



Sermon On the Mount – In Context

by Pastor F.M. Riley

The Olivet Discourse – In Context

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Text: Matthew 24:36; 24:42; 24:44; 25:13; Mark 13:32-33; 13:35.

Introduction

I am quite familiar with the above texts. I should be! I have had these verses quoted and *misquoted* to me dozens of times over the past 54 years. I can read just as well as the average person, and whole lot better than some folks. Not a one of these verses contains the words *date*, *date setter*, *date setting*, *forbid*, or *forbidden*. I wholeheartedly believe every one of these verses. However, I believe them based on the context in which they occur. I say without apology that there is not a human being on the face of this earth that can “*rightly divide the Word of truth*,” if they ignore the context in which a Scripture occurs. It cannot be done! Period!

Discerning the Context

The Olivet Discourse as it is commonly called, is recorded in **Matthew 24-25**, **Mark 13**, and **Luke 21**. All three accounts are the same discourse, given to the same people, on the same occasion. The three accounts vary in wording only because the Lord wanted to emphasize different aspects of truth in each of the three accounts. When you study these three accounts, keep in mind that the three accounts are all the same discourse.

Contrary to what is commonly taught, the Olivet Discourse was not given to “the church” in any sense other than being a part of the whole inspired Word of God. Anyone who seriously studies this discourse can easily see that the Lord gave the Olivet Discourse in response to the questions asked by four Jews; Peter, James, John, and Andrew, **Mark 13:3**. These four Jews were disciples of the Lord, however they didn't come to the Lord on this occasion as His disciples. They came to Him as Jews representing the Jewish people. This is clearly proven by **Matthew 24:9**. These four disciples were not a nation, and were not “*hated of all nations*.” This is plain enough for anyone to see that wants to deal honestly with God's Word.

These four Jews came to the Lord asking Him Jewish questions about Jewish concerns. The Lord answered them by speaking of things which would be of particular concern to the Jews during this present dispensation, and on to the end of the age [*Tribulation*]. Therefore, it should be obvious to anyone willing to deal honestly with this discourse, that the entire discourse was given to the Jews, was for the Jews, and is primarily

concerned with the Jews. I will now demonstrate the truth of this statement for my readers.

The Three Questions

The three questions asked by the four Jews, were, ***“Tell us, when shall these things be? [1] and what shall be the sign of Thy coming [2], and of the end of the world?”*** [*aion...age...3*]. All three questions related to things that were of special interest to the Jewish people. Now let’s review the questions.

The first question had to do with the destruction of the Jewish Temple. These four Jews were deeply shaken by the Lord’s prophecy that their beloved Temple would be destroyed. The Temple represented Israel’s special relationship with God, and was the glory of the whole nation of Israel. Therefore, as Jews, they wanted to know when it was going to be destroyed.

The next two questions are bound together under one ***“sign.”*** Being Jews, they asked the Lord for a specific ***“sign”*** that would indicate that [1] the Lord’s coming [*parousia*] was at hand, and [2] that ***“the end of the world [aion...age]”*** was near. The Lord, throughout the history of Israel, has always given the Jews ***“signs”*** to indicate His will, His power, and His blessings upon them. The Jews expect such of the Lord. See ***1 Corinthians 1:22***. This is why these four Jews asked the Lord for a ***“sign.”*** There are so many examples of this in the Old Testament that it isn’t necessary to labor the point. The ***“end of the age”*** was of great concern to these Jews, because they knew that the Kingdom promised to Israel would not be established in the earth until ***“the end of the age.”***

The Lord’s Answers

In answering the questions, the first thing the Lord did was to warn them of ***“false messiahs,”*** ***Matthew 24:4-5***. This would be of great concern to the Jewish people, since they rejected and crucified their true Messiah, and are still looking for their Messiah to come. But this would be of no concern at all to New Testament believers, for we know that the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Messiah and Savior, has already come.

The Lord then warned them about the Roman wars which would devastate the Holy Land, and result in scattering the Jews among the nations, ***Matthew 24:6-9; Luke 21:20-24***. It is obvious that Peter, James, John, and Andrew, the four Jews to whom Christ was speaking, did not constitute a nation [*verse 9*], nor were they ***“hated of all nations,”*** but those four men obviously did represent Israel and the Jewish people on this occasion. Israel and the Jewish people have been ***“hated of all nations”*** throughout this dispensation, and this hatred is on the increase today. True New Testament churches are also hated, but churches are not ***“nations.”***

In exact chronological order the Lord then warned of **"false prophets"** who would rise up among the Jewish people, **Matthew 24:10-11**. This too would be of great concern to the Jews, because God had always ministered to the Jewish people by raising up "prophets" among them. This warning should be of no real concern to New Testament believers. We [*NT believers who seriously study the Word and seek to "rightly divide" it*] know that **"the law and the prophets were until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached....," Luke 16:16**. "Prophets" have to do with the Jewish people. They have nothing to do with "the church." True New Testament believers have to be concerned with **"false teachers" [2 Peter 2:1-22]**, but it is the Jews who have to be concerned with **"false prophets."**

In **Matthew 24:15** the Lord spoke of **"the abomination of desolation."** Now why would this be of any concern to New Testament believers? If a person has truly received Christ as their Savior, then they won't even be on this earth when this future event occurs at or near the middle of the coming Tribulation. But unbelieving Israel will be here, because they will have missed the resurrection and rapture. This predicted future event obviously concerns the Jews, and is of no concern at all the "the church."

