

# The Most Misunderstood Parts of the Olivet Discourse Explained!



The Siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD

There are several articles about the Olivet Discourse on this website. Why am I posting another one? Because this one, a talk by Steve Gregg, is one of the best, clearest, and easiest to understand in my opinion. I think it's important to understand what Jesus is really saying in the Olivet Discourse. Many believers in Christ have been led astray by Darby's Dispensationalism into thinking Matthew 24 is talking about events just before the end of the world when it's really talking about the end of the Jews and Judaism!

I think Steve Gregg is a great Bible teacher but that doesn't mean I agree with him about everything he teaches. He doesn't hold the Historicist view of the Book of Revelation, the view held by all the early Protestant Bible teachers. And why doesn't he? I think he must not know the Roman Catholic / Jesuit / [Masonic](#) connection to Dispensationalism. The Protestant Reformers all saw the "great whore that sitteth upon many waters" of Revelation 17:1 as the Roman Catholic Church! If Steve Gregg doesn't see that now, maybe he will later. And I can say the same thing for pastor Chuck Baldwin as well. His [teaching on the Olivet Discourse](#) is also very good but I don't agree with his preterist views on the Book of Revelation.

What I know today is the result of a long journey of 50 years of Bible study and research. Thanks to the Internet, research became much easier, and thanks to guidance and discernment from the Holy Spirit of who to listen to and what to read, I learned things that I believe can benefit the body of Christ. I'm not coming up with any new revelations from God, I'm sharing what the Church and men of God used to teach and believe before the Jesuit Counter-Reformation which led to apostasy and false doctrines in many Protestant churches.

And I like to study conspiratorial subjects, something some Christians don't like and stay away from. If you do, remember that it only takes two influential people to make a conspiracy. Psalms 2 refers to a conspiracy of the rulers of the earth against God and His Kingdom.

Psalms 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?  
2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,  
3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

This is what the rulers are doing today. Government officials are calling "hate speech" any Bible-based preaching against sin such as criticism of the LGBTQ movement. They are seeking to destroy Bible-based Christianity and replace it with ecumenical inclusiveness and tolerance of all beliefs and practices. Wikipedia calls gender a "social construct" and intelligent design of the Universe "pseudoscience". The first chapter of the Book of Genesis says otherwise. A visitor could edit out those words from the Wikipedia articles that talk about them, but within minutes those words will be restored by Wikipedia moderators.

## **A condensed transcription of Steve Gregg's explanation of the most misunderstood parts of the Olivet Discourse**

The Olivet Discourse is a very much discussed controversial passage although many people perhaps don't know it's controversial. They've heard it taught from one point of view and have never known that there were other points of view about it. That was my position for many years in my ministry. I've been in the ministry for 52 years this year as a Bible teacher, and for the first 12 of those years probably or more, the Olivet Discourse just had a certain meaning that my teachers told me. It meant I kind of read it through this grid and I never thought there'd be any reason to consider another way of looking at it.

And then I read a book back in the 80s by a guy named Jay Adams and he had written a book about the book Revelation where he was taking the view that revelation is actually fulfilled in the past, not in the future. And he also had a chapter in there as I recall about the Olivet Discourse, and he didn't convince me about the Book of Revelation in that book, but what he said about the Olivet Discourse was very eye-opening. Now that's the first I ever heard of such an alternative interpretation.

Now this is the famous discourse where Jesus talks about how there will be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines and pestilences in diverse places, the abomination of desolation, all that stuff. Most Christians who are biblically literate know what I'm talking about when I say that. That discourse is found in all three of the synoptic Gospels it's found in the 13th chapter of Mark. It's found in the 21st chapter of Luke and it's found in Matthew 24. In Matthew, it's three times longer than it is in Mark or Luke.

Now, I'm going to use Matthew here because I believe the reason that Matthew's version of the Olive Discourse appears to be three times longer is because he brings in things that Jesus said on other occasions which the other Gospels don't include. No two of the Gospels even when they're talking about the same story of the same discourse will give exactly the same details of it. Whether it's one of the famous miracles of Jesus or one of the parables of Jesus or whether it's a discourse like this, whether it's the Sermon on the Mount or some other passage, if two or more Gospels cover it, they don't cover verbatim the same. There's some different wording, there are some different details included or excluded. Part of that is simply because they're histories and when people write history they have to decide what

they're going to include and what they're not.

