusses the most specific sign of all. When the abomination of desolation occurs, it will be clear to all that the return of Christ is very near. It will also signal the intensification of God’s judgment on the earth. Those alive at the time this sign occurs should head for the hills if they want to avoid death. Luke’s account includes specific details relating to the destruction of Jerusalem which will occur at this time. Jerusalem will experience devastation at the hands of the Gentiles for about 3 ½ more years until Christ returns to give Jerusalem back to Israel and establish His kingdom (Luke 21:24; Rev. 11:2).

² I take it that the “trampling [GK πατεω] by Gentiles” which Jesus mentions in Luke’s account refers specifically to the second half of the Tribulation, after the abomination of desolation. Revelation 11:2 indicates that the Gentiles will “tread [GK πατεω] the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.” Thus, I connect Revelation 11:2 with Luke 21:24. Nothing in Luke 21:24 indicates that the “trampling by Gentiles” must take place during the *entire* “times of the Gentiles.” Rather, Luke 21:24 only indicates that when the times of the Gentiles ends, so too will this intense “trampling” (i.e. which takes place in the second half of the Tribulation).

Section Five: Signs Immediately Accompanying the Second Coming		
Matthew 24:27-31	Mark 13:24-27	Luke 21:25-27
"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together." (Mt 24:27-28)		
"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. " (Mt 24:29)	"But in those days, after that tribulation , the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. " (Mk 13:24-25)	"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars ; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. " (Lk 21:25-26)
"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. " (Mt 24:30)	"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. " (Mk 13:26)	"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. " (Lk 21:27)
" 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. " (Mt 24:31)	" And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. " (Mk 13:27)	

In **section five**, Jesus gives specific signs that will immediately precede his second coming. These include a number of cosmic disturbances that will be so great; no one could possibly miss his return. No one will have to wonder, "Has Christ returned yet?" It will be obvious.

Section Six: The Parable of the Fig Tree—All these signs will indicate the nearness of Christ’s Return		
Matthew 24:32-35	Mark 13:28-31	Luke 21:28-33
		“Then He spoke to them a parable:” (Lk 21:29a)
<p>“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Mt 24:32-35)</p>	<p>“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Mk 13:28-31)</p>	<p>Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. . . . Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Lk 21:28, 29b-33)</p>

In **section six**, Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to teach the truth that those who see all these signs He has just set forth will also see His return.

Section Seven: The Analogy of the Flood—The Second Coming will Occur Unexpectedly		
Matthew 24:36-44	Mark 13:32-37	Luke 21:34-36
<p>""But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah <i>were</i>, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two <i>men</i> will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two <i>women will be</i> grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Mt 24:36-44)</p>	<p>""But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. <i>It is</i> like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"" (Mk 13:32-37)</p>	<p>""But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."" (Lk 21:34-36)</p>

In **section seven**, Jesus gives illustrations to demonstrate that for many in the tribulation, the second coming will be completely *unexpected*. Even though they will know the general timeframe of His return, they will not know the precise moment. Amazingly, many during that time will be unprepared for His return in spite of all of the supernatural events occurring at the time. The reference is clearly to the tribulation age, not the church age. Those alive during the tribulation would do well to heed this warning and be watchful.

Section Eight: The Parable of the Faithful and Evil Servants--The Second Coming may Occur Sooner Than Expected		
Matthew 24:45-51		
<p>“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed <i>is</i> that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat <i>his</i> fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for <i>him</i> and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint <i>him</i> his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mt 24:45-51)</p>		

In **section eight**, Jesus uses the parable of the faithful and evil servant to demonstrate that for many in the tribulation, the second coming will occur *sooner than expected*.

Section Nine: The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins--The Second Coming may occur Later Than Expected

Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (Mt 25:1-13)

In **section nine**, Jesus uses the parable of the virgins to demonstrate that for many in the tribulation, the second coming will occur *later than expected*.

Section Ten: The Parable of the Talents		
Matthew 25:14-30		
<p>“For <i>the kingdom of heaven is</i> like a man traveling to a far country, <i>who</i> called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who <i>had received</i> two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well <i>done</i>, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well <i>done</i>, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, <i>there</i> you have <i>what is</i> yours.’ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give <i>it</i> to him who has ten talents. ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (Mt 25:14-30)</p>		

In **section ten**, Jesus tells the parable of the talents to remind national Israel to do something with the “talent” she has received. All three servants represent Israel (Cf. Is. 41:8; Lk. 1:54; et. al.). The focus of this parable is strictly on Israel and her preparedness for the kingdom just prior to its arrival. In view of Israel’s incredible privilege as the chosen nation of God, the talent stands for all of the resources and benefits that are hers (Cf. Rom. 9).

The tribulation period will provide Israel with one final chance to do something with the “talent” she has been offered time and again throughout history. Those who believe the gospel of the kingdom (i.e. accept the talent rather than squandering it) will receive entrance into that kingdom. Among those who respond, there will be varying levels of faithfulness/fruitfulness. Those who make good use of their resources in spreading the gospel of the kingdom will be rewarded with positions of authority and responsibility in the kingdom. That this passage refers to Israel and not the church is confirmed by such phrases as “Enter into the joy of your lord;” (Joy is a frequent Kingdom motif [Heb. 12:1-2; Rom. 14:17; Is. 65:14-18; et. al.]); “entering,” “ruling,” and “of your lord.” This terminology lends support to the view that kingdom life is in view, as opposed to heaven.

Section Eleven: The Judgment of the Nations and the Establishment of the Messianic Kingdom		
Matthew 25:31-46		
<p>“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides <i>his</i> sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I <i>was</i> naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed <i>You</i>, or thirsty and give <i>You</i> drink? When did we see You a stranger and take <i>You</i> in, or naked and clothe <i>You</i>? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did <i>it</i> to one of the least of these My brethren, you did <i>it</i> to Me.’ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do <i>it</i> to one of the least of these, you did not do <i>it</i> to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Mt 25:31-46)</p>		

In **section eleven**, Jesus presents a picture of the judgment that will occur when He returns. The sheep represent those who responded favorably to the Jewish witnesses during the tribulation (i.e. accepted their message). The goats represent those who rejected the gospel of the kingdom.

Olivet Discourse

Matt 24:27-31
Mk 13:24-27
Lk 21:25-27

Matthew 24:1-14
Mark 13:5-13; Luke 21:8-19

Matt. 24:15-26
Mark 13:14-23
Luke 21:20-24