Then in **24:16-26** the Lord spoke about those who would be living **"in Judea,"** and about them fleeing on **"the sabbath day,"** and for a second time, about "false messiahs." None of these things should be of concern to New Testament believers. We don't live in **"Judea."** We don't observe **"the sabbath day" [at least I don't]**, and our Messiah has already come. These predicted events obviously concern the Jews.

In **Matthew 24:32-35** the Lord gave **"The Parable of the Fig Tree."** All serious Bible students know that this parable applies to the reestablished nation of Israel, which occurred on May 14, 1948, and that the new nation began to **"put forth leaves"** during the Six Day War of 1967. This parable has nothing to do with New Testament believers, other than indicating that the end of the age began with Israel's national restoration.

In **Matthew 25:1-13** the Lord gave another parable, **"The Parable of the Ten Virgins."** A careful study of this parable will reveal that it is dealing with events that occur during a Jewish wedding. This parable, like nearly everything else in this discourse, is dealing with the Jewish people, in spite of the efforts of some today who try to apply it to "the church." Wake up people!

Do I need to labor the point any further? Any serious study of the Olivet Discourse will reveal that it was given to the Jews, is about the Jews, and is for the Jews. Since **Matthew 24, Mark 13** and **Luke 21** are the same discourse, given to the same four Jews, on the same occasion, the three accounts varying in wording only as the Lord inspired the three different writers, it should be obvious that all three accounts are dealing with the Jews. Isn't it obvious that the entire context of the Olivet Discourse is

Jewish? Who can deal honestly with the Scriptures and deny this glaringly obvious truth?

Scriptural Conclusions

Now that we have determined that the context of the Olivet Discourse is Jewish, then what conclusions can be Scripturally drawn?

It was immediately after giving *"The Parable of the Fig Tree"* that the Lord said, ***"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only," Matthew 24:36.*** According to the context that we have already examined, who was Christ speaking to? In verse **42** of this chapter, the Lord added, ***"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."*** Did the context change in any of these passages? Wasn't Christ still speaking to the same four Jews? Wasn't He still speaking about matters of particular concern to the Jews? Folks, the answer to these questions is obvious.

Since all three gospels record the same discourse, given to the same people, on the same occasion, then it is a simple conclusion that in **Mark 13:32-33** and **13:35** the Lord is still speaking to, for, and about the Jews.

Now let's see how this harmonizes with what the Scriptures teach about unbelieving Israel.

Who is Blind and in Darkness?

Now that we have discerned the context of the Olivet Discourse, let's study the Scriptures to find out exactly what people it is that are spiritually **"blind,"** walk in spiritual darkness, and are unable to discern spiritual truth.

In **Romans 11:7-10** we read, ***"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.....Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always."*** Is this plain enough?

Then in **Romans 11:25** the Scripture states, ***"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."***

Again in **2 Corinthians 3:14-15** we read, ***"But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old***

testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." The context clearly indicates that Paul is referring to the Jews.

Each of these passages clearly point out that it is unbelieving Israel who is spiritually blind, and walks in spiritual darkness. However, such blindness is not limited just to Israel.

In *2 Corinthians 4:3-4* the Scriptures state, ***"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*** These Scriptures make it clear that all lost people, regardless of their race, are spiritually blind, and walk in darkness.

This truth is in perfect harmony with *1 Corinthians 2:14*, ***"But the natural man [person having only a natural birth] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*** Folks, no unsaved person can understand, know, or comprehend the things of God. That which God reveals can only be known by the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit, and lost people do not have God's Spirit dwelling in them. Therefore, ***"the natural man"*** is spiritually blind and walks in darkness. This is plain enough for any true believer to understand. So who is blind and in darkness and cannot know? All unsaved people are spiritually blind, both Jews and Gentiles.

In view of this truth, then WHO was the Lord speaking to in *Matthew 24* and *Mark 13* when He said, ***"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only?"*** Isn't it obvious from the context that the Lord was speaking to the Jews, about the Jews, and for the benefit of the Jews? In plain language, the Lord was speaking to unbelieving Israel. It is unbelieving Israel that is spiritually blind, has no spiritual discernment, and cannot know the things of God. The things of God are hidden from their eyes, *Luke 19:42*. But such is also true of unbelieving Gentiles.

Who is not Blind and in Darkness?

In direct contrast to unbelieving Israel and unbelieving Gentiles, stands the Lord's people [true believers]. The Lord's people are those who have been genuinely saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's churches are composed of God's people who have covenanted together to form a New Testament church.

