

## Olivet Discourse Part 1 Luke 21:5 - 9

*Ch. 21:5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 6 “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.” 7 And they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” 8 And He said, “See to it that you be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is at hand’; do not go after them. 9 “And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.”*

In our post post post modern culture, whatever the current title for our current times is, you will be asked and usually scoffed at for believing in a particular sacred written tradition among many other sacred traditions.

Why would you believe this one we hold is more valid than all the others. Hasn't modern study disproved all of this old stuff as bizarre musings of ancient goat herds at this point. Textual criticism.

In a culture of mass systems of comparative learning at virtually every persons fingertips, why would you believe any ancient tradition at all, and if you do, why this one? We have more information and learning at our fingertips in micro seconds than these folks had over thousands of years.

To our culture it seems irrational to actually believe some ancient writings on scrolls. It's idiotic to do that. Why does anyone do that, and then why choose this collection of writings by at least 35 authors that spans thousands of years. Even more irrational.

And then to have people who will die because of their beliefs based in the words of this book, in our modern times, that's just so crazy that we can probably do just as well without people around who are that insane. Is there any useful purpose for people who are that nutty?

I'm not going to give you all of the categorical reasons why someone might do that. But I am going to refer you to one phenomenon, that for me at least, when I was a teenager desperately clinging to my professed atheism, I knew was true and I couldn't shake it loose. It ultimately did me in.

Prophecy. God Almighty, Creator of heavens and earth claims to be the ultimate author of these writings. He claims to reveal things in this book that cannot be found out by any searching or reasoning on a human level. Things revealed about Himself that are un-knowable, unless He chooses to tell us.

And then He backs up that claim, His revelation of Himself, with another claim.

Isaiah 46:9,10 9 *“Remember the former things long past,  
For I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is no one like Me,*

*10 Declaring the end from the beginning  
And from ancient times things which have not been done,  
Saying, ‘My purpose will be established,  
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;*

God says, I declare the beginning and I declare the end, from ancient times, and then I accomplish it. God foretells the future. He declares what He will accomplish in the future. And when the time is according to His plan and His pleasure, He does it.

Isaiah 48:3 says: *3 I foretold the former things long ago; they came out of My mouth and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.*

In Isaiah 41, God asks the same questions I began with a few minutes ago. His stated case is; Who will you worship? Idols, ie. other traditions, or Yahweh, the God of Gods. Listen to Him as He presents the case against all other ancient traditions; God vsss the idols. God vss all other comers.

21 *“Present your case,” the LORD says.  
“Bring forward your strong arguments,”  
The King of Jacob says.*

*22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place;  
As for the former events, declare what they were,  
That we may consider them, and know their outcome;*

What are the former events. Creation of the world. Tell us about that, if you know. Describe creation, since you know.

Let's see, how're we doing with that one. Trillions and quadrillions of years all of this happened by accident. DNA happened by accident. Cells that reproduce themselves perfectly happened by accident. Human aging over a period of years as the cells re-create themselves millions of times, just differently enough that after 80 years we die. Also by accident.

I urge you to begin at Job 38 and read to the end of the book as God gives some highlights of His creative genius completely unknowable unless He told us and which I might add, are breath-taking.

He says, come on you idols, you man generated baloney, explain how all of this got here? But He doesn't stop there.

*Or announce to us what is coming.*

*23 Declare the things that are going to come afterward,  
That we may know that you are gods;*

This is the argument for prophetic utterance. Declare the future. That we may know that you are gods. This is the God test. Tell us what is coming in the future. Future events. Stated now.

Clearly, only God can tell you how it began. No one else was there. And only

God can tell you how it will end. Ahead of time. Before it happens. And then bring it to pass exactly as stated.

*Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.*

Do anything, you idols. Do something. Whether good or evil, do something. Anything. So that we can have some basis to fear you. Just do anything at all.

*24 Behold, you are of no account,  
And your work amounts to nothing;  
He who chooses you is an abomination.*

God taunts all other traditions. Empty dead worthless air. Nothing. They cannot accomplish anything. At all. To choose other gods is an abomination.

Prophecy is the test of any ancient tradition. Tell us what will come to pass in the future. Then make it happen. If you can't do that, you are nothing but empty words meaning nothing. That's the litmus test. If there is a God of heaven, He must be able to tell us future things, and then He must have the power to make what He said, happen. And He must be able to tell us how all of this came to exist, because no one else was there to observe it, except Him.

Jesus has made His final pronouncement of judgement against Israel. His final words to corporate Israel. We looked at it last week. That study is posted on line if you're interested.

Mt. 23:38 *“Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 “For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”*

Beloved, those words were prophecy. He tells them future things, not yet come to pass. DID THEY HAPPEN?

