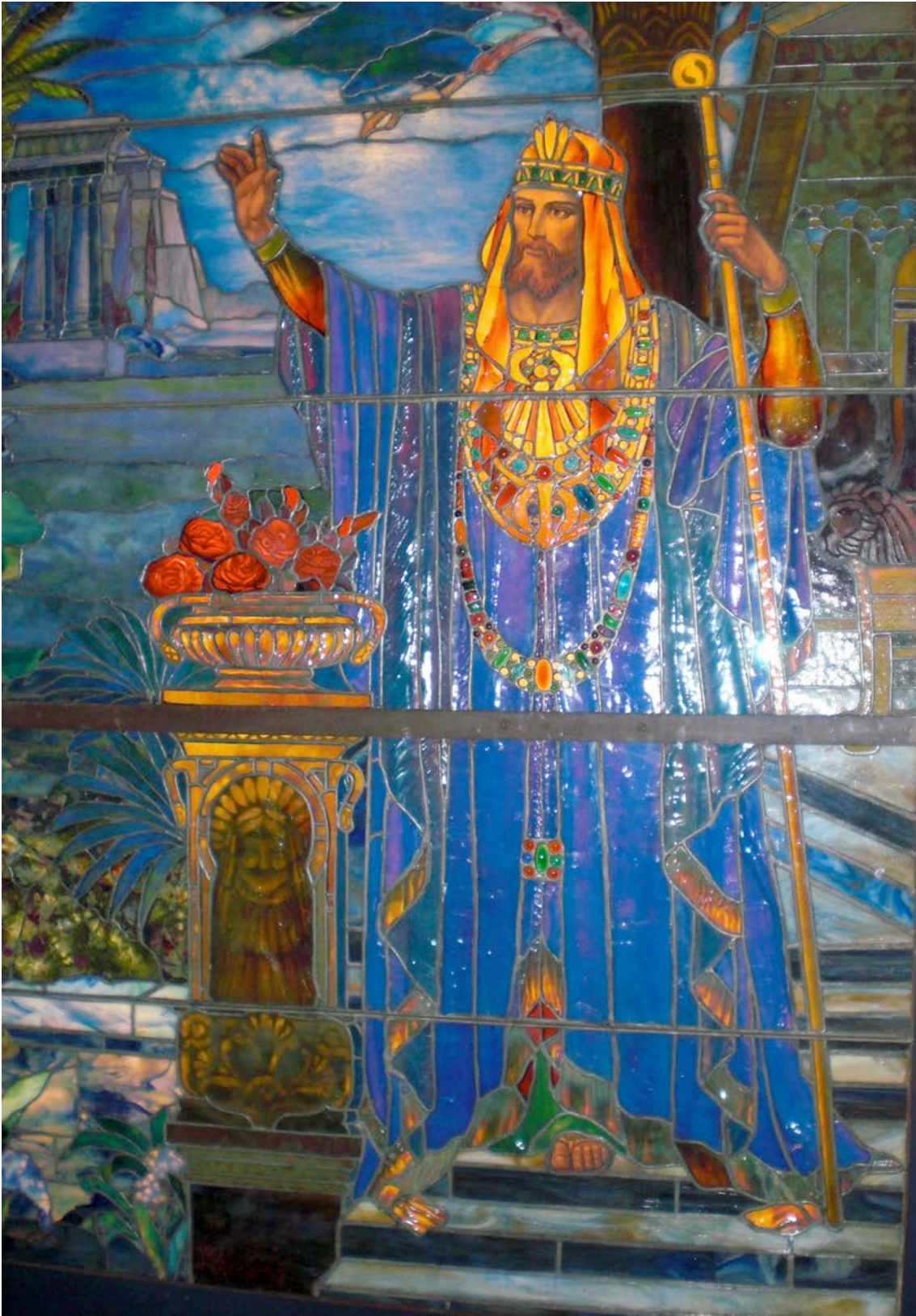


The Olivet Discourse Part 1

Daniel E. Woodhead
Matt 24-25; Luke 21; Mark 13



The Olivet Discourse is Christ's last great sermon and it touches on many key events during The Church Age and the ushering in of the Kingdom. It is important that we understand this discourse in order to fully be aware of the end times and experience the pressure that Christ wanted us to sense so that we would continue working (laboring) for The Kingdom.

