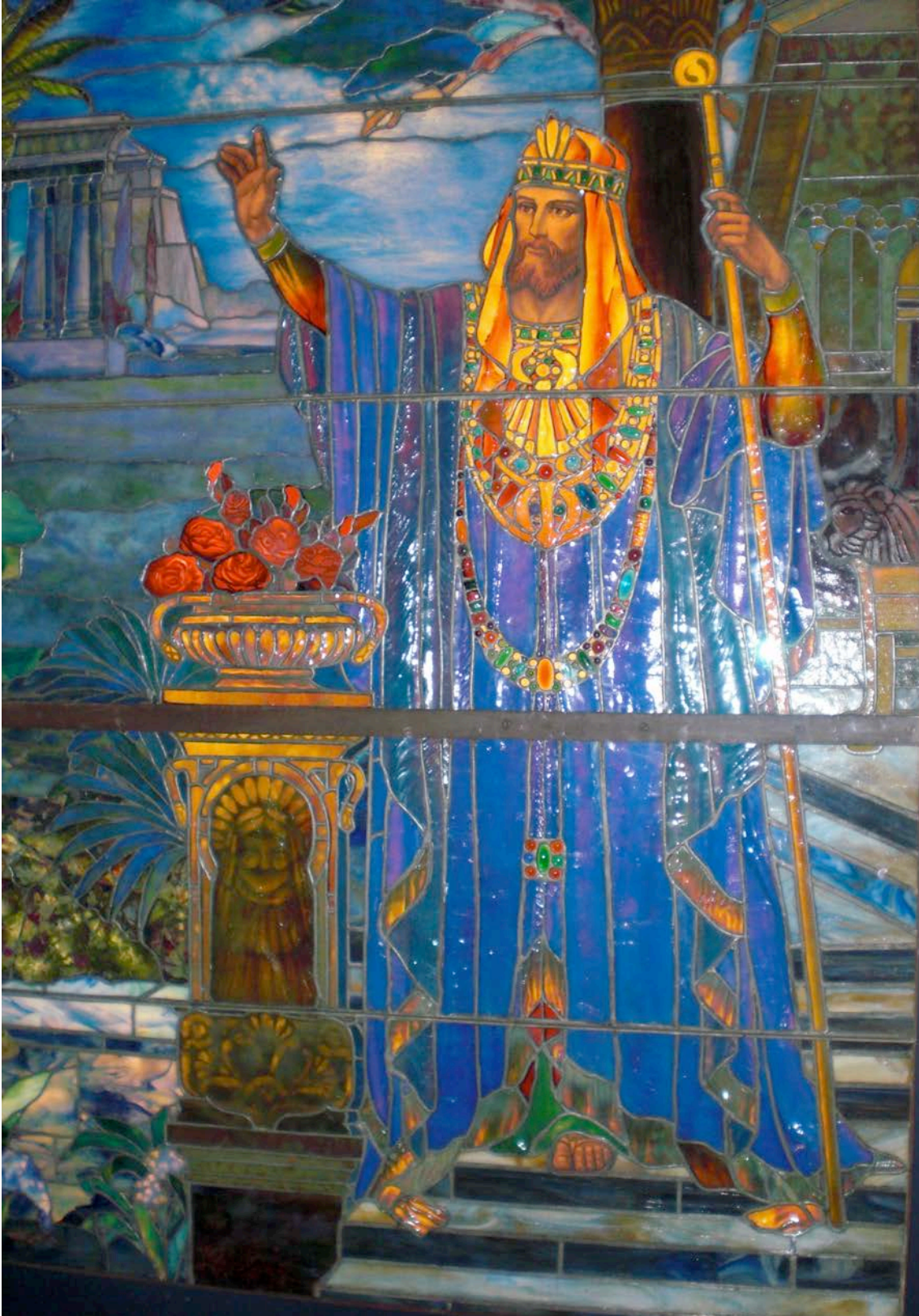


The Olivet Discourse Part 3

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.

11. The Parable of the Fig Tree

The Olivet Discourse now comes to a section known as the parable of the fig tree, recorded in Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-32 and Luke 21:29-33.

