

Christ Prophecies About the Temple and the Second Coming

The gospel of Matthew contains five significant discourses that Jesus delivered while he was on Earth. The most well-known of these is the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). It contains the Beatitudes. The second is the Disciples' Commission (Matthew 10). The third is the Parables of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13). The fourth is the Denunciation of the Pharisees (Matthew 23), and the fifth is the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25). The Olivet Discourse is the second sermon Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives. The first was the Sermon on the Mount. Some consider Matthew 18 to be the sixth discourse, about greatness and forgiveness. This study is the first in a series about the Olivet Discourse. It was delivered late on Tuesday, March 29, A.D. 33, before Jesus was crucified. The Olivet Discourse was Christ's final sermon, which is fitting since it is about His return, or second coming. It is also the last event that occurred on that Tuesday. It is a prophecy about the future, with Christ as the central figure. Our study is found in Matthew 24:1-36; Mark 13:1-37; and Luke 21:5-28.

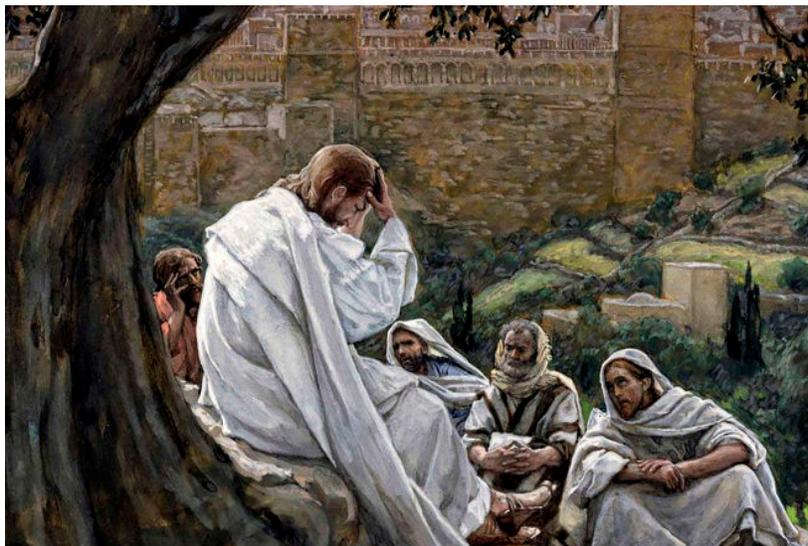
Destruction of the Temple Prophesied. The Olivet Discourse refers to chapters 24 and 25 of the gospel of Matthew, chapter 13 of Mark, and most of chapter 21 of Luke. They tell us that Jesus sat down on the Mount of Olives and answered three important questions from his disciples. Matthew and Mark tell us Jesus had left the temple grounds (Matthew 24:1; Mark 13:1).

Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. Matthew 24:1 (NASB)

As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful

buildings!" Mark 13:1 (NASB)

Matthew is the only gospel that tells us the disciples pointed to the temple buildings. Mark 13:1 adds that the disciples told Jesus that the temple was beautiful. Luke 21:5 states that some disciples said the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts. All together, this information helps us understand that the disciples were very interested in the temple.



Christ Teaching the Twelve On the Mount of Olives

The temple was called Herod's temple because Herod the Great began expanding its grounds in 20 BC. It was made of massive rocks, some of which were 40 ft by 12 ft by 12 ft (12.2 m by 3.66 m by 3.66 m). The stones were quarried from limestone and covered with gold. They fit together perfectly to form the

temple's walls. The eastern wall of the temple was plated with gold. The eastern gate was believed to be the one through which the Messiah would enter to establish His kingdom. The marble colonnades on the temple grounds added to its splendor.

Leen Ritmeyer with Ritmeyer Archaeological Design states,

Once the platform was completed, double colonnades, or porticoes, were built above the outer walls to provide shelter from the elements. A huge hall called the Royal Stoa, with four rows of columns, was erected on the southern end. The pre-existing eastern portico that stood on the square mount was left unchanged. As it belonged to a pre-Herodian period, it was called Solomon's Porch. Near the center of this platform a new gold-covered temple was constructed that in turn was surrounded by many other buildings.¹

Late in the afternoon on that Tuesday, the temple must have looked magnificent when the disciples pointed to it and made the comments recorded in Mark and Luke.

Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2, and Luke 21:6 all report that Jesus told the disciples that not one stone would be left upon another.

And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." Matthew 24:2 (NASB)

In addition, Luke 21:6 adds,

As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down. Luke 21:6 (NASB)

This clearly reveals that Jesus prophesied the destruction of

the temple in the near future. Using the phrase "the days will come" implies that the event would occur in the near future.

After Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 AD the Roman army surrounded and burned the city to the ground. This was the second time the city and temple were destroyed. 2 Kings 25:8-10 and Ezekiel 24:1-14 reveal that this was not the first time.

Second Coming of Christ Prophesied. Next, we learn that the inner circle of disciples held a private meeting with Jesus and asked Him two questions (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3-4; Luke 21:7). Peter, James, John, and Andrew were present. The gospels reveal that Jesus often included these four disciples in special events without the others being present. (Matthew 17:1-6; Mark 5:36-43; 9:2; 14:32-33). They were the inner group. On some occasions, only Peter, James, and John were included. It is important to note that they wrote eight of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, while Paul wrote thirteen. Mark 13:3 says,

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately. Mark 13:3 (NASB)

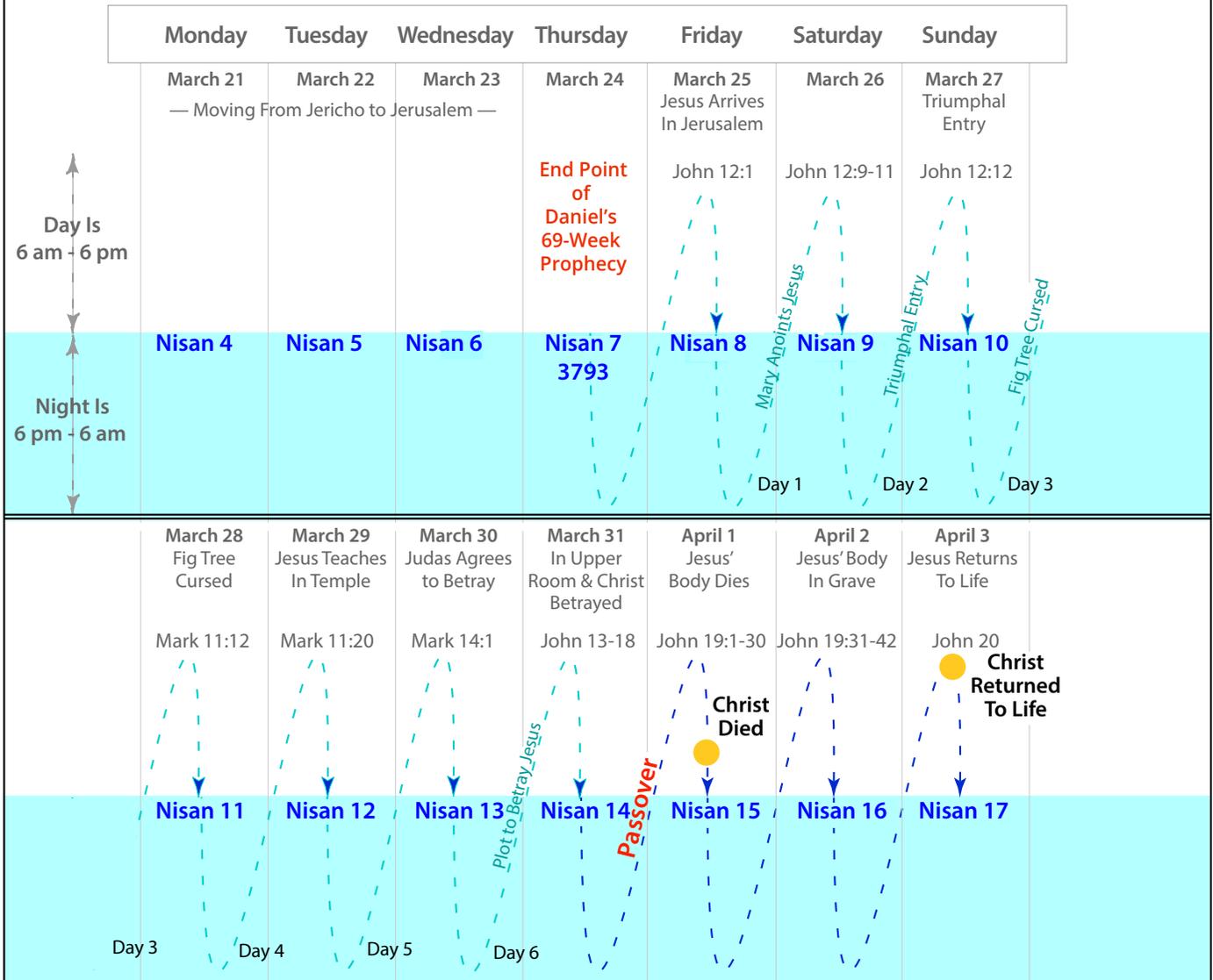
There is clearly a gap in time between verses 2 and 3 of Mark 13. In Matthew 24:1, we are told that Jesus' disciples were with him. Then in Mark 13:3, a change occurs. The inner circle has a private meeting with Jesus. This would have found the other disciples elsewhere or doing something else. Jesus and the inner circle most likely left the others and sat by themselves.

