

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Centrality of the Olivet Discourse to the Seventy Weeks

*And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:27)*

*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24:1-3)*

Given Jesus' reference to Gabriel's prophecy and to similar language in other passages from Daniel, specifically the "abomination of desolation" or similar terms, we cannot reasonably doubt that the Olivet Discourse is integrally related to, if not a full explanation of the seventy week prophecy.

While so many contemporary Christians embrace the rather modern (Beginning around 1830 is quite modern compared with the closing of Scriptural writings and authority near the end of the first century A. D.), I will quote extensively in this study from a leading Christian authority on Jewish history and belief, Alfred Edersheim. Clearly from these quotes and from other points made in his writings, Edersheim did not embrace the Darby view of secret rapture that dominates contemporary dispensational thinking.

In the quotes that follow Edersheim demonstrates the points I made in our last study, that Jesus' prophetic warnings in the Olivet Discourse regarding being in the field, on the roof, pregnant, or a young mother did not relate in any way to the hypothetical secret rapture of dispensationalism, but rather to the Roman siege and destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of the temple.

Clearly the disciples asked two (Edersheim's view), if not three questions in response to Jesus' description of the temple's demise. At least one question relates to the destruction of the temple. To this question Jesus gives the disciples multiple signs and detailed descriptions that would provide them with certain indications and warnings of the approaching destruction by the Romans, a warning that they were immediately to flee the whole region near Jerusalem for safe quarters many miles away.

With equal clarity, Jesus answered a second question regarding the Second Coming and His final Advent, one, not two appearances. The first event Jesus described in detail and warned the disciples that these events would occur within their lifetime; "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matthew 24:34) However, He also included in His prophetic revelation His answer to their second question regarding the Second Coming, not an event that would immediately follow the first, but would rather occur centuries later. Regarding this event, Jesus avoided any reference to signs of the event's immediacy, rather directing His followers in all future generations to remain constantly watchful, knowing that the time of His Second Coming would be a surprise, even to His own followers. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36) Notice the contrast. Certain indisputable signs of one event that would occur within the disciples' lifetime is vividly juxtaposed with another event whose timing was wholly unknown, even to the Incarnate Son, much less the disciples. Any view of the Olivet Discourse that either attempts to force all of it into a prophecy of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A. D., or to force all of it into a prophecy of the Second Coming, faces an insoluble contradiction in these two verses. The date of one event is known; the date of the other is wholly unknown.

Though not at times simple or easy to follow, Edersheim addresses these two events as being equally addressed in the Olivet Discourse, thus providing us an invaluable service in our search to understand the lesson clearly and in harmony with Jesus' teachings in it. I thus highly encourage you to read the whole of the Olivet

Discourse in all three of the gospel books where it is recorded before you read Edersheim's writings below. (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)

In silence they pursued their way. Upon the Mount of Olives they sat down, right over against the Temple. Whether or not the others had gone farther, or Christ had sat apart with these four, Peter and James and John and Andrew are named<sup>c</sup> as those who now asked Him further of what must have weighed so heavily on their hearts. It was not idle curiosity, although inquiry on such a subject, even merely for the sake of information, could scarcely have been blamed in a Jew. But it did concern them personally, for had not the Lord conjoined the desolateness of that 'House' with His own absence? He had explained the former as meaning the ruin of the City and the utter destruction of the Temple. But to His prediction of it had been added these words: 'Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.' In their view, this could only refer to His Second Coming, and to the End of the world as connected with it. This explains the twofold question which the four now addressed to Christ: 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy Coming, and of the consummation of the age?'<sup>2</sup>

Irrespective of other sayings, in which a distinction between these two events is made, we can scarcely believe that the disciples could have conjoined the desolation of the Temple with the immediate Advent of Christ and the end of the world. For, in the very saying which gave rise to their question, Christ had placed an indefinite period between the two. Between the desolation of the House and their new welcome to Him, would intervene a period of indefinite length,

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<sup>c</sup> St. Mark 13:3

<sup>2</sup> τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. *Godet* argues that the account in the Gospel of St. Matthew contains, as in other parts of that Gospel, the combined reports of addresses, delivered at different times. That may be so, but the inference of *Godet* is certainly incorrect,—that neither the question of the disciples, nor the discourse of our Lord on that occasion primarily referred to the Second Advent (the παρουσία). When that writer remarks, that only St. Matthew, but neither St. Mark nor St. Luke refer to such a question by the disciples, he must have overlooked that it is not only implied in the 'all these things' of St. Mark, and the 'these things' of St. Luke—which, surely, refer to more than one thing—but that the question of the disciples about the Advent takes up a distinctive part of what Christ had said on quitting the Temple, as reported in St. Matt. 23:39.

during which they would not see Him again. The disciples could not have overlooked this; and hence neither their question, nor yet the Discourse of our Lord, have been intended to conjoin the two. It is necessary to keep this in view when studying the words of Christ; and any different impression must be due to the exceeding compression in the language of St. Matthew, and to this, that Christ would purposely leave indefinite the interval between 'the desolation of the house' and His own Return.

