

Olivet Discourse Part 3 Luke 21:12 - 15

Ch. 21:12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. 13 “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. 14 “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. 16 “But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all on account of My name. 18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 “By your endurance you will gain your lives.

We are studying the Olivet discourse for the past two times we've been together. You will find many parallels of this particular discourse in Matthew 24 and 25, the most complete account, Mark 13, and Luke 21 which we are studying.

Jesus is fielding 3 questions posed on the Mount of Olives, as the disciples are looking back at the temple complex. The questions they ask Him are a rather direct result to first, Him announcing in His final words to Israel as a nation that with His departure, they would become desolate.

That happened both spiritually and physically. **Spiritually** they were already desolate, empty, a vast expanse of nothing. When Jesus left the room, so to speak, their fate in that emptiness was sealed by their own choice. They rejected the life giver. Spiritually they were dead and when Jesus left, all hope of revival of life left the room with Him. The whole head is sick and they've dismissed the doctor.

Physically His prophecy became reality in His physical departure, and then they finished the job by killing Him. Then in 70 AD when Rome came down and murdered and displaced 2.2 million jews. Rome turned Jerusalem into a pile of rubble. A waste place. His prophecy become complete and has remained complete until this day, even with them back in the land. Without

Him, they remain desolated.

The disciples were shocked when He said it and they were musing over the glory of the temple complex of Herod's temple when Jesus unloaded a second bombshell on them. Think that temple complex and the religion it represents is glorious do you? Not one stone will be left upon another. It's all coming down.

And thus begins this famous prophetic discourse. They asked Him 3 questions. When will these things be. What will be the sign of your coming, your parousia, and of the end of the age.

Jesus doesn't launch into a direct answer. After His resurrection they will again ask Him about His parousia. *“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* 7 Jesus replied, *“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority.”* Acts 1:6b,7

He doesn't give a day and month and hour answer. Well boys, you've got 2000 years to wait. It'll be in April of 2030. And all of us smart guys will get out our calculators and say, let's see, 2030, April, that means the rapture will happen in April 2023. I guess I better sell my house and my cars and go on a 2 year cruise.

No, He tells them Sovereign God has set that day and hour and He has decided NOT to tell you. What He will do though is give you some mile posts so that you can gauge where we may be at.

1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 1Thess. 5:1,2

This has been a continuous topic of conversation between christians from Paul's day until today. God in His wisdom said, I'm not telling you the day, I AM telling you to be ready at all times. Don't take a vacation from being a christian because you think He's delaying and it won't matter.

Jesus answer to His disciples is; Wars, disturbances, famines, pestilence, disease, earthquakes. Same thing you've always had. But at the end they will increase in intensity and be closer together than has always been normative in Satan's realm. Count on the usual stuff but when you see it gaining in intensity and volume like birth pangs do before a birth, that's a sign. That's a clue.

The next clue is going to be increasing persecution. Persecution of christians will increase exponentially at the last times.

But before all these things, Before all what things? Before the things that we can categorically locate as things described during the 7 year tribulation period. Before all of those things He just got done talking about. All of the beginnings of birth pangs things. Increasing war, increasing conflict, increasing murders, increasing earthquakes, increasing signs in the sky.

Before all of that; persecution of believers.

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.

Uh-Oh. Before the tribulation; persecution?? Before the rapture and the church is removed . . . persecution? Is this a possibility for us? ??????

Actually, the church has endured persecution of believers from day one until this day. We're the anomaly, not the norm. There has always been wars and earthquakes and pestilence and there has always been persecution of God's elect bringing Him glory somewhere on the planet. That's normative, even though to us it's never been a reality.

The disciples have followed Jesus because they believe He is the Messiah of Israel. And He IS! But their incomplete eschatology does not include Him dieing, being resurrected from the dead, ascending into heaven, and a 2000

year church age where God gathers gentiles from every nation for His glory.