The more literally we take the Bible our theology becomes more fundamental. The less literally we take the Bible the more liberal our theology becomes.

Resolving Power

From the field of optics, we learn that the closer we inspect something our previous notions about this issue might become clearer. It is possible that we could find out that there are fine distinctions in the subject under study, which enable us to more fully understand the subject.

Terminology

Several key words and concepts must be mastered prior to an exposition of The Olivet Discourse.

The Rapture

The Rapture is a word that does not appear in our English Bibles. It is an Anglicized Latin word; Rapturo; meaning to be caught up. Jerome the first translator of the Bible into Latin used the word Rapturo about 400 AD.

It is found in 1Thes 4; 1 Cor 15:51-52; John 14:3.

1Th 4:15-18 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The believers in Jesus Christ both alive and those who have passed on will experience this blessed event some time prior to The Great Tribulation. Jesus Himself in The Olivet Discourse will discuss this event.

The Great Tribulation

The Great Tribulation is a time yet future on planet earth where there will be huge catastrophes such as the world has never seen. A worldwide war coupled with unprecedented natural disasters as well as economic chaos, famine and disease will be rampant on the planet. The believers are kept from this "Day of Wrath" as the Lord describes it (Revelation 6-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 8:1, Is 13-27 etc.).

Matthew 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Millennium

After the Great Tribulation the Lord Himself returns (Revelation 19) along with the previously raptured believers (saints) (Zechariah 14:5) and Jesus sets up His 1,000 earthly reign on planet earth; ruling the world government from David's Throne in Jerusalem. The word Millennium is not in our English Bibles. It is another Latin word that refers to a thousand, mille.

The Kingdom

The Kingdom is simply the earthly realization of the Heavenly Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:9-12; Isaiah 60-61 etc.).

Matthew 6-9-10 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.

Jesus promised His Apostles that this would happen some day. It is yet future from us today and is the same as the Millennium. The Millennium simply gives us the duration of the earthly Kingdom.

Hermeneutics:

Within the field of Biblical interpretation the way we read our Bibles is extremely important. The science of Biblical study is called Hermeneutics. It is important to realize that we must not take verses out of context. For example some would have us believe that while Revelation 20 discusses the length of the Theocratic Kingdom as 1,000 they say a 1,000 does not always mean a 1,000. They would have us believe that 1 Pet 3:8 which speaks to a comparison/contrast to the earthly time domain and where God lives, tells us that a 1,000 is not a 1,000. They simply mis-interpret Scripture by allegorizing the text. They are also taking different verses out of context and putting them together to establish their own private meaning. This means that their own meaning is assigned to the text instead of using the normal common usage of the words in Scripture. When this happens only they can know what it means. Scripture forbids this! (*2 Peter 1:20, knowing this that no Scripture is of any private interpretation.*) It adds confusion and chaos and then Scripture will not be able to be known. (*1 Corinthians 14: for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*) We follow a literal hermeneutic and allow for historical usage, common grammar as well as figures of speech to guide our interpretation. We do not assign meaning to words that remove the plain sense of the text. Sometimes when the Scripture is engaged in hyperbole or an exaggerated description it is fair to interpret in a manner consistent with grammar instead of the plain meaning of the words. For example:

Isaiah 55:11-12 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and

it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands.

It is quite obvious that trees do not have hands and therefore cannot clap them; neither do mountains have the capability of singing. This passage speaks of a personification of nature to assist us in sensing the joy that the Lord brings to us through the promulgation of His Word. Taking Scripture literally means that we adhere to proper grammar.

Further if we take verses out of the context we lose the structure of the paragraph and how the verse in question fits in and enables understanding of the whole of Scripture and the section we are trying to understand.

