

The Olivet Discourse and Luke 17:22-37

A Harmony and Explanation

Texts are a slight modification of the NAS95 Updated

Matthew 24:1-51	Mark 13:1-37	Luke 21:5-36	[Luke 17:22-37]
<p>24:1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when his disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to him.</p> <p>24:2 And he 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.”</p> <p>24:3 As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying,</p> <p>“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”</p> <p>24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.</p> <p>24:5 “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.</p> <p>24:6 “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.</p> <p>24:7 “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against</p>	<p>13:1 As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”</p> <p>13:2 And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”</p> <p>13:3 As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning him privately,</p> <p>13:4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”</p> <p>13:5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.</p> <p>13:6 “Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and will mislead many.</p> <p>13:7 “When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.</p> <p>13:8 “For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against</p>	<p>21:5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts,</p> <p>he said,</p> <p>21:6 “As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.”</p> <p>21:7 They questioned him, saying,</p> <p>“Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”</p> <p>21:8 And he said, “See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not go after them.</p> <p>21:9 “When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.”</p> <p>21:10 Then he continued by saying to them, “Nation will rise against</p>	

<p>kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 24:8 “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.</p> <p>24:9 “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.</p> <p>24:10 “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.</p> <p>24:11 “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.</p> <p>24:12 “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.</p> <p>24:13 “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.</p> <p>24:14 “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.</p> <p>24:15 “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),</p> <p>24:16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.</p>	<p>kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.</p> <p>13:9 “But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.</p> <p>13:10 “The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.</p> <p>13:11 “When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>13:12 “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.</p> <p>13:13 “You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.</p> <p>13:14 “But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand),</p> <p>then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.</p>	<p>nation and kingdom against kingdom, 21:11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.</p> <p>21:12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.</p> <p>21:13 “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.</p> <p>21:14 “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;</p> <p>21:15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.</p> <p>21:16 “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,</p> <p>21:17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.</p> <p>21:18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.</p> <p>21:19 “By your endurance you will gain your lives.</p> <p>21:20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.</p> <p>21:21 “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those</p>	
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<p>24:17 “Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 24:18 “Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.</p> <p>24:19 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 24:20 “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.</p> <p>24:21 “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.</p> <p>24:22 “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.</p> <p>24:23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There he is,’ do not believe him. 24:24 “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.</p> <p>24:25 “Behold, I have told you in advance.</p>	<p>13:15 “The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 13:16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat.</p> <p>13:17 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 13:18 “But pray that it may not happen in the winter.</p> <p>13:19 “For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.</p> <p>13:20 “Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the chosen ones, whom He chose, He shortened the days.</p> <p>13:21 “And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, he is there’; do not believe him; 13:22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.</p> <p>13:23 “But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.</p>	<p>who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;</p> <p>21:22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.</p> <p>21:23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days;</p> <p>for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.</p>	
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<p>24:26 “So if they say to you, ‘Behold, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. 24:27 “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 24:28 “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.</p> <p>24:29 “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>24:30 “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.</p> <p>24:31 “And he will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER his chosen</p>	<p>13:24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, 13:25 AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>13:26 “Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory.</p> <p>13:27 “And then he will send forth the angels, and will gather together his chosen ones from the four winds, from the farthest</p>	<p>21:25 “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 21:26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.</p> <p>21:27 “Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory.</p> <p>21:28 “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”</p>	<p>17:22 And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 17:23 “They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them. 17:24 “For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky and shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in his day. 17:25 “But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.</p>
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<p>ones from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.</p> <p>24:32 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;</p> <p>24:33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that he is near, right at the door.</p> <p>24:34 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.</p> <p>24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.</p> <p>24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.</p> <p>24:37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.</p> <p>24:38 “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,</p> <p>24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.</p> <p>24:40 “Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.</p> <p>24:41 “Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.</p>	<p>end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.</p> <p>13:28 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.</p> <p>13:29 “Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near, right at the door.</p> <p>13:30 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.</p> <p>13:31 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.</p> <p>13:32 “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.</p>	<p>21:29 Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees;</p> <p>21:30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.</p> <p>21:31 “So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the Kingdom of God is near.</p> <p>21:32 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.</p> <p>21:33 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.</p>	<p>17:26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:</p> <p>17:27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.</p> <p>17:28 “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;</p> <p>17:29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.</p>
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<p>24:42 “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.</p> <p>24:43 “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.</p> <p>24:44 “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.</p>	<p>13:33 “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.</p>	<p>21:34 “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;</p> <p>21:35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.</p> <p>21:36 “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”</p>	<p>17:30 “It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.</p> <p>17:31 “On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.</p> <p>17:32 “Remember Lot’s wife.</p> <p>17:33 “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.</p> <p>17:34 “I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.</p> <p>17:35 “There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left.</p> <p>17:36 [“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.”]</p> <p>17:37 And answering they said to Him, “Where, Lord?” And He said to them, “Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered.”</p>
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<p>24:45 “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?</p> <p>24:46 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.</p> <p>24:47 “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.</p> <p>24:48 “But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’</p> <p>24:49 and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;</p> <p>24:50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,</p> <p>24:51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.</p>	<p>13:34 “It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.</p> <p>13:35 “Therefore, be on the alert — for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning —</p> <p>13:36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep.</p> <p>13:37 “What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”</p>		
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Matthew 24:1	Mark 13:1	Luke 21:5a	
24:1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.	13:1 As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”	21:5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts,	

By comparing the four passages of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, along with Jesus’ comments in Luke 17, we can come to a better understanding of exactly what Jesus was seeking to communicate, as opposed to looking at only each text individually. According to Matthew 26:1-2, Mark 14:1-2, and Luke 22:1, this conversation is taking place just two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when Jesus will be arrested and subsequently crucified at the hands of the Romans. In addition, Jesus’ comment in Matthew 24:36, “Regarding that day and hour [of his second appearance], no one knows, not even the angels (*angeloi*) of the heavens, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (cf. Mark 13:32), is key to realizing that, while Jesus knows that Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed fairly soon, he will leave the earth and then return much later to restore the Kingdom of Israel. However, not even he as the “icon/image of the invisible God” (according to the apostle Paul in Colossians 1:15) does not know the exact time of either of these events or even who will destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Maybe it will be the Romans, but it could be another nation in history which soon follows Rome and its empire.

The temple of Jesus’ day was a pet project of King Herod the Great, who as an Edomite and descendant of Esau, Jacob’s brother, who lost the blessing of their father Isaac, wanted to ingratiate himself to the Jews. Its construction as a replacement for the one built by Zerubbabel after the return of the exiles from Babylon and completed in 520 B.C. was begun over forty years before this conversation between Jesus and his disciples and was still not yet finished. It eventually became one of the seven wonders of the world so that it obviously was an imposing and beautiful building. Therefore, it is no surprise that his disciples are commenting on its magnificence.