They do not have a single clue about any of that. What they're most interested in is who will be number 2, number 3, number 4 man in His imminent kingdom. They expect the kingdom to begin . . . now. Right now. They expect to be elevated to glorious ruler status alongside the King.

They've got a lot of shocks coming in their immediate futures. Nothing is going to happen according to their eschatological hopes and beliefs.

Zechariah 13:7 says; "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate," Declares the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

The disciples are expecting a co-reigning situation with God's messiah on the throne of Israel. But what's going to happen to them is shattering. The Shepherd is going to be struck down and the sheep will be scattered. It isn't going to be like what their imaginations have played out.

Jesus isn't going to conquer the Roman occupiers and set up His throne and bring a magnified time like David's reign. They still expect that. Even now as He's pronounced desolation on Israel and told them the whole system, including the temple is going to become empty desolate uninhabited nothing.

And so the questions come. When? What? How? And He has unfolded to them that what they can expect is trouble. Trouble on the outside. Wars. Disturbances. Famines. Plagues. Earthquakes. None of that is welcome, but there's hope that you can somehow be on the outside looking in on the disaster

But then He tells them, besides all of that, you can expect things to get very personal. Listen to words that He will tell them in about 24 hours in His upper room discourse. It doesn't get any plainer. We aren't going into a palace situation. We're going into a situation where you are public enemy number one. That's what's coming.

John 16:1 *“These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. 3 “And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me. 4 “But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

I'm telling you this so you won't stumble when what you hoped for and expected to happen because you are the Messiah's chosen men doesn't happen.

You thought you would be the new rulers in the temple and the synagogues in a new Davidic reign alongside the Son of David. Here's what's going to happen. You are going to be outcasts of the synagogue. Ejected. Thrown out. Un-synagogued. And that's just the beginning.

They will hate you because of Me. They will kill you and think they are offering up service and worship to God by eliminating you. And He says, I'm telling you this now, so that when it happens, you will remember that I told you and your faith will not fail.

Beloved, why would we expect anything less? Satan is the ruler of this world, why would we expect to be comfortable here? I mean, just thinking logically. Do enemy combatants expect to be comfortable and well received in the nation they are at war with.

In John 15 Jesus says;

18 *“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.*

Actually, from a purely biblical perspective based on what Jesus is telling His disciples we should be more alarmed that we've lived in this era when christians got a pass. That's really unusual.

I read a quote this week. It was in one of Al Mohler's morning briefings where he puts world events in a christian perspective. A good little 25 minute session 5 mornings a week. This is a direct quote from his transcript;

"Speaking of the new administration and the president's proclamation, the story in the New York Times included a quote that ought to have our attention. It didn't come from the administration. It came from a spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign. In this case, the president of the organization, the Human Rights Campaign or HRC as it's often known, is identified as the largest LGBTQ advocacy group in the country. Alfonso B. David is the president, and this is what he said, "For the past four years, it was difficult to get out of bed. It was difficult to get out of bed because you understood that you, your being, your identity were being assaulted." (end quote)

He felt like his group, his identity, his very being, was under assault during the reign of terror of Mr. Trump. Now he can get up and click his heels together and face the day with confidence. Assault over.

Is that good news for christians? The assault against LGBTQ+++ is over. Who's under assault now in their place. Everything changed. The losers are now the winners. Who's the new losers? The balance tipped towards someone and away from someone. It didn't simply just become a nice perfect even playing field. Someone new is under assault now. Who is the new target that will find it difficult to get out of bed now? I'll leave that up to your imaginations.

Hint: 18 *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.* 19 *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

If you think about it logically, if Satan is the ruler of this world and Christians are chosen by God to live apart from this world but we are left in this world that is at war with God as something sort of like enemy combatants, do we think for one minute that the world is going to love us?

Add to that our single task that our Lord has left us to accomplish. We are to go everywhere in the entire world and tell everybody that they can be freed from their captor Satan who holds them captive because they have sinned.

We are to tell everyone that true freedom is possible, that they can leave sin behind, and be made righteous, sinless, with a righteousness not their own, it is the very righteousness of Jesus, imputed to us. He gives His righteousness to us! And He takes away our damning sin, takes all of it upon Himself and dies the death we were due, in our place, on the cross.

So in a sense, we are on Satan's usurped turf that doesn't really belong to Him, it belongs to God, and we are God's chosen army fighting directly against enemy Satan, taking his turf away from him one person at a time.

We're cutting into his territory and diminishing his holdings one person at a time. Rescuing people away from Satan's hold. Making God's camp in this world bigger and Satan's holdings smaller. Does that sound like something he would allow?

The logical thing would be for Satan to extinguish his enemies. Kill Christians immediately on sight. Stamp out all Christians. They are enemies of Satan's world. Christians are like a cancer that spreads in Satan's world, diminishing his captives! What world ruler would allow that?

17 and you will be hated by all on account of My name. 18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish.

God doesn't allow Satan to touch one hair of His chosen elects heads, until He does. God restrains Satan, until He doesn't. Satan has slaughtered Christians from day one of there being Christians, but not unless and until God allows it.

He can't touch a single diminishing hair on my fuzzy head, until God, who owns every hair, says, OK go ahead and do whatever you will with Jim. All you can do is kill him, but then he comes home to me

We are untouchables. Until God allows us to experience whatever it is He allows, for our good and His glory. But not a single hair will perish without my owners permission. The world can rage at me but they can't touch a hair of my head, unless my owner allows it to happen.

Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Mt. 28:20 is the promise my Sovereign owner and King has made to me. He rules over each hair on my head. I'm untouchable, unless He allows me to be touched. I belong to Him, and He loves me. How much better than to belong to Satan who hates you and is using you as a pawn in his war against God.

And yet, we find the logic of what we've just stated doesn't work very well, because Satan's pawns in his army love their sin that enslaves them and hate God who would save them and cause them to flourish far better without the sin.

How does all we've said fit with what Jesus tells His disciples on the hillside across from the temple and religious system that is doomed?

12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.

What He just described began in Acts chapter 3 immediately after the church was formed by the Holy Spirit after pentecost. The jewish ruling authorities threw Peter and John in prison and scourged them and ordered them to cease and desist with this Jesus stuff.

And you can follow that general pattern right through the book of Acts. Stephen is martyred in ch. 7. Paul was looking on while that happened,

leading the persecution.

Then God selected Paul to belong to Him and called him out of this world and into His kingdom. And after that, Paul was beaten and scourged and left for dead time after time as Satan chased him out of one place into the next where it happened again.

And if the church is a disease, Paul singlehandedly spread it everywhere. You just follow Paul around and the church is left everywhere in his wake. Satan chasing him everywhere and causing the church to grow. Satan meant persecution for harm and God caused it for His glory and our benefit.

After the book of Acts you can pick up Foxe's book of Martyrs and follow the persecution and slaughter from the first century AD up until the 1600's when it was written.

Here's a thought to ponder. No other religion has a Foxe's Book of Martyrs. None. That's sort of telling, isn't it. Here's another problem to ponder. The Roman Catholic church has murdered over 50 million protestants over the centuries. Oops.

Jesus tells His disciples, expect it. Persecution of God's chosen elect in Satan's world is normative. Paul says; *And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* 2Tim 3:12 That verse makes me squeemish. All?

And yet the church or what calls itself the church is giving away the store so to speak in order to not be at war with the world. Go along to get along. Embrace the world and it's sin. Look so much like the world no one is quite sure where the world stops and the church begins. There are no boundaries, no rules. If the world does it, we do it even more. If the world is cool, we're even cooler!

12 “But before all these things, **they** will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you

before kings and governors for My name's sake.

Who is the "they" in that verse? It's pretty specific to the disciples who are asking about the temple going down and the house or nation of Israel becoming desolated.

Synagogues were where the jews held court for their religious matters. So it's established religion first, but then that verse includes kings and governors and that is Rome, or, ultimately whoever has the authority to reign.

