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The Sermons of Jesus Christ: The Mount of Olivet Discourse Sermon

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THE SERMONS OF JESUS

THE MOUNT OF OLIVET DISCOURSE SERMON

(Matt. 24:1-31; Mark 13:1-27; Luke 21:5-28)

- **Christ's remarks concerning the temple destruction**

- A. The place involved — *“And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives”* (Mark 13:3a).
 - 1. The Mount of Olives is directly east of the City of Jerusalem. It rises to a height of 2,743 feet above sea level, some 300 feet higher than the temple mount area.
- B. The purpose involved — *“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple”* (Matt. 24:1).
- C. The prophecy involved
 - 1. The what of the matter — *“And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down”* (Luke 21:5-6).

“This prophecy doubtless shocked the disciples, if for no other reason than because of the casting down of those massive temple blocks. Since 1967 the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities, has cleared out an ancient passage in Jerusalem which they named the Rabbinical Tunnel. Undoubtedly it dates back to the time of Christ. The tunnel runs north along the Western Wall and is more than 600 feet long. Meir Kusnetz, an American-born civil engineer, has been in charge of the project. Since 1967, more than 17,000 cubic meters of fill have been excavated. The tunnel stops just short of the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. Its starting point is in the hall under Wilson's Arch, which is directly left of the present-day men's prayer section of the Western Wall. The finished stones inside the tunnel are still beautifully preserved, and some are of unbelievable size. For example, near the beginning of the tunnel is a gigantic chiseled limestone rock 46 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet high, weighing more than 415 tons. By comparison, the largest megalith at Stonehenge, England, is a mere 40 tons, and the rocks used by the Egyptians to build the pyramids were only 15 tons. Other similar stones weighing more than 300 tons have been uncovered in the tunnel. The amazing thing is that all those massive rocks are so well cut that although there is no mortar holding them together, even a thin knife blade cannot fit between their joints.” (*Israel at Forty*, Willmington & Pritz, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill., 1987, p. 63)

2. The who of the matter—*“Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately”* (Mark 13:3b).
 3. The when of the matter—*“Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled”* (Mark 13:4). *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh”* (Luke 21:20).
- D. The program involved. Note: It appears Christ actually had two temple destructions in mind here.
1. The destruction of the second temple (Herod’s temple) by Titus the Roman general in 70 A. D.
 2. The destruction of the third temple (tribulation temple) by the coming antichrist in the future.
- E. Facts concerning the second temple:
1. The temple proper—

It was the most beautiful building in the world. Herod had trained 1,000 priests in building arts and had employed 10,000 skilled masons. He then secured 1,000 wagons to haul stones from the quarries. The temple was made of beautiful marble and gold—so gleaming that it appeared from afar as a mountain of snow glittering in the sun. It could easily hold 120,000 worshippers.
 2. The temple personnel—
 - a. The high priest
 - b. The chief priests (200 highborn Jews who could trace their descent back to Zadok). They had charge of the weekly temple services, temple treasury, and maintenance of the sacred vessels.
 - c. The regular priests (7,200 in number). They were divided into twenty-four priestly clans, each serving a week at a time. Their job was lighting the altar fires, burning incense, baking the unleavened bread, and sacrificing the animals.
 - d. The Levites (9,600 in number). They also served one week at a time, as guards, policemen, doorkeepers, singers, musicians, and servants. The daily temple ritual required the services of 1,000 chief priests and Levites. During the three great feast days (Passover, Weeks, Booths) all clans were required to attend; thus, there were some 18,000 priests on hand.
 3. The temple prophecy—As predicted by our Lord, the temple was destroyed by the Roman armies in A.D. 70 when Titus burned the city of Jerusalem. The soldiers pried apart those massive stones to collect the gold leaf that had melted from the fiery heat.

Facts concerning the third temple—

It will (probably) be constructed by the nation Israel (Rev. 11:1).

It will be corrupted by the antichrist (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:11-18).

- **Christ's remarks concerning the Tribulation destruction**

A. Those events to transpire during the first three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation—
"All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8).

1. The wrath of God

a. Disturbances from the cosmic and natural world

Cosmic world—

"And fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven" (Luke 21:11). *"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars"* (Luke 21:25). *"For the powers of heaven shall be shaken"* (Luke 21:26).

Natural world: Great sea storms—*"the sea and the waves roaring"* (Luke 21:25); *"famines, pestilences; and earthquakes"* (Matt. 24:7).

b. Deception from the religious world

False prophets—*"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many"* (Matt. 24:11).

False Christs—*"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"* (Matt. 24:24). *"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many"* (Matt. 24:5).

c. Destruction from the military world—*"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"* (Matt. 24:6). *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places"* (Matt. 24:7).

2. The witnesses of God

a. To be abused grievously by the devil

Arrested by the authorities—*"But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them"* (Mark 13:9).

Betrayed by their families—*"And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death"* (Luke 21:16).

Hated by all—“*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake*” (Luke 21:17).

- b. To be used greatly by the Lord

In ministering the wisdom of God—“*But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost*” (Mark 13:11). “*For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist*” (Luke 21:15).

In ministering the Word of God—“*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*” (Matt. 24:14).

Many believe this task will be accomplished by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. See. Rev. 7:1-8.

- B. Those events to transpire during the last three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matt. 24:21-22).

1. The defiling of the temple of God — “*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)*” (Matt. 24:15).

Here Jesus seems to refer to both a historic and a prophetic event, both having to do with the defiling of the Jewish temple.

The historic event—Daniel the prophet, writing six centuries before Christ, predicted the desolation of the second temple (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Some 400 years later this happened at the hands of a godless Syrian warrior known as Antiochus Epiphanes, after he captured the city of Jerusalem. On December 15, 168 B.C., his temple desecration reached its ultimate low, for on that day this Nero of the Old Testament sacrificed a giant sow on an idol altar he had made in the Jewish temple. He forced the priests to swallow its flesh, and also made a broth of it and sprinkled it all throughout the temple. He finally carried off the golden candlesticks, table of shewbread, altar of incense, and various other vessels, and destroyed the sacred books of the law. A large image of Jupiter was placed in the Holy of Holies. All this was known by the horrified Jews as “the abomination of desolation,” and is referred to by Jesus in Matt. 24:15 as a springboard to describe the activities of the future antichrist.

The prophetic event—John the apostle describes the desolation of the third

temple (tribulational temple) in Scripture's final book. It has to do with the image and mark of the antichrist. (See Rev. 13:11-18.)

2. The destroying of the city of God — *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh . . . 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”* (Luke 21:20, 24).
3. The directing of the elect of God — *“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 . . . 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, shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matt. 24:16-20, 26-27).
4. The darkening of the skies of God — *“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”* (Matt. 24:29).
5. The descending of the Son of God — *“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. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matt. 24:30-31).