

# Matthew 24: The Olivet Solution

Lesson 12

# The Olivet Problem

- Jesus sat down on the Mount of Olives and the disciples came and asked about His second coming. They asked because they were concerned about Israel's future and their people. If the Temple is destroyed, how could Jesus possibly bring about the promised kingdom.
- Jesus revealed to them ...
  - signs that would precede His coming,
  - including the Great Tribulation, and
  - He told them of His coming with power and great glory after the tribulation.
  - Jesus concluded this portion of the discourse in an unexpected way. He said of His coming, "“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,<sup>[a]</sup> but the Father only." ([Matthew 24:36](#)). "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" ([Matthew 25:13](#)).
  - Doesn't it seem strange that the *strongest statements of imminency* in the entire Bible occur in this post-tribulational context?
  - It is very puzzling especially when Jesus plainly states that 1260 days after the abomination of desolation to Christ's return.
- **THE OLIVET PROBLEM**
  - These statements of *imminency* are difficult for pre-tribulationists to handle. Primarily since they interrupt the flow of the context by saying that they refer to the *beginning* of the tribulation or ignoring them altogether by depending on other and weaker verses for their doctrine of imminency.
  - For post-tribulationists the Olivet Discourse has been a fortress, yet there is a crack in that fortress because they are hard put to explain the outright contradiction of the unknown day when Daniel and Revelation give the exact day.
  - Both sides face a problem. The solution requires us to look at several verses in the Olivetti discourse and then we can tie it all together for the solution

# Who Are 'They'?

Unknown Day  
"Suffering"

UnKnown Day  
"Ruling"



Church Age and Tribulation

- A similar dilemma faced the Jews of Old Testament times. They looked at passages in which two irreconcilable prophecies were woven together. Would the Messiah come suffering or would He come ruling?
- In the above chart we see the solution was The Messiah comes twice. Only the Unknown Suffering Date is known because its already occurred.
- Now Read [Matthew 24:37-42](#) Notice closely what Jesus says, "And they were unaware ...." Who are they ....? Notice [in Vs 40-41](#). Who's taken
- They are the unbelievers. So why are forcing vs 42 to mean believers. It is the unbelievers this verse references.

# The Fig Tree

- Read [Mat 24:32-33](#)
- Now learn a parable of the fig tree;
  - when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:
  - so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors
- What does the fig tree represent?
- Jesus gives the interpretation,
  - Jesus says the putting forth of leaves represents the coming to pass of "all these things." What are "all these things"? The very things He has just spoken of, namely events to occur during the tribulation period.
  - Jesus does speak of the "beginning of sorrows" and the "great tribulation." These two time periods, form the two halves of the seven-year tribulation.
  - The fig tree stands for Israel only *one-tenth* of the times it is used in the Bible. But as noted above, due to the emphasis on the Tribulation, this is what the Fig tree represents.

# The Fig Tree Leaves

- What do the leaves of the fig tree represent?
- They represent the coming to pass of "**all those things**" that Jesus had spoken of earlier in [Matthew 24](#).
- Notice the word "all." It reads not, "When you see these things *begin* to come to pass." No, not the beginning, not *some* of these things, but when you see *all* these things, *then* the fig tree has budded, *then* you know the end is near.
- Have you seen the abomination of desolation? If not, then you haven't seen the fig tree bud.
- Will you be around to see the Fig Tree bud.
- I sincerely hope not!

# Matthew 24:34-35: This Generation

- Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away
- What does "this generation" mean?
  - Does it mean the generation living which sees these signs?
  - Or does it mean the people of Israel?
  - The former interpretation defines a generation as 30, 40, or 70 years.
  - The latter interpretation allows the generation (or people) of Israel to span the centuries. Which is correct?
  - Both meanings are theoretically possible for the Greek word "generation." But which meaning makes sense in this context?
- Does a generation of 30 or 40 years make sense? If Jesus meant a generation of 30 or 40 years dated from the time of the signs (which are tribulation signs, remember), then Jesus would be saying, "Thirty or forty years shall not pass before seven years of tribulation passes." This does not make sense.
- It does make sense, though, to say that the people of Israel during the Tribulation will not all pass from the earth until all the things promised her have been fulfilled.

# Calculating The Time of Rapture

	Israel's Guarantee	
<a href="#">Verse 34</a>	This generation (line of people) shall not pass,	till all these things be fulfilled.
<a href="#">Verse 35</a>	Heaven and earth shall pass away,	but my words shall not pass away.

- Why mention the "fig tree" and "this generation"?
- We want to show that the rapture *cannot be dated*. Some zealous and well-meaning Christians try to predict the rapture using the budding of the fig tree and calculating a generation of years.
- Various calculations use various starting points and various lengths of generations, showing that the entire speculation is not on solid ground.
- Interpreting from the context before and after and on all sides, the fig tree buds *after* the rapture and "this generation" refers to the people of Israel rather than to a period of 30, 40, or 70 years. This means *we cannot calculate the time of the rapture*. It will come as a surprise.
- Jesus' answer also allows "this generation" reference to the forty years from the time of Christ to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. If so, this would answer the disciples' question about when the temple would be destroyed.