Another point of considerable importance remains to be noticed. When the Lord, on quitting the Temple, said: 'Ye shall not see Me henceforth,' He must have referred to Israel in their *national* capacity—to the Jewish polity in Church and State. If so, the promise in the text of visible reappearance must also apply to the Jewish Commonwealth, to Israel in their national capacity. Accordingly, it is suggested that in the present passage Christ refers to His Advent, not from the general cosmic viewpoint of universal, but from the Jewish standpoint of Jewish history, in which the destruction of Jerusalem and the appearance of false Christs are the last events of national history, to be followed by the dreary blank and silence of the many centuries of the 'Gentile dispensation,' broken at last by the events that usher in His Coming.<sup>a1</sup>

As regards the answer of the Lord to the two questions of His disciples, it may be said that the first part of His Discourse<sup>a</sup> is intended to supply information on the two facts of the future: the destruction of the Temple, and His Second Advent and the end of the 'Age,' by setting before them the signs indicating the approach or beginning of these events. But even here the exact period of each is not defined, and the teaching given intended for purely *practical* purposes. In the second part of His Discourse<sup>b</sup> the Lord distinctly tells them, what they are *not* to know, and why; and how all that was communicated to them was only to prepare them for that constant watchfulness, which has been to the Church at all times the proper outcome of Christ's teaching on the subject. This, then, we may take as a guide in our study: that the words of Christ contain nothing beyond what was

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<sup>a</sup> St. Luke 21:24 &c.

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:432-433.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matt. 24:4-35, and parallels

<sup>b</sup> St. Matt. 24:36 to end, and parallels

necessary for the warning and teaching of the disciples and of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

1. The purely practical character of the Discourse appears from its opening words.<sup>e</sup> They contain a warning, addressed to the disciples in their individual, not in their corporate, capacity, against being 'led astray.' This, more particularly in regard to Judaic seductions leading them after false Christs. Though in the multitude of impostors, who, in the troubled times between the rule of Pilate and the destruction of Jerusalem, promised Messianic deliverance to Israel, few names and claims of this kind have been specially recorded, yet the hints in the New Testament,<sup>f</sup> and the references, however guarded, by the Jewish historian,<sup>g</sup> imply the appearance of many such seducers.<sup>3</sup>

2. From the warning to Christians as *individuals*, the Lord next turns to give admonition to the *Church* in her corporate capacity. Here we mark, that the events now described<sup>c</sup> must not be regarded as following, with strict chronological precision, those referred to in the previous verses. Rather is it intended to indicate a general *nexus* with them, so that these events begin partly before, partly during, and partly after, those formerly predicted. They form, in fact, the continuation of the 'birth-woes.' This appears even from the language used. Thus, while St. Matthew writes: 'Then' (τότε, at that time) 'shall they deliver you up,' St. Luke places the persecutions 'before all these things';<sup>a</sup> while St. Mark, who reports this part of the Discourse most fully, omits every note of time, and only emphasises the admonition which the fact conveys.<sup>b</sup> As regards the admonition itself, expressed in this part of the Lord's Discourse,<sup>c</sup> we notice that, as formerly to individuals, so now to the Church two sources of danger are pointed out: *internal*, from heresies ('false prophets') and the decay of faith,<sup>d</sup> and *external*, from persecutions, whether Judaic and from their own

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:445-446.

