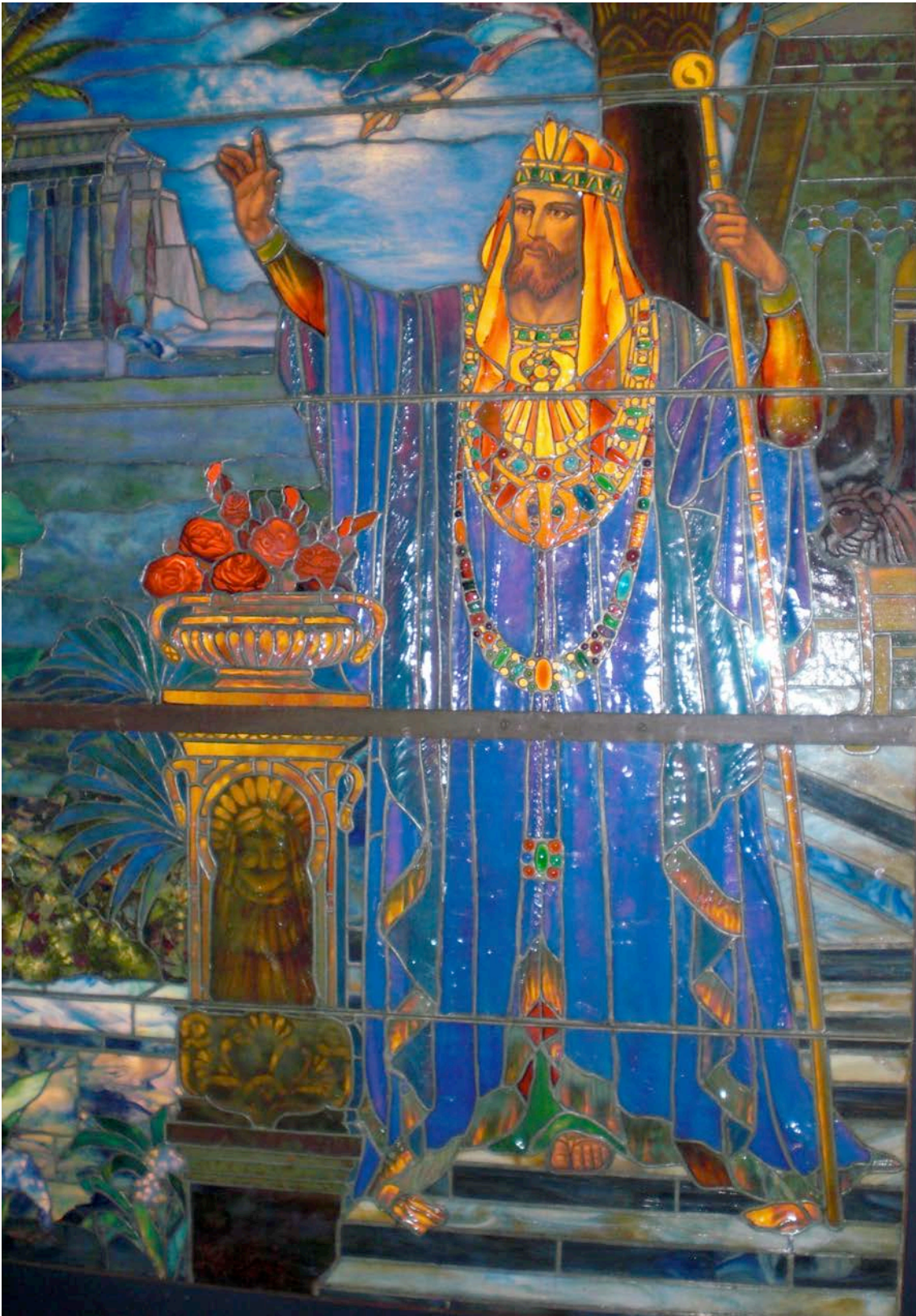


The Olivet Discourse Part 2

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.

6. The Sign of the Fall of Jerusalem

Only after having spelled out clearly that the apostles would have to undergo a period of suffering as well as have a successful ministry did Christ go on to answer their first question concerning the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

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

Luke 21:20-24 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 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. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 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. 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.

In answer to the first question, the Messiah gave them the sign that would mark the fact that Jerusalem was about to be destroyed. The sign was the surrounding of the City of Jerusalem by armies. The Jewish believers were told that, when they saw this sign, they were to leave Jerusalem and Judea and flee outside the Land.

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

Matthew 10:5-6 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

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

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Some day the Jews will all be saved.

Romans 11:25-28 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (cf. Luke 19:42) And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (cf. Leviticus 26) As concerning the gospel, [they are] enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, [they are] beloved for the fathers' sakes.

This sign would mark the coming desolation of Jerusalem and, from that point on, Jerusalem will be continually trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. *The sign was the surrounding of the City of Jerusalem by armies.* The Jewish believers were told that, when they saw this sign, they were to leave Jerusalem and Judea and flee outside the Land.

This prophecy was fulfilled in a very marvelous way. In the year A.D. 66, the first Jewish revolt broke out against the Romans. When the revolt first began, the Roman general in the Land, Cestus Gallus, came with his armies from Caesarea and surrounded Jerusalem. The surrounding of the city marked the sign that Jesus had promised, and the Jewish believers knew that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed. Jesus had commanded the Jewish believers to desert the city when they saw this happening. However, it was impossible to do so while the Romans were surrounding the city.

Then Cestus Gallus noticed that his supply lines were not secure. He did not have enough supplies to maintain an extended siege, so he lifted the siege of Jerusalem in order to back to Caesarea. On the way, he was attacked by Jewish forces and killed. Temporarily, the armies no longer surrounded the city, so every single Jewish believer was about to leave Jerusalem. They crossed the Jordan River and set up a new community of Jewish believers in the town of Pella in the Transjordan. Jewish believers from Judea, Galilee and the Golan joined them. There they waited for the prophecy to be fulfilled.

In the year A.D. 68, a new Roman general named Vespasian and his son, Titus, again besieged the city, and in the year A.D. 70, the city and the Temple were destroyed. Altogether, 1,200,000 Jews were killed in the final onslaught, but not one Jewish believer died because they obeyed the words of their Messiah. Since that time, Jerusalem has indeed been trodden down by the Gentiles and continues to be so to the present day.

Jerusalem will not be free of Gentile nations treading upon her until the Messiah returns.

With these words, the Messiah answered their first question, the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. That left one more question of the three to be answered; the sign of the second coming.

7. The Great Tribulation

In preparation for answering the second question, the Messiah turned to the Great Tribulation itself. His words concerning this period are recorded in Matthew 24:9-26 and Mark 13:14-23. In this section, the Messiah spoke of the events of both the first half and the second half of the Tribulation.

The Events of the First Half of the Tribulation

The events concerning the first half of the Tribulation are recorded in Matthew 24:9-14:

Matthew 24:9-14 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Although these verses are very similar to those recorded in Mark 13:9-13 and Luke 21:12-19, the differences show that Matthew is not dealing with the same thing. Similarity does not prove sameness. Luke clearly stated that the events he was describing came before the sign of the end of the age, when nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. However, in the Matthew account, the passage begins with the word, *then*, pointing out that the Messiah is now describing what will come after the event of nation rising up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. While the words tend to be similar, these similarities do not prove sameness. Mark and Luke described events that will happen to the apostles before the sign of the First World War, while Matthew dealt with events of the first half of the Tribulation that would come after the sign of the First World War.

Altogether, the Messiah pointed out five events that will occur during the first half of the Tribulation. First, in verses 9-10, there will be tremendous persecution of the saints, a fact also given in Revelation 6:9-11. The one-world religious system, known as Ecclesiastical Babylon, will be doing the persecuting and will be responsible for the death of the saints during the first half of the Tribulation. (Revelation 17:1-6)

Secondly, in verse 11, the first half of the Tribulation will be characterized by the rise of many false prophets. This point is also brought out in Zechariah 13:2-6.

Thirdly, in verse 12, there will be a tremendous rise of sin and iniquity, because evil will no longer be restrained (II Thessalonians, 2:6-7).

Fourthly, in verse 13, those Jews who survive to the end of the Tribulation will be

saved.

The fifth event of the first half of the Tribulation will be the world-wide preaching of the gospel in verse 14, which will be conducted by the 144,000 Jews of Revelation 7:1-8. The results of the ministry of the 144,000 are recorded in Revelation 7:9-17, where it clearly states that a great multitude of Gentiles will come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

The Events of the Second Half of the Tribulation

Having given some events of the first half of the Tribulation, the Messiah next turned to the events of the second half, recorded in Matthew 24:15-28 and in Mark 13:14-23. Jesus said that this will be the most awful time in all of human history (a sobering statement), when God pours out His wrath on a God-rejecting-world.

More detail is given concerning the events of the second half of the Tribulation; altogether the Messiah said eight things in the Matthew account. First in verse 15, the Messiah dealt with the specific event that will mark the beginning of the second half of the Tribulation:

Matthew 24:15 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:)

When Jesus describes the abomination of desolation, there is the presupposition of an operating temple, and of the Jewish occupation of the land of Judea.