# Signs Of The Times

- **Israel Becoming A Nation**

- It is true that a covenant between antichrist and Israel at the beginning of the tribulation ([Daniel 9:27](#)) requires that Israel be a nation
  - Israel becoming a nation on August 14, 1948 is a step toward the 'end times' but as we saw previously doesn't mean the tribulation will start within a generation.
  - Nonetheless that event sets the stage for the drama of the tribulation.
  - Some claim that the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967 was a fulfillment of [Luke 21:24](#). However, Jerusalem will be overrun by Gentiles again during the tribulation ([Revelation 11:2](#)). This means that Luke 21:24 is not yet fulfilled, and it means that we cannot look to [Luke 21:24](#) for a "pre-tribulational sign."
- What about the other "signs of the times" like **earthquakes and famines**? No signs are *necessary* before the rapture, but God in His mercy allows His bride to see some signs making her more eager for the meeting in the air.

# Signs Of The Times (2)

- The **gift of tongues**. When the disciples spoke in tongues in Acts two, what *Biblical support* did Peter offer for speaking in tongues? [Joel 2:28-32](#). However, [Joel 2:28-32](#), strictly speaking, is not to be fulfilled until the millennium because that is when the Spirit shall be poured out upon "*all* flesh."
- Historically, tongues have ceased according to [1 Corinthians 13:8](#). But if the millennial sign of tongues could spill over into Peter's time, then if tongues *are* reappearing today (as the nation of Israel has reappeared), it may also be a spilling over of millennial prophecy, showing us that the time is near.
- At any rate, these signs give *no time indication in terms of years*; they merely tell us that the time is approaching.
- He might come sooner than we expect. We cannot guess the time of the rapture. It comes in surprise. Remember this, because it is one key which unlocks the mystery of the Olivet problem.

# Let's Revisit Noah

Who do the flood victims represent?

Who does Noah represent?

Jesus relates this illustration in order to make a comparison to the end times; so the flood victims must represent unbelievers who are destroyed at Christ's return. Noah represents tribulation saints.

**Flood victims represent tribulation unbelievers**

**Noah represents tribulation saints**

Why does Jesus compare the disciples to the flood victims instead of to Noah? It doesn't fit. Are the disciples unbelievers? Will they be destroyed? Then why are they compared to the flood victims? Why not compare them to Noah? If Noah represents tribulation saints, then surely the disciples ought to be compared to Noah if the disciples represent tribulation saints. How *do* the disciples fit into the picture?

# Where Do The Disciples Fit?

Into which category will you put the disciples?	
Flood victims	Unbelievers
Noah	Tribulation saints

The disciples are believers, not unbelievers.

And Jesus refrains from putting them into the category of Noah since they are not Tribulation Saints as history shows us.

The disciples form a *third category* namely, *church saints* who will be raptured before the tribulation or before the Abomination of Desolation.

Instantly the riddle dissolves. Now, instead of forcing the interpretation where it doesn't fit, the interpretation fits naturally.

# Surprised And Safe

- The disciples are like flood victims in one respect—they are surprised.
- The disciples are like Noah in another respect—they are safe.
- The disciples are *unlike* the flood victims, because the flood victims are unbelievers.
- The disciples are *unlike* Noah, because Noah *knew the day* the catastrophe would come ([Genesis 7:4](#)).
- Therefore the disciples have similarities and dissimilarities to both groups, but they fit perfectly a third group, namely church saints who are surprised but safe. This diagram shows how the characteristics of all three groups easily fall into place without forcing one word of Scripture:

# Why The Disciples Were Compared To The Flood Victims

- Why did Jesus compare the disciples to the flood victims instead of to Noah?
  - Because Jesus wanted to illustrate *surprise*, and Noah was *not* surprised.
  - Noah *knew* the day, just as tribulation saints will know the day.
  - We will *not* know, and in this respect, we are like unbelievers—we both will be *surprised*.
- Because Jesus is coming in surprise for the church, He told us to "watch" (vs 42). "Watch" is in the present tense and the intended sense is, "Be continually watching now."
- This kind of command has force under pre-tribulationism, but a post-trib could more easily be tempted to say to himself, "I will not watch now; I will wait until the tribulation begins, to start watching."
- Watching *now* is confirmed by the *reason* for watching, "for ye know not what hour..." This implies that it *could* be any day now rather than implying that it *could not yet* be any of these days.

# Why The Disciples Were Compared To The Flood Victims (2)

- Why did Jesus not compare the disciples to Noah because Noah was saved and protected from wrath,
- Jesus could not make the comparison to him because Noah knew seven days ahead of time, and Jesus was illustrating surprise.
- If the prophecy were *single in viewpoint*, then the disciples would have been compared to Noah, for church saints and tribulation saints would be one and the same and so the comparison would be made between the two.
- But since there are *two* different saved groups (one knowing and one not knowing) and since there are *two* different groups not knowing (one saved and one not saved), Jesus is giving the prophecy from a *double viewpoint*.
- The double viewpoint illuminates the comparisons and apparent contradictions, while the single viewpoint is stuck with disjointed comparisons and insoluble contradictions. How many times have we all read this passage before, not noticing the inconsistency that arises from the single viewpoint?

# The Master of The House (Goodman)

- But know this, that if the master of the house (goodman) had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect
- Ready for another quiz? A couple of easy questions first. Jesus said *if* the Master of the House had known he would have watched.
  - This implies that if the goodman did *not* know he would *not* have watched. We have, therefore, two hypothetical goodmen. One watching, one not.

# The Third Category

Goodman #1	knows and watches
Goodman #2	knows not and watches not

- Who does goodman #1 represent? What end-time group knows and watches? Tribulation saints.
- Who does goodman #2 represent? What end-time group knows not and watches not? Unbelievers.
- Which goodman are you? Stop reading for a minute and Think.
- Are you goodman #1? Surely you are watching for the Lord's return, but do you know the hour? No, you can't be goodman #1.
- Are you goodman #2? Surely you know not the hour, but are you not watching? No, you can't be goodman #2.
- You form a *third category*, namely church saints who know not the hour, yet watch.

# Noah & The Master Of The House

Goodman #1	knows and watches	tribulation saints
Goodman #2	knows not and watches not	unbelievers
Disciples	know not and watch	church saints

Or to illustrate it another way ....

The three groups follow the *same pattern* as the Noah illustration.

# Watching Virgins

- Read [Mat 25:1-13](#)
- The parable of the virgins follows the *identical pattern* of both the Noah and Master Of The House illustration.
- This parable is within the framework of the context which places these illustrations in a tribulational time setting.
- The five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins are waiting to attend the wedding.
- Who do the five wise virgins represent? They represent tribulation saints.
- Who do the foolish virgins represent? The bridegroom says to them, "I know you not." So the foolish virgins must be unbelievers.
- Now, into which category do the disciples fit?
  - Not the foolish virgins.
  - How about the wise virgins? Are the disciples like the wise virgins waiting to attend the wedding? Well, yes and no.
  - The disciples will be at the wedding all right, but not as attendants. They are the *bride!*
  - You and I are *not* virgins who attend the wedding, we are the *bride* at the wedding.

# Where Is The Bride?

Therefore, *neither* category fits the disciples perfectly, but the double-reference fits perfectly because it recognizes two groups of redeemed people.

The illustration of the virgins carries a different twist to it, because it dwells not so much on knowing or not knowing, but it emphasizes readiness or preparedness. Perhaps this is why it stands separate from Noah and the Master Of The House instead of following immediately after them.

wise virgins	ready	attend wedding
foolish virgins	not ready	miss wedding
disciples	ready	bride at wedding

# The Virgins Represent The Tribulation Populace

- Some have said that the virgins represent the church because the church is called a "virgin" in [2 Corinthians 11:2](#).
- Some have said the virgins represent Israel because Israel is called a "virgin" in [Jeremiah 18:13](#). But "virgin" in these verses is singular, not plural.
- Is the church ten virgins? Or are there ten Israels? No, rather than representing Israel or the church, the parable of the virgins depicts *people in general* living during the tribulation, saved and unsaved, Jew or Gentile.
- This interpretation avoids the oddity of the church being made up of multiple virgins, it allows the foolish virgins to be unsaved ("I know you not"), and it matches the illustrations of Noah and the Master Of The House which depict the saved and the unsaved of the tribulation.

# Putting The Illustrations Together

	"the coming of the Son of man"		
	for tribulation saints	upon tribulation wicked	for church saints
	primary reference		secondary application
Noah and the flood victims	knew and safe	knew not and destroyed	know not but safe
Master of the house	knew and watched	knew not and watched not	know not but watch
wise and foolish virgins	ready	not ready	ready but bride
men waiting	ready after wedding		ready before wedding

The three illustrations reinforce each other, but also one builds upon the other in a progression of thought.

The illustration of Noah and the flood teaches *surprise*.

The illustration of the Master Of The House teaches *readiness* in light of that surprise.

The illustration of the virgins teaches *advance* readiness.

# Matt 24:36-44 Timeframe Chart

refers to both times	36 But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.
tribulation illustration	37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
refers to both times	40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.
church application	42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming
tribulation illustration	43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into
church application	44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect