

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Prophecy Come Alive part 1 of 4

Thy Kingdom Postponed

Lesson 44 Matthew 23:34 – 24:2

The Olivet Discourse Message of Jesus recorded in Matthew 23:37- 25:46 is the foundation stone of end times prophetic study. It has historically been the dividing line of eschatology – the study of end times because of preconceived theological biases. It was controversial when He spoke it to the leadership who rejected that He was the royal heir to the throne of David as Messiah King. It has become even more controversial among believers but now for a different reason. The debate moved on from what He meant to when He will return. Jesus spoke these words after exiting the Temple platform following a dramatic challenge to His authenticity and authority from the elders of Israel i.e. . . . the Sanhedrin. Chapter 23 contains Jesus' sharpest words yet toward their unrighteous rebellious stance. He pronounced seven woes upon them. We will examine His final indictments before we turn the page to His predictions. But before we can interpret His message we must address the mess made of the Olivet Discourse. There are two main views from two different systems of interpretation and numerous views across the spectrum of eschatology – end-time prophecy. The two main views are interpreted as dispensational futurism with distinct programs and peoples: Israel and the Church. The other main school of thought is Covenant/ Reformed/Renewal/Theologies which see one people of God in which the unconditional Covenants given to Israel were forfeited by Israel and/or fulfilled in the Church which has superseded and replaced Israel. The manner of interpretation is allegorical/symbolic. From that loose interpretive principle comes Preterism, a belief that New Testament prophecies of end times were already fulfilled not futuristic.

Futurism is the system of eschatology that understands the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation as future events specifically the second coming of Christ are yet to be fulfilled. *Preterism* is the system of eschatology (end times prophecy) that believes that the events in the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation have been fulfilled in the past. Because the tragic destruction foretold by Jesus happened in 70 AD a “preterist” (past view) of eschatology sees all of the prophecies in Matthew 24 – 25 and the Book of Revelation fulfilled in the first century. That system of Hermeneutics or interpretation known as Covenant/Reformed Theology is allegorical/symbolic rather than literal and holds that the four unconditional covenants that God made with Israel were actually made with the universal people of God who were temporarily called Israel. Now they are believed to be the sole possession of the Church which superseded Israel. This ideology holds that the promises and provisions that were made with Israel are fulfilled by and benefit the Church and are no longer an option for national ethnic Israel. It follows that those who interpret scripture allegorically see all Israel terminology as meaning the Church in this sermon. They first have to assume that God is finished with Israel and that they never were the chosen people and the Church is the new form of Israel, “new people of God” in this era. So, to them when Christ does return it is merely to expand the Church from its current status to a worldwide realm. They hold that national Israel is only a remnant of believing Jews absorbed into the church and losing their distinctiveness but not an ethnic nation with a literal land. What is the problem with these assumptions? Where do I begin? The people physically descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who was renamed Israel were given four unconditional and eternal covenants.

1. **Abrahamic** (Gen. 15:1-6; 17:7-21; I Chron. 16:16-17; Ps. 105:8-10) “everlasting”
2. **Land** (Gen. 15:18) The deed of the land is eternal. The possession is conditional.
In 1948 God began regathering them in unbelief into the Covenant Land that they might be purged through sorrow to repentance, and receive Jesus the Messiah by faith. (Zech. 13:8,9)
3. **Davidic** – royal dynasty (II Sam. 7:2-15; 23:5; Isa. 53:5) (II Sam. 7:12,16) “everlasting” Jesus as emphasized in Matthew’s Gospel, verified and offered himself and was hailed as Son of David by the multitudes. (Matt. 1:1; 22:41-45; 26:64; 27:11; John 12:13; Matt.27:37) **Jesus will reign both as David’s son and His Lord** (Matt. 22:41-46; Ps. 110:1; Jer. 23:5,6)

4. New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Isa. 24:5, 68:8; Ezek. 16:60; Ezek. 37:26; Isa.55:3; 61:8; Jer. 32:40) “everlasting”
- Made with Israel and Judah (Rom. 9:4) As sure as the sun and moon. (Jer. 31:36,37) not with Gentiles “aliens... strangers from the covenants” (Eph. 2:11, 12)
 - We along with believing Jews enjoy the benefit from Israel’s New Covenant by faith in Jesus and are adopted into the family of God. We are grafted in. (Rom. 11:17, Eph. 1:5)
 - The surviving remnant of Jews (surviving 1/3) constitute a nation that will receive Jesus the Messiah at the end of the Tribulation period. (Matthew 21:43; Rom. 11:25-27; Zech. 12:10; 13:1-9; 14:3)
 - It has been initiated by the blood of Christ and will be ratified by the Nation of Israel through faith as the unconditional Everlasting, New Covenant. (Heb. 8:6-13; 13:20)

God is immutable, He changes not, therefore He cannot rescind His covenants with Israel based on their failure to live up to them. If He can rescind the covenants with Israel then He can rescind our salvation under the New Covenant when we fail to live up to it. Each of the unconditional covenants includes accountability and consequences in this life for disobedience without changing the eternal outcome. The land was theirs even at times when they had no benefit from it while suffering the consequences of being removed from it for disobedience.

Kevin Zuber in his article *Supersessionism Rising*, part 2 summarized Covenant/Replacement theologies, “they assert that the purpose of the election of Israel was for the creation of the Church! This, of course, is a denial of God’s purposes for the ethnic descendants of Abraham and of a future for the nation of Israel. Their statement also asserted, ‘It is vital that we strongly affirm, therefore, that while there are multiple ethnicities within the one church by God’s clear intention, no single ethnic group holds privileged place in God’s economy of salvation or God’s eschatological purpose.’ And just in case the theological and practical thrust of that assertion was not clear enough the paragraph concluded, ‘For this reason, we strongly believe that the separate and privileged place given to Jewish people today or to the modern Israeli state in certain forms of dispensationalism or Christian Zionism, should be challenged, in as much as they deny the essential oneness of the people of God in Christ.’ Many readers of this publication will recognize immediately that in this statement is a fairly obvious assertion of covenant theology, and an affirmation of supersessionism, or replacement theology. That is, the theology that denies that God has a future program for the nation of Israel and denies that the promises God has made to the ethnic descendants of Abraham - the Jewish people - will be kept fully and literally.”¹

The camp of theology to which we ascribe is Dispensational with a literalist interpretation of scripture and futuristic regarding eschatology – end times. We see Israel under an unconditional covenant relationship with God. Believing gentiles benefit from the blessings of the New Covenant through faith in Jesus’ blood, burial, and resurrection. By faith we are blessed with the benefits extended to “all the families of the earth” from the Abrahamic Covenant but we are not a party in that covenant. When it comes to eschatology, we interpret Matthew 24,25 literally, futuristically, in context relating to Israel during the Tribulation. The Rapture of the Church happens before the tribulation and the second coming of Christ to physically deliver and redeem Israel happens at the end of the tribulation. In other words, the interpretations of the Olivet Discourse intended to be a simple clear message to Israel have become an eschatological mess because of a wrong theology about Israel being replaced by the church.

A Jewish Awareness of the context of the prophetic terminology of Jesus demands a literal dispensational futurist interpretation of scripture. Again, I refer the reader to lessons 1-5 in this series for an understanding of “kingdom” terminology. In short, this final sermon is the culmination of Jesus’ entire theology of a literal coming kingdom that all of the Jewish prophets foretold. He offered it. It was rejected. It was postponed. He gives specific signs preceding His return to establish it. We will reference the prophecies of Daniel to interpret Jesus’ teaching. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)” (Matthew 24:15).

Final Indictments (23:30-36)

(23:34) Following His seven woes to the Jerusalem elites, Jesus prophesied that they would “fill up the measure” of their fathers who killed the prophets by persecuting and killing His followers. This description of their spiritual rebellion is reminiscent of the message of the prophet Jeremiah to Israel just before Jerusalem was destroyed the first time by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon in 586 BC (2 Chronicles 36:14-16).

(23:34) Jesus predicted, the persecution of His disciples by the leaders. This began soon after His resurrection and ascension recorded in (Acts 4: 5;7:54-58; 8:1-9:1, 24; 12:1-5; 14:2-5,19). It was an attempt to stamp out this Jewish sect known as the “followers of the Way” (Acts 9:2) ie: Jesus “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). The rejection by Rabbis and ostracization of Jewish believers in Jesus from their Synagogues began as a threat before Jesus’ crucifixion and actualized in The Acts of The Apostles (Acts 22:19; 26:11; John 12:42; Act 4:16,17).

The derogatory term “Christian” would not be used until 45 AD (Acts 11:26). Not until 381 AD were Jews and Gentiles severed from worship in the same faith assemblies at the council of Nicaea. Ultimately decades later in Constantinople, an edict officially severed Jews who believed in Jesus from fellowship with Gentiles who believed in Jesus.ⁱⁱ Before this, no one had the power to tell a Jew that he was not a Christ follower nor to tell a Gentile Christian that he could not attend a synagogue or keep Passover or Sabbath.ⁱⁱⁱ The apostle Paul began most of his churches in Synagogues (Acts 13,14,17,18,19). Fourth-century Church Fathers Eusebius of Caesarea and Epiphanius of Salamis claimed that as many as 50,000 Jewish believers fled to Pella east of the Jordan River before Jerusalem was besieged by Romans in 70 AD.^{iv} The Jewish leaders held this against Jesus’ followers as a non-patriotic abandonment.

Final Sentence upon the Religious Elite

(23:36) “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”

“In what sense could Israel be held responsible for the murder of Abel...” Alva J McClain in *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, answers the question. “Men make the guilt of past ages their own, reproduce it’s atrocities, identify themselves with it; ... so visiting ‘upon the children the sins of the fathers’, becomes in such cases a righteous judgment... but there is, I feel, a still more specific connection between crimes, such as the murder of Abel, and the responsibility of the generation which rejected the Messianic king. For the establishment of his kingdom on earth would, according to Old Testament prophecy, put an end to all such crimes...” “There shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain says the Lord” (Isaiah 65:25). Viewed from the standpoint of Israel’s sin of rejecting the Messianic King becomes... a gigantic crime... which Christ is now charging against the ‘generation’ which rejected His rule.”^v This was not pronounced as a curse upon all “The Jews.” Later church leaders misinterpreted it as a license to revenge the blood of Jesus on all Jewish people. This became the rationale for a “deicide” libel; ie...Jews killed God.

(23:35) There is much debate over “son of Baruch” which does not appear in Luke 11:51 neither matches [2 Chronicles 24:20-22] “which says Zachariah the son of Jehoiada.” The discrepancy is the assumption that this same person cannot have a different father. Is Zacharias the son of Baruch or Jehoiada? Is Matthew referring to a different Zechariah? The Jewish historian Josephus mentions “Zacharias, the son of Baruch” in his *Wars of the Jews*.^{vi} “Zacharias, the son of Baruch, one of the most eminent of the citizens, slain...so two of the boldest of them fell upon Zacharias in the middle of the temple, and slew him.” The problem with the second option of the extra-Biblical figure recorded by Josephus is that he was killed about 35 years after Jesus’ crucifixion. John Lightfoot holds that Jesus is referring to Isaiah 8:2 ‘And I shall take faithful witnesses to witness for Me, Uriah the priest, and

Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.^{vii} Coincidentally, in the Septuagint this is the same name as the Zechariah in Matt. 23:35.^{vii} However there is no record of this Zechariah being killed in the Temple the absence of which does not exclude him. “Zechariah son of Berekiah is explicitly mentioned in the OT as the prophet in Zechariah 1:1. ‘the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah.’ This second Zechariah lived after the exile when the temple was being rebuilt.” The absence of details of his death being unknown does not exclude him. The blood guilt Jesus assigned was for the murder of one Zacharias in the Temple known to the first-century Jewish leaders. There are four main options for interpretation for a Zechariah who was slain in the Temple. 1. Higher textual critics seize upon the inexplicable inconsistency between Matthew’s account and 2 Chronicles to argue against the reliability of the scriptures. 2. An extra-biblical figure in “**son of Baruch**” who according to Josephus lived in the 400 “silent years” between the Old and New Testament periods. 3. the one mentioned in Isaiah 8:2 “son of Jeberechiah” 4. Lastly “son of Berechiah” Zechariah 1:1. ^{viii} It is important to note that the 2nd Book of Chronicles is the last book in the Jewish canon called the Tanakh (Old Testament). The point of Matthew is that all of the innocent blood that was shed from before recorded scripture starting with the first murder all the way to His time period would be laid at the foot of the generation who rejected Jesus the one sent to redeem mankind from the penalty that began in Eden. He is the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:21,22).

