

## **"The Olivet Discourse"**

### **Matthew 24-25**

#### **Part 3**

**Introduction:** Tonight as we continue our study of the Olivet Discourse we will enter into a study which I believe you will find to be very interesting and very informative as it relates to prophecy.

Now so far in our study of this passage we have been building a foundation which will really help us to understand the Words of our Lord in Matthew 24-25. There have been 2 major points which we have considered that are so important for us to grasp as we begin to enter this passage.

- 1. The credibility of the Words of our Lord pertaining to this message.**

#### **Notice Matthew 24:2**

This was a prophecy which was fulfilled in 70 A.D. and it was fulfilled to the very letter. This was given by our Lord at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse to show the credibility of Jesus prophecy.

#### **Deuteronomy 18:18-19**

*<sup>18</sup> I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.*

*<sup>19</sup> And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*

Here is an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus Christ and how He will be a Prophet. But wait. There was something which "marked" a true prophet from a false prophet.

### **Deuteronomy 18:20-22**

*<sup>20</sup> But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.*

*<sup>21</sup> And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?*

*<sup>22</sup> When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, **if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken**, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*

The "mark" of a false prophet was when his message did not come to pass. The "mark" of a true prophet was that every word he spoke would come to pass just as he spoke it.

Therefore, the prophecy in Matthew 24:2 and the fulfillment of that prophecy is to draw our attention to the prophecy in the Olivet Discourse and help us to see that what is spoke here will also be fulfilled to the letter.

### **2. We also looked at how this prophecy fits into God's timetable.**

Last week we looked at Daniel 9 and we came to the understanding that this passage which we are about to look at is the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. The events which we shall study in the Olivet Discourse will cover a 7 year period known as the Great Tribulation. It will be a time when God

works with the Nation of Israel again. The church age which we live in will be over when the (church) bride of Christ is complete. Jesus will then come back for His bride and that event is what we know as the rapture or the "snatching away" of the church. That event will mark the end of the church age and the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel or the Great Tribulation which will be 7 years long.

### **Daniel 9:24**

*<sup>24</sup> Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.*

God revealed through Daniel's prophecy the 70 weeks were determined upon the Nation of Israel. Last week we saw that 69 of those weeks were already fulfilled and the 70<sup>th</sup> will be fulfilled after the church age is complete. Then will begin the 70<sup>th</sup> week which will come upon Daniel's people, meaning the Jewish people.

That brings us to where we are tonight.

### **I. The Events Preceding the Great Tribulation**

Now as we step into Matthew 24:4 we step right into the Great Tribulation period. Let me give you something to consider here: When the disciples asked their questions on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24:3 they were still in the 69<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. That 69<sup>th</sup> week would end with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When they asked the question, "When will be the end of the world (age)?" they were referring to end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Remember they were

looking for the Kingdom and the Kingdom will be established after the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. So, Jesus took them from the 69<sup>th</sup> week which they were living in and with His words He walked them into the 70<sup>th</sup> week. He completely skipped over the church age which is the time we live in.

So, as we step into Matthew 24:4 we will be looking at the events of the Great Tribulation period. But what does the Bible tell us about the end of the Church Age? What will the days be like right before the Rapture of the church takes place? Let us consider some of the signs of the end of the Church Age.

### **1. The Apostasy**

I want to look closely at something which Paul said to the church at Thessalonica in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. I will break the verses down so that we can better understand some things which Paul is saying.

#### **2 Thessalonians 2:1**

*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,*

This verse points to the Rapture of the church. When Jesus comes back in the clouds we who are saved will be gathered together unto Him. We see this in the first letter written to the Thessalonians.

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**

*<sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

<sup>15</sup> For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

<sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

If you have ever wondered when we get the word "Rapture" from it comes from the words "caught up" in verse 17. It is the Greek word "harpazo". Let me show you the definition of this word:

It means: **to seize on, claim for one's self eagerly, to snatch out or away.**

The word "**rapture**" comes from the Latin word "**raptus**" which means "**to carry off**".

Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that when this happens we will be caught up "together" to be with the Lord. That is the very event Paul is referring to in 2 Thessalonians 2:1.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:2**

<sup>2</sup> That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

These people were facing such difficult times that they believed they had entered into the Great Tribulation. There are 2 words in this verse

that are very important. They are the words "shaken" and the word "troubled".

- a. **Shaken** - This refers to a "motion produced by a storm" it also has the meaning of "being agitated in the mind".
- b. **Troubled** - This words means to be "troubled and frightened".

It is so important that we grasp what was happening here. These people were "confused" and "terrified" because they thought they were in the *Great Tribulation*. You see they had been taught that the church would not go through the *Great Tribulation* and so they thought they had missed the Rapture. They were confused because of what Paul had taught them and they were terrified because they thought they had missed the Rapture. This verse is solid evidence of a pre-tribulational Rapture. If they had been taught the Rapture was in the middle or the end of the tribulation they would have been full of excitement knowing that Jesus was coming within the next 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  or the next 7 years.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:3

*<sup>3</sup> Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

Here Paul explains needs to happen before the *Great Tribulation* can begin.

1. The falling away.
2. The coming of the anti-christ.

I want to focus upon the "falling away" which Paul speaks of here.

I used to think of this "falling away" as a departure from the Truth of God's Word by our society. But then I began to think that there have been many societies over the years which have departed from the

Truth of God's Word. You see the problem I had was that I was focused upon the United States of America. But then I began to think this through and realized that Paul is speaking to the "church" which is the universal body of Christ. Therefore, a departure from the Truth of God's Word here in the United States would most likely have little or no effect on a believer who was living in Africa.

Therefore, the "falling away" which Paul is talking about has to be something which the entire body of Christ would be able to see happening. So I decided to look closer at the "falling away" which Paul spoke of here and that is when the Spirit helped me to see what it was that Paul was referring to here.

The Blue Letter Bible defines this "falling away" this way, "**a falling away, defection, apostasy**". Vines Dictionary defines it as "**revolt or a forsaking**".

Now let us think about this for a moment. If someone is going to fall away or they are going to forsake something that means they had to be "attached" to whatever it is they are falling away from or forsaking.

Now there is something else you need to know. The root word from which the words "falling away" come from means "divorcement". It is the word "**apostaseon**" from which the word "apostasy" comes from. Now I want you to think with me: in order for a "divorce" to take place there first had to be a "joining together". Let me pull this together so that you can see the picture. The "apostasy" which Paul talks about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 will be a time when **false believers** will "divorce" themselves from Christianity. There will be a separation of true believers from false believers. There will be a separation of

"professors" from "possessors". You see there are many people who profess to be saved but they are only going through the motions.

All of this now raises a question, "What causes the "falling away"?"

I believe the Bible reveals 2 reasons for the "divorce".

### **A. Persecution of the church.**

I believe it will be persecution which will come upon the church. There are many people who claim to be saved today but if the heat was to be turned up and people began to be persecuted for their faith those who had "joined" with believers but were not true believers are going to separate very quickly. Now some people would say that is nothing but speculation. They would say that I am reading too much into the words "falling away". Before you reject that thought let me show you something else which Paul wrote.

#### **2 Timothy 3:1**

*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

Again we need to look at a word meaning. The meaning of the word "perilous" will shine some light upon what we need to see here.

The word "**perilous**" means "*hard to bear, troublesome, dangerous, harsh, fierce, or savage*". From this we can see that as we go deeper into the last days it will become more and more difficult for those who will stand for the Truth of God's Word.

But the Bible also tells us there will be another reason why people will "fall away".

### **B. Increase in Demonic Influence.**

## **1 Timothy 4:1**

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

<sup>2</sup> *Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

Here we see that they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. That tells us there will be an increase in demonic activity.

### **Conclusion:**

I hear people all the time say that the Lord must return very soon because of how difficult life is becoming in our day. Let me just say that there is no promise that the church will not be tried and tested before the Rapture. There is no promise we will not face persecution. That is "American Theology" and by that I mean we have the mindset as Americans that God would never allow any believer in America to suffer persecution.

Here is a good question to consider, "What makes us as American believers different from believers in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan or China?" Believers in those areas face persecution every day and some to the extreme of losing their lives. Just because we are Americans does not mean we are exempt.

In Revelation 13 we are told about the Anti-Christ's Kingdom and what life will be like in that kingdom for those who are left behind. Let me show you a few verses.

### **Revelation 13:7**

<sup>7</sup> And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

In the Great Tribulation the Anti-Christ will have control over the entire world. People will be forced to submit to his rule.

### **Revelation 13:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

<sup>12</sup> And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

### **Revelation 13:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

<sup>16</sup> And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

Much of this kingdom will need to be set up before the Great Tribulation because the Anti-Christ will begin his reign shortly after the Rapture of the church happens. The end of the Church Age begins the start of the Great Tribulation.

I give you all of this information tonight to help you to see the need to focus on your spiritual walk because if we do see persecution the things of this world may be gone in a minute. You will need to be rooted into the Word of God.