We have the benefit of 20-20 hindsight of 2000 years. Was Israel made

desolate? Yes. Israel was preserved intact, they still are a people, but they have been desolate since 70AD. They were set aside by God. They are no longer the mouthpiece in the world of revelation by God.

God is represented in the world by His ecclesia, His called out ones, His church, worldwide. Israel is desolate. Expelled from their homeland they are chased all over the earth by Satan and murdered continually from that day to this one. They are like a house abandoned. By God. Yet, strangely preserved intact.

They are back in their homeland, some of them, thanks to Britain and the United States, still desolate spiritually. Surrounded by enemies on all sides. Hated by the rest of the world. Intact but desolated to this day.

Yet, they had to remain intact in order to complete Jesus prophetic statement. *For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'*

If the jews had vanished into all the other cultures and were lost as a people, the second part of Jesus sweeping prophecy would be impossible to complete. But they didn't vanish. Persecuted and punished on all sides for 2000 years, yet they are a distinct race of people in a distinct place in the world, ready for this prophecy to have it's ultimate completion.

And here's the thing about prophecy. Did the first part happen. Yes. Then why would we not believe the second part will also happen. WE believe in prophecy, because we've watched what Jesus foretold, become reality over 2000 years. And we know that God's people the jews will literally see their Messiah coming to them when Jerusalem is moments away from becoming a smoking hole in the earth.

I believe He literally stops the rainstorm of thermonuclear devices in flight that would have made Jerusalem and the surrounding area a literal smoking hole. That's a Jim prophecy and you can take that and \$3 bucks and get a cup of coffee at Starbucks. That's what my prophecies are worth. But Jesus

alludes to that very scenario in the Matthew 24 version of this discourse when He says;

*21 For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.*

In Matthew's account, the final words of Jesus to corporate Israel are in the last verses of Matthew 23 and the next words, the first words of chapter 24 are these; *1 And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.*

That's the reference for our passage this morning. He says His final words to corporate Israel, in the hearing of all, on the temple grounds, and He turns and with His disciples, He makes His exit from corporate Israel. They will not hear another word from Him. It's over for them.

And He comes out of the temple area and crosses over the Kidron valley and begins the ascent up the mount of Olives, adjacent to the temple on the east side, and this discussion of how the future is going to unfold begins when His disciples look back at the magnificent temple in the immediate distance and wonder out loud about it.

When Jesus says, your house is left unto you desolate, you need to know a little bit about the physicality of that house that Jesus is referring to. The temple complex is ground zero of the house of Israel. It's the beating heart of Israel.

House means not just the physical complex, but the whole representation of God in the earth that the historic religion of Israel centered at Jerusalem was. God's people, God's chosen nation, God's chosen place to dwell, all of it swirls around this temple complex that they have left and have turned around to look at, gleaming perhaps a half of a mile away and in full glorious view.

In 20 BC, about 50 or 51 years before the events we're speaking of when Jesus was speaking at the temple grounds, Herod the Great had announced to the Jewish people that he was going to build them a new temple.

The immediate reaction was panic. That's sort of like Joe Biden saying he's going to take Christianity on as a project and rebuild it for us. You Christians aren't doing so well and I'm going to fix it. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Panic.

But what happened was that he staged all of the materials, all of the necessary things, and then he trained the priests to do the work. He was completely respectful to the Jews and their traditions and to how God said the temple should be laid out, all of it.

And what he did, you have to picture a very small hilltop, the place where ground zero is, was Mount Moriah, where Abraham had offered up Isaac, and God had provided the lamb and spared Isaac's life, where Solomon built the first temple that was destroyed by the Babylonians. It just wasn't very big. Limited real estate and almost no flat area.

So what Herod did was he built up the entire area with huge retaining walls and created atop the retaining wall area a flat pavement area that was twice as large as the original temple area.

Picture these 10, 12, 15+ foot retaining walls built out of stones as big as a Volkswagen bus. Piled on top of each other in courses until you fill it all in on the inside and you have this huge big tiled paved area surrounded by portico's built of 30 foot columns. It was a massive undertaking.

Then atop the big paved area which was the court of the gentiles you keep going higher up in levels to different courts. Each court higher up stairways is more holy than the lower ones. The court of the women. Then the Court of Israel, the main area where the sacrifices were happening then atop it all was this 70 foot high structure, sort of shaped like an Egyptian lion. Big head and main with a long body, but it was all square, it just had those sort of

proportions.

Finally the big room where only the priests could go, and the curtain, a hand width thick, and the holy of holies behind the curtain where God dwelt and the high priest only entered once a year.

Massive, unbelievable place. The stones were white as marble. And the entire east side was covered with gold so that when the sun came up you couldn't even look directly at it. It was one of the wonders of the world. Massive massive place. It was decorated with votive offerings. People would take vows and adorn the temple with beautiful endowments.