I believe (in Matthew 24) there are two different discourses and maybe three that are combined here. The reason I say maybe three is because the first part of Matthew 24 parallels very, very closely the Olivet discourse in Mark 13 and Luke 21. But then in Matthew 24 after about verse 35 or so, there's parallels to a different discourse in Luke 17. The material in Matthew 24 verses 36 and following is not found in Mark or Luke's Olivet Discourse but it is found, much of it is found in Luke 17.

Of course, Matthew was an eyewitness so he would have heard those himself, he may have been his own source. But the point is Matthew's Olivet Discourse comes from at least three different sources. One is the source from the Olivet Discourse itself recorded in Mark and Luke. Another is a different discourse of Jesus given in Luke 17. And another is three parables that we don't know where Matthew got them but he heard them with his own ears so he made his own source.

Now having said that the question that is at issue is what is the Olivet Discourse about? That is the portion that was on the Mount of Olives uttered which parallels Mark 13 and Luke 21. Second question, what is the discourse in Luke 17 about which is brought by Matthew and attached to the Olivet Discourse? What is that about? And then I guess the third one would be these parables, what are they about?

I was raised as probably many of you were to understand this is a passage about the end of the world before Jesus returns, things that maybe are even starting to happen as we speak, earthquakes, wars, rumors of wars, and pestilences. I have to say that these things were associated in my mind with the end times, the last days, some of them with what was called the tribulation period. It was very common for those who were looking for signs of the times to be saying, "Oh look how many wars there are, look how many earthquakes there are, look how many of these things are happening." I remember a number of teachers saying, "There have been more earthquakes in the last 100 years than in all recorded history previously. Now, I'm not sure how anyone would know that. I don't know if they could record worldwide earthquakes 100 years ago and beyond. So I don't know how anyone knows how many earthquakes there were previously. But even if it was true they're quoting that as if to say, "See? We're living in the times Jesus described. There will be earthquakes." I'd point out that He doesn't say anything about there being an increased number of earthquakes. He just said there's gonna be earthquakes, there's gonna be wars, there's gonna be pestilences. Has there ever been a time when there weren't those things? **He didn't say they're gonna increase. He said don't let these things make you think that the end is near.** It's not the end. These things have to happen but it's not the end. In other words, far from saying earthquakes and pestilences, wars, these are a sign of the times, He's saying, no don't think they are. They're not. These are just things that have to happen but the end's not yet. After all, there's always those things. There's a lot of calamities that might make you think the end of the world is near.

What is He talking about? Is He talking about the end of the world? I don't

think He is. but to see that he's not one has to look carefully at the parallel passages as well.

Let's look at this passage. First of all, He left the Temple with His disciples and they observed how magnificent the stones of the Temple. They're pointing it out. Look at these great stones! And they were great stones. Josephus and other authorities say that those stones were huge, enormous, and fantastic. The Temple was one of the great wonders of the world and the disciples were impressed with it. Why did they point out the stones? They've seen them many times before. It's possibly because Jesus had just said,

*"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." -Matthew 23:38*

He told the Jews that their house, the Temple, is not God's house. Earlier in His ministry, it was, "My Father's house." He said, "Don't make my Father's house a house a merchandise." That was the Temple. He's no longer calling it His Father's house. The Jews have rejected Jesus. He's going to be crucified within days and no longer calls it My Father's house. He says this is your house, it's all yours. God doesn't own it anymore. Your house is empty, desolate. It's abandoned.

Now, it may be because of that statement that the disciples said, "But Lord, look at these stones! Why would God ever abandon this beautiful house?" And His answer was, "Well, do you see that? I'll tell you the day is coming when not one of these stones shall be left standing on another. They're all going thrown down."

That actually happened. The Romans attacked Israel and were in a bloody war with the Israelites for three and a half years beginning in 66 AD and ending in 70 AD. In 70 AD the Temple was destroyed and burned by the Romans. Every stone was taken down. What Jesus predicted came true in the year 70 AD. The Bible doesn't record it. History records it. It's known to be a fact.

Now, we find that the disciples come to Him, and they have a couple of questions for Him. This is where it gets a little tricky. In verse three.

