

The Olivet Discourse

What is the Olivet Discourse

- Jesus' (private) teaching in response to questions asked by the inner circle of his disciples (Peter, Andrew, James and John) following His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
- Takes place on the Mount of Olives
- 2 days before, Christ had entered Jerusalem on a donkey; 2 days later, the Last Supper took place
- Matthew 24,25; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36
- **The trigger:** Matthew 24:2 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.
- **The questions:** Matthew 24:3 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?**

Outline

1. Prelude parables
2. Prophecy
3. Prophecy-related Parables

1. Prelude to the Olivet Discourse

What did Jesus do after entering Jerusalem?

- Threw out the traders in the temple
 - ¹³ And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. Matthew 21:13
- Performed healing
 - ¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. Matthew 21:14
- Cursed a fig tree on the way to Bethany
- Debated with the Jewish religious leaders

The opposition of the religious leaders

Chief priests, Pharisees, Herodians, Saducees

- ¹⁵ And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, ¹⁶ And said unto him, **Hearst thou what these say?** And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? (21:15-16)
- ²³ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?** (21:23)
- ⁴⁵ And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. ⁴⁶ But when they **sought to lay hands on him**, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet. (21:45-46)
 - ¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for **they feared him**, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. Mark 11:18
 - ⁴⁸ If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. John 11:48
 - ¹⁸ For he (Pilate) knew that for **envy** they had delivered him. Matthew 27:18

What had Christ been teaching all this while (as recorded in Matthew)?

- **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** (4:17)
- What citizenship in the kingdom of heaven is like (Mat 5-7); The kingdom of heaven is like (Mat 13)
- But that ye may know that the **Son of man** hath power on earth to forgive sins, ... (9:6)
- They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. ¹³ But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for **I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** (9:12-13)
- ²⁸ **Come unto me**, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (11:28-30)
- For the **Son of man** is Lord even of the sabbath day. (12:8)
- For whosoever shall do **the will of my Father** which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (12:50)
- Except **ye be converted**, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (18:3)
- **For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.** (18:11)
- And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall **inherit everlasting life.** (19:29)
- ³⁷ -- Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt **love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt **love thy neighbour** as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (22:37-40)

Three parables told by Christ before the Olivet Discourse

Matthew 21-22

Why did Christ tell these parables?

- **Trigger**

- ²³ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?**
Matthew 21:23

The parable of the 2 sons (Mat 21:28-32)

- Initial rebellion followed by repentance and obedience
 - ⁵⁰ For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. Matthew 12:50
- Superficial obedience and religiosity that masks the lack of repentance
 - ⁸ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Matthew 15:8-9
 - ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Timothy 3:5
- Relationship with what Christ taught before
 - **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** (4:17)
 - They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. ¹³ But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for **I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** (9:12-13)

The parable of the wicked husbandmen /vinedressers /tenants (Mat 21:33-44; Mar 12:1-12; Luk 20:9-19)

- Referencing Isa 5:1-7
- Repeated calls to repentance and return to God – many servants (prophets)
- Final call – the son (Christ)
- Rejection of all the past warnings and finally of the Son brings judgment
- Addressed primarily to the Jewish religious leaders
- Relationship with what Christ taught elsewhere:
 - **Matthew 23** for fuller reading of what Jesus condemns the Jewish religious leaders for
 - ⁸ For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. (12:8)
 - ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (12:24) ³¹ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. (12:31)
 - ⁷ Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, ⁸ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (15:7-9)
 - ¹⁴ Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. (15:14)

The parable of the wedding feast

- A symbol of the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God)
- Rejection of that kingdom by the original invitees – Israel
 - Including mistreating and murdering God’s servants, the prophets
 - Resulting in their punishment, the destruction of the nation (the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD70)
- Invitation extended to everyone (not just Israel) i.e. the Gentiles
- But a wedding garment (Christ’s righteousness, true faith) is required – it is offered!
 - And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: Phil 3:9
 - the inadequacy of self-righteousness
 - We can only come to the wedding when we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 - We can only rely on God’s provision of salvation, not on our own good works or religious service.

What do these parables teach us?

- Common themes in these parables
 - What does God desire? – Repentance, Obedience, Faith, Loyalty
 - What is man's response? – Self-righteousness, Rebellion, Unbelief, Rejection
 - the inadequacy of self-righteousness
 - What is the outcome of man's response? – Judgment
 - ⁴⁴ And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Matthew 21:44
 - ⁷ But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Matthew 22:7
 - ¹³ Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 22:13
- ⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Galatians 6:7

The response of the religious leaders

- ¹⁵ Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might **entangle him** in his talk. (22:15)
 - ¹⁷ Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? Matthew 22:17
 - ²⁸ Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Matthew 22:28
 - ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Matthew 22:36

Judgment on the Jewish religious leaders

woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

- ²The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: ³ All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.
 - They do have a legitimate teaching office
 - But they are **hypocrites**
- ⁴ For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.
 - **Legalism** – making rules that others find difficult to follow (but with loopholes for oneself); exalting the law above grace, adherence to the letter but not the spirit
- ⁵ But all their works they do for to be seen of men:
 - **Outward piety without inner repentance**

woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

- ¹³ But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.
 - **Preventing others from coming to Christ**
- ¹⁴ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.
 - **Exploitation of the poor for vulnerable gain (presumably using religion)**
- ¹⁵ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.
 - **Turning others from the Gospel**
- 16-22: **Dishonest oaths** – made with no intention of keeping them – using religious trickery
- 23-24: **Majoring in the minors** – punctilious over minor things but neglecting the important aspects of faith
- 25-28: **Outward cleanliness, Inward sinfulness**
- 29-35: **Rejection of God's message (and His messengers)**

The lesson(s) for us:

- The rejection of Christ leads to punishment
 - Of Israel
 - Of all unbelievers
- God has compassion for sinners, desiring their repentance and salvation
 - ^{23:37} O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
- It is easy for organized religion (and “old” churches) to fall into the same trap as the Jewish religious leaders
 - Legalism, Unbelief, Pride, Hypocrisy, Outward show without inner repentance, religious trickery, Rejection of the Gospel message
- What do we value? Christ or our “religion”
- The fate of Israel is a warning to us gentiles (Rom 11)

Romans 11 – *read the whole chapter*

⁵ Even so then at this present time also there is a **remnant** according to the **election of grace**.

¹¹ I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

¹² Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

¹⁵ For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

¹⁸ Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

²⁰ Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. **Be not highminded, but fear:** ²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. ²² Behold therefore **the goodness and severity of God:** on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

²⁶ And **so all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ²⁷ For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

³³ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Romans 11 - The fate of Israel is a warning to us gentiles

- God has punished Israel
- The way of salvation is open to the Gentiles
- Gentiles must not boast against Israel
- God has a plan for the salvation of Israel

Next: The Prophecy of the Olivet Discourse

... and all its difficulties