

## ***Introduction to the Olivet Discourse + The Beginning of Birth Pains***

### I. Introduction and Context of the Olivet Discourse

- a. The Olivet Discourse refers to an extended teaching by Jesus concerning the end times, delivered while he was on the Mount of Olives. This discourse is recorded in **Matthew 24-25**, **Mark 13:1-37**, and **Luke 21:5-36**, with Matthew's account being the most extensive. While Jesus initially shared this teaching with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, its valuable lessons are pertinent to the entire body of Christ, encompassing both Jews and Gentiles. The Olivet Discourse holds particular significance for the generation alive during the final years of this age.
- b. In **Matthew 24**, Jesus draws upon Old Testament prophecies to provide a more comprehensive picture of what the end of the age will look like. Those present with Him, being familiar with these Old Testament references, would gain a clearer and more substantial understanding through His teachings on the subject of the end times. Jesus spoke extensively about the signs, events, and trends that will occur in and around Jerusalem and throughout the world, so that those living in the final years of this age would have clarity and understanding about the details surrounding His return.

**(Matthew 24:33 NASB)** *“So you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”*

**(1 Peter 4:7 NASB)** *“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”*

- c. Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse shortly after issuing a stern rebuke to the Sadducees and Pharisees for their hypocrisy and rejection of Him. He condemned their behavior and prophesied that He would send prophets, wise men, and scribes to them (**Matthew 23:34**). Yet, just as their ancestors had done, Jesus said, they would reject and kill both Him and those whom He'd soon send. Jesus then mourned over Jerusalem's rejection of Him with a broken heart and pronounced a judgment on them. Despite the severity of His words, He also foretold that this judgment would eventually lead to their acceptance of Him at the time of His second coming (**Psalms 118:26; Matthew 23:39; Romans 11:26-27**). This is a crucial reminder that Jerusalem is at the center of the end-time drama.

**(Matthew 23:37-39 NASB)** *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

### II. Jesus Prophecies of the Destruction of The Temple

**(Matthew 24:1-2 NASB)** *“Jesus left the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 But He responded and said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”*

- a. As they were walking to the Mount of Olives, some of Jesus' disciples were admiring the temple's beauty. It was at this moment that Jesus delivered a profound and startling declaration: the magnificent temple would soon be destroyed. This statement was deeply jarring for the disciples because, for first-century Jews, the temple was the epicenter of religious worship, society, and governance. The temple was integral to Israel's identity, and memories of its destruction and subsequent rebuilding just 500 years earlier were still vivid.
- b. To fully grasp the significance of Jesus' statement, it's essential to consider the primary scripture He referenced. Throughout Matthew 24, Jesus extensively draws from Daniel 9 to outline key timing indicators for events in His day and those at the end of the age. In Daniel 9, the prophet receives the "prophecy of 70 weeks" from the angel Gabriel. Gabriel delineates a period of 70

weeks (*Shavu'im*), equivalent to 490 literal years (70 sets of 7 years), and associates specific future events with this timeframe (vv. 25-27). Among these events are the "cutting off of the Messiah (the death of Jesus)" and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (vv. 26).

**(Daniel 9:24-26 NASB)** *“Seventy weeks [490 years = 70 X 7 years] have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the wrongdoing, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place. 25 So you are to know and understand that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [Totaling 69 weeks]; it will be built again, with streets and moat, even in times of distress. 26 Then after the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”*

- Gabriel begins the message by telling Daniel that there’s 6 redemptive purposes for the 70 weeks (**Daniel 9:24**): 1) To finish the wrongdoing, 2) to make an end of sin, 3) To make atonement for guilt, 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness, 5) To seal up vision and prophecy, 6) To anoint the Most Holy Place.
- All 6 of these purposes are positive and are redemptive or salvific and ultimately point to the future redemption of Jerusalem. It’s important to remember that all 6 of these purposes have been provided for by the blood of Jesus, but have not yet been actualized in Israel.

- c. The 70th week marks the final seven years of this age before Christ's return. This period begins when the Antichrist "confirms a covenant with the many for one week (**Daniel 9:27**)". By predicting the destruction of the temple, Jesus was alluding to one of the most significant end-time prophecies in the Old Testament. Although He foretold impending destruction for Jerusalem, there was also great hope in His words, as He recalled the six redemptive purposes of the 70 weeks prophecy (**Daniel 9:24**).

**(Daniel 9:27 NASB)** *“And he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come the one who makes desolate, until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, gushes forth on the one who makes desolate.”*

### III. The Disciples Ask Jesus 3 Important Questions

- a. After Jesus profoundly shocked His disciples by predicting the destruction of the temple, they asked Him three pivotal questions. These questions prompted Jesus to deliver His detailed "outline" of the end times. The questions were: 1) when will these things happen, 2) what will be the sign of your coming, 3) What will be the sign of the end of the age.

**(Matthew 24:3 NASB)** *“And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?””*

- b. Although the disciples asked three distinct questions, all were interconnected. Familiar with the prophecy from Daniel 9, they assumed that the destruction of the temple would coincide with the end of the age and Jesus' second coming. Jesus responded to these questions in a reversed sequence, first addressing the signs of the end of the age. His approach was deeply pastoral, aimed at ensuring that His disciples—and future generations—were well-informed about the times and seasons related to His return. Other verses in the Olivet Discourse further clarify Jesus' pastoral intentions by detailing the specifics of His return.