And that's exactly what happened. The jews were the first persecutors of the christians. The Romans just lumped christians as a jewish fringe group and let them alone to be punished by the jews for what ever religious crimes the jews thought they were doing.

But after Rome crushed Jerusalem in 70AD they realized christians were distinct from the jews and they persecuted christians mainly because they wouldn't worship and declare total allegiance to Ceasar.

Ultimately, the "they" in the verse turns out to be all peoples in all times and in every place who Satan has duped into carrying out his reign of terror in this world. To this minute christians are still being dragged into courts and prisons for what they believe by Satan's duped workers of iniquity.

13 "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

We just watched as a pastor in Canada was put in prison because of a governors over reach using Covid falsely as the weapon. Guess what. The entire world got to hear that pastor's testimony.

The entire world got to see at least one christian who would not back down to the so-called authorities who were demanding that worship of our God in the manner that He demands cease and desist in obedience of the state.

And he was able to witness God's grace and purpose to all the men inside the

prison. When he was released after 35 days with 2 weeks in solitary confinement included, all the other men rattled their bars and clapped out of respect for his witness.

The world is desperate to see christians who will actually pay with their freedom and if necessary their lives in order to belong to God. The world isn't impressed with "cool" christians who are just like the world.

*14 "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;
15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents
will be able to resist or refute.*

There's a sense in which we are as defenseless as sheep. See the word opponents. We are in a battle with opposition. The battle is much bigger than us. The opposition in that verse is Satan and the cosmos, the world systems that he controls.

Jesus says to His own men, we're in a fight. There are predators out there who are like wolves and you guys are sheep. But He promises to give us wisdom and utterance in our defense in the moment.

He says don't prepare beforehand to defend yourselves. We don't build armies with firepower to wage war with Satan. He's out of our league. His weapons are not of this world. We are like sheep and we are at the disposal of the shepherds plans. When our Shepherd enters the fight in our behalf He gives wisdom and utterance that is irresistible and non refutable.

Your homework is to read Acts 3 and 4 this afternoon and watch what Jesus just told His disciples in this passage in Luke go to work for the first time.

The authorities are amazed at Peter's speech. They order them to cease and desist speaking in Jesus name. Peter says we have to obey God, not men. The authorities release them because they have no real case to hold them. It's an exact mirror of what Jesus told them right here in Luke 21. The reality in action. Exactly as Jesus said.

I'll close with a prognostication. Last Sunday, immediately after church, I gathered some things together, cameras to play with and clothes and bath articles and bedding for my comfort, and I set out for the Columbia River 800 miles away. I only returned to Tonopah yesterday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock so I could be with you all this morning.

Pam has bought me the nicest i-phone 12 you can imagine. While I was away last week, I talked to everyone, everywhere, at any time I wanted to. I used the map for distances and times and also for directions. I bought and sold things. Quite a few things. I'm a capitalist. I used the phone for monetary profit. And I did my banking remotely, moving money in and out of places to accomplish my goals and meet my responsibilities. I even carried this sermon around with me from place to place and worked on it remotely in Oregon.

The phone gives me statistics about face time and breaks it down into categories. 3.4 hours total on a certain 24 hour period. Getting information. Moving stuff and money. Communicating with people I need to communicate with. All neatly categorized. It's amazing!

What happens when the cosmos says, that's a privilege that we can control and you either bend to our way of thinking and agree with what we say, or all of that is going to be taken away? Think of your life with no phone and no internet connections. Cash only. Your ability to earn money is diminished. No phone. You can't buy or sell on the internet. No connection to the cosmos. All gone.

Over night you've become lower than the homeless people living in cardboard on the streets, along the Truckee river. They all have phones. They're all connected. Even the homeless have i-phones these days.

Hold that thought until we meet again, if God is gracious and allows it, in 2 weeks. It's time to calculate the possible costs of keeping Jesus, keeping this book, intact, and determining what you will lose in order to have . . . Him.