<sup>e</sup> ver. 4

<sup>f</sup> Acts 5:36; 8:9; 21:38

<sup>g</sup> War 2. 13. 4, 5; Ant. 20. 5. 1; 8. 10

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:446.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matt. 24:9-14, and parallels

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke 21:12

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark 13:9

<sup>c</sup> St. Matt. 24:9-14, and parallels

<sup>d</sup> St. Matt. 24:10-13

kindred, or from the secular powers throughout the world. But, along with these two dangers, two consoling facts are also pointed out.<sup>4</sup>

3. From these general predictions, the Lord proceeds, in the third part of this Discourse,<sup>f</sup> to advertise the Disciples of the great historic fact immediately before them, and of the dangers which might spring from it. In truth, we have here His answer to their question, 'When shall these things be?'<sup>9</sup> not, indeed, as regards the *when*, but the *what* of them. And with this He conjoins the present application of His general warning regarding false Christs, given in the first part of this Discourse.<sup>h</sup> The fact of which He now, in this third part of His Discourse, advertises them, is the destruction of Jerusalem. Its twofold dangers would be—outwardly, the difficulties and perils which at that time would necessarily beset men, and especially the members of the infant-Church; and, religiously, the pretensions and claims of false Christs or prophets at a period when all Jewish thinking and expectancy would lead men to anticipate the near Advent of the Messiah. There can be no question, that from both these dangers the warning of the Lord delivered the Church. As directed by Him, the members of the Christian Church fled at an early period of the siege<sup>1</sup> of Jerusalem to Pella, while the words in which He had told that His Coming would not be in secret, but with the brightness of that lightning which shot across the sky, prevented not only their being deceived, but perhaps even the record, if not the rise of many who otherwise would have deceived them.<sup>5</sup>

4. <sup>d</sup>The Age of the Gentiles, 'the end of the Age,' and with it the new allegiance of His now penitent people Israel; 'the sign of the Son of Man in heaven,' perceived by them; the conversion of all the world, the Coming of Christ, the last Trumpet, the Resurrection of the dead—such, in most rapid sketch, is the outline which

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:447-448.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matt. 24:15-28, and parallels; note especially the language of St. Luke

<sup>9</sup> St. Matt. 24:3

<sup>h</sup> vv. 4, 5

<sup>1</sup> So *Eusebius* (Hist. Eccl. 3. 5) relates that the Christians of Judæa fled to Pella, on the northern boundary of Peræa, in 68 A.D. Comp. also *Jos. War* 4. 9. 1 5. 10. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:448-449.

<sup>d</sup> vv. 29-31

the Lord draws of His Coming and the End of the world.

It will be remembered that this had been the second question of the disciples.<sup>e</sup> We again recall, that the disciples did not, indeed, could not have connected, as immediately subsequent events, the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming, since He had expressly placed between them the period—apparently protracted—of His Absence,<sup>f</sup> with the many events that were to happen in it—notably, the preaching of the Gospel over the whole inhabited earth.<sup>g</sup> Hitherto the Lord had, in His Discourse, dwelt in detail only on those events which would be fulfilled before this generation should pass.<sup>h</sup> It had been for admonition and warning that He had spoken, not for the gratification of curiosity. It had been prediction of the immediate future for practical purposes, with such dim and general indication of the more distant future of the Church as was absolutely necessary to mark her position in the world as one of persecution, with promise, however, of His Presence and Help; with indication also of her work in the world, to its *terminus ad quem*—the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations on earth.<sup>6</sup>

5. From this rapid outline of the future the Lord once more turned to make present application to the disciples; nay, application, also, to all times. From the fig-tree, under which, on that spring-afternoon, they may have rested on the Mount of Olives, they were to learn a 'parable.'<sup>e</sup> We can picture Christ taking one of its twigs, just as its softening tips were bursting into young leaf. Surely, this meant that summer was nigh—not that it had actually come. The distinction is important. For, it seems to prove that 'all these things,' which were to indicate to them that it<sup>1</sup> was near, even at the doors, and which were to be fulfilled ere this generation had passed away, could not have referred to the last signs connected with the immediate Advent of

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<sup>e</sup> St. Matt. 24:3

<sup>f</sup> 23:38, 39

<sup>g</sup> 24:14

<sup>h</sup> ver. 34

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:449-450.

<sup>e</sup> vv. 32, 33

<sup>1</sup> Not as in the R.V. 'He.' It can scarcely be supposed that Christ would speak of Himself in the third person. The subject is evidently 'the summer' (not as Meyer would render  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\varsigma$  = 'harvest'). In St. Luke 21:31 it is paraphrased 'the Kingdom of God.'