*And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?*

That's the first question,

*And what will be the sign of your sign of your coming, and of the end of the age? (NKJV)*

Now, "when will these things be" must refer to what He predicted. They wouldn't just say these things without some kind of a reference, without some kind of an antecedent. He had just said the Temple would be destroyed, leveled, not one stone to be left on another. The only way to understand their question would be, "When is the Temple going to be leveled like you just said? When will this be? And what will be the sign of your coming in at the end of the age?" Now here's where we should look at the parallels in Mark and in Luke. The same story is in Mark 13 in verses one and two, the same things we just looked at. He walks out of the Temple, and the disciples

comment on the stones, He predicts they're gonna be thrown down in verse three. It says,

*And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,*

Now, as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, not all His disciples, four of His disciples came to Him privately and asked Him privately, Tell us when will these things be." That's the same first question we found in Matthew 24:3, but then their second question is worded differently.

*and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?*

in Matthew, it says the sign of your coming and of the end of the age (world in the KJV), here it has, "What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" So you have the expression "these things" in both places. When will these things, the destruction of the Temple be, and what sign will there be that these things, the destruction of the Temple will be soon fulfilled? They want a general time frame and they want some kind of warning sign. It's interesting that in Mark they asked about the same subject two questions, when will it be? Give us some kind of a time frame and what sign might we look for to know that it's coming soon?

So far all three Gospels agree on that first question and what sign will there be. The term "these things" obviously refers to what He had predicted. Now, if you look at Matthew 24 again in verse 34, Jesus said, "Assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things come to pass." Now, they said, "When will these things be?" his answer was this generation will not pass before these things be before these things happen. He's answering their question directly. They asked for a time frame and He gave them one.

Now, when I was younger I thought that this was not talking about things that happened in the first century. I thought these were things still unfulfilled in our future. I figured that when He said this generation will not pass, He didn't really mean that that generation would not pass, His own generation. My teachers actually told me that what He meant was the generation that begins to see these things start happening will not pass until it all happens. So He had not really given them an answer to the question of when shall these things be. He's not telling them when they'll be, He's just saying when it starts to happen whenever that might be, it'll happen within a span of a generation. But if that's what He meant and he was talking about some future generation, one might think that He would say *that* generation will not pass rather than *this* generation will not pass, especially in view of the fact that about five other times in Matthew previous to this, he's used the expression "this generation" and in each case He was talking about his own contemporaries like I'd be talking about this generation, people living at this time. "This generation" in all the other occurrences in Matthew refers to the generation that saw John the Baptist and saw Jesus and rejected them both. They said about John the Baptist, "He's got a demon." And about Jesus, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of

publicans and sinners.” That’s what this generation is saying. You can look at the places where He said all these things.

In Matthew 23:35-36 He said,

*That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon **this generation**.*

In Matthew 16:28 He said,

*Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

Before they see this, that’s the same thing as saying this generation will not pass away. Some people living in this generation will not yet be dead. So there’s every reason to believe that Jesus is indeed giving a timeframe when he says this generation will not pass.

But the other question, and it did happen by the way 40 years later. How could it be more precise? He made the prediction in 30 AD it was absolutely fulfilled in 70 AD, 40 years later. If He is saying that that generation would live to see the destruction of the Temple, it is the most specific and accurate prophecy we have on record of Jesus ever making of something that didn’t wasn’t fulfilled in His own lifetime. That happened in the very timeframe He said. So I’m of the opinion that when Jesus said this generation will not pass till all these things are fulfilled, He was talking about what they asked Him about which is a nice thing to do, it’s a polite thing to do if someone asks you a question.

Jesus, by the way, had not mentioned to them the end of the world. He only mentioned that the Temple would be destroyed, not one stone be left standing on another. They don’t have any predictions from Him about the end of the world here.

He says in verse 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: 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: – Matthew 24:15-17)*

Now, He says there is a sign you can look for. It is the sign of the abomination of desolation. We have that same expression used in Mark 13 in the parallel discourse, and this expression “the abomination of desolation” is clearly taken from Daniel 9:27. As Jesus says in Mark 13:14-15:

*But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing*

*out of his house:*

Why? Because the very danger that's going to cause the Temple to be dismantled is going to be dangerous for everybody in Judaea. So when you see this, get out of there! I'm giving you some sign that you will see that this take place. You'll notice that both Matthew and Mark have it, "When you see the abomination of desolation" and then in parentheses, it says, "Let him who reads understand." Like it may be that the reader might have trouble understanding this. I hope you'll understand what Jesus is talking about here. Well, "abomination of desolation" is a very Hebraic statement from Daniel chapter nine verse 27. Luke was writing to a Greek man who probably had no familiarity with Daniel. And Luke, when he comes to the very same place in the narrative, changes it, you would say interprets it or paraphrases it because Luke knew what He meant. I believe Matthew and Mark knew what He meant too, but Matthew and Mark weren't sure their audience would know what He meant because they'd say in parentheses, "Let him who reads understand" like maybe you won't. This is hard to understand. What I'm talking about Daniel spoke of, the abomination of desolation. I hope you can understand. Well, Luke just assumed his reader Theophilus, a Greek guy wouldn't understand, so instead of saying that, he just kind of paraphrased it so that he could understand! You find that in Luke 21 verse 20 this is the very point in the discourse where Mark and Matthew say, "When you see the abomination of desolation." In Luke 21:20 it says, "When you see **Jerusalem surrounded by armies**, then know that its desolation is near. Then flee to the mountains," he says, just like Matthew and Mark said to flee the mountains. When you see the abomination of desolation, Luke says when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, its desolation is near. This is the abomination that's going to bring about its desolation, and it's time for you to flee.

In Daniel 9:26 and 27, it says that the Messiah is going to be killed and then the people of the prince who is to come is going to come destroy the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary of the Temple. So Daniel in the the next verse refers to that as the abomination that causes desolation.

*Daniel 9:26a And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary...***

*Daniel 9:27b ...and for the overspreading of **abominations he shall make it desolate,***

In Matthew 24:3, in the King James version, it reads, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world." Well, no wonder people have read this passage and think it is about the end of the world! But Jesus had not predicted the end of the world, only the end of the Temple which was the end of the Jewish age or what we call the second Temple era. The disciples and all their ancestors for the previous 1400 years had lived in the age of the law, the age of the Mosaic covenant. The destruction of the Temple is the end of that era, and the end of the era meant that's the end of the age, the age that they were living in, and the age that they always lived in and their ancestors had.

Now you can see, when we think of the second coming of Christ we immediately think of His second coming at the literal end of the world. Now, they (the Gospel writers) didn't say the end of the world, they said the the end of the eon which is age. so the King James version was a little confusing by translating the end of the age to the end of the world because they probably were not thinking of the end of the world, or maybe they were. Maybe they thought the destruction of the Temple since they knew nothing beyond that, maybe they thought that'd be the end of the world. Maybe they did. I can't say what they thought or didn't think. But according to Mark and Luke, they weren't asking about the end of the world but about the destruction of the Temple specifically.

Remember, the disciples at this point didn't even know yet that Jesus was leaving much less coming back. When we hear of Jesus coming, we hear it from the framework of He's been gone a long time and we want Him back, we can't wait till Jesus comes because He's not here and we want Him to be here. As they knew His next thing He's going to do is go set up His kingdom in Jerusalem. They didn't know He'd be crucified. He told them but their ears were dull of hearing. They didn't understand what He said. When He got crucified it blew their minds. It was totally unexpected, even unexpected of His resurrection. Even after He was resurrected they still didn't believe it even though Jesus had predicted several times "I'm gonna die, I'm gonna rise again the third day." That just didn't register. If they asked, what would be the sign of your coming, it's very unlikely that they were thinking in terms of what we call the second coming of Christ because they didn't know there was going to be a second coming. They didn't know there's going to be going away. I think it took them by surprise.

When He was caught up in Acts chapter 1 a cloud received Him out of their sight, and two angels had to say to them, "Well, He's going to come back. Why are you looking at Him? This same Jesus that you saw go up, He's going to come back in the same way." That was probably the first time they realized there is actually going to be a second coming because until He died and disappeared into the clouds they thought He's already here. He was but He went away. They did not have in their minds a frame of reference of what we call the second coming yet because He was still there the first time, and for all they knew, He would be perpetually.

In Zechariah 14 it talks about the destruction of Jerusalem.

*Zechariah 14:1-2 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

Now when it says the residue of the people shall not be cut off, they won't go into captivity. It doesn't say half, it says residue, the remnant. Half of them will go into captivity. Almost half of them were wiped out by the Romans but the remnant which was the believers in Jerusalem, the Jewish Church, escaped. And they remain citizens of the true Jerusalem. They have not been cut off from the city.