The extreme example of the “Out of Context” error is mixing these two verses Matthew 27:5 & Luke 10:37

Matthew 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Luke 10:37b Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

This is an obviously absurd example but it serves to help us remember the rule. Do not take verses out of context.

Drawing us Away From God’s Word:

Satan has been trying to get us away from God’s Word, by casting doubt on its authenticity since the Garden.

Gen 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

From Where do Different Interpretation of The Bible Come?

1. Inability to Read
2. Denominational Bias
3. Presuppositional Study Concepts
4. Misapplication
5. Spiritualization of the Message
6. Failure to Study the Context

7. Failure to use Background Resources and Study Helps
8. Lack of Comprehension of Biblical Language Syntax
9. Lack of Understanding of What “Literal Interpretation” means.
10. Eisegesis
11. Believing Bible Study is not a Priority in Life
12. Not being Sensitive to the “Human Drama” within the Bible (pain and sorrow)
13. Before Study failing to Pray for Spiritual Insight
14. Theological or Emotional Bias
15. Failure to Rightly Divide the Truth
16. Failure to See Strong Word Descriptions (David swam on a bed of tears)
17. Presently Interpreting the Bible Through the Past (childhood hurts can be a block)

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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

1. The Historical Setting

After His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees, and after announcing the coming destruction of the Temple, Jesus and His disciples moved out of the Temple compound for the last time. On the way out, the disciples pointed out the magnificent buildings of the Jewish Temple Compound. Actually at that time, the Temple buildings were not yet completed. Herod the Great began the Temple Compound in 20 B.C. but it was not finished until A.D. 64 only 6 years before its destruction. The words of the Olivet discourse were spoken in the year A.D. 33, so the building had been going on some fifty+

years at that time. They would continue for another 31 years. The stones, which so impressed the disciples, were indeed magnificent, and some of them are still visible in the walls of the Temple Compound today. These “Herodian Stones” are huge and each measures 10 to 12 feet in length and weighs several tons.

Though this was an amazing prediction, especially in light of the political scene and the actual structure of the temple, Jesus' words here had an extremely literal fulfillment in 70 AD. When Jerusalem was besieged by Roman armies in that year, many Jews took refuge in the temple - the strongest building in the city. It caught fire (reportedly from a torch thrown by a drunken soldier), incinerating the people inside and melting the golden-domed roof down into the crevices of the stones of the temple; When the ruins cooled down, Roman leaders ordered the temple literally dismantled stone by stone, to recover the gold and to utterly break the spirit of Israel. The structure was dismantled to the extent that its exact location today cannot be determined.

This prophecy of the Messiah left the disciples perplexed.

The Temple Will Be Destroyed!

These men would very likely think that although things may change, the Temple would never go away. This prophecy had to strike them as being extremely unlikely. Thus, the prophecy was very literally fulfilled, not one stone was left upon another of the Temple. (Don't confuse the Temple with the Temple Mount, the retaining wall, which is still there.)

The literal fulfillment of this prophecy establishes the tone for the rest of the prophecies in the Discourse; we should expect a literal fulfillment for these as well.

Dedication of Solomon's Temple

After the completion of the Temple, King Solomon dedicated it in 953 B.C. Solomon's speech to the people and an enormous offering of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep followed his humble prayers. A great public feast followed:

IKi 8:65-66 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, [even] fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

The account in II Chronicles tells us that fire from heaven (The Shekinah Glory) ignited the offerings on the altars as Solomon finished praying:

II Chronicles 7:1-7 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the

sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, [saying], For [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy [endureth] for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood. Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that [was] before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

The Babylonians destroyed this temple in 586 B.C. Ezra attempted a partial rebuild. Actually at the time of the Olivet Discourse, the Temple buildings were not yet completed. Herod the Great began the rebuilding Temple Compound in 20 B.C. but it was not finished until A.D. 64 only 6 years before its destruction. The words of the Olivet discourse were spoken in the year A.D. 33, so the building had been going on some fifty+ years at that time. They would continue for another 31 years. The stones, which so impressed the disciples, were indeed magnificent, and some of them are still visible in the walls of the Temple Compound today. These “Herodian Stones” are huge and each measures 10 to 12 feet in length and weighs several tons.

