

The Last Days

“Behold, I have told you ahead of time...”

Matthew 24:25

In Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Jesus speaks of His Second Coming. This prophecy is called the “Olivet Discourse” because it was spoken while He sat upon the Mount of Olives. It is also known as “Discourse on the Last Things”. In these verses, Jesus weaves two great events together: the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (70 AD), and the tribulation that will precede the Second Coming. The reason He weaves these two events together is that one is a *type* of the other – there will be similarities.

“The Last Days” began with the appearing of Christ, and they will end with His Return. We are in the last days (Hebrews 1:2). But for the purpose of this series, we will focus mostly on the last days or end times immediately preceding His Return and the end of this age. The schedule is below:

8/30 - Deception, Persecution and World Evangelization

9/6 - The Unseen Realities

9/13 - The Great Tribulation

9/20 - The Anti-Christ (Man of Lawlessness)

9/27 - The Battle of Armageddon and Christ’s Return

10/4 - What are Christians to Do?

Deception, Persecution and World Evangelization

(Matthew 24: 1-14)

A. The Lord's Prediction (1-2)

¹ Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

- “All this will come upon this generation... Your house is left to you desolate.” (23:36, 38)
- The Jews admired the temple. The temple symbolized God's presence with His people

B. The Disciples Question (3)

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

- The temple was very important in the minds of the Jewish people.
- If the temple was to be destroyed, it must be associated with the end of the age.
- They question Jesus to learn more...
- “When will this (the temple destroyed) happen?”
- “What will be the sign of your coming and the end?”
- They are assuming these (destruction of the temple and end of the age) will be one event.
- Jesus will speak of these as separate events; there is a time interval between them.
- But there are similarities associated with both events.
- One is a *type* of the other; one event foreshadows the other.

C. Deception, Defection and Evangelization (4-14)

1. *The Danger of Being Deceived* (4-8)

⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.”

- “This will surely be a reference to the last days, for there is little evidence that any of the turbulent men so active preceding the fall of Jerusalem ever claimed to be the Messiah... But in the face of this they must retain a firm hold on the truth.”
- “Jesus is telling his followers that they must not let themselves be caught up in the general disquiet; they are to be sure that they are not gripped by the panic that will take firm hold on other people. They have one thing going for them that the general public has not: they know that God is over all and that His purpose will in the end be worked out... Although in a time when people are caught up in war and when other wars are rumored it seems that evil is in control, this is illusory. God is in control, and all apparent triumphs of wrong will in the end be seen to fit into His perfect plan.” (Leon Morris, Commentary on Matthew)

2. *The Danger of Defecting* (9-13)

⁹ Then you will be handed over to be persecuted (tribulation) and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith (be trapped) and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness (lawlessness), the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

- “From the conditions which point toward the end of the world of men generally, Jesus turns to sketch the conditions that shall appear in the church.” (Richard Lenski, Commentary on Matthew)
- “This signifies that people in authority will take initiative against Jesus’s followers; they must expect special trouble in the last days and not simply the suffering they will share with all people, such as the famines and the earthquakes of which Jesus has just spoken. They will suffer because of who they are – Christians, and their suffering will be no insignificant trouble, but the discomfort that crushes...” (Leon Morris)

- “And they will all be the objects of a hatred that will be universal... They will be hated not because of anything they will have done, but on account of Christ’s name; they will suffer persecution simply because they bear the name “Christian.” (Leon Morris)
- “In those difficult circumstances *many will be entrapped*. The meaning is that they will be caught in the situation in which their Christian profession will be the accusation against them (be caught so as to have their faith killed as an animal that springs a trap) ... They had professed to be Christians because of the peace and joy they sought in a difficult world, and instead they find persecution. In such a situation nominal Christians readily find the faith a trap and seek to get out of it promptly...” (Leon Morris)
- “They will actively assist the evil people in authority by handing over to them those with whom they had been associated in the church. The final disaster for those who formally professed the Christian faith is that they will *hate one another*.” (Leon Morris)
“These who have turned traitor to the Name will use their knowledge and their former connection to help destroy the faithful by denouncing and by delivering them up.” (Richard Lenski) (See Luke 21:16)
- “In that situation *lawlessness* will abound (a way of life that refuses to recognize any divine law... a way of life in which one’s neighbor no longer has any legal claim).” (Leon Morris)
- “One of the most important elements of common grace we enjoy is the restraint of evil in the world. That restraint flows from many sources. Evil is restrained by policemen, laws, public opinion, balances of power, and so on. Though the world we live in is filled with wickedness, it is not as wicked as it possibly could be. God uses the means mentioned above as well as other means to keep evil in check.” (RC Sproul, Chosen by God)
- God tests or purifies the church. We must persevere when facing deception and persecution, “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:1). God keeps his own (1 Peter 1:5), but we must also keep ourselves (2 Peter 1:5-11).

3. *The Delay While the Great Commission is Fulfilled (14)*

“¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

- The Gospel must be preached throughout the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20).
- God delays Christ’ Return until the Great Commission is fulfilled!
- How will we know when this is fulfilled?