It was a marvel of human achievement. A wonder. And the disciples are from Tonopah. They're hicks. To them it's just astonishing! And Jesus has just made an astonishing statement. The house of Israel will be desolate. Abandoned by God. And they're looking across at this gleaming jewel and they're marveling at the achievement of it all.

Jesus has just pronounced final judgement against it and the religion in it and prophesied that it will become desolate. To what extent? That word desolate means an empty place. A place abandoned. A lonely place where the only sound is the wind. We understand that word better perhaps out here where we live. A true ghost town with no one at all. A truly empty place.

The disciples are looking across the ravine at this gleaming jewel that is at it's pinnacle of activity. Well over a million people have come to slaughter their animals and keep the passover which is just hours away. It looks more like a beehive than an empty desert abandoned place. How could that ever come to pass.

*5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 6 "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."*

I was trying to think of something current to compare the magnitude of the temple mount with all of its tiled pavements and its columned porches and its magnificent towering structures, and the Getty museum came to mind. Not a bad comparison.

It would be like 12 guys from Tonopah sitting a half mile away looking at the Getty, marveling at how beautiful it is and the leader says; It's coming down. That's all coming down. There won't be one stone sitting upon another stone.

How? Those stones are big as Volkswagens. We can almost imagine it desolate, but not really. Empty with the wind whistling through the columns. That's a stretch for the imagination. How would that happen? What on earth would it take for Jerusalem to be empty of life and people and for this magnificent place to be desolated. An empty ghost town?

That's difficult enough to fathom and then Jesus says Not just empty, torn down. And torn down so completely that not a single stone is left on top of any other single stone. That's unimaginable.

You know, if christianity was a made up calculated religion that depended on prophetic statements being fulfilled we would rather expect the prophecies to be on the modest side. You might prophecy little things that are going to happen anyway. Or you might do miracles that are sort of hard to prove. Like a person who has one leg that is shorter than the other and miraculously it grows even with the other. A person has a back injury that is miraculously healed. No way to prove any of it.

A football field is 1 1/3 acre. The temple area with its massive buildings and porches encompassed 26 acres. That's about 20 football fields. Not a tiny little place. And the buildings upon it were massive structures. It was a huge complex. At the time Jesus was there it had been under construction for nearly 50 years non stop.

If we're going to construct a phony religion with belief based on completed prophecies in part, maybe we should pick something smaller to make the kind

of statement Jesus just made. Not one stone upon another? That's a prophecy that his little hillbilly followers from Tonopah, I mean Galilee, can barely even imagine. It's all coming down. Not one stone upon another. A ghost town and not one stone will remain upon another.

In 70 AD the order came down from Rome to dismantle Jerusalem so that no one would believe it was ever even inhabited. 2.2 million jews were displaced or slaughtered. The temple and the entire city with it's walls was torn down. The emporer ordered 3 towers and portions of the western wall remain so that future peoples passing through would have something as a context of how grand a place it had been, before the Romans decimated it. Such was the power of Rome.

The temple with all of it's buildings was torn down stone by stone. All that remained were some of the retaining walls that created that flat 26 acre area where the temple had once been. A little portion of that retaining wall is what christians have titled, the wailing wall.

Here, the jews are allowed to gather and weep over their sacramental system that is vanished from the earth, and still is. Sacrifices ceased. The jewish records were obliterated. The jews that survived were scattered to the four winds. The area of Jerusalem became the abode of Mohammedans.

It's hard to describe the emptiness and desolation of that place that was a wonder of the world. Swept clean like the top of a rock. A religion, a people, a culture, a world force . . . all vanished. Nothing left. Within about 40 years of Jesus statement.

Such is the norm of prophecy when God states what the future will bring. The disciples were trying to imagine that complex as a ghost town, empty, desolate, and Jesus says, it's not going to just be desolate, it's going to be obliterated from the earth. And it was.

*7 And they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take*

*place?"*

We need to get inside the heads of the disciples a little bit if we can so we can understand the scope of their question. They have just heard two nearly unfathomable statements from Jesus within a short time of each other and the question that they ask is based in what Jesus has just said.

The house of Israel is going to become an empty wilderness. The temple complex is going to be utterly destroyed. The nation, gone. The religion with its sacrificial system for forgiveness of sin all contained within the temple; gone. Their minds cannot even begin to wrap around what He just said.

These men believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ. The anointed one. They have watched Him now for 3 years. He speaks and the wind and the waves obey His voice. He speaks and 20,000 people are fed with food that wasn't there minutes earlier. He speaks and people born blind can see, people who are deaf and dumb can hear and speak. He speaks and lepers are healed. He speaks and every imaginable disease is healed. He has conversations with unseen spirits, demons, who fear Him and must obey His orders.