**(Matthew 24:32-33 NASB)** *““Now learn the parable from the fig tree: as soon as its branch has become tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”*

*(Matthew 24:42-44 NASB) “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 For this reason you must be ready as well; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”*

#### IV. The Beginning of Birth Pains

*(Matthew 24:4-8 NASB) “And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will mislead many people. 6 And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 **But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pains.**”*

- a. Jesus begins answering the disciples' questions by describing the "beginning of birth pains." This phrase indicates that the timing of the prophecy in Matthew 24 pertains to the last days. While the Olivet Discourse may have been a warning to the disciples about events that would occur in 70 A.D., its ultimate context unmistakably points to the years leading up to the end of this age.
- b. Once again, Jesus referred to Old Testament scriptures—sources His disciples would have known well—to explain the events leading up to the end of the age. When Jesus spoke of "birth pains," His disciples likely thought of three particular scriptures: **Jeremiah 30:5-7, Isaiah 26:19-21, and Isaiah 66:7-16.**

#### **Jeremiah 30:5-7**

- Daniel's 70th week, representing the final seven years of this age, is divided into two periods of 3 ½ years each. Midway through this week, the Antichrist will confirm a covenant with many and unleashes his demonically fueled rage upon Israel and those who stand with her. The prophets foretold this period of unprecedented turmoil and conflict for Israel and the church (**Deuteronomy 4:26-31; Jeremiah 30:4-7; Daniel 12:1-4**). Jeremiah 30 aptly names this period "Jacob's Trouble." Later, Jesus refers to it as the Great Tribulation (**Matthew 24:21**). What's significant about this scripture is the Jeremiah's mention of men groaning and hurting like a woman in childbirth.

*(Jeremiah 30:5-7 NASB) “I have heard a sound of terror, of fear, and there is no peace. 6 Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his waist, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? 7 Woe, for that day is great, there is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, yet he will be saved from it.”*

#### **Isaiah 26:19-21**

- In Isaiah 26, Israel expresses its lament over prolonged suffering and unfulfilled hopes, describing their struggle as enduring the pains of "labor" without the expected deliverance, redemption, or resurrection symbolized by a successful birth—saying instead that they seemed to have "given birth" to mere "wind," an emblem of futility. However, the Lord provides reassurance, promising that the anticipated birth—the Messianic age of resurrection, also known as the Millennial Kingdom—will indeed come, but only after a period of Great Tribulation (**vv. 20-21**).

*(Isaiah 26:16-21 NASB) “Lord, they sought You in distress; They could only whisper a prayer, your discipline was upon them. 17 As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, she writhes and cries out in her labor pains; This is how we were before You, Lord. 18 We were pregnant, we writhed in labor, we gave birth, as it seems, only to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth, nor were inhabitants of the world born. 19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. 20 Come, my people, enter your rooms and close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while until indignation runs its course. 21 For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their wrongdoing; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed and will no longer cover her slain.”*

**Isaiah 66:7-16**

- In Isaiah 66, the theme of birth and resurrection reemerges, this time with the remarkable paradox that the Messiah would be born before the onset of "labor pains" (Isaiah 66:7). Yet again, God reassures His people, promising that the days of their labor pains will ultimately cease as He ushers in the Messianic age.

**(Isaiah 66:7-9 NASB)** *“Before she was in labor, she delivered; Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. 8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be given birth all at once? As soon as Zion was in labor, she also delivered her sons. 9 Shall I bring to the point of birth but not give delivery?” says the Lord. “Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?” says your God.*

**(Isaiah 66:10-16 NASB)** *“Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her, 11 So that you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts, So that you may drink fully and be delighted with her bountiful breasts.” 12 For this is what the Lord says: “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and rocked back and forth on the knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; And you will be comforted in Jerusalem.” 14 Then you will see this, and your heart will be glad, and your bones will flourish like the new grass; And the hand of the Lord will be made known to His servants, But He will be indignant toward His enemies. 15 For behold, the Lord will come in fire, And His chariots like the whirlwind, o render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For the Lord will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on humanity, and those put to death by the Lord will be many.”*

- These scriptures help to establish the context for the "birth pains" that Jesus references in **Matthew 24**. Drawing from the Old Testament, we understand that "birth pains" are intimately connected with several pivotal events: the Great Tribulation, the coming of the Messiah, the judgment of nations, the vindication of Israel, the resurrection of the righteous dead, the redemption of creation, and the inauguration of the Messianic age. The events described in Matthew 24 were not fully realized in 70 A.D. and are anticipated to reach their ultimate fulfillment at the end of the age.
- When Jesus compared the events leading up to the end times to birth pains, He used a powerful and familiar analogy for His disciples. Just as birth pains increase in severity and come at shorter intervals, signaling imminent birth, so will end times troubles and signs intensify and occur more frequently. These escalating "pains" point to the culmination of God's perfect plan. Here, the "birth" signifies not only an end but the glorious beginning of the Millennial Age or Messianic Age—a time of renewal, peace, and Jesus' perfect leadership. Jesus emphasized that the growing challenges would ultimately lead to the birth of His Millennial Kingdom.