This small section of Matthew 24:1; Mark 13:1; and Luke 21:5 introduces the initial subject of their conversation—the temple and its aesthetic beauty that is so striking to the disciples. Matthew and Mark mention that Jesus is leaving the temple. Matthew says that his disciples refer to the temple buildings in speaking to him. Luke says that some of them are talking presumed among themselves about the temple and how beautiful a building it is. These authors are not contradicting each other but, like typical storytellers, merely pointing out different elements of the scene. Mark also provides us with the very words to Jesus of one of the disciples in the midst of all them talking to one another, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”

In Mark we learn that the disciples call Jesus “Teacher,” *didaskale* in Greek or probably Rabbi (literally “my master”) in Hebrew. They consider him their instructor in all things divine and biblical, and they are willing to follow his teaching either in line with other Jewish teachers of his day such as the scribes and Pharisees, or in contradiction to them—if necessary. I guess, by this time, they could have called him “Messiah” (*christe* in Greek, *mashiach* in Hebrew) or “Lord” (*kurie* in Greek, *adonai* in Hebrew) but probably their main way of addressing him was as Rabbi, the one who is guiding them in understanding the Old Testament scriptures, while they recognize that his understanding of God and of the process of His bringing about salvation from their earthly enemies and God’s condemnation is different from that of their Jewish leaders. For example, during the last three years Jesus’ assessment of human sin has caused them to realize that it is more problematic than the other Jewish leaders have taught, while his take on God’s grace means that it is more powerful and cannot be earned, along with the fact that their salvation necessitates his death on the cross—even if they have not yet fully grasped these concepts.

Matthew 24:2	Mark 13:2	Luke 21:5b-6	
24:2 And he 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."	13:2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."	He said, 21:6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."	

This section is Jesus' terse and categorical prediction of the impending and complete destruction of the temple. All three gospel authors quote Jesus to the effect that he refers to the temple and its beauty, and then he declares, saying that not one stone will be left upon another, that it will be totally razed to the ground. Matthew and Mark are probably closer to what Jesus actually said when he poses a rhetorical question to the disciples, "Do you not see all these things?" (Matthew) and "Do you see these great buildings?" (Mark). Of course they are looking at the temple, and the question is intended to focus their attention on it. Luke interprets Jesus' rhetorical question by having him speak directly about the temple and its associated buildings, "As for these things which you are looking at..."

Matthew and Luke are also probably closer to what Jesus said in the second part of his comments as he simply uses the future tense to describe the destruction of the temple by the fact that "not one stone [of the building] will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." Luke interprets the future tense by adding that Jesus means that "the days will come" when all this takes place.

By the way, the destruction of the temple will indicate another judgment by God on Israel, His chosen people ethnically speaking. He had already brought about this same kind of judgment on them in 722 B.C., when Assyria destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel, and in 586 B.C., when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, the temple of Solomon, and the southern Kingdom of Judah. Plus, we should consider Daniel 9:20-27, especially vs. 24-27, for what has helped inform Jesus of the future,

Daniel 9:20 I was still speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, thus presenting my request before Yahweh my God on behalf of the holy mountain of my God.

9:21 While I was still speaking in prayer, the person Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

9:22 He gave me instruction, talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

9:23 "At the beginning of your requests, the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, because you are chosen for mercy. Therefore, give heed to the message, and gain understanding of the vision.

9:24 "Seventy weeks have been specified for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

9:25 "Therefore, know and discern that, from the issuing of the order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

9:26 "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 holy place. Its end will come with a flood. Even to the end there will be war. Desolations are determined.

9:27 "And the covenant with the many will remain strong for one week. But in the middle of the week the sacrifice and grain offering will cease. And on the wing of abominations there will be the one who devastates, even up to a complete destruction. And that which has been determined will pour out on the one being ruined."

Assuming Jesus has studied the above passage, here is my guess what he learned from it. This is not as detailed an analysis as these verses deserve, but my bare bones conclusion is that Gabriel is saying the following in vs. 24-27—

Verse 24 – God declares that the Jews as a nation and God’s chosen people have “seventy weeks” to humble their hearts before Him, appropriately repent of their sins, obey Him properly, bring about the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant, usher in the age of the Messiah who will rule over them and the world, and make the land of Israel the sacred place that He has promised for them.

The “seventy weeks” means $70 \times 7 \text{ years} = 490 \text{ years}$

Verse 25 – God declares that there will be “seven weeks” plus an additional “sixty-two weeks” between 457 B.C., the date of the executive order by Artaxerxes I of Persia to rebuild Jerusalem after its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., AND the arrival of the Jewish Messiah on the land of Israel in A.D. 27 when John the Baptist baptizes Jesus of Nazareth. Plus, Jerusalem will be rebuilt in “seven weeks,” meaning by 408 B.C.

The “seven weeks” means $7 \times 7 \text{ years} = 49 \text{ years}$, the period of time between Artaxerxes’ order to rebuild Jerusalem and its completion in 408 B.C.

The “sixty-two weeks” means $62 \times 7 \text{ years} = 434 \text{ years}$, the period of time between the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in 408 B.C. until Jesus the Messiah appears on the scene in Israel in A.D. 27

The “seven weeks” + “sixty-two weeks” = $49 \text{ years} + 434 \text{ years} = 483 \text{ years}$, the total period of time as described above

Verse 26 – God declares that after the “sixty-two weeks,” which come after the “seven weeks,” the Jewish Messiah will be killed, resulting, according to God’s judgment of the Jews, in war and devastating circumstances for the Jews up to moment of the destruction of Jerusalem, which we know takes place in A.D. 70 by the Roman army under General Titus. This will include the killing and dispersion of the Jews from the land of Israel, which we also know takes place in both A.D. 70 and during the subsequent rebellion by the Jews against Rome in A.D. 132-135.

The “seven weeks” means $7 \times 7 \text{ years} = 49 \text{ years}$ from 457 B.C. to 408 B.C., from Artaxerxes’ order to rebuild Jerusalem to its completion date

The “sixty-two weeks” means $62 \times 7 \text{ years} = 434 \text{ years}$ from 408 B.C. to A.D. 27, from the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the year that John the Baptist baptizes Jesus, who spends the next three years proclaiming that he is the Jewish Messiah

Verse 27 – God declares that He will remain faithful to His promise to hold off on judging the people of Israel until the very end of the “seventy weeks,” while the death of the Messiah, which relativizes the Mosaic Covenant and its sacrifices, will occur halfway through the final “week” of the “seventy weeks.” This act by the Jews which will so detestable to God that He will destroy Jerusalem with the Roman army in A.D. 70, just as He has planned and purposed, so that the Jewish people will be killed and expelled from the land of Israel during that event and their subsequent rebellion against Rome in A.D. 132-135. Indeed, the Jews for the most part will vacate the land until the rise of the Zionist movement in the 19th century.

The “one week” means 7 years , the last seven years of the 490 years, from A.D. 27 to 34, from Jesus’ beginning his ministry when John the Baptist baptizes him to 3½ years after his crucifixion.

The “middle of the week” means 3½ years after A.D. 27 in A.D. 30 when Jesus the Messiah is crucified and killed as a propitiatory offering to God and the basis for God’s eternal forgiveness of the Jewish (and Gentile) people, which automatically relativizes the sacrifices and offerings of the Mosaic Covenant.

“On the wing of the abominations” means in the aftermath of the Jews’ committing the detestable act of putting to death their own Messiah, which results in the “complete destruction” of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the people of Israel from their land until the Zionist movement of the 19th century.