The mention of the abomination of desolation is taken from Daniel 11:31: They shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation; this describes a complete desecration of the temple, prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes in the inter-testamental period. Paul elaborates on the future fulfillment of this in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 - That day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Daniel 12:11 gives additional insight - And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be 1,290 days (until the end); when this sign is set up, the end may be determined - almost three and one-half years to go.

This phrase is a superlative in the Hebrew, the ultimate that one can think of. It has happened once before in history. Antiochus Epiphanes wanted to offend the Jews. He slaughtered a sow on the altar in Jerusalem and sprinkled the blood in front of an idol of Zeus in the Holy Place. This started the Maccabean Revolt. The Temple was rededicated in 135 B.C. (now commemorated by Hanukkah). This was prior to Christ. Therefore when Jesus says in Matthew 24:15, "when ye see," is saying that it will happen again!

The abomination of desolation will involve two stages. The first stage will be when the Antichrist will take over the Jewish Temple, sit down in the Holy of Holies, and declare himself to be God (II Thessalonians 2:3-10). The second stage of the abomination

of desolation will be when the False Prophet will make an image of the Antichrist and stand it up in the holy of Holies (Revelation 13: 11-15; Daniel 12:11). This act of the abomination of desolation will signal that the second and worst half of the Tribulation has begun.

Secondly, the abomination of desolation will be the signal for the Jews to flee out of the Land in verses 16-20.

Matthew 24:16-20 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.

This flight is also recorded in Revelation 12:13-17. This passage reflects a sense of urgency in Israel's flight. In fact, the whole emphasis is on speed and quickness. This emphasis is especially evident in the Messiah's listing of the three difficulties that may be encountered in this flight. The first difficulty is for women who are pregnant or have nursing infants. In both cases, this makes quick flight difficult. The second difficulty is in relation to the Sabbath. And the third difficulty is in relation to the winter.

Why not in winter since it seldom snows in Israel? What could possibly be the problem with winter? The reason for this prayer request lies in a situation, as things exist in Israel. There are several differences between the U.S. and Israel. One of these differences is the manner in which weather patterns occur. In the U.S., the land receives rain during all four seasons, but this is not the case with Israel, which has a specific rainy season. Between April and October, not one drop of rain will fall throughout the country. Israel receives all her rain between October and April. When it does rain during the winter months, it often comes down heavily, creating flood condition at times. Another difference between the U.S. and Israel is the manner in which highways are built. When Americans build highways and come to a dry water gully, although it is dry, they will build a bridge across it. This is not the case in Israel where the roads are paved into the water gullies and out again. Technically, these water gullies are known as *wadis*. *Wadis* are dry all summer and also most of the winter. However, during the winter rainy months when rain falls along the mountain ranges of Israel, water rushes down the wadis with tremendous speed and force, washing out the highways. From other passages we realize that when the Jews escape from Jerusalem they will have to go by means off these wadis. If this event takes place in winter it will make escape that much more difficult.

The second prayer request is that it should not happen on the Sabbath day either. Why not on the Sabbath day? On the Sabbath day in Israel, all public transportation closed down because the busses and the trains are all locked up. Unless one owns his own automobile, it will be extremely difficult to make an escape from the country. Only one-third of the Israeli population owns their own cars; two thirds are without cars. The majority of the population is heavily dependent upon public transportation, which is non-existent on the Sabbath day. If this event happens on the Sabbath day, it will make escape that much more difficult.

For these two reasons, they are advised to pray that this abomination of desolation, which will indeed come to pass, will not come on the Sabbath day or during the winter months, during the rainy season.

The third thing mentioned is the reason for such as flight in verse 21:

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.

At this time anti-Semitism will break out in all its fierceness. Satan's attempt to annihilate the Jews once-and-for-all will have begun in earnest.

Fourthly, Israel will survive this terrible period, though greatly reduced in number according to verse 22:

Matthew 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Fifth, the second half of the Tribulation will be characterized by a false messiah as typified in the counterfeit son, the Antichrist in verse 23:

Matthew 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here [is] Christ, or there; believe [it] not.

Sixth, the latter half of the Tribulation is described in verse 24:

Matthew 24:24 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.

Many false signs, miracles, and wonders for the purpose of worldwide deception will characterize the latter half of the Tribulation. These signs will be performed by both the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2:8-10) and by the False Prophet (Revelation 13:11-15).

Seventh the Messiah gives a warning in verses 25-27:

Matthew 24:25-27 Behold, I have told you before. 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. 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.

The Messiah warned that there will be people saying that the Messiah has returned here or that the Messiah has returned there, and that the Second Coming has secretly occurred. The Messiah warned His disciples not to believe any such rumors or statement and come out of hiding because, unlike His First Coming, the Second Coming will not be in secret. When the Messiah returns the second time, all men will see it, for it will be like

a flash off lightning surrounding the world.