The Matthew account reads:

Matthew 24:32-35 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [is] nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, [even] at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

The Luke account reads:

Luke 21:29-33 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Those who have attempted to date the rapture or the Second Coming of the Messiah have often misused this section. The fig tree is often taken to mean the re-establishment of The State of Israel in 1948. Then, within a generation, that is forty years or so from 1948 the Second Coming must occur. This would place the Second Coming in 1988. Because the Rapture precedes the Second Coming by at least seven years, it would place the Rapture by 1981. This is simply date setting; something the Scriptures clearly forbid. Nevertheless, date-setters continue to revise their 1988 "prophecy" year after year. Since 1988 has now come and gone, the new focus is to start the forty years with Six-Day war in 1967. So now, some are predicting the return of the Lord around 2006-2007.

There are two errors in this type of reasoning and its exposition. First, the Bible nowhere limits the period of a generation to simply forty years. The one place where the

term “generation” is given a specific length of time, it is reckoned to be one hundred years (Genesis 15: 13-16). Actually the term “generation” can mean “twenty”, “forty”, “seventy”, “eighty” or a “hundred years.” Sometimes it simply means “contemporaries, much as we use the term today. That is the way it is used here. A second mistake made in this reasoning is assuming that the fig tree is a symbol of Israel and that this passage is speaking of the re-establishment of the Jewish State in 1948. This has not been mentioned anywhere in the entire Olivet Discourse. The re-establishment of Israel has merely been assumed and presupposed in the passage, but, it has never been dealt with specifically. Furthermore, the usual scriptural symbol of Israel is the vine.

However, the real point of this passage is that the fig tree is being used literally as an illustration, not as a symbol for Israel. This is clearly seen from verse 29 of the Luke passage, which reads: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees. If the fig tree represents Israel, what then, do all the other trees represent? If they refer to the other nations, and since a number of nations have risen-and keep rising-since 1948, then when would the forty-year countdown really begin? Neither the fig tree nor the other trees are used symbolically to refer to any nation or nations; rather, they are being used as an illustration.

The point of the illustration is this: When fig trees and all the other trees begin to bloom it is a sure sign that summer is on its way, because blossoming occurs in the spring. Then, in application of the illustration, Jesus said: Even so ye also when ye see all these things, know that He is nigh, even at the doors. Just as a blossoming fig tree means that summer is on its way, in the same way, when these events that Yeshua spoke about occur, then they can know that His return is near.

But, what is it that signals the soon return of the Lord? It is not the re-establishment of Israel in 1948, because Jesus never mentioned that event in this passage. Rather, the event that He was speaking about was the Abomination of Desolation. When the Abomination of Desolation occurs it will signal the soon return of the Messiah, namely only 3 1/2 years later. More specifically, it will be exactly 1,260 days from the Abomination of Desolation until the Second Coming.

Then Yeshua stated that the generation that sees this event-the Abomination of Desolation-will still be around when the Second Coming of the Messiah occurs 3 1/2 years later. The point of verse 34 is not that the generation that sees the re-establishment of the Jewish State will still be here at the Second Coming, but rather, the Jewish generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation will still be here at the Second Coming. Verse 34 is intended to be a word of comfort in light of the worldwide attempt at Jewish destruction. It must be kept in mind that the Abomination of Desolation signals Satan’s and the Antichrist’s final attempt to exterminate the Jews. The fact that the Jewish generation will still be here when the Second Coming of the Messiah occurs shows that Satan’s attempt toward Jewish destruction will fail, and the Jewish saints of the second half of the Tribulation can receive comfort from these words.

The ‘coming’ referred to in this passage is not the Rapture for which no signs are promised, but the Second Coming itself. This is evident from the Luke account, for He states that what the Abomination of Desolation signals is the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Millennial Kingdom will be a result of the Second Coming, not of the Rapture.

Again, the point of this section is not that the fig tree represents Israel in 1948, but rather, the fig tree is being used literally as an illustration. The point of the illustration is

to provide a word of comfort that the worldwide attempt to destroy the Jews is destined for failure, for the Jewish generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation will still be around when the Messiah returns.

The fig tree has a regular pattern; the leaves appear, and then summer follows; when you see the leaves, you know summer is near.