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2. The Three Questions

Private answers to three questions: Four disciples ask Jesus three questions and Matthew 24, 25 and Mark and Luke's recording together answer the three questions. Matthew and Mark are silent on one of the questions and Luke answers that one.

Jesus' prediction brings up three questions in the minds of His disciples
The Matthew account reads as follows Matthew 24:3

Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? The Luke account reads. Master, but when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?

And they asked Him, saying, Teacher, when therefore shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?

The first question: when will these things (that is, the destruction of temple) be? Matthew does not record Jesus' answer to this first question, but Luke does in Luke 21:8-23.

The first question in the Matthew passage, "When shall these things be?" imply His remark in verse 2; i.e., the destruction of the Temple. In this account in Matthew this is not dealt with very intensely, however in Luke responds clearer (Luke 21:20-24). And what shall be the sign when these things are about to take place? While this question is not answered very thoroughly, for us it is a matter of history as this prophecy has been fulfilled. Also, perhaps it is left vague purposely, as it would be easy for us to mix up this last Temple with the one that will be present in the last days.

The second question is answered in the remainder of the chapter: what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? This question was asked perhaps as they remembered the events surrounding the last temple's destruction: the temple was destroyed in the context of national judgment and exile. This question does not concern the Rapture of the Church because the Rapture is imminent and can happen at any moment having no warning sign preceding it. However, the Second Coming will be preceded by a sign, and the disciples asked what the sign would be.

Perhaps it was so each age would have reasons to be ready for Jesus return; because we should not think of Jesus' return as an event far off on a time line, but something we have been running parallel with since the day of Pentecost.

The third question was: What shall be the sign of the end of the world? The Greek word translated world actually means "age." They asked for a third sign and that was, "What will be the sign that the end of this age has begun?" In rabbinic theology of that day, the rabbis spoke of two ages: "this age," meaning the age in which we not live, and "the age to come" meaning the Messianic Age. So the question is, "What is the sign that the last days of this age have begun and will lead to the Messianic Age?"

So altogether there were three questions in which the disciples asked for three signs to watch for. Yeshua answered these questions, but not in the same order as they were asked. Not are all three answers found in all three accounts. While Matthew and Mark recorded the answer to the second and third question., they ignored the answer to the first question. It is Luke who recorded the Messiah's answer to the first question.

Last time we left off with the opening questions in the Olivet Discourse. The Apostles come to Jesus right after the Pharisee denunciation in the Temple and they are on the Mount of Olives looking westward back at the Temple. We discussed the historical setting and then we began to look at the three questions they asked Him.

Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

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3. Dispensation of The Church

Before answering the third first. He began by answering the question in a negative manner and in doing so He was providing some general characteristics of the Church Age, which are not signs.

Matthew 24:4-6 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you .For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Rather than immediately answering all three questions, Jesus decided to give some facts about the Church Age, which are part of "This Age", none of which meant that the end had begun. Jesus answered their questions at first in a way that they would not jump to certain conclusions because of various events. Therefore, He first answered the questions negatively so as to tell them what events would *not mean* the end of the age. There were to be two general characteristics of the Church Age.

1. The Rise of False Messiahs

Historically, Jesus was the first person who claimed to be The Messiah. After Him many would coming making that claim. After Jesus many Jewish men made that claim from Simon-Bar Cochba to Sabbetal Tzvi and Jacob Frank. They led many astray with their false claims. A number of Gentiles have done this too. Just as Christ said this was to be a general characteristic of the church Age. This was in no way meant to identify the beginning of the "End of The Age."

2. The Existence of Local Wars

The second general characteristic would be the existence of local wars. Jesus stated that when you "Hear of wars and rumors of wars," these things also would not signal the start of end of the age. Even if such a war took place in the Middle East it would not be prophetically significant.