All the Jews who rejected Christ were cut off. They either went into captivity or were slaughtered in 70 AD. Christians fled and got away and continued to be the citizens of Zion. They're not cut off. It says that in Hebrews chapter 12:22-23.

*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

The new Jerusalem is the spiritual Jerusalem of the church in Hebrews chapter 12, and that's what Paul means also in Galatians 4 when he says the Jerusalem that is above is free which is the mother of us all. He means the Church is the mother of us all, God's children.

I think when Jesus said some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the Son of Man coming, I believe He was probably referring to the Roman armies coming against Jerusalem because Jesus predicted several times that that was going to happen. In Luke chapter 19:42-44, He wept over the city of Jerusalem and said,

*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

Jesus in the end of his ministry made a lot of references to the destruction of Jerusalem. In the Jewish prophetic verbiage that would be Him coming just like YHWH came on clouds against Egypt, but it was really the Assyrian armies.

I do believe in a future second coming but what I'm saying is that when the disciples said what will be the sign of your coming and the end of this age, I believe that Mark and Luke have paraphrased what they said because they use Jewish idioms. Matthew is the only gospel written to a Jewish audience. He retains Jewish idioms that Jesus used more than any other Gospel. Mark does so a little less and Luke much less.

There's a part of it that some people think probably didn't happen and that's in Matthew 24 verses 29 through 31. Let me read this section:

*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. 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 imagery in that statement immediately strikes us as the future, the end of the world, the second coming of Christ. He sends His angels to gather people in, they see Him in the clouds, cosmic disturbances, sun, moon and stars going dark. Did those things literally happen? Some of them amazingly did, but not all of them happened literally. The ones that did not, happened in the sense that the prophets used that terminology. We as American Christians, unless we study the prophets a lot, are not that familiar with the prophetic language.

Let me show you something Isaiah said in Isaiah 13. He's prophesying the fall of the Babylonian Empire to the Medes and the Persians. This happened in 539 BC. He names the Medes in particular as being involved in this, but the Medes and the Persians together were. And as it talks about the destruction of Babylon it says in verse 10:

*Isaiah 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.*

Well, that didn't all literally happen when Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians but it was kind of the end of the world for them. But it's just poetic language.

If you turn to Isaiah 34 there's a prophecy against Edom. Edom isn't a nation anymore. The last Edomite that history knows of was Herod the Great. The Edomites were enemies of the Jews in Old Testament history but they were taken into Babylon three years after Jerusalem was Jerusalem went into Babylon in 586 BC. Three years later in 583 BC, the Edomites were taken into captivity into Babylon. They never recovered. Some of them came back or just remained in the land but they were subsumed in the inter-testamental period into southern Judah and put under Jewish law by force. So they ceased to be a nation anymore. The last of them that's known to have been in existence was Herod. This is an extinct nation but this predicts the destruction of Edom.

It says this in Isaiah 34:4-6:

*And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea (Edom), and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, ...*

We can see these talk about the destruction of Edom. Bozrah is the capital of Edom. He's talking about something that happened almost 600 years before Christ. He describes it as the host of heaven being dissolved, the heavens being rolled up like a scroll, all the hosts shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, that is, all the stars will fall like a leaf falls from the vine. And so what we have here is of course the language of a cataclysm to be sure, but not literal. This is the way the prophets talk when something very very bad permanently happens to a nation. That's how they talk about it.

Jesus said those things will happen too in that generation. Did they literally happen? Well, not exactly, but they happened in the same sense that they happened in Isaiah 19 or Isaiah 13 or Isaiah 34 or in some of the other passages that use this language.

We didn't look at Ezekiel 32 which talks about the same thing. When Egypt fell to the Babylonians it talks about how the sun and the moon and stars were darkened, and there's other places like that. So what we have is when Jesus said, after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the heaven, everything there is language from Isaiah or some other prophetic passage which in their original context refer to the destruction of some nation of some kind. In this case that apparently is Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

It says the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven. Now, what is the sign of the Son of man? A few lines later He says, "And they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." It says, "The sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn." The word "earth" can be translated as land. "And they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory."