Jesus assures us that when these signs appear as He as foretold (the abomination of desolation, followed by great tribulation, followed by signs in the heavens), His return to the earth will follow. Really, it was just as Daniel prophesied in Daniel 12:11; the end will come 1,290 days after the abomination of desolation. Jesus is assuring that the agonies of the great tribulation will not continue indefinitely; they will have an end.

12.The Rapture of the Church:

Here the Lord breaks the chronological order of the Discourse.

Matthew 24:36-42 But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe [were], so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two [women shall be] grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

The Luke account Reads:

Luke 21:34-36 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and [so] that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Within conservative Bible Seminaries the prevailing view of these passages is that of the Second Coming not the Rapture. There are two main reasons for that: One, Jesus has been speaking about the Second Coming so the context would lead the reader to understand this is the Second Coming. Second: The taking away of Matthew 24:40-41 is taken to be the same as verse 39 which is a “taking away” in judgment and therefore, the “taking away” is thought to be the judgment at the Second Coming and not the blessings of the Rapture.

For the first point, Matthew 24:36 begins with the word But, which is *peri de* in Greek. This is known as a contrastive construction in Greek and introduces a new subject. It is usually translated *But, concerning*. (I Corinthians 7:1;8:1; 12:1;16:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:1; etc.) So Jesus has been talking about the Second Coming but now He moves to the

Rapture with the *peri de* introduction. Other reasons for taking this as a Rapture passage are:

Jesus makes four points.

1. In verse 39 as to the question of when; this is known only by one person and that is God the Father. If the timing of the Rapture has been hidden from the angels and the humanity of Jesus then it is surely hidden from humanity in general! For that reason the only clue given about the timing of the rapture is that it will occur sometime before the Tribulation. This is not true of the Second Coming. We know that it is exactly 7 years after the signing of a covenant, (Anti-Christ & Israel) It is also 42 months or 1260 days, or 3 ½ years after the Abomination of Desolation.
2. There will not be any sign preceding the Rapture (vv.37-39) as there will be signs preceding the Second Coming. When the Rapture occurs, it will happen while there are normal conditions on the earth. The Flood came while there were normal conditions on earth. In the same way during normal conditions the Rapture will arrive and sweep us all away.
3. When it comes it will mean a separation (vv.40-42). According to the key Rapture passages (John 14:1-3; I Corinthians 15:50-58; I Thes 4:13-18) it will be a separation of the believer from the unbeliever.
4. There is the supplication to watch (Luke 21:34-36) for the purpose of escaping the Tribulation. Throughout the Olivet Discourse to *watch* means to be ready. The only way to be ready is to be saved. The unsaved person is neither going to understand these concepts or adhere to Jesus' warnings. Those who escape the Tribulation are watching and therefore ready. Only those who accept the Messiah before the Rapture of the Church can be ready and watching.

Luke gives two reasons for watching:

1. That believers may *escape all these things that shall come to pass* during the Tribulation. What Luke states must not be missed. He points out that the Tribulation will *come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the earth* (v 35). In other words, no one living on the earth can escape the effects of the Tribulation. It will fall upon all earth dwellers. Luke also states that there is a possibility *to prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass* (v.36). This is not possible if one is on the earth. Therefore to escape all these things one must be off the earth.
2. That the believer might stand *before the Son of Man* in heaven. This will be the result of the Rapture: we stand before the Son of Man, and by standing before Him, we escape *all these things*. Both of these things can only be accommodated by the Rapture, and that is why to *watch* is to be saved.

13. Parables Urging Watchfulness, Readiness, and Laboring

Jesus now tells parables to reinforce His closing point in the previous section. Here He presents five parables which all have as their main point the urging of watchfulness, readiness, and laboring. In all these parables the distinctions are between believers and unbelievers. They express differences of attitude in believers and unbelievers toward the second coming not the rapture; the former will be ready the latter will no.

In the parabolic method of teaching, a parable or a series of parables are given and then the application is made. The application of these parables will be made to the judgment of the sheep and goats.