3. Conclusion

Concerning both false messiahs and local wars, in Matthew verse 24: 6, Jesus said: *for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* Luke emphasized this point when he wrote: *for all these things must needs to come to pass first; but the end is*

not immediately (Luke 21:9). In other words, the rise of false Messiahs and long periods of local wars will necessarily come first. But neither of these things would in any way shape or form be signs that the end had begun.

4. 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 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows.

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 earth quakes 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 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. 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. 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. 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.

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: And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: 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. Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: But when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 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. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded.

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 world wide 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. Yeshua 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 Yeshua 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

lead 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 impetus 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.

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

8 May 1902	Martinique (Volcanic Eruption).	40 000	A.C.	11
16 Aug. 1906	Valpariaso, Chile	20 000	B.	18
28 Dec. 1908	Messina, Italy	83 000 85 000 70 000-100 000 85 926	B. C. A. D.	5
13 Jan. 1915	Avezzano, Italy	29 980 30 000 32 610	A.B. C. D.	12
16 Dec. 1920	Gansu, China	70 000 180 000 235 000	B. C. D.	3
1 Sept. 1923	Tokyo, Japan	99 300 140 000+ 142 800 143 000	B. A. D. C.	4
22 May 1927	Nan-Shan, China	200 000	A.B.	2
26 Dec. 1932	Gansu, China	70 000	A.B.C.	6
15 Jan. 1934	Bihar, India	10 700	B.	24
31 May 1935	Quetta, India [Pak.]	30 000 35 000 30 000-60 000 50 000	B. D. A. C.	8
24 Jan. 1939	Chillan, Chile	28 000	B.D.	13

		30 000	A.C.	
26-27 Dec. 1939	Erzincan, Turkey	30 000 32 740 45 000 100 000	B. D. C. A.	9
15 Aug. 1950	Assam, India.	1 530 20 000-30 000	B. A.	19
29 Feb. 1960	Agadir, Morocco	10 000-12 000 12 000 20 000	A. B.D. C.	22
1 Sept. 1962	NW Iran.	12 230 12 403	B. C.	21
31 Aug. 1968	NE Iran	12 000	B.C.	23
31 May 1970	NW Peru	50 000+ 66 794 67 000 70 000	A. B. D. C.	7
23 Dec. 1972	Managua, Nicaragua	5 000 <6 000 10 000	B. A. C.	
4 Feb. 1976	Guatemala	22 084	D.	17

		22 778	B.	
		23 000	A.C.	
28 July 1976	Tangshan, China	250 000 290 000 242 000 [official] - 655 000 800 000	C. D. A. B.	1
16 Sept. 1978	Tabas, NE Iran	25 000	A.B.C.	14
19-20 Sept. 1985	Mexico	7 000+ 10 000 25 000	C. D. A.	25
14-16 Nov. 1985	Colombia (Volcanic Eruption)	24 740 25 000	D. A.C.	15
7 Dec. 1988	Armenia	<25 000 25 000	A. C.D.	16
21 June 1990	NW Iran	35 000 50 000+	C. A.	10
17 Aug. 1999	NW Turkey	15 000 17 000 17 000+	C. A. D.	20

Additionally, the frequency of earthquakes has increased significantly since around the time of the 1st World War.

Sources:

- A: <http://www.infoplease.com>
- B: 1984 World Almanac
- C: Encyclopedia Americana, 2003 ed.
- D: Munich Re, Press Release, Dec. 1999

5 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 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. It shall turn out unto you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. 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. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience ye shall win your souls.

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. First, in verse 12a, the Jews will reject them. Secondly, in verse 12b, the Gentiles will reject them. Thirdly, in verse 13, they will undergo persecutions, but these persecutions will provide opportunities for testimony. Fourthly, they will succeed in proclaiming the gospel everywhere (Mark 13:10); this is verified by Romans 10:8 and Colossians 1:6, 23. Fifth, 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. Sixth, in verse 16, their own family members will reject them. Seventh, in verse 17, they will be hated by all men to the point that some will be martyred. Eighth, in verse 18, nevertheless, their salvation is assured. And ninth, 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.

Sources:

Outline and text excerpted from A. Fruchtenbaum's Olivet Discourse

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