Eighth, the Messiah gave a hint as to the place of His Second Coming in verse 28:

Matthew 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

He said that where the body is there will be the eagles, actually vultures be gathered together. The body refers to Israel while the vultures refer to the Gentile nations coming against the body of Israel. The place of the Second Coming of the Messiah will be in that place where the body of Israel is located, and where the Gentile nations are gathered together. The exact place is known in Hebrew as Bozrah or as Petra in Greek. That is where the body will be (Mic. 2:12-13); that is, where the vultures will be gathered to come against them (Is.34:1-7;63:1-6); and that will be the place of the Second Coming (Hab. 3:3)

To summarize this passage, the Messiah presented the events of the second half of the Tribulation, showing it to be an especially difficult period for Israel, which will culminate in the Second Coming of the Messiah. But, He has not yet answered the second question concerning the sign that will signal the Messiah's Second Coming.

8. The Sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah

The answer to the second question is recorded in Matthew 24:29-30; Mark 13:24-26 and Luke 21:25-27.

The Matthew account reads:

Matthew 24:29-30 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: 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.

The Luke account reads:

Luke 21:25-27 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

In the Matthew account, Yeshua stated that just preceding the sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah, there will be a total blackout of the earth. No light will penetrate to the earth from the sun, the moon and the stars. (Matthew 24:29) Luke adds that there will be a great amount of perplexity on the earth as both physical and non-physical things are shaken in expectation (Luke 21:25-26)

At this point, Matthew states that the sign of the Son of man will appear in verse

30a. As this sign is coupled with God's glory, it is obviously the Shekinah Glory light that will signal the Second Coming of the Messiah. The answer to the second question, "What will be the sign of the Second Coming?" is: the Shekinah Glory. But, immediately after the tribulation of those days, there will be a total blackout with no light penetrating at all, followed by a sudden, glorious, tremendous light that will penetrate through the blackout. This Shekinah light will be the sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah. The light will be followed by the return of the Messiah himself in verse 30b.

The Messiah had now answered all three questions. The sign of the destruction of the Jewish Temple was to be the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies. The sign that the end of the age had begun was to be a world wide war. The sign of the Second Coming would be the Shekinah Glory light breaking through the worldwide blackout. The first sign was given in A.D. 66; the second sign was given in 1914-1918; and at the end of the Tribulation, the third sign will be given as well.

Although Jesus had answered all three questions, He still wished to give more information regarding the last days.

9. The Re-gathering of Israel

Since the Jewish prophets had predicted in great detail the worldwide regathering of Israel, Jesus did not spend much time with this, but only specified that it will occur after His Second Coming. This re-gathering is found in Matthew 24:31 and in Mark 13:27.

The Matthew account reads:

Matthew 24:31 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.

The Mark Passage reads:

Mark 13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven

Following the Second Coming, the Messiah will send His angels all over the world to re-gather every Jew and bring them back into their Land. The background to the Matthew passage is Isaiah 27:12-13, which prophesied that the final restoration of Israel will be signaled by the sound of a great trumpet. The background to the Mark passage is Deuteronomy 30:4, which also emphasizes that the final restoration will come from two localities: earth and heaven. Those who are gathered from the uttermost parts of the earth will be living in Israel, the one-third Remnant that survives the Tribulation. Those who are gathered from the uttermost part of Heaven will be the resurrected Old Testament saints. This part of the Olivet Discourse summarizes many Old Testament prophecies, specifying that the final world-wide restoration will come only after the Second Coming, not before (Isaiah 11:11-12:6; 43:5-7; Jeremiah 23:5-8; 31:7-14; Ezekiel 11:16-21; 20:40-42; 36:22-31).

10. The Exhortation - Luke 21:28

Having given an outline of things to come from their own day until the beginning of the Kingdom, the Messiah then presented an exhortation, recorded in Luke 21:28:

Luke 21:28 But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh.

The exhortation is that when believers see these things begin to come to pass, then they are to look up-raise their heads-because it will mark the imminent redemption of the believers of this world. In Luke's context, the expression these things refers back to Luke 21:20-24, which was the sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. Once Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 that fulfilled every and any prophecy that had to be fulfilled before the Rapture. Once the city and the Temple were destroyed, it fulfilled the judgment for the unpardonable sin. Once that happened, it rendered the Rapture of the Church imminent. Immanency does not mean "soon." It only means that it can now happen at any moment of time. It should be noted what Jesus did not say. He did not say that only when all these things have come to pass, then look up for your redemption draws nigh. He did not say we must wait until the end of the Tribulation before looking up. What He did say was, "*When you see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, for your redemption draweth nigh.*" The beginning part was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Once the beginning had occurred, the Rapture became imminent.

Sources:

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