A. The Parable of the Porter

Mark 13:33-37 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

[For the Son of man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

The first parable urges *watchfulness* and He used the term watch four times. This parable refers to the second coming. The phrase *for ye know not when the time is*, is further clarified by the phrase, *whether at even, or at midnight, or a cockcrowing, or in the morning*. Although the day of the Second Coming will be know when the Tribulation starts, the *time* of the day is not.

The main point of the parable is the emphasis on *watching* for the Lord's return

B. The Parable of the Master of the House

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

The emphasis of the second parable is on readiness: therefore be ye also ready. Again, being ready can only be obtained by means of salvation.

C. The Parable of the Faithful Servant & the Evil Servant

Matthew 24:45-51 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed [is] that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his

coming; And shall begin to smite [his] fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for [him], and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint [him] his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The emphasis on the third parable is on *laboring*. In order to make sure that the believers do not misconstrue the previous emphasis on watching as meaning "just to sit there and look at the sky," the third parable emphasizes the necessity of working while one is waiting. When the Messiah returns, it will be while believers are busy laboring. The believer will be found laboring, while the unbeliever will be found not laboring.

Jesus warns us of the attitude, which says my master is delaying his coming; we must live in constant anticipation of Jesus' return, and that means being about our business for Him now. The most dangerous lie is not "There is no God", not "there is no hell"; but the most dangerous lie of Satan is "there is no hurry".

The evil servant is "rewarded" for His wickedness; he has the portion with the hypocrites he has deserved.

Again, the parable refers to the Second Coming. The phrase, a day when he expects not, refers to the unbeliever who is not expecting the Second Coming. The next two parables provide a more extended treatment of the emphasis of the first three parables.

D. The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five [were] foolish. They that [were] foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, [Not so]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The emphasis on the fourth parable is on both watchfulness (*watch therefore*) and readiness (*they that were ready*)

This parable does not represent the Church or Israel it simply serves to illustrate a point. From the Old Testament the contrast of the wise and the foolish is between the believers and the unbelievers. Ten virgins go out to meet a bridegroom at a wedding. There were three stages to a Jewish wedding in that day: engagement (a formal agreement made by the fathers), betrothal (the ceremony where mutual promises are

made), and marriage (approximately one year later when the bridegroom comes at an unexpected time for his bride).

In this parable, the first two stages have already taken place; now the wedding party (the ten virgins) awaits the coming of the bridegroom for his bride.

Why does Jesus describe ten virgins? Talmudic authorities affirm that there were usually ten lamps used in a bridal procession.

The young women caught unprepared are denied entry.

These young women were outwardly prepared (they had their lamps in hand), but yet not really ready for the coming of the bridegroom.

What did they lack in their readiness? Oil. Oil is seen by some commentators as emblematic of the Holy Spirit. Only He can make us really ready for the coming of Jesus. No one can be a true Christian without the indwelling Holy Spirit - now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His (Romans 8:9); these virgins had the appearance of readiness, but they lacked the critical ingredient.

If oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, this is evidence that they are unsaved. The fact that they were in the procession, does not tell us that they are saved. How do we know they were not saved? They were outside when the door was shut. Also, when they asked the Lord to open the door, He said, "I know you not!" The interesting part of this is that they thought they were saved.

When the *bridegroom*, the Messiah returns to earth with His Bride-the Church-for the marriage feast, the *virgins* will be responsible for both watching for His return and being ready to light the lamps upon His return. The five *virgins* who were wise will be the ones who are believers; hence, they will be both ready and watching. They are the ones who have the oil, a commonly thought symbol of the Holy Spirit. Only the wise ones enter the Marriage Feast. Because the parable is about the second coming, the marriage feast of the Lamb is believed to occur in the Messianic Kingdom at least in the early part of it. Since the Messiah is already pictured as already with His Bride, the Church that had been raptured, these who have the oil are people who became believers during the Tribulation. They are saved and invited to the wedding as guests. The five foolish virgins will be the unbelievers and therefore will be neither ready nor watching. They do not have any oil. It should be noted that the text does not say that they ran out of oil. They never had any at all. They never had the oil or the Holy Spirit to begin with.

That is the whole point of this parable, and it would be wrong to try and develop too many details from a simple parable. In this parable, there is an extended emphasis on watching and readiness, both of which are accomplished by faith in Jesus the Messiah. Only the wise ones enter the marriage feast of the Lamb.