A clarification – Many Bible students interpret the final effects of the latter part of v. 26 and all of v. 27 as referring to the world dictator who arises in the end times immediately before Jesus' return, makes a covenant with the Jews for 7 years, and who eventually desecrates the temple of God and produces a great destruction on the land of Israel among the Jews. I am suggesting that, in line with vs. 24-26, the covenant maker is God, who remains committed to His promise to wait at least 490 years before He destroys Jerusalem, which will come after the Jews crucify and kill their own Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. He will give them another 3½ years after the crucifixion to repent, but then God will be determined to destroy the city and the temple, which is exactly what happens.

Therefore:

The "seventy weeks" (490 years) extend from 457 B.C. to A.D. 34
 The "seven weeks" (49 years) extend from 457 B.C. to 408 B.C.
 The "sixty-two weeks" (434 years) extend from 408 B.C. to A.D. 27
 The last "week" (7 years) extends from A.D. 27 to A.D. 34

Therefore, to describe the above in another way, from the latest date to the earliest date:

A.D. 34 is the end of God's promise of 490 years to forego judging the people of Israel if they will only obey Him properly—with changed hearts, authentic belief, and obedience.
 A.D. 30, half way through the 70th "week," is the date of the death of the Messiah.
 A.D. 27 is the arrival of the Messiah on the scene on the land of Israel.
 408 B.C. is the completion of rebuilding Jerusalem.
 457 B.C. is the date of the order by Artaxerxes I of Persia to rebuild Jerusalem.
 539 B.C. is the date of Daniel's prayer and God's response through Gabriel.

Thus, I suggest that, by means of Daniel 9:24-27, Jesus knows that God will invoke His promise to Daniel to commit Himself irrevocably to destroying the temple and Jerusalem again, which will include another time of expelling the Jews from the land. This will be when "the wing of abominations," starting with the Jews' putting to death their own Messiah, take place, and the Jews inevitably do not repent. As we learn from the book of Acts, after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, they continue to reject the gospel at all levels of society, especially their leadership and the Sanhedrin. Then, relatively soon after the end of the 3½ years grace period, they angrily reject the gospel when the apostle Paul proclaims it to them in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13). Paul tells them that he is turning his focus from them to the Gentiles in their city. Nevertheless, Paul keeps trying to persuade the Jews to embrace Jesus as their Messiah in other cities such as Iconium (Acts 14), Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17), Corinth (Acts 18), and Ephesus (Acts 19). As he says in Romans 9-11, he hopes to annoy the Jews sufficiently that they think long and hard about what he is teaching, so that they change their minds and embrace the good news of Jesus as their Messiah. However, most of them continue to reject it—both those living on the land of Israel and those living throughout the rest of the Roman Empire.

As a result, God soon brings about two more catastrophic judgments of the Jews living on the land of Israel, which will only presage an even worse judgment immediately before Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel. The first catastrophic judgment is in A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus destroys Jerusalem and the temple during the reign of Emperor Vespasian, and many Jews die from hunger and by Roman swords once they breach the city's walls. The second catastrophic judgment is in A.D. 132-135 when Emperor Hadrian brings General Sextus Severus from Britain and his best soldiers from Germany to put an end to the Bar Kochba revolt. They destroy over a thousand towns and villages and kill almost 600,000 Jews. They exile any surviving Jew or sell him into slavery, scattering them throughout the Roman Empire. Hadrian renames the area Palaestina (Palestine) as an insulting reminder to the Jews of their ancient enemy, the Philistines.

The exile of A.D. 132-135 also means one more scattering of the Jews from the land of Israel before they are finally restored to it in prosperity, success, and with their permanent king, the Messiah. We know that this will be when Jesus appears for the second time, and all the remaining, living Jews become

authentic believers in God and in Jesus. In addition, we learn from recent history that the Jews were dispersed by the Romans never to return until the Zionist movement of the 19th century, which culminated in the creation of the modern state of Israel in May of 1948. However, I think that the immigrations of Jews during the latter part of the 19th century and that have continued until today should not yet be considered the final restoration of the Jews to the land, because this will occur only after the third and worse judgment by God on the Jews takes place. This will be the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5, when God judges and kills all the unbelieving Jews worldwide—as described in the book of Revelation.

Then, after this final judgment, Jesus will return, and God will fully change the hearts of the “144,000” Jews who have been protected from the invasion and destruction caused by the Man of Lawlessness and his army (cf. 2 Thessalonians; Daniel 11,12; and Revelation). Consequently, present-day Israel is the main arena in which God’s last judgment of the Jews will take place before Jesus’ second appearance and before he restores the Kingdom of Israel. Nevertheless, Revelation 16:17-20 indicates that all unbelieving Jews throughout the world will experience God’s judgment during this time by being killed by earthquakes—

Revelation 16:17 “Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, ‘It is done.’

18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth [land], so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

19 The great city [Jerusalem] was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great [the Jewish economic and cultural influence on the peoples of the world] was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.”

To summarize, Jesus is simply saying in this small section of the Olivet Discourse that the temple will be destroyed, but we learn from many other passages in the Bible that his will be in conjunction with many more significant events surrounding the Jews and their Messiah, especially his return and second appearance—as Jesus will go on to describe.

Matthew 24:3	Mark 13:3-4	Luke 21:7	
<p>24:3 As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying,</p> <p>“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”</p>	<p>13:3 As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning him privately,</p> <p>13:4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”</p>	<p>21:7 They questioned him, saying,</p> <p>“Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”</p>	

This section indicates that Jesus and his disciples have left the temple mount, crossed the Kidron Valley to the east where the Garden of Gethsemane is located, and climbed up the Mt. of Olives so that they can look down to the west on the temple. Matthew and Luke say that he “was sitting on the Mount of Olives,” which probably means that they were all seated and wanting to know what Jesus meant by what he had just said about the destruction of the temple buildings. Mark adds that the mountain is “opposite

the temple,” meaning that it is situated across a valley and to the east, while it is also a little higher in elevation. Thus, seated with Jesus on the Mt. of Olives and looking down with wonder on the magnificence of the temple, his disciples curiously question him about his statement to the effect that it will eventually be destroyed.

Luke does not mention that they are on the Mt. of Olives. He also is the most general and says that “they” questioned Jesus, referring to the “some” in v. 5 who were talking among themselves about the temple. Mark is the most specific and says that Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Jesus privately. Matthew takes a middle stance and says that the disciples asked him privately. He could be referring to only Peter, James, John, and Andrew, but more likely these four began questioning Jesus and then the whole group, once they saw them start to talk to Jesus, joined them because they, too, were perplexed by his answer that not one stone of the temple would be left on another. That is a lot of destruction. And the word “privately” means that all these disciples are the only ones who hear Jesus’ answer. In other words, this instruction and teaching are for his close disciples only and not for the general public—for the time being.

The next part of the section contains the question(s) that the disciples ask Jesus in the light of his statement regarding the destruction of the temple and its buildings. The question is basically, “When will this happen?” But Matthew’s account reveals that they are thinking of more than the temple’s being destroyed. And Luke tells us that once again they address Jesus as “Teacher,” i.e., Rabbi.

All three authors state the first part of the disciples’ question, “When will these things [the destruction of the temple and its buildings] happen?” They want to know if this event will it be sooner or later? Will it be during their lifetimes or after? In other words, they are puzzled, because here is the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who they are convinced will restore the Kingdom of Israel, but it has been obvious that the Jews, especially their leaders, the Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and chief priests, are stubbornly refusing to embrace him as such. Now, Jesus says that the temple will be destroyed, thus declaring that God will unleash His judgment again on the Jews—as He did in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians put an end to the northern Kingdom of Israel and took many of those Jews in captivity and in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians swooped down on the Kingdom of Judah, destroyed Jerusalem and the first temple of Solomon, and took the remaining Jews into captivity. Therefore, what is the connection between this upcoming catastrophe and Jesus’ role as king and Messiah? In other words, Jesus’ disciples are still working on understanding God’s response to the Jews’ obstinacy in embracing him as the Messiah in the light of His promises to Abraham to form his descendants into a “great nation” and to provide them with a Messiah and king (cf. Genesis 12:1-3 and 2 Samuel 7).

Mark and Luke then add the question of what will be the “sign” that can be observed by the people of Israel as “when all these things are going to be fulfilled” (Mark), or “when these things are about to take place” (Luke)? In other words, what will be the events leading up to such a disaster as the destruction of the temple (and presumably Jerusalem in which it resides)? And it should not surprise us that the disciples think that there will be signs when the temple is destroyed., etc. The Old Testament describes signs of various kinds (famines, earthquakes, diseases, etc.) that either occurred during previous events, e.g., when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt during the Exodus, or will occur in the future, e.g., the prophet Joel’s predictions of astronomical and cosmic events at the end of the age.

Nevertheless, are these disciples surprised by Jesus’ prediction of the temple’s being torn down? Perhaps they are not in the light of Jewish leadership’s (and many other Jews’) repeated rejection of him as the Messiah. Plus, Jesus has been telling his disciples consistently that their leaders will kill him, even though he will rise from the dead on the third day (cf. Matthew 16:21-23). But how will God end up fulfilling His promise to make the Jews the greatest nation in history if the they reject Jesus as the Messiah, so that God judges them and destroys Jerusalem and the temple—again? Plus, could it be that God finally gives up on the Jews for all the rebellion they have demonstrated against Him, especially rejecting Jesus who is supposed to be their own Messiah, and does something radical such as transfers His promise of greatness to only the followers of Jesus, the community of believers comprising mostly Gentiles and some Jews during the rest of human history?

Matthew in the last half of v. 3 puts this latter question of a “sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled” in terms of—

- 1) “the sign” to be observed by the Jews during Jesus’ “coming,” i.e., his *parousia* (τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας), and

- 2) “the sign” to be observed by the Jews at “the end of the age” (τὸ σημεῖον... τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος).

Thus, Matthew makes more explicit what the disciples are thinking in regard to the whole idea of the destruction of the temple. It will involve the two events that are important to God and His completing His plans for the Messiah. This first event will be Jesus’ *parousia* (παρουσία), which means more than just his return. In the disciples’ minds, it will be his grand entrance into the nation of Israel where he introduces himself to them as their king, and it will be when he brings about the goal, or “end,” of the present age, which is for God to fulfill his promise to the Jews and make of them the greatest nation and people in human history (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

As a result, God’s bringing about His promise to the Jews will be the culmination of this era, when they live peacefully on the land of Israel under Jesus’ rule and finally exercise authority over the Gentiles. Indeed, they Jews will become the dominant force on the earth, while the Gentiles will lose the power they have wielded in history and will become subservient to the Jews, as described in Deuteronomy 28:13.

Deuteronomy 28:13 “Yahweh will make you [the Jews] the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, **14** and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

Ever since their sojourn in Egypt, when that Gentile nation ruled over them, the Jews have felt the oppression or persecution of many Gentile nations, right up through and including the modern State of Israel when four Arab nations, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, attacked them in 1948 and at other times since then. Many more nations and peoples, e.g., the Iranian government, still hope for their destruction, while the United States rules over them in the sense that they are completely dependent on them and other western countries for military aid and the ability to defend themselves. But Revelation 20 speaks of Jesus’ return and rule over not only the Jews but also the rest of the world, and Revelation 21 indicates that God will destroy the present realm after the Kingdom of Israel has run its course and then create an entirely new and eternal realm. Therefore, God will not allow any group of people, not even the Jews in the midst of their current secular and atheistic ideologies, prevent Him from carrying out His plans in regard to the nation of Israel and the Gentile countries and peoples.

Since Luke and Mark present the question in very much the same terms, while Matthew provides more detail, it probably means that Luke and Mark state the question as it was really asked by the disciples, and Matthew edits the question by adding more detail in order to make it clearer that they are concerned about both the destruction of the temple and Jesus’ setting up the Kingdom of Israel. Again, they have not become clear in their own minds exactly how Jesus accomplishes his messianic responsibility of destroying the Jews’ earthly enemies and setting up the restored Kingdom of Israel, especially now that he has boldly declared that the existing temple is coming down in probably the not too distant future. Therefore, they are wondering what will his grand appearance (*parousia*) will entail when he is installed as the final king of Israel.

The four men of Mark’s account, Peter, James, John, and Andrew (and then the rest of the disciples who join them in the other two accounts), who ask the question, may assume that the destruction of the temple will be at the same time as the culmination of the present age (cf. Matthew 24:3), i.e., when Israel’s enemies invade the land and subjugate the Jews and immediately afterwards Jesus destroys their enemies and sets up his kingdom on the land of Israel for the “thousand years” of Revelation 20. They also may be thinking that the temple will have to be rebuilt under the leadership of the Messiah. In addition, perhaps both these events, the destruction of the temple and Jesus’ restoring the Kingdom of Israel, will happen fairly soon, because his disciples have not yet grasped the fact that he is going to die, rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven in order to return at a time much later.

Previous passages in the gospels that say that the disciples are not understanding Jesus when he talks about his death and resurrection indicate that they are quite confused about his fulfilling the Old Testament role of Messiah. Acts 1 demonstrates this as well when they ask Jesus if he is now “restoring the kingdom to Israel” after his resurrection, but he has to put them off by saying that it is not for them to know the timing of this event. Most likely, it is only after Pentecost and the Holy Spirit comes upon them to work more aggressively in reminding them all that Jesus had taught them, including this Olivet Discourse,

where he makes it evident that there is a long period of time between his first and second appearances, that they grasp the fact that this restoration takes place much later.

Thus, Jesus' disciples ask the questions of when and during what circumstances the destruction of the temple and his making it obvious that he is the king of Israel will take place. Now, Jesus will answer these questions.

Matthew 24:4-5	Mark 13:5-6	Luke 21:8	
<p>24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.</p> <p>24:5 “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.</p>	<p>13:5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.</p> <p>13:6 “Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and will mislead many.</p>	<p>21:8 And he said, “See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not go after them.</p>	

Here Jesus begins his answer to the disciples' two questions—

- 1) When and what will be the circumstances of the destruction of the temple?
- 2) When and what will be the circumstances and signs leading up to and involving Jesus' *parousia* when he officially takes on the responsibility of being the king of Israel?

