

12 OLIVET DISCOURSE FULFILLED IN THE FIRST CENTURY MT. 24—PART 1

INTRODUCTION: When Jesus announced the temple would be destroyed, the disciples would likely have known instantly, from Daniel 9, that He was referring to the definitive judgment on Israel i.e. national judgment in the form of war, which would end the Mosaic Age. Their questions pertained to “the sign” and the timing. The sign would be that which makes the tribes mourn (vs. 30), that is, devastation, and the timing was “that generation” (vs. 34) which turned out to be AD 67-70. Jesus also gave the disciples other indicators leading up to that ultimate sign.

1. “For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will lead many astray.” Mt. 24:5

- A) Shortly after the ascension of Jesus, Dositheus, the Samaritan, arose claiming to be the Messianic prophet that Moses prophesied in Dt. 18:15.
- B) Simon the magician (Acts 8:9f), a religious figure with high ambitions, deluded multitudes that he was the “great power of God.” (Acts 8:10)
- C) In AD 44-46, Theudas led a great multitude, laden with their belongings, to the Jordan assuring them the river would divide at his command. The Romans cut off his head. (This is not Theudas referred to in Acts 5)
- D) In AD 55, one known as “the Egyptian”, led 30,000 followers into the wilderness and to the Mt of Olives promising the walls of Jerusalem would fall down at his command as a prelude to capturing the occupying Roman garrison. The crowd was dispersed by the Romans with many killed. (Wars 2:13:5)
- E) Around AD 60, during Festus’ procuratorship, an imposter arose leading people into the wilderness (presumably Moses-like) promising deliverance from the Roman yoke. Roman procurators were always suspicious of these movements (there were many) and they were met with swift dispersion/decimation.

2. “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you aren’t troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet.” Mt. 24:6-7

- A) In AD 39-41, the entire Jewish nation was thrown into upheaval when Roman legions arrived in Palestine to erect a statue of Emperor Caligula in the Jerusalem temple under threat of war. Foot dragging by a sympathetic Roman official and Caligula’s sudden death averted war.
- B) During the procuratorship of Cumanus (AD 48-52) a Roman soldier’s public mockery during a Jewish feast day, ended in 10,000 Jews being trampled and killed. (Wars 2:12:1)
- C) About AD 54, war broke out between the Jews and Samaritans over a Galilean murdered on his way to the Passover Feast, ravaging Samaritan lands. (Wars 2:12:3)
- D) The Jews and Syrians living in Caesarea had a history of contention over governance. In AD 66, War broke out resulting in 20,000 Jewish dead. (Wars 2:18:1)
- E) That same year, the cities where Jews were a majority, militia groups formed to exterminate the non-Jewish population. (Wars 2:18)
- F) That same year, the Jewish retaliation ignited anti-Jewish sentiment all over the eastern Roman Empire resulting in slaughter of Jews in Damascus, Tyre, Ascalon, Gadara, Scythopolis. In Alexandria alone, 50,000 Jews perished. (Wars 2:18)
- G) The perverted excesses of Emperor Nero caused a condition of general lawlessness in Israel lands.
- H) The Roman Empire was wracked with civil war and was near collapse in the year of the four emperors AD 68-69. Four emperors (Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius) died violent deaths in the space of 18 months.

3. “There will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places.” Mt. 24:7

- A) The New Testament reports: In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus ... foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Roman Emperor Claudius). Acts 11:28.
- B) Historian Orosius reported a great famine in Syria AD 46-47.
- C) There was a severe earthquake in Rome during Claudius’s reign.
- D) A severe earthquake in Apamea, Syria permitted residents to not pay taxes for five years.
- E) Hieropolis, Colossae and Laodicea were “overthrown” by an earthquake.

4. “Then they will deliver you up to oppression, and will kill you.” Mt. 24:9

- A) “Summoning the apostles, they beat them and commanded them not to speak...” Acts 5:40
- B) “They stoned Stephen as he called out, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”” Acts 7:59-60

- C) Saul, before his conversion, "made havock of the church, entering in from house to house, and dragging away men and women, committing them to prison." Acts 8:3.
- D) After his conversion, the Jews conspired to kill Saul. "They watched the gates also day and night, that they might kill him." Acts 9:23
- E) "King Herod reached out to harm some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword." Acts 12:1-2
- F) "When Herod saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also...When he had arrested him, he put him in prison... intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover." Acts 12:3-4
- G) "When some of both the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers, made a violent attempt to mistreat and stone them, they [Paul and Barnabas] became aware of it, and fled..." Acts 14:5-6
- H) The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. They were imprisoned and put in stocks. Acts 16:22-24
- I) Not an exhaustive list.

5. "Then many will stumble, and will deliver up one another, and will hate one another." Mt. 24:10

- A) Paul warned: "Now I beg you, brothers, look out for those who are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and turn away from them." Rom 16:17
- B) NT writers spoke frequently of "falling away" due to persecution. Heb. 3:12, Jude 1:24, 2 Pt. 3:11, Jn.16:1
- C) Being "put out of the synagogue" had dire consequences for work, income, family, community. For example, parents of the man born blind whom Jesus healed were afraid of the Jews. "the Jews had already agreed that if any man would confess him as Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue." Jn. 9:22 Many of the Jewish leaders believed in Jesus, "but because of the Pharisees they didn't confess it, so that they wouldn't be put out of the synagogue." Jn. 12:42
- D) Josephus reports: "There were...disorders and civil wars in every city; and all those that were at quiet from the Romans turned their hands one against another....Those people that were the dearest to one another, brake through all restraints with regard to each other, and everyone associated with those of his own opinion and began already to stand in opposition one to another." (Wars 4:3:2)

6. "Many false prophets will arise, and will lead many astray." Mt 24:11

- A) "Many false prophets have gone out into the world...the spirit of antichrist." I John 4:1-3
- B) In the NT we see Judaizers trying to persuade Christians to follow Jewish traditions. Gal 2:14.
- C) We see disciples having to contend against those who advocated pagan practices of food offerings and temple prostitution. 1 Cor. 6. This heresy persisted and was connected with the Nicolaitans in Rev. 2:6.

7. "This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations." Mt 24:14

Paul confirmed that the gospel had been preached in all the world as of the writing to Colossians AD 62.

- A) "The gospel... has come to you even as it is in all the world and is bearing fruit and growing." Col. 1:5-6
- B) "Gospel...which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." Col. 1:23
- C) "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Romans 1:8

8. "So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination of desolation, as described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..." Mt. 24:15-16

THEORY: The abomination of desolation may refer to the abrogation of the law of Moses by the governor of the temple to actively exclude Gentiles from Yahweh worship (see #20 "The Man of Sin"). Simultaneously, temple priests were engaging in war preparations. These travesties would likely have signaled for Christians to exit Judea. The following passage from Luke calls for the same action. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..." Luke 21:20. From history we learn Cestius Gallus surrounded Jerusalem in a pre-war attempt to quell the Jewish uprising in AD 66, but mysteriously withdrew days later for no apparent reason, allowing people to leave the city. It appears these are two different signals to evoke the same behavior from believers in Jesus. The abomination regarding the sacrificial system took place Aug/Sept 66 and the surrounding of Jerusalem in Oct/Nov 66. Regardless of the theory, Jesus was warning in both passages of the coming national judgment and for Christians to leave Jewish territory to escape the coming destruction.