The inner group asked Jesus two questions about the future. They wanted to know exactly when these things would happen. What are the signs of His coming and the end of the age?

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:3 (NASB)

1. Leen Ritmeyer. The temple Mount in the Herodian Period (37 BC–70 A.D.) January 23, 2025. (www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/temple-at-jerusalem/the-temple-mount-in-the-herodian-period/)

Last Week of Jesus' Life



The records of the questions that Matthew, Mark, and Luke asked Jesus vary slightly. The four disciples in the inner circle were undoubtedly curious about the same thing, so they asked the question in slightly different ways. Matthew 24:3 captures the essence of their questions. Then Jesus answered their questions in reverse order. First, He gave them the signs of his second coming at the end of the age (Matthew 24:4-31; Mark 13:5-27; Luke 21:8-28). He then explained when the Second Coming would occur (Matthew 24:32-51; Mark 13:29-37; Luke 21:29-36).

In the next study, we will learn how Jesus answered these

two questions. In this study, it is essential for us to pause and present reasons why the amillennial, postmillennial, and preterist interpretations of Matthew 24:1-28 must be rejected. There are three important points to consider about their interpretations of the Olivet Discourse.

Scripture Not Understood Literally

The most important point is that all three views spiritualize or allegorize the Bible. In the process, they force Scripture to support their teachings about the

Life and Heart of Jesus

The Last Week - March A.D. 33

	Parables About Religious Leaders	Jesus Is Questioned	Questioned by Sadducees	Questioned by Pharisees	Jesus Asked A Question	Pharisees Rebuked	Jesus Laments Jerusalem	Poor Widows' Gift	Beginning of Birth Pangs
Matthew	21:28-22:14	22:15-22	22:23-33	22:34-40	22:41-46	23:1-36	23:37-39		24:1-14
Mark	12:1-12	12:13-17	12:18-27	12:28-34	12:35-37	12:38-40		12:41-44	13:1-13
Luke	20:9-19	20:20-26	20:27-40		20:41-44	20:45-47		21:1-4	21:5-19
John									

future. They mix literal and allegorical interpretations of Scripture. Protestants and Jewish rabbis agree that the Hebrew word for “weeks” in Daniel 9:24 refers to a seven-year period. Premillennialists understand the 69 weeks to refer to 69 literal periods of seven years, or 483 years. Amillennialists, postmillennialists, preterists, and Jewish rabbis all agree. Premillennialists understand the seventieth week mentioned in Daniel 9:27 to be a literal seven-year period. Premillennialists call that period the Tribulation. Verse 27 clearly states that an event called the abomination of desolation occurs midway through the seven-year period. Jesus clearly referred to this prophecy in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14.

Premillennialists interpret the first half of the seventieth week as a 3.5-year period and the second half as 3.5 years, the result of dividing seven in half. It is certain that the first 3.5 years will be a time of peace in Israel. It is equally certain that during the last half, Israel and the world will experience the wrath of God.