Tragically one million Judeans were slaughtered by the Romans in 70 AD in Judea. Mathew’s chapters 24-25 tell of the victorious return of the King to physically deliver and spiritually redeem Israel and crush Satan and the Gentile powers aligned against Israel. The disciples were asking how and when He would return.

(23:37 - 24:2) A prelude to The Olivet Discourse sermon. After His pronouncement of the spiritual fate of the first-century Jewish leadership of Jerusalem, Jesus predicts the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple in their lifetime. The Apostles who could still not conceive of His crucifixion just days away, were beginning to understand that the Kingdom would not happen immediately.

Understanding the immediate context of this discourse is essential. It is Jesus’ answer to a question by His Jewish disciples about when He would return to earth as Messiah King to establish Israel’s promised Kingdom. (24:3) After walking through the vast 37-acre complex which was nearing the final phases of King Herod’s reconstruction that had taken four decades, they came to Jesus with their exuberant observations of its marvelous buildings. “as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts” (Luke 21:5). (Matthew 23:35- 39). Their question was prompted by a disturbing statement Jesus made on the Temple compound. They waited until they crossed the Kidron Valley and ascended up the Mount of Olives before they dared to ask what He meant. With this concise statement He snapped them back to the sad spiritual reality; “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.”

What in the world ... actually; What in the **end of the world** could He be talking about?

“What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?”

What is the end of the world? Is it literally the earth burning up or vanishing?

There is such an end (2 Peter 3:9-13) but that is not found in the following description. Jesus says the events He is describing is just the beginning of the end times. (24:6) The word “world” is (Greek αἰών αἰὼν -properly an *age*, end of the age). It had to include the age in which they were living up until Jesus returns.

What age? The “times of the Gentiles dominating Israel. (Luke 22:24) “Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” The Times of the Gentiles as prophesied in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 started with Israel’s Babylonian Captivity in 586 BC and lasts until Jesus returns to earth after The Tribulation to destroy the

gentile world powers that are gathered against Israel. They asked two questions. His answer takes two chapters.

A. When shall these things be?

B. What shall be the sign of thy coming, of the end of the world?

*Among all the catastrophic cosmic events, (24:4-28), pay close attention to the references to deception.

“Let no man deceive you...” (24:4)

How will people in the end times know the truth when mass deception will be the norm?

Knowledge of the Scriptures and the Savior by the leading of His Spirit will be essential.

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:42-44

Are you deceived? Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life. He said “no man comes to the Father but by me.”

Do you know Him? If not and you are one of the small minority of earth’s population that miraculously survives until the “end of the world,” it’s not going to be good.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:9-13)

The last sentence in Jesus’ last sermon before He died on the cross for your sins was “these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46). Your eternity depends on you coming in repentance to Jesus and placing your faith/trust in Him to save your soul from sin and the eternal penalty. Faith in Him as your Savior means you have His gift of life eternal.

ⁱ <https://sharperiron.org/article/supersessionism-rising-dispensationalism-part-2>

ⁱⁱ The Jewish Gospels, Daniel Boyarin, New Press, NY, NY. 2012, p 2

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. p 14

^{iv} Flight to Pella - Wikipedia

^v The Greatness of the Kingdom, Alva J. McClain, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1948, p 359

^{vi} Josephus, Flavius. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Trans. Whiston, William. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987.

^{vii} Lightfoot, John. *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae (Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations)*. Trans. Gandell, Robert. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1859.

^{viii} <https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/36360/in-matthew-2335-who-was-zacharias-son-of-barachias>