14. The Judgment of the Gentiles

The Olivet Discourse comes to an end with the Judgment of the Gentiles and it is here that the application of the five parables is made:

Matthew 25:31-46 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say

unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

The *time* of the judgment will be after the Second Coming of the Messiah when the Throne of David will be set up (v31).

The *place* of the judgment is not given in this passage, but it is given in a parallel passage in Joel 3:1-3. This is a judgment that will take place just outside the City of Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which lies between the city and the Mount of Olives.

The *subjects* of the judgment are individuals; this will be an individual judgment rather than a national one (vv.32-33). The Greek word translated *nations* has the primary meaning of “Gentiles” and is so translated elsewhere in the New Testament. All the Gentiles who survive the Tribulation and the Campaign of Armageddon will be gathered into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and will then be separated by the Messiah; some are brought to His right and are called *sheep* Gentiles, and those brought to His left are called *goat* Gentiles.

The *basis* of this judgment is going to be anti-Semitism or pro-Semitism. The individual Gentiles will be judged on the basis of their treatment of the Messiah’s *brethren*, namely, the Jewish people during the Tribulation (9vv.34-35). Some have tried to make the term *brethren* refer to saints in general, but this would render the passage meaningless. There are three specific groups mentioned in this passage: the *sheep* Gentiles, the *goat* Gentiles, and the *brethren*. If the *brethren* are saints in general, then who are the *sheep* since they too have eternal life? It would be very confusing to make both the *sheep* and the *brethren* as saints of the same order. From this context alone, it should be very evident that the *brethren* must refer to Jewish people because the saints are the *sheep* and the unsaved are the *goats*. Furthermore, the parallel passage of Joel 3:1-3 makes it certain that these *brethren* are the Jewish people of the Tribulation. The term

brethren, here is used in the sense of “brethren in the flesh.” The fact that only Matthew records this segment of the Olivet Discourse also teaches the same truth since his is the most Jewish of the Gospels and his primary concern has been how the Messiah’s coming has and will affect the Jewish people.

The sheep who are the pro-Semites, are clearly stated to be the *righteous* ones. Will they be saved, then, because of their pro-Semitism? This can’t be true because then their salvation would be on the basis of their works and not the work of God. This passage is an example of James 2:14-26, proving one’s faith by one’s works. Because these Gentiles are already believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will refuse to join the policy of the Antichrist in his attempt to destroy the Jews. So while Jews will undergo a great persecution, these believing Gentiles will do what they can to help the Jews under these conditions. Their works toward the Messiah’s *brethren* will prove their faith. In this manner, they are ones who will be watching, ready, and laboring in accordance with the admonitions of the five parables. Because they are saved Gentiles, they will be allowed to enter into the Messianic Kingdom, and they will be the ones to populate the Gentile nations during the Messianic Kingdom (vv.34-40).

On the other hand, the *goats* will be the anti-Semites who, because of their unbelief in Jesus, will join the ranks of the persecutors under the Antichrist’s authority. They will show their lack of faith by their works. They are the ones who will *not* be watching, ready or laboring, in violation of the five parables. For this reason they will be left out of the Messianic Kingdom (vv.41-45).

The ultimate and final result after the 1,000-year Kingdom (Millennium) is that the believing Gentiles will enter into eternal life while the unbelieving Gentiles will enter into eternal punishment (v.46).

So this ends our study of the Olivet Discourse, which is the most detailed teaching the Messiah gave us on future events. It was His last great discourse as a prophet. He transitioned to a priest at this point and made ready the sacrifice of His own blood. When He returns to fulfill the rest of the Olivet Discourse, He will come as King! Actually He will be, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Olivet discourse contains words for believers today: to look up, for our redemption draws nigh; and words for unbelievers today: to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It also has words for those who will be living during the Great Tribulation: for the Jews to flee; and for Gentiles to watch, to be ready, and to labor.

Look for Him: When He comes it will be Quickly. (Revelation 22:7)

Sources:

Outline and text excerpted from A. Fruchtenbaum’s Olivet Discourse
Chuck Missler: The Olivet Discourse
David Jeremiah; The Olivet discourse