

I. Introduction to the Olivet Discourse

- A. The Olivet discourse - Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21
- B. We will mainly focus in Mark 13 since we are going through Mark's Gospel.
- C. I will bring in the other 2 Gospels as necessary to either illuminate the meaning of a text or to answer possible objections.
- D. The key idea is that the Olivet discourse is about the destruction of the Temple that occurred on August 29 and 30, 70AD and does not refer to the worlds end as is often taught.

II. v1-4 - The Key Question and Context

- A. The key issue: the Temple's destruction
As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"² "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Mark 13:1-2
 - 1. This is the context and issue in Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2, and Luke 21:5-6.
 - 2. All 3 Gospels also indicate this statement was made at the end of the day of controversies in the Temple.
 - 3. Matthew 23 records Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, Jerusalem, and the entire generation. Jesus says that the generation will be held guilty for all the blood of every righteous person ever martyred, and He declares the Temple to be desolate - abandoned by God.

And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.³⁶ I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate. Matthew 23:35-38

- B. The disciples question that Jesus answers in the Olivet discourse

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" Mark 13:3-4

- 1. The disciples question is simple - when will the Temple be destroyed? Are there any signs that this prophecy of the Temple's destruction is about to be fulfilled?
- 2. Luke has the same question (almost verbatim)
- 3. Some think Matthew has an extra question
As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:3
 - a. When will this happen - same as Mark and Luke
 - b. What will be the sign of you coming and the end of the age - is this different than Mark and Luke?
 - c. Two possible answers to this question

1. Jesus taught about His second coming and the end of the world in response to this extra question.
 - (a) Matthew includes a lot of extra teaching in the Olivet discourse not in Mark and Luke - basically this begins at Matthew 24:36 and continues through the parables of chapter 25.
 - (b) It is possible that starting at Matthew 24:36 Jesus shifts to the question regarding His final return and this is the point of Matthew 24:36-25:46.
 - (c) However, this has NOTHING to do with the meaning of Matthew 24:1-35, Mark 13, and Luke 21, which are all clearly the same words of Jesus and therefore must be addressing the only question given in Mark and Luke - when will the Temple be destroyed?
 2. These are all really the same question
 - (a) The coming in question is not Jesus' final coming at the end of the world, but His coming in judgment on apostate Israel to destroy the Temple. This is clearly the focus of Mark 13, Luke 21, and Matthew 24:1-35. And as we will see, this is a very common idea in the Old Testament - the Lord coming to execute judgement.
 - (b) The question about the end of the age is not the end of the world but the end of the Old Covenant age. The word used is not κόσμος (kosmos - world) but rather αἰών (aeon - age). They are not asking about the end of the world but the end of the Old Covenant age - of which the Temple was a central part.
 - (c) This means that Mark and Luke, who wrote for Gentiles, did not include the language of 'coming' and the end of the age which were of more interest to Jewish audiences (Matthew's recipients).
 3. In either case, it is clear that Mark 13 and Luke 21 do NOT address the final return of Christ and the end of the world and if Matthew does so it is not until after Matthew 24:36 when Matthew has additional material.
- C. The fact that the discourse is about the destruction of the Temple and NOT the end of the world is reinforced by the fact that Jesus clearly declares that everything He describes will be done during the lifetime of the current generation.
- I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Mark 13:30
1. Jesus is crystal clear - everything He has described in Mark 13:1-29 will be fulfilled during THIS GENERATION.
 2. The same statement is recorded at the same place in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 - so the events described in the Olivet Discourse had to be fulfilled during THIS GENERATION.
 3. Jesus is emphatic about this - "I tell you the truth", a phrase Jesus uses to underline the certainty of what He is saying.
 4. Some try to say this means 'this race' meaning the Jewish nation. Although the word for 'generation' (γενεά) can refer to a race, it is also used in the restricted sense of "those living during the same period of time." It is CERTAIN that the reference here is to the current generation alive at the time of Jesus.
 5. Jesus refers to "this generation" (γενεὰ αὐτῆς). This phrase is used 19 times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:16; 12:41, 42; 12:45; 23:36; 24:34; Mark 8:12; 8:38; 13:30; Luke 7:31; 11:29, 30, 31,

32; 11:50, 51; 17:25; 21:32; Hebrews 3:10). Every single time the phrase refers to a specific generation, never to a race or nation. Consider a few examples:

“To what can I compare **this generation**? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: ¹⁷ “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ Matthew 11:16-17

The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. Matthew 12:41

I tell you the truth, all this will come upon **this generation**. Matthew 23:36

6. It is the generation alive as Jesus spoke the words that heard and saw Him, rejected Him, and that will bear the guilt of all the blood shed upon the earth. This will happen when judgement falls and the Temple is destroyed and the Old Covenant age is ended forever.
7. This means every single sign and event in Mark13/ Luke 21/Matthew 24 prior to this statement MUST have been fulfilled within that generation (usually considered to be 40 years in Scripture).
8. If I struggle to understand how some of the events could have happened in the first century (the Gospel preached to all nations, the elect gathered, the sun being darkened and stars falling from the sky) I must see how the Scripture interprets them - not alter the clear statement of Jesus that they MUST happen during THIS GENERATION.

9. If I say “within an hour it will be raining cats and dogs” it is clear that the time reference is literal, while the “raining cats and dogs” is not! No one would expect German Shepherds and Siamese cats to be falling from the sky. And if it rained hard during that hour, no one would say “Well, with the Lord an hour could mean thousands of years” - they would recognize that the time frame was literal while the statement about the rain was metaphorical. As we will see, the same is true in the Olivet Discourse.

- D. The Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans, and the Old Covenant age ended forever. Thus, Jesus’ words came true! The Temple was utterly destroyed and the Old Covenant age ended as it found its fulfillment in the far greater New Covenant. This is the focus of the Olivet Discourse - not the final return of Christ and the end of world.

The Olivet Discourse: Mark 13:1-4