It would have been nice if Jesus had explicitly said, “I am now answering the first question...”, and then afterwards said, “Now I am answering the second question.” Instead, Jesus is not so clear, and some of his long answer could apply to either question, so that we will have to ponder his words very carefully in order to interpret his whole answer correctly. In fact, it seems to me that, except for Matthew 24:15-20, Mark 13:14-18, and Luke 21:20-21 (along with vs. 22-24 that help point to the far distant future), about 90% of this whole discourse is about Jesus' *parousia* and second coming. It is as though Jesus is saying, “Yes, the temple will be destroyed, but regardless of when you live, be people who are ‘on the alert’ and properly expectant of my return when I will restore and establish the Kingdom of Israel.”

Plus, it certainly makes sense that most of what Jesus says here in the Olivet Discourse is about his return, because, as the culmination of the present age, it will obviously be more important than the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple for the second time in Jewish history. This is not to say that Jerusalem's sack by Rome, the temple's razing by the same army, and the killing and dispersion of hundreds of thousands of Jews (along with the suffering that the Jews have experienced over the last two thousand years) is not important. But the glory of God's installing His kingdom on earth through Jesus the Messiah when he makes his *parousia* and grand appearance will far outweigh the significance and effects of the judgment of Israel in the first and second centuries. Consequently, understanding God's judgment and discipline of the Jews is part and parcel of understanding the Bible, but understanding Jesus and his role in human and cosmic history is most important and paramount. This is the point of the overall message of the both the Old Testament and the New Testament. To grasp the significance of Jesus of Nazareth is to understand God's eternal purposes for bringing the universe into existence.

In the light of Jesus' statements in the whole discourse, we can ask of this section, “Is Jesus encouraging people not to be misled either before the destruction of the temple or before his *parousia* and restoring the Kingdom of Israel, or both?” I think that he is focusing here on “the end of the age” of Matthew 24:3 and, therefore, on his second coming. But, of course, it is important that people not be misled from the biblical truth at any time, even before the destruction of the temple.

But we start our analysis of this section by realizing that there are three options for who the “you” are to whom Jesus is addressing himself when he says, for example, in Matthew 24:4, “See to it that no one misleads you.”

- 1) The “you” are Peter, Andrew, James, and John, along with their Jewish peers who believe in Jesus—thus a specific and immediate “you” where he is referring to his own Jewish disciples and their contemporaries.

- 2) Anyone who lives through the long time between Jesus' first appearance and his second appearance, and whom he is implying in Matthew 24:7ff., Mark 13:7ff., and Luke 21:9ff., so that Peter, Andrew, James and John are merely representatives of them—thus a specific, immediate “you” (his disciples and their contemporaries) that looks beyond them to a future “you” (i.e., all future Christians, especially Jewish Christians, even after the temple is destroyed), during whose time most of what Jesus is referring to will take place between his two appearances.
- 3) All Christians who exist at the time when any of these events take place between the moment when Jesus is speaking to the moment of his return—thus a general, future “you” of Christians.

Because of the long time implied in just Matthew 24:7,8; Mark 13:7,8, and Luke 21:9, the second option makes more sense than option #1. This is because, as Jesus himself says later in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, not even he knows the date of his return. As he goes on to indicate, it is simply a long way away. Thus, the rest of the discourse shows that his return will be after a long period of time. As I suggested above in my analysis of Daniel 9:24-27, this is probably in the midst of his knowing that the destruction of the temple will occur fairly soon. There will be a total of 490 years of relative grace and mercy that God grants the Jews from Artaxerxes I of Persia's order to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 B.C. for them to repent and demonstrate authentic belief and obedience in Him. The end of this 490 years is A.D. 34. Yet, about 3½ years or so into the last 7 years of the 490 years, they crucify Jesus and continue to rebel against God during the remaining 3½ years. As a result, God brings about both the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans 40 years after Jesus' death in A.D. 70 and the dispersion of the Jewish people from the land by the Romans between A.D. 132 and 135. Again, I think that Jesus knew that these important events of his death, Jerusalem's and the temple's destruction, and the scattering of the Jewish people from the land would occur fairly soon.

And because there is the possibility that the disciples, even Peter, Andrew, James, and John, may be alive when at least the destruction of Jerusalem takes place, the second option above makes more sense than option #3. Also, because Jesus is directly addressing the disciples, option #2 makes more sense than that of #3. Consequently, Jesus is saying that first his disciples and second any of his disciples after them before his return and grand appearance to restore the Kingdom of Israel should make sure that they are not misled by false Messiahs.

In Matthew, Jesus is certainly addressing the second question by the disciples about the finalization of the present age along with his indicating that it does coincide with his “coming” (παρουσία), because he relates the “end” (τὸ τέλος, v. 7) or goal to other people who claim to be the Messiah, meaning that they declare that the Messiah has “come” (cf. v. 3) and the “end of the age” has arrived when God is finally fulfilling His promise and making the Jews the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-2 and the Abrahamic Covenant.

But as we will see, because Matthew 24:6-8, Mark 13:7-8, and Luke 21:9-11 indicate that Jesus' establishing the Kingdom of Israel is still a long way off, he wants to encourage his current disciples (and all future Jewish Christians) to persevere in their belief in spite of the difficulty of waiting for God to end the present realm and any suffering they may have to endure because of their association with him. The longer the time that people have to wait for the kingdom to arrive and the harder it becomes to hold on to their faith in the midst of persecution, the more prone they will be to believe false information and in false Messiahs to satisfy their longing for the end.

Thus, false Messiahs will arise within the Jewish community in particular, and Jesus is warning the “you” (#2 above – his immediate disciples and future ones who live during the long period of time) of this exhortation not to give in to the lies and deceptions of these men. They will claim to be the Messiah, but they are lying. Luke adds that they will say, “The time is near,” referring to the time of ending the present age where the Jews have found themselves constantly oppressed and even hated and moving on to the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel when they become the rulers of the entire world with Jesus as their king. Nevertheless, Jesus is implying that it will be a long time before both his return and this restoration occur.

Therefore, the “you” of these statements must include those who will be followers of Jesus after his current disciples, depending on just how long God plans to wait before He sends him to restore the Davidic kingdom on the land of Israel. Because this has not yet happened even in our time, the “you” indirectly refers to Gentile believers around the world down through the centuries. However, I think that

Jesus is speaking mainly of the Jews of the Middle East as well as Jews throughout the rest of the world where they have been scattered (see note below).

“In my name” in this context means that the false Messiahs will claim to be fulfilling the role and function of the king of Israel, who is predicted by the Old Testament to rescue Israel from their enemies and to establish them as the most powerful nation in the world. As a result, the false Messiahs will declare as he has been saying in the midst of the 1st century Roman Empire, “I am the Messiah.” But they also may try to raise an army of their fellow Jews to fight against their enemies, starting with the Romans. Indeed, Jesus’ disciple Simon the Zealot had been a member of one of these insurrectionist groups hoping to push the Romans off their land. Or the false Messiahs’ claim may be like the preterist view of Bible teachers, who assert that Jesus already came in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans. But this view becomes a version of antisemitism, because it leads people away from God’s promises to the Jews to make of them a great nation and to restore them to the land of Israel (the same way that Replacement Theology does, claiming that God has transferred His promise for the nation of Israel, the Jews, to the Gentile and Jewish Church, so that the promised, temporary, earthly land of Israel becomes heaven and eternal life).