Now the sign of the Son of man in heaven is a term used only here. We don't have any other passage to clarify what it means, but one possible meaning is it's a sign that the Son of man is in fact in Heaven. The reason I say that is because, to the Jews, the Son of man in heaven calls to mind Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. I think it is where he says:

*Daniel I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*

So He's going up, He's going up to God. It's the ascension of Christ from the Mount of Olives. It's what's referred to as the Son of Man. Daniel is on the other side. He sees the Heavenly Throne. He sees the Son of Man come up through the clouds. The disciples saw Him disappearing into the clouds. Daniel is on their side. He sees Him come out through the clouds to the Ancient days. He was given the throne as Jesus sat down at the right hand of God when He ascended. The coming of the Son of man is an expression that comes from that verse. And so He could be saying, "You'll see the sign that the Son of man has in fact come in that sense you'll see it now."

One argument that has been made is that the very fact that the Temple is destroyed and the Jewish system that crucified Christ will be the sign that God has vindicated Him, that Jesus is reigning now. He's not on the cross anymore, He's not their victim, He's their judge as He sits at the throne at the right hand of God.

It's not clear entirely what this refers to, the sign of the Son of man in heaven when it says "the tribes of the earth." Again, the word "earth" is in the Greek. It's the word that means earth or land. Usually, it's Israel that's divided into tribes, not the planet. The planet is usually divided into nations. Israel is divided into tribes. So to say "the tribes of the

land will mourn" makes plenty of sense especially since it's a term that comes from Zechariah 12:10 which talks about all the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourning and seems to be a reference to that. So it's the people of Israel in the land of Israel that are mourning because of this. They see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. Well, Egypt saw God coming in the clouds of heaven but not literally. It saw the Assyrians coming. That was God coming in the clouds. Israel saw the Romans coming and that was Jesus sending them like Isaiah talks about. They saw that in the Romans.

But then there's this verse 31 He will send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they'll gather together His elect from the four winds as the four compass points from one end of heaven to the other, that is, from one horizon to the other horizon where He is gathering them to. Who are these angels that are gathering them? The Greek word which is translated as angels is the word in Greek that generally means messengers. In the Bible, it often means special messengers sent from God from heaven. When we find "angel" in the New Testament, usually we're thinking of a supernatural angel. It is a translation of the Greek word *angelos*. But the same word is the ordinary word for messenger, human messenger. John the Baptist sent two messengers from prison to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who's to come or not?" James talks about how Rahab received the messengers and sent them away safely.

*Angelos* is the word for human messengers. What if we just translate this as the Greek allows, "He'll send out His messengers, the apostles, the evangelists, the missionaries, and they'll gather His elect into His body, into the Church. It doesn't say they're going to go away to another planet after Jerusalem falls. The Gospel is no longer focused on the Jews, it's now an international message. The messengers of the Gospel go out and they gather His elect from all the parts of the world which has been what's going on for the last two thousand years.

Now, all I've tried to do is show you that everything Jesus said here has parallels in many cases, multiple parallels in the Old Testament that use the same language, the same imagery, and are not talking about the end of the world or a literal Second Coming of Christ. Let me say only one more thing. I've only dealt with the first part of the discourse, I'm not going to deal in detail with the other part, but the part that parallels Luke 17 is the part that talks about the days of Noah and the one shall be taken on the other left, which people all have associated with the Second Coming usually. I don't think it's part of the same subject as the earlier one because He says at the end of this discourse, and Mark and Luke end with this, He says, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows." Now, when He says heaven and earth will pass away but no one knows when, I think He's referring to the end of the world. He's contrasting it with the fall of Jerusalem. Well, I can tell you when that's going to be. This generation won't pass before *that* (the fall of Jerusalem) happens. The end of the world nobody but God knows. The angels don't know, I don't know, He says nobody knows, only the Father knows.

Likewise, He gives signs to look for for the fall of Jerusalem, but He gives no signs for the end of the world. He said it'll be like the days of Noah before the flood came. People ate, drank, got married, bought and sold, and

they didn't know, didn't have a clue, until the day that Noah and the Ark and the flood came and took them all away. There were no signs. There was Noah's preaching that might be seen as a sign, but there was none until the day that the flood came. They had no clue. They were doing the same things people do when they didn't expect to die that day, getting married, buying selling, and doing things like eating and drinking. If you thought you were going to die in a cataclysm later this evening, you might choose not to have a meal. You might choose not to follow through on your marriage plans. You might not buy anything significantly because you don't expect to be here more than another hour or two.