Christ,<sup>f</sup> but must apply to the previous prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish Commonwealth. At the same time we again admit, that the language of the Synoptists seems to indicate, that they had not clearly understood the words of the Lord which they reported, and that in their own minds they had associated the 'last signs' and the Advent of Christ with the fall of the City. Thus may they have come to expect that Blessed Advent even in their own days.<sup>7</sup>

It is at least a question, whether the Lord, while distinctly indicating these facts, had intended to remove the doubt and uncertainty of their succession from the minds of His disciples. To have done so would have necessitated that which, in the opening sentence of the Second Division of this Discourse,<sup>a</sup> He had expressly declared to lie beyond their ken. The 'when'—the day and the hour of His Coming—was to remain hidden from men and Angels.<sup>b</sup> Nay, even the Son Himself—as they viewed Him and as He spake to them—knew it not.<sup>1</sup> It formed no part of His present Messianic Mission, nor subject for His Messianic Teaching. ***Had it done so, all the teaching that follows concerning the need of constant watchfulness, and the pressing duty of working for Christ in faith, hope, and love—with purity, self-denial, and endurance—would have been lost. The peculiar attitude of the Church: with loins girt for work, since the time was short, and the Lord might come at any moment; with her hands busy; her mind faithful; her bearing self-denying and devoted; her heart full of loving expectancy; her face upturned towards the Sun that was so soon to rise; and her ear straining to catch the first notes of heaven's song of triumph—all this would have been lost!***<sup>8</sup> What has sustained the Church during the night of sorrow these many centuries; what has nerved her with courage for the battle, with steadfastness to bear,

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<sup>f</sup> vv. 29–31

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:450.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matt. 24:36 to end

<sup>b</sup> St. Matt. 24:36

<sup>1</sup> The expression does not, of course, refer to Christ in His Divinity, but to the Christ, such as they saw Him, in His Messianic capacity and office

<sup>8</sup> Holder: I put these words in bold type. They emphasize the beauty and ageless value of watching, waiting, and eagerly expecting the Lord's final and glorious return. May we never stop straining our ears for "...the first notes of heaven's song of triumph."

with love to work, with patience and joy in disappointments—would all have been lost! The Church would not have been that of the New Testament, had she known the mystery of that day and hour, and not ever waited as for the immediate Coming of her Lord and Bridegroom.

And what the Church of the New Testament has been, and is, that her Lord and Master made her, and by no agency more effectually than by leaving undetermined the precise time of His Return. To the world this would indeed become the occasion for utter carelessness and practical disbelief of the coming Judgment.<sup>c</sup> As in the days of Noah the long delay of threatened judgment had led to absorption in the ordinary engagements of life, to the entire disbelief of what Noah had preached, so would it be in the future. But that day would come certainly and unexpectedly, to the sudden separation of those who were engaged in the same daily business of life, of whom one might be taken up (παραλαμβάνεται, 'received'), the other left to the destruction of the coming Judgment.<sup>d9</sup>

But this very mixture of the Church with the world in the ordinary avocations of life indicated a great danger. As in all such, the remedy which the Lord would set before us is not negative in the avoidance of certain things, but positive.<sup>a</sup> We shall best succeed, not by going out of the world, but by being watchful in it, and keeping fresh on our hearts, as well as on our minds, the fact that He is our Lord, and that we are, and always most lovingly, to look and long for His Return. Otherwise twofold damage might come to us. Not expecting the arrival of the Lord in the night-time (which is the most unlikely for His Coming), we might go to sleep, and the Enemy, taking advantage of it, rob us of our peculiar treasure.<sup>b</sup> Thus the Church, not expecting her Lord, might become as poor as the world. This would be loss. But there might be even worse. According to the Master's appointment, each one had, during Christ's absence, his work for Him, and the reward of grace, or else the punishment of neglect, were in assured prospect. The faithful steward, to whom the Master had entrusted the care of His household, to supply His servants with what was needful for their support and work, would, if found faithful, be rewarded by advancement to far larger and more responsible

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<sup>c</sup> vv. 37–40

<sup>d</sup> vv. 40, 41

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:450-451.

<sup>a</sup> vv. 42–51

<sup>b</sup> St. Matt. 24:43, 44

work. On the other hand, belief in the delay of the Lord's Return would lead to neglect of the Master's work, to unfaithfulness, tyranny, self-indulgence, and sin.<sup>c</sup> And when the Lord suddenly came, as certainly He would come, there would be not only loss, but damage, hurt, and the punishment awarded to the hypocrites. Hence, let the Church be ever on her watch,<sup>d</sup> let her ever be in readiness!<sup>e10</sup>

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
16434 Woodruff  
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor

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<sup>c</sup> ver. 45, end

<sup>d</sup> ver. 42

<sup>e</sup> ver. 44

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1896, 2003), 2:451-452.