Jesus does say also that many will be deceived by the claims of false Messiahs (cf. Revelation 13 and the Beast from the sea, who is a kind of final (albeit Gentile) false Messiah, even declaring himself to be God). This points to the vital nature of Christians’ engaging in thorough and thoughtful Bible study to acquire as much understanding as possible of the history of the Jews between Jesus’ first and second comings. Fortunately, we can put together a fairly complete picture from the Old Testament prophets of Isaiah through Malachi, from this discourse, from the New Testament letters, and from Revelation of what the time period between Jesus’ first and second comings, including the intensified judgment of the Jews at the very end (the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord—cf. Malachi 4:5), will look like.

Mark and Luke have Jesus say simply that the false Messiahs will declare, “I am he.” Probably they are quoting Jesus exactly, while Matthew wants to make it clear that the “he” is the Christ, the Messiah. Matthew and Mark indicate that “many” will unfortunately follow these false Messiahs. As I mentioned above, Luke adds that the false Messiahs will claim that the “time” of restoring the Kingdom of Israel “is near,” so that Jesus is warning his listeners (and by extrapolation any Jew (and Gentile) living during the time leading up to the end of this age before Jesus’ return) not to give in to these lies and false claims when the time of his return may very well be a long way off.

Matthew 24:6	Mark 13:7	Luke 21:9	
24:6 “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.	13:7 “When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.	21:9 “When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.”	

Having warned his disciples not to be bamboozled by false Messiahs who claim that God’s fulfillment to free the Jews from their enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel is right around the corner, Jesus now goes on to explain why there will be a long period of time between his first and second appearances. It has to do with “wars,” “rumors of wars,” and “disturbances” that he is implying will affect and involve the Jews. But we still should consider that there are two options for what Jesus means by the word “end” (τὸ τέλος, *to telos*) here,

- 1) The “end” of the temple and its destruction, which we know took place in A.D. 70 by General Titus and the Romans, so that the wars and disturbances will occur within the next forty years.
- 2) The “end” of the present age when Jesus returns and that is still future to us, so that the wars and disturbances will occur during the next two thousand or more years.

Because of what Jesus describes in this and the next two sections, I think that he is talking about option #2, the “end” of the present age and his return, with a long period of time leading up to it.

Therefore, another way to say it is that he is referring to the “end” of the age of the Gentiles and of the persistent suffering of the Jews for their rejecting him when God, through the Messiah, will restore the Kingdom of Israel and fulfill His promise to form the people of Israel into the most powerful nation in human history. This will be according to the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22 and the statements by the prophets, Isaiah through Malachi along with the book of Revelation. The *telos* will also be the end of Gentile hegemony over the world and the beginning of Jewish hegemony in the manner of Jesus’ ruling over not only the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel but also the entire world. Every Gentile nation will be required to submit to Jesus and his authority, even if many of them as individuals reject him as the Messiah. In fact, the continued existence of unbelief in the world will become clear at the end of Jesus’ rule over the world when Satan is released from his “thousand year” imprisonment and permitted to deceive the Gentiles one more time into attempting to attack and destroy Jesus and his kingdom. Revelation 20 speaks of this event and how Satan’s attempt will fail miserably, culminating in the second resurrection of sinful human beings, which will involve all *unbelievers*, who will experience their final judgment and resultant destruction because of the Great White Throne Judgment.

I am also assuming that, because of the first promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to make Abraham’s physical descendants a “great nation” and that Jesus is talking to Jews whose scriptures, the Old Testament, explicitly predict this happening for them, history is Israel-centric and Jewish-centric. Consequently, Jesus could be talking about “wars,” “rumors of wars,” and “disturbance” which involve only the Jews and their enemies, that they will consistently declare during the time between his first and second appearances that they are going to attack the Jews on the land of Israel, that their declarations will turn into actual attacks on the Jews, and that their declarations will turn into such things as the Holocaust of World War II and the pogroms of the Soviet Union. And, of course, these declarations and events will obviously frighten the Jews. However, the next section indicates that these wars are between multiple ethnic groups and nations, so that, while they involve the Jews and their immediate enemies in the Middle East, they also will be much more widespread. Indeed, the whole world will experience conflicts between nations as the military landscape of humanity from the time of Jesus’ first appearance to his return and *parousia*.

In addition, these attacks on the Jews and the “wars” and “rumors of wars” between other ethnic groups and nations will not mean that the present age has finally come to an “end” and the return of the Messiah is in the process of happening. As Jesus says in Matthew and Mark, “that is not yet the end,” and in Luke, “the end does not follow immediately.” In other words, there will be multiple attacks against the Jews, along with conflicts within nations and global conflicts between nations, before his return. Certainly, pursuing a path of “non-violence” is not an immoral goal, but it is unrealistic in the light of God’s plans and purposes that involve a satanic influence in all nations and which results in conflicts between individuals, groups of individuals, and even, if not especially, the Jews.

Thus, Jesus’ point is that, between his death (and resurrection and ascension) and his *parousia* (his grand appearance), when he restores the Davidic Kingdom of Israel with himself as the final king, it will be a long time, indeed long enough that some people will become weary of having to wait, so that they become susceptible to being deceived by false Messiahs who precede Jesus’ return. Embracing false Messiahs will also occur because the Jews (and others) will simply become afraid of the possibility of violence towards them and being attacked.

But Jesus tells his eager listeners in Matthew, “See that you are not frightened,” in Mark, “Do not be frightened,” and in Luke, “Do not be terrified.” He is encouraging his current and future disciples to work through their fear with genuine belief in order to gain the eternal Kingdom of God. Fear is a natural human response when we encounter danger and the potential to suffer and be harmed. Plus, Jesus is stating that violence among and between human beings throughout the times of the Gentiles will be a necessary part of God’s plan and story before he establishes his kingdom on the land of Israel and rules the whole world. But Jesus wants his followers to embrace wholeheartedly the truth that God will bring all the wars and conflicts to an end when He sends Jesus the Messiah to destroy Israel’s enemies and reestablish the Kingdom of Israel for the symbolic “thousand years” as described in Revelation 20. The perseverance of their belief in this truth will be the important mitigating factor with respect to their natural fear. The biblical truth of God’s fulfilling His plans in the future is the best tranquilizer of the fear of present danger.

While Matthew and Mark speak of “wars and rumors of wars” (πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων) Luke speaks of “wars and disturbances” (πολέμους καὶ ἀκαταστασίας). These latter in Luke refer to disorderly and violent protests against existing authorities that will include those within nations against their own governments. Thus, Jesus is speaking of international and intranational wars, of wars between

nations and civil wars within nations, and these will involve even the Jews against other nations and within their own nation. All these also correspond to the first two seals of Revelation 6,

The First Seal – A White Horse and Political Oppression Towards the Jews

Revelation 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and in order that he may conquer.

The Second Seal – A Red Horse and Wars and Lawlessness Towards the Jews

Revelation 6:3 And when he broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.” **4** And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

These two seals, the first two horses of the Four Horses of the Apocalypse, symbolize political oppression towards the Jews, such as the Holocaust of World War II, and wars and lawless behavior, also towards the Jews, such as the current attacks and rhetoric coming from the surrounding Middle Eastern countries and protesters in the rest of the world. John, the author of Revelation and recipient of its visions, is writing about global and regional conflicts that will spell absence of peace and moments of hardship for the Jews, which will recur from time to time between Jesus’ first and second appearances.

