

## Seven Reasons to Divide the Events of the Olivet Discourse

As we discussed in a separate document, we see that Matthew 24 logically breaks the events described into two, distinct groups. While Matthew 24 does comprise one literary unit, or, rather, conversation, it becomes clear that there are two primary subjects in the single conversation. Looking further, we here present seven reasons why we should divide these groups of events within the larger discussion.

1. First, the disciples asked more than one question. Their questions were (a) “When will these things be?”, referring to the destruction of the then visible buildings, and (b) “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Understanding, then, that there were two questions is, of course, the first clue that there are two separate things in view. Unless these things are known to be the same event, or at the same time, which is not inherent in this passage or others, this of course would elicit discussion of two separate sets of events, assuming the following text supports such, which it does.
2. “Eutheos de meta”, traditionally translated as “Immediately after”, but which could clearly be rendered “Next, but after...” in Matthew 24:29 suggests a logical division of the subject matter. The word in the Greek does not imply “timing” as much as “sequence”, as it comes from the Greek word for “straight”. When we compare other Gospel usages of it to such places as John 6:21 and 3 John 1:14, we see that the word implies a time gap. Though generally translated as “immediately”, the word clearly implies sequence, not “with no time in between”.
3. The language referring the groups of events is precise. In general, whenever the present building's destruction is talked about, it is referred to with the phrase “these things”, or “all these things”. In opposition, when referring to the Second Coming events, the text uses the phrase “that day”, instead. This is especially important in the “timing texts” of Matthew 24:34&36. In v36, “that day” can only refer to the vv29-31 events, since the ones prior cannot be viewed as a “single day” happening. As such, the “these things” always refers to the near events, the destruction of the then standing temple, and the “that day”, in general, refers to the distant Second Coming.
4. All of the events up to v22, with the possible exception of the abomination, can clearly be seen to have been fulfilled historically. Note, especially, that the Gospel was already preached to the whole world, according to Paul, in Colossians 1:23. However literal you want to take the one, is the same level of literality of the other. That the Gospel was preached to the whole known world is established. Since it is clear that the first group of events, in reference to the Herod's Temple and Jerusalem have been completely fulfilled, in accordance with the “generation” of Matthew 24:34, and the Second Coming events are yet-to-be-fulfilled, we see that history also supports the proposition.
5. The contrast is laid out between the two in vv23-28. Where in the first, the location of the believer mattered, indicating flight at the sight of the abomination, so in the second, location does not matter, for, as lightning in the East is seen in the West, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. The difference in the two sets of events is illustrated through Jesus' discussion.
6. The time of the Gentiles must be between the two. Although only referenced in Luke's account, the “times of the Gentiles”, in which we are in presently, is between the 70 AD events and the Second coming events. Luke's language also gives indication that the abomination of desolation was embodied in Jerusalem being encompassed by armies. Either they were equivalent, the abomination occurred silently in history, or the abomination signifies something

we are not aware of. Being the only clear-cut example of 'dual-fulfillment' in Biblical prophecy, it is quite possible a literal substitute of a well-known, fulfilled historical prophecy, used to protect the identity of the real sign, the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies. This would explain the use of the phrase, "let the reader understand". The abomination would hardly have been unknown to any Jew of the time, and no other Old Testament reference is so qualified. It may well be that the fulfilled Old Testament type was used in place, in the text, to conceal the real warning, should the document of the written Gospel fall into the hands of an unbeliever in the decade between its writing and the fall of Jerusalem.

7. v36 specifically excludes the timing of the v29-31 events. Consider v34 and 36 together, in a possible paraphrase: "The near events, the destruction of the visible buildings, will happen in a generation, ... but that day's day and hour are unknown." That is, unknown, except that they must be "after" the 70 AD ones, hence, "eutheos" in Matthew 24:29. Apparently, this is also the construct of 2 Thessalonians 1-2, where in 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul says that the Second Coming cannot happen until certain things have happened. The 2 Thessalonians 1 Second Coming events could not have taken place at the time of Paul's writing, because the 2 Thessalonians 2 events refer to the fall of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, which had not then occurred.