He teaches, not like their elders or learned men, but with the authority that the author would speak about the book He wrote. He doesn't sin. Ever.

They have followed Him to Jerusalem. They have put their old lives on hold, walked away from their previous employments in order to follow Him. He's the Messiah. He's at Jerusalem. What happens next?

The Jews had a pretty complete eschatology of Messiah. They expected Messiah to ascend David's throne in a time of upheaval and conflict. We're at Jerusalem, what's next? How do we get from a little band of nobodies sitting on the slope of the mount of Olives, to a place of world dominance, at Jerusalem. That complex looks pretty good to us. But it's coming down? And Jerusalem is going to be a ghost town? How is this going to work, Jesus?

Immediately after the prophetic statement that the temple is going to come

down totally, not one stone left upon another, these questions come rapid fire. They're trying to get their minds around something unexpected and stunning to the point of surreal.

Matthew's account actually gives us the most complete dialogue of what they ask Him at this point. Matthew 24:3

*3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

The questions, there are three of them, the questions are brought on by prophetic utterances already spoken by Jesus. The house of Israel will become a waste place. The temple will be dismantled stone by stone. It's coming down. The temple and the nation are coming down.

The disciples thought Jesus was going to be God's chosen ruler at God's chosen place, beginning now. How do we get from here to there? Tell us how this is going to come down. What happens next. How do we get from nobody's from nowhere to Rulers in a palace, but the palace is coming down. Help us understand, Jesus.

At that moment in time, the church age, 2000 years of God dwelling with men of all nations not via the sacrificial system of Israel, but via the crucifixion, death and resurrection of the Son of God, wasn't a figment anywhere in their collective imaginations.

God set Israel aside. Their clock of 70 weeks of years prophecied in Daniel is stopped at the end of the 69th week, the 483rd year, when they crucified the Son of God, their own Messiah, God's dealing with Israel is shelved. It isn't over. They have 7 years left. But it was set aside, and something totally unseen unfolds.

Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, once for all, individually, inside mens hearts, is thrown open to the nations and christianity becomes the source of

the revelation of God's word to men until the canon of scripture is complete. Pinch yourselves, here we are. 2000 years later.

These men don't have a clue about any of that. They're sitting on the slope of the mount of Olives, looking at the temple complex, the representation of the greatness of Israel, wondering what's next. That's going to become a ghost town? An empty wasteland? What's next? How does this work?

We followed you here because you were going to ascend as King and we were going to rule with you. What happens now? Clearly the powers that be hate you and want you dead. How is this going to unfold?

Let's try to understand what they're asking from their perspective, and then we'll call it a day and pick it up next week. This is a fascinating section of prophecy.

*“Tell us, when will these things be,  
and what will be the sign of Your coming,  
and of the end of the age?”*

The main question is the one in the middle. What will be the sign of your coming. They aren't expecting Him to go anywhere. He's already there. The greek word here for coming is parousia. And it's the word you would use for the act of a conqueror who rides into a city he has conquered and sets up his reign.

They don't have any eschatological doctrine of the second coming of Jesus. He's right there. The question they ask is when and how are you going to take over?

When a new president is sworn in and the big ceremony happens, and all of the offices in the white house are cleaned out of the old occupiers and the new occupiers simultaneously move in and set up shop; that's a parousia

We're sort of the first people who have been successful, sort of, of doing that regime change peacefully. But in the ancient world it was never peaceful when a conquerer was finished conquering and set up his rule. It was always bloody. And Jesus didn't exactly allude to a peaceful takeover.

The nation, the house if you will, of Israel a waste place. An uninhabited waste place. The temple obliterated. That meant the Roman occupiers would have to be eliminated also. This sounds bloody. There's, like, 12 of us. We're fishermen. How exactly is this going to happen? And when?

It's the single most astonishing prophetic statement perhaps ever uttered. Did it happen?

The answer is yes, and not only just yes, it's still unfolding before our eyes 2000 years after the words were spoken.

The regime change Jesus is going to describe isn't with the chief priests and rulers of Israel along with the Romans. The regime change that Jesus is going to unfold is the conquering, and disposing of the ruler of this world, Satan, his deposing, along with all who hate and reject the King, and the setting up of the Kingdom of God, as opposed to Satan, on earth.

9 *“Pray, then, in this way:  
‘Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy name.*

10 *‘Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.* Mt. 6

That's the regime change, the parousia of Jesus. Satan and all evil will be deposed and crushed. Jesus will reign in perfect righteousness. Jesus IS Lord

That's what they're asking. They don't really understand fully their question.

Neither will they fully understand His answers. We have 2000 years of 20-20 hindsight and we won't fully understand everything Jesus will tell us in this prophecy.

But, we understand enough, from what has already become physical history exactly as He stated it, that we believe the remaining things will physically come to pass.