What Jesus said is when the flood came, and the same thing is true of Lot leaving Sodom. Until the day the judgment came they didn't have a clue. They're just doing all the stuff people always do when they don't expect to die that day, and there are no signs that this is going to happen. It just happens to catch them by surprise. And that's when Jesus said there's going to be two sleeping in one bed, one would be taken and the other left and so forth.

When I was younger, I was always under the impression this is about Christians taken up in the Rapture and the wicked left behind for the tribulation, but if you look at the passage in Luke 17 which is the parallel passage, and I'll make this very brief, this is where this prediction is found that Matthew I think incorporates into his version of the Olivet Discourse, but he's now talking about another subject which transitioned by Jesus saying heaven and earth is going to pass away but no knows when that's going to be.

In Luke chapter 17, it says in verses 34-37:

*I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*

Or, wherever the corpse is the birds will come to eat it. Now He's just said two people being in very close proximity, one to be taken the other left. They said, Where? Where are they taken to? Well, the birds will find them easily enough. Wherever the corpses are there are birds. The ones who are taken were not raptured, they're dead. And in the parallel of Matthew 24, it says as in the days of Noah they ate and drank and did all that stuff and did not know till the flood came and took them all away. So shall it be that's the coming of the Son of man. One will be taken and the other left. The people who were taken away in the flood were the wicked. They weren't raptured, they were just killed. "Taken away" is just a euphemism for killed. And here we have the disciples asking, "Where Lord? Where are they taken?" Well, wherever the corpses are there will be birds. To find the forest fires look for the smoke. Do you want to find the dead bodies? Look for the vultures or the eagles.

And what I believe He means by that is that when Jesus comes, the wicked will be judged. It says in Second Thessalonians 1:8:

*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

In Psalm 91:7-8 it says,

*A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*

The wicked are judged, and the righteous remain. When Jesus comes, He's going to judge the wicked and the righteous will be spared. But I'm not going to go into that in detail. I'm only going to say those features did not apply to 70 AD. Before 70 AD happened, all the Christians had fled from Jerusalem. The righteous had fled across the Jordan to another mountainous area called Pella. Everyone in Jerusalem during the siege and the fall of Jerusalem were the wicked. There wasn't one righteous one unrighteous in close proximity. There will be when Jesus comes back. There wasn't in 70 AD.

Furthermore, when 70 AD happened, they weren't getting married, eating and drinking, they were starving in the siege. They were eating each other in starvation. But that's not what Jesus described. I doubt they were getting married as there was total havoc during the siege. Buying and selling? I don't think that was going on. Jesus describes people involved in peacetime activities as if they don't know they're in danger at the time that it comes. That was not the case in 70 AD and for these reasons I don't believe that the material in Luke 17 which Matthew incorporates at the end of the Olivet Discourse, I don't think that's also about 70 AD. I think there are two subjects here, and the first one is summarized by Jesus and this generation will not pass before all these things take place, and that was the question the disciples asked about the destruction of Jerusalem. The other part is the future when Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away but no one knows when that's going to be.

And so that could be why many people find the discourse confusing. Matthew has taken two judgment discourses of Jesus, and put them together. In the transition between the two, it's Him saying heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away. That's when He transitions from the destruction of the Temple where not one stone is left, He transitions to the end of the cosmos when Jesus comes back.

So that's what I understand now. If that's new to you, and it probably is to many of you, just know it's not really new information. This view was the view Eusebius the church historian in 325 AD quoted from the Olivet Discourse and said this was fulfilled when the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem. So at least from the early 300s the Church recognized that Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

We may not have heard it because our teachers don't teach that view but there are plenty of teachers that do. They're just not maybe teaching on the radio

or places that you'd run into them, but it's a very early view of the Church and a very exegetically sound one.

#### **END OF THE LECTURE BY STEVE GREGG**

I learned so much from this! I never heard before that Matthew incorporated another discourse not related to the fall of Jerusalem! No wonder the Olivet Discourse in Matthew is so misunderstood! Parts of it are talking about the end of the world, but verses 29-31 are not talking about the end of the world or the rapture!

All the work I put into transcribing this was worth it because I didn't catch those points so clearly when I heard Steve Gregg's talk in the video. Praise the Lord Jesus for the truth of His Word!

The transcription doesn't include the last 30 minutes of the video which is a question and answer session.