When a person is genuinely ***"born again"*** [*John 3:3-7*], the Holy Spirit takes up residence in that person's body, *John 14:16-17*. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit gives to that believer spiritual understanding of the things of God, to whatever

extent the believer is willing to study God's Word, *John 16:13, 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Timothy 2:15*. People who have been genuinely saved from their sins, have been given *"the mind of Christ," 1 Corinthians 2:16*. This allows us to see things as the Lord sees them, and from His point of view. Therefore those who are truly saved are not spiritually blind and do not walk in spiritual darkness.

This is why the inspired Apostle wrote to the Thessalonian church and said, *"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief," 1 Thessalonians 5:4*. This statement is in direct contrast [*not contradiction; contrast*] to the statement the Lord made to unbelieving Israel in *Matthew 24:43-44*.

A Time for Heart Searching

At this point some folks that "profess" to be "Christians" need to do some heart searching. Read *2 Corinthians 13:5* and *2 Peter 1:10*. Are you really saved?or are you just a lost "religionist?" Do you have spiritual discernment?or are you really blind and walking in darkness? Quit riding the fence! You are either truly saved, or you are still lost in your sins. You either have spiritual discernment, or you are spiritually blind and cannot see. Which is it?

God's people [*true believers*] *"are not in darkness,"* and are able to *"see the day approaching," Hebrews 10:24*. If you are truly saved, then the only reason that the coming of the Lord will *"overtake you as a thief"* is because you choose to be *"willingly ignorant," 2 Peter 3:3-5*. If you want to identify yourself with unbelieving fools [*Luke 24:25*], that is your choice. I choose to identify myself with those children of God who have been given spiritual light, and are willing to use that light to discern the *"times and seasons"* of the Lord's return. I have God's Word. I do not walk in darkness, *Psalms 119:105*.

An Explicit Command

In *Matthew 24:37* the Lord explicitly stated, *"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."* No one can be honest with the Scriptures and deny that the Lord revealed to Noah in advance the exact day the flood was coming. See *Genesis 7:4; 7:10*. Deny that truth, and you will be denying God's Word.

Folks, as I write this study [*1998*] I do not know the *"day and hour"* when the Lord is coming to resurrect and rapture His people to glory. But I do know that the day is drawing near. I fully expect to know the exact day just shortly before the Lord comes. The Lord is going to fulfill His Word whether some folks like it or not. The Lord did not say that the *"day and hour"* could not be known, or that it would not be known. He spoke in the present tense, indicating that it was not known at that time. Some folks

need to learn the difference between past, present, and future tenses, then respect God's Word enough to pay attention to the tenses when reading the Word.

In **Mark 13:34-37** the Lord commanded the Jews [*and all who claim to be the Lord's people*] to **"Watch."** In verse **37** the Lord explicitly said, **"And what I say unto you [*Jews*] I say unto all, Watch."** Now some of these "super-smart, super spiritual, all wise, all knowing "Christians" [?] today tell us there are no signs to indicate the Lord's coming again. But if there are no signs or indications that the Lord's return is approaching, then what is it that God's people are supposed to **"watch?"** The logic of some of these "great spiritual leaders" [*Sic!*] today makes about as much sense as some of their "theology."

The Lord explicitly stated in **Revelation 3:3**, **".....If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."** The Lord addressed this statement to one of His churches. **1 Thessalonians 5:4** quite clearly states that the Lord's churches **"are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."** The Lord has explicitly commanded His people to **"Watch."** To refuse to do so is to disobey the Lord Himself, whether some of these so-called "good Christians" like it or not. The plain implication of **Revelation 3:3** is that if God's people do watch, then the Lord will not come on us as thief, and we will know **"what hour"** He is coming. These so-called "great leaders" in the ranks of Christianity today, many of whom won't even lift a finger to seriously study the prophecies of God's Word, can get angry over this statement, and stomp and spit and puff and blow, but this passage in **Revelation 3:3** will keep right on saying exactly what it says. The truth is the truth whether men like it or not.

Conclusion

The simple truth is that it is lost unbelievers who are blind and in spiritual darkness. Those who claim to be the Lord's people have no such excuse for their lack of Scriptural knowledge, both as to God's Word in general and as to the time of the Lord's return in particular. The sole and only reason true believers have for not knowing that **"the time of the end"** is swiftly approaching, is that they willfully refuse to get serious about studying the prophecies of God's Word. They willfully refuse to compare current events with events clearly predicted in the Scriptures to occur at the end of this age. In other words, they willfully choose to not study, to not hear, and to not see. Such is **"willing ignorance," 2 Peter 2:3-5**, and no amount of excuses will ever make it anything else.

Folks, great end-time truths are being revealed today for those of God's people [*true believers*] who are willing to search them out. It is not God's people who are **"blind"** and **"in darkness."** It is past time that many who profess to be God's people quit using **Matthew 24:36** as an excuse for their own **"willing ignorance,"** and start seriously studying and **"rightly dividing the Word of truth," 2 Timothy 2:15.** The

Olivet Discourse, when studied *in context*, provides nothing for the *“willingly ignorant”* to hide behind. I have clearly demonstrated this truth in this study.

But for those people who refuse to accept the truth that has been presented in this study, preferring to walk on in darkness and ignorance, the Word of God does say, *“If any man will be ignorant, let him be ignorant,” 1 Corinthians 14:38.*

SELAH!



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