Amillennialists, postmillennialists, and preterists all agree that the first half of the seventieth week is three and a

half years. However, they apply an allegorical interpretation to the second half of the seventieth week and say that it does not equal three and a half years, but at least two thousand years and counting. According to amillennialists and postmillennialists, mankind has been living for at least two thousand years in the last 3.5 years! It began when Christ was crucified. This is a serious error, and it is not the only example of errors. They interpret the first 3.5 years of Daniel’s seventieth week literally. Then they interpret the last 3.5 years figuratively to force Daniel 9:27 to fit their view of the future. They are adamant that no temple will exist beyond 70 AD. This future temple unequivocally confirms that Israel remains a pivotal part of God’s divine plan for the future. The church has absolutely not replaced Israel.

Premillennialists interpret Daniel 9:27 literally. They believe that Daniel’s seventieth week will occur in our future. This week is called the tribulation. Israel is poised for a 3.5-year era of peace. Israel has never had peace in the Middle East since the time of Christ. It is a fact that even during the time of Christ, Israel was controlled by the Roman Empire until it was destroyed. Israel still does not

have peace. The first 3.5 years of the prophecy have not yet occurred, and the abomination of desolation has not yet happened because it occurs at the end of the first 3.5 years.

Temple Is Mentioned Only Briefly

Second, full preterists claim the Olivet Discourse is fulfilled history. Partial preterists teach that most of the sermon has been fulfilled. Both full and partial preterists assert that the Olivet Discourse is chiefly concerned with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. There are several reasons why they believe this. They teach that Luke 19:41-44 clearly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, not the temple. They also believe the word “house” in Matthew 23:38 refers to the temple. But the term “house” is used to refer to Jerusalem in Matthew 15:24 and Ezekiel 24:2-3. The word “house” is only used in Matthew 21:13 to refer to the temple. Therefore, “house” could refer to either the city or the temple. So, the context must determine the correct meaning of “house.” The answer is found by noticing that in Matthew 23:37 Jesus clearly states, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem.” He emphasized “Jerusalem” twice. Then He used the word “house” in Matthew 23:38. This strongly suggests that “house” most likely refers to Jerusalem and not to the temple. Consequently, preterists have no serious support for their view that the Olivet Discourse is about the destruction of the temple.

The disciples’ questions stemmed from their strong interest in the temple, having just viewed it, and since Jesus had just said Jerusalem would be destroyed. Obviously if Jerusalem is destroyed, the temple would be also. The disciples asked to know the timing of the temple’s destruction and the signs that would precede it. Their questions are clearly logical.

Amillennialists, postmillennialists, and preterists are obsessed with the temple in Jerusalem. Their preoccupation directly impacts their interpretation of Scripture. For example, they believe the fig tree in Mark 11:20-26 symbolizes the temple. But the fig tree never symbolized the temple anywhere in Scripture. Yes, the temple is an important place where worship was to occur, but it was

only a building. However, the temple was not a place of worship when Jesus visited it. They view the physical building through spiritual eyes. We must remember that Jesus instructed us to worship in spirit and truth. That does not include pews, offering plates, amplification systems, or glorified buildings. The temple or the church is a dead place between services. The temple, itself, is nothing. Yes, the temple had meaning as a place of worship, but otherwise it is just a building.

Jesus wept for the people in Jerusalem and not for the temple. Luke 19:41-44 clearly states, “If you had known. . .” Jesus was not grieving over the buildings. God wants us to worship Him in spirit and truth. Let me be clear: the preoccupation with the temple is misguided.

Jerusalem Is Only The Main Location

The third important point we must consider is that while preterists teach the Olivet Discourse is primarily about the temple, amillennialists and postmillennialists think it is mainly about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. While the disciples did ask questions about the temple, that does not mean the Olivet Discourse is about the temple. In addition, the city of Jerusalem is not mentioned in Matthew 24 or Mark 12! It does occur in Luke 21:20, but not in reference to 70 AD. The Olivet Discourse is all about the second coming of Christ (v. 29-3). We’re going to dive into this fascinating topic in the next section.

Second Coming Is the Focus

We also know that the amillennialists, postmillennialists, and preterists have misunderstood the Olivet Discourse. The signs that Jesus gave indicate that the prophecy will be fulfilled in our future. They were not fulfilled between the time of Jesus’ crucifixion and 70 AD. In Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, He talks about the signs that will happen just before His second coming. We will talk about these signs in the next study. In the rest of this study, we will look at six signs that show this prophecy will yet happen sometime in the future.

First, medical science tells us that labor begins at the end of a pregnancy, not at the beginning. In Matthew 24: 8, Jesus said that the signs He described were like the pain of childbirth. This helps us understand that the signs He described would occur very close to His second coming. They were not descriptions of events shortly after His crucifixion.

“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Matthew 24:5-8 (NASB)

This means the signs that He gave will occur near the end of human history right before Christ’s second coming and the establishment of His millennial kingdom. They cannot be descriptions of what happened two thousand years ago because birth pangs do not happen at the beginning of a pregnancy, but at the end.

Another sign of Jesus’ second coming is given to us in Matthew 24:14, where we learn that the gospel will be shared with all nations everywhere on the earth.

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14 (NASB)

That has not yet happened. Wycliffe Bible Translators and other Christian organizations tell us that the Bible has not yet been translated into all of the languages in the world. Maybe the gospel about Jesus Christ has reached everyone on the earth by the internet. But this sign could not have been fulfilled at the time of Christ or near 70 A.D.

The third sign is the abomination of desolation. Verse 15 gives us this sign.

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand). Matthew 24:15 (NASB)

Since the gospel has not yet been preached to the whole world, this sign could not have occurred prior to 70 AD. Therefore, the abomination of desolation has not yet occurred since the time of Christ before or after 70 AD.

In the earlier discussion titled “Scripture Not Understood Literally,” we established that a literal understanding of this sign requires the temple to exist in Jerusalem sometime after 70 AD and within 3.5 years before the second coming of Christ. It is clear that this has not yet occurred nor has Christ appeared to the entire world yet. We are not living in the millennial kingdom. This sign has not yet occurred.

Verse 21 definitively reveals a fourth sign that points to the second coming.

For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Matthew 24:21 (NASB)

This verse and Mark 13:19 teach that a time of great tribulation will follow the events in Matthew 24:15. The abomination of desolation has not occurred, so the great tribulation has not yet occurred. It is clear that the murders of the Israelis described in this verse and in Matthew 24:15-27 and Mark 13:14-22 did not occur before 70 AD nor have they occurred since. The horrors of the future great tribulation have not yet come to pass.

We must remember that a slaughter of Israelis in Israel, a destruction of Jerusalem, and of the temple also occurred in 586 BC by the Babylonian army. Lamentations 4:10 and chapters 5-7 and 24 of the book of Ezekiel describe the horrible slaughter that occurred. Children were killed, boiled, and eaten. Two-thirds of the Israelis were killed. The city of Jerusalem and temple were burned and leveled to the ground. So, the destruction in 70 AD by the Roman army was the second such occurrence and not the first. The Olivet Discourse clearly states that a third attack on

Jerusalem is inevitable. Zechariah 12:1–14 and Zechariah 14:1–8 outline this future destruction of Jerusalem. Christ will save Jerusalem from complete destruction at His second coming.

The sixth reason we know the prophecy of the Olivet Discourse will be fulfilled in the future is that Jesus told the disciples in Luke 17:22 that they would not see His second coming. The book of Revelation was written by the apostle John around 95 AD, which clearly indicates that the prophecy is yet future. The second coming of Christ did not occur in 70 AD. It has not yet occurred. This is still a future event.

Conclusion. Finally, Jesus made it clear in Matthew 24:32-36 that no one knows the day or the time of His second coming but the Father.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Matthew 24:36 (NASB)

This unequivocally means that the signs did not point to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Why? The answer is clear: Jesus said this generation will not pass away until all these things take place (v. 34). Since a generation refers to 40 years and Christ died in 33 AD, the fulfillment date of the signs would point to 70 AD. But Jesus said we cannot know that. It is clear that the signs point to events beyond 70 AD. In fact, they point to a time still in our future because the second coming of Christ has not yet occurred.