So, we see, without breaking the literary unit, that the general outline of the text breaks down and demonstrates that two groups of events, as in reference to the original question, are in view. The uncertainty in the language stems from the fact that the timing of the second events, referenced only in brief in Matthew 24:29-31 and then later, from v37 onward, is completely unknown, other than being "after" the first.

Certain people, of course, have attempted to prove the 'unity' of the discourse, and attempted to disprove any argument towards the separation of events. To do this, they usually list several scriptures from Matthew 24 and then scriptures from Luke 21. The general scriptures from this argument are as follows:

1. Matthew 24:17-18 "...let him who is on the housetop not go down..."
2. Matthew 24:26-27 "For just as the lightning comes from the East..."
3. Matthew 24:28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."
4. Matthew 24:37-38 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah"
5. Matthew 24:40-41 "there shall be two men in field; one...taken, and one...left"

And, from Luke's account:

1. Luke 17:23-24 "For just as the lightning, when it flashes..."
2. Luke 17:26-27 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, ..."
3. Luke 17:31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop..."
4. Luke 17:35-36 "There will be two women ...; one will be taken, and the other will be left."
5. Luke 17:37 "...Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered."

The claim, then, is that while the order of the first is 1-2-3-4-5, the order of the second is 2-4-1-5-3. The problem, of course, is that, taking a closer look at the scriptures, all of these are only referring to the Second Coming events, and none of them look at the 70 AD ones. As already seen, Matthew 24

does go back and forth some, slightly, in its discussion of the two groups, simply for the purpose of illustration. That is, first, Jesus describes the two sets of events, and then, after this, He relates their timing. After relating both sets of events, the first in detail, and the second only in summary, and then giving the relevant timing elements for both (the original stature of the question), He then goes on to describe the Second Coming in greater detail, and from v37 onward, all of His remarks are only in reference to that day.

When studied out thus, it appears that while the Olivet Discourse is indeed one literary unit, the text contains two prominent themes, which are hard to miss one illustrated. Further, clarifying the imprecision of the translation of Matthew 24:29 to “immediately” instead of simply to “next” removes the non-textual requirement that the Second Coming happen in the same time frame as the Great Tribulation.

The important 'timing' text, also, then, divide the two, although this is often overlooked because of the intermediate v35, but the exclusion of the Second Coming from the 'genea' generation of v34 is apparent in the introduction of v36 with the word “but”.

We find, in light of these considerations, that the Olivet Discourse is indeed partially fulfilled, with a past Great Tribulation referring to the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem, and a yet-future Second Coming, where the Sun will indeed be darkened and the moon, indeed, will not give her light.

Remember, of course, that the Great Tribulation of 70 AD was as bad as it was because the siege began on Passover. Hence, much of the entire nation was trapped within the city because of the feast. Nearly 1,000,000 Jews perished in that horror. While that may not seem like it compares with modern atrocities, remember, it is not merely in sheer magnitude that the disaster came upon them, but it was in degree of suffering and proportion of the whole (percentage).

The devilish horror of WWII may have been bad, but the torments of 70 AD were, Biblically, worse. Nearly 500 people a day were crucified outside the city towards the end, with the rebellion and famine and who knows what else raging within. Likewise, while the madness of Hitler may be seen as demonic, even his gas chambers did not compare to Caesar Nero's tying of Christians to poles, lighting them on fire, and using them as streetlights, screaming and burning alive, for his dinner parties. Just thoughts to consider.

While we understand the Great Tribulation, then to be past, let us not forget that all agree that WWII did not fulfill the events of the End Times, and yet WWII came. Let us not be so naïve to forget that we have an adversary, and that this present evil age will stop at nothing to kill, steal, and destroy.

The clear admonition of Jesus regarding these things is in Mark 13:37:

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

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