In all three gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus is encouraging his disciples, who are definitely Jewish, and, by extrapolation, future believing Jews and Gentiles not to become frightened in the face of all the human conflicts and the effects that these will have on them during the time between his two appearances. Indeed, he says that these things “must” (δεῖ) occur as part of God’s sovereign plan and an integral part of the story which He is telling. The proper conclusion that anyone should draw from these “wars,” “rumors of wars,” and “disturbances” is that it is more important to fear God and His eternal condemnation and destruction than to fear persecution and death from human beings in the midst of wars and civil wars.

Jesus speaks of the same things in Luke 12:4-5,

Luke 12:4 “I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. **5** But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!”.

To summarize, by Jesus’ commenting that these international and intranational wars and conflicts, he means that they do not spell the absolute “end” of the present age, so that there will be many of them. Therefore, he is letting his disciples know that his *parousia* and grand appearance to reestablish the Kingdom of God is a long way off. And he will provide more explanation of this fact in the next section. We can also conclude that Jesus’ return will take place far beyond A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, in contrast to the claim of preterists that he appeared again in A.D. 70.

Matthew 24:7	Mark 13:8	Luke 21:10-11	
24:7 “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 24:8 “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.	13:8 “For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.	21:10 Then He continued by saying to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 21:11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.	

In this section, Jesus continues to point out that his reestablishing the Kingdom of Israel when he returns is a far distant reality. In both Matthew and Mark, Jesus uses the analogy of a mother in labor. Indeed, the kinds of grave disruptions in human beings' lives he is describing in the previous section and this section are simply the "beginning of birth pangs," which, in line with the analogy, would still mean that the "birth" of Jesus' *parousia*, his grand entrance to establish the Kingdom of Israel, will not occur for a long, long time. Yes, his second appearance and the finalization of the present age is on its way, but just as the beginning of birth pangs for a mother do not necessarily mean that the baby is about to arrive in the next few moments, neither will all these global, *human and natural* disasters mean that Jesus is setting up his kingdom anytime very soon.

In Mark 13:8, Jesus says, "For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines." Matthew adds "and earthquakes" in v. 7. Luke says in v. 11, "great earthquakes...plagues, and there will be terrors and great signs from heavens." Here are the international conflicts and natural catastrophes that will precede Jesus' return. While Jesus makes the global conflicts sound as though they will occur around the entire earth, perhaps the scope of his concerns may be only the boundaries of the Roman Empire and its neighbors in the Ancient Near East where plenty of these catastrophic events have occurred. Nevertheless, this world being one with its particular laws of physics and because of what we human beings are like, great wars between nations, large conflicts within nations, and massive natural disasters have taken place around the world for the last two thousand years.

As I said, Luke adds a few other mishaps to his list of events. The first is "plagues." These are large scale disasters that include fatal epidemic diseases (pestilences) that will affect a wide section of the Middle East and probably the rest of the world—such as the bubonic plague of the late 1300s that killed a third of the European population. By the way, the "plagues" of Luke and the "famines" of Matthew, Mark, and Luke correspond to the fourth seal of Revelation 6,

The Fourth Seal – a Pale Gray Horse and Violent Death, Famine, and Sickness of the Jews

Revelation 6:7 And when the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."

8 And I looked, and behold, an ashen [gray] horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

This is the fourth of the Four Horses of the Apocalypse, which symbolizes the many times before Jesus' return that the Jews will suffer death at the hands of other human beings, lack of food, and disease as described in Revelation 19 and 20. And Jesus must be implying the same encouragement as in the section above, that his disciples and future followers of him as the Messiah should not allow their fear of suffering during these natural disasters and even of death to frighten them and destroy their faith. All these events are a necessary part of God's story leading up to Jesus' grand appearance and restoring the Kingdom of Israel. Whether its celestial and divinely produced events or earthly and humanly produced catastrophes, these Jewish Christians and those who follow them (even within Gentile nations) should see all these kinds of events (wars, diseases, famines, etc.) as not only "signs" from God that history is on schedule for Jesus' return, but also opportunities to strengthen their faith through having learned their meaning as God's judgment on mainly Jewish unbelievers. The apostle Paul states categorically that Christians "exult in tribulations" and afflicts, because these motivate them to place their trust more deeply in God and to wait confidently for their entering into the eternal Kingdom of God.

Luke also adds "terrors and great signs from heaven." Jesus is probably referring to the prophet Joel, who speaks of the same kind of things in 2:28-32—

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass after this, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters will speak on behalf of God. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions.

2:29 And also on your servants and your maidservants, in those days I will pour out My Spirit.

2:30 And I will give signs in the heavens, and on the land blood, fire, and columns of smoke.

2:31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, in the presence of the coming of the Day of Yahweh, the great and fearful One.

2:32 And it will happen that all who call upon the name of Yahweh will escape to safety, because in the mountain of Zion and Jerusalem there will be someone who escapes to safety, just as Yahweh said, even among the survivors whom Yahweh is calling.

Jesus will provide more details regarding these same events in a little later in the discourse (Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, and Luke 21:25-26), but, briefly, God in Joel and Jesus in Luke's account are talking about destruction and devastation of the land of Israel prior to God's restoring the final Davidic kingdom under Jesus' rule and providing the Jews an existence of complete and permanent safety. Thus, while Matthew and Mark indicate that the wars, conflicts, and natural disasters precede Jesus' return during a long period of time, Luke clarifies Jesus' meaning by jumping to very near the end of the present age when cosmic events ("terrors and great signs from heaven") will eventually occur. Thus, all three authors are correct, and probably Luke wanted to mention the extra events to help dramatize Jesus' point—that he will not be returning for a long time, and there will be a lot of man-made events (e.g., wars, nations rising up against other nations), and God-made events (e.g., famines, earthquakes, plagues, terrors and signs from heaven), which will all bring great suffering on the Jews and the Middle East with collateral damage throughout the rest of the world.

Matthew 24:9-14	Mark 13:9-13	Luke 21:12-19	
<p>24:9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.</p> <p>24:10 "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.</p> <p>24:11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.</p> <p>24:12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.</p> <p>24:13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.</p> <p>24:14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.</p>	<p>13:9 "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.</p> <p>13:10 "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.</p> <p>13:11 "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>13:12 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.</p> <p>13:13 "You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.</p>	<p>21:12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.</p> <p>21:13 "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.</p> <p>21:14 "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;</p> <p>21:15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.</p> <p>21:16 "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,</p> <p>21:17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.</p> <p>21:18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish.</p> <p>21:19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.</p>	

In this lengthy section, Jesus is still describing the long period of time involving wars between nations, famines, earthquakes, plagues, and cosmic signs from heaven between his first and second

appearances. Therefore, the “you” in this section refers to his disciples and includes Christians, especially Jewish Christians, who live after them up to the time of his return. We notice that Luke begins with the words, “But before all these things...” This is to say, before all the negative experiences of the Jews really get rolling in history with the destruction of the temple forty years later in A.D. 70 and certainly after it, too, and before the final cosmic events Luke mentioned in v. 11 that will terrify them and other people in the Middle East (and, probably, throughout the rest of the world), the circumstances that Jesus will go on describe will occur. And his main point is that his followers will undoubtedly face persecution from their fellow human beings, because most of the Jews (and the Gentiles) will be unbelievers and hostile towards God. Again, the “you” involves all disciples of Jesus, starting with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and continuing until the end of the times of the Gentiles and God makes the dramatic change from the Gentiles’ exercising hegemony over the world to the Jews’ doing so.

Jesus thus indicates in Matthew 24:9, Mark 13:9, and Luke 21:12 that, not only will there be periodic Middle Eastern and global conflicts involving the Jews, along with plenty of natural disasters and eventually major cosmic destructive events (as he said in the previous verses), but Christians, and maybe especially Jewish Christians, will be severely hated on occasion (cf. Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17), rejected, and mistreated by their non-believing countrymen. Matthew 24:9 says, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name,” and Mark 13:9 speaks more specifically about the Jews, “But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them”, while Luke 21:12 is similar, “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.”

Indeed, Jewish (and Gentile Christians) will be killed because of their association with Jesus as the Messiah, while Jewish Christians (and, by extrapolation, certainly Gentile Christians too) will be brought before religious and government authorities on account of their biblical faith (for example, Paul in Corinth in Acts 18:12ff.). This is to say that not only will unbelieving *individuals* express their hostility towards Christians, but *religious and governmental groups and institutions* will do likewise. Plus, it is certainly possible that eventually individuals and groups who label themselves as Christians will antagonize and hate genuine believers just as the Jewish authorities and Jews of Jesus’ and the apostles’ day did towards them.

Next, Jesus says in Mark 13:10, “The gospel must first be preached to all the nations” (εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), and Matthew says in the last verse of this section, 24:14, “The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ) as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” Just how far abroad is Jesus thinking with the phrases “all the nations” and “the whole world.” Certainly, he means the Middle Eastern area and the Roman Empire. But he may also be thinking of the entire world, since Psalm 2, for example, speaks of the king of Israel ruling over “the nations/Gentiles as [his] inheritance and the ends of the earth as [his] possession” (Psalm 2:8). Thus, the longer God waits to bring about Jesus’ return, the more the rest of the world has become a part of this whole process. And once the gospel goes out to the all these Gentiles, who will, by God’s design, exercise the majority of power and authority over the world and the Jews, God will inaugurate the establishment of His earthly Kingdom of Israel through the second appearance of the Messiah. In Romans 11:25-29, the apostle Paul comments on this part of God’s plan,

Romans 11:25 Brothers, so that you are not trusting in your own wisdom, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, that a partial hardening has occurred to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **11:26** And without further ado all Israel will be saved just as it is written,

The One who delivers will come out of Zion; He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob
 <Isaiah 59:20>, **11:27** and this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins”
 <Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33-34 >.

11:28 On the one hand, they are enemies with respect to the good news on your account. On the other hand, they are beloved with respect to the choice on account of the fathers, **11:29** because the gracious gifts and calling of God are unchangeable.

In any event, Jesus is saying that his disciples, i.e., those present and those who will live in the future, during the entire period of time between his first coming and his setting up the Kingdom of Israel when he returns, will be given the opportunity to proclaim the “gospel” of the good news of his messiahship beyond the boundaries of Israel proper “to all the nations” and “in the whole world.”

The presentation of his message that he is the Messiah by his disciples to “all the nations” and “the whole world” may have come as quite a shock to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, who, just as they are not yet clear on the fact that Jesus is going to die, rise from the dead, and then ascend to return later, have also not yet fully understood God’s intentions to make many Gentiles His people by changing their hearts so that they become authentic believers. Nevertheless, God gives them all a wonderful object lesson in His international purposes for His Messiah when, in Acts 10 & 11, Peter reports to the Jewish, Christian leaders in Jerusalem on the effect of his evangelistic efforts among the *Gentile* family and friends of the Roman Centurion Cornelius who embrace his information about Jesus just as much as the apostles and disciples did in Acts 2 when God affirmed the inner work of His Spirit by causing everyone to speak about Him in foreign languages which they did not know. Then, there is Acts 15 where all the apostles and leaders of the Christians in Jerusalem finally figure out that the Gentiles are not obligated to obey the (Jewish!) Mosaic Covenant, while nevertheless having qualified by their faith in Jesus to take part in the fulfillment of God’s promises according to the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12.

And part of the reason that they will be given this opportunity will be the persecution which they will experience from unbelieving Jews and Gentiles who will demand an explanation for their unacceptable behavior. According to Mark 13:11 and Luke 21:13-15, Jesus encourages his disciples that God will give them both courage and the words that He wants them to speak by means of the inner work of the “Holy Spirit.” Mark’s account reads, “When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit,” and Luke writes, “¹³ It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. ¹⁴ “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; ¹⁵ for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.” In other words, Jesus’ followers will not have to “worry beforehand about what” they will say when they are arrested and brought before various religious and government authorities. Indeed, God will make sure that “none of [their] opponents will be able to resist or refute” the biblical “wisdom” that they will communicate.

Certainly, Jesus is not giving his disciples an excuse never to learn anything from the Bible about God and the good news that he is the Messiah. Instead, it makes more sense that his encouragement to all Christians who live between his two appearances is to learn as much as possible about the truth which God has provided sinful human beings through the scriptures, so that it is this learning which He will use when the Spirit directs them to speak on behalf of Jesus. During these trying moments, when hostile unbelievers are confronting them in regard to their faith in Jesus, God will overrule their fear by the powerful and inner work of His Spirit, providing them with both appropriate courage to speak and the proper words that they will use.

While Christians have used Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14 as the basis for missionary movements, starting in the 19th century, it is more coherent to understand Jesus to mean by this section that the presentation of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles will be more because of their persecuting Christians than because of the missionary movements. Jesus simply wants to warn and prepare his followers for what they are going to face in life. There is a lot of hostility to God and Jesus among unbelievers in this world and down through history. Nevertheless, these passages provide a good basis for Christians to use whatever biblical resources they have, so that they can take the opportunity to do the loving thing and proclaim the gospel however and whenever they can to everyone with whom they come in contact.

Mark’s next words of Jesus in v. 11 are, “When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.” Here, Jesus is indicating via Mark that it is the Holy Spirit who gives people the wisdom and courage to proclaim the gospel, while in vs. 14-15 of Luke, Jesus says that it is he who does so, “¹⁴ So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; ¹⁵ for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.” What Jesus means is that God’s Spirit as His invisible work will inwardly strengthen Peter, Andrew, James, and John, i.e., his immediate disciples (as mentioned by Mark), and the rest of the apostles as his authoritative spokesmen, so that they will have clear minds and thoughts to speak the truth which he taught them to those who mistreat them others.

Similarly, during the Upper Room Discourse of John 13-17, Jesus highlights to the eleven disciples (all of them minus Judas Iscariot), who become apostles, that the Holy Spirit will be their next *paracletos* (helper) who reminds them of the truth. While only these men with Jesus become his authoritative apostles, the Spirit as the *paracletos* and helper will basically be the same for future Christians. God will organize their thoughts at key moments, even under the pressure of persecution, and give them the ability to speak what they know about the gospel in order to inform those who are mistreating them.

Jesus then says in v. 12 and the first part of v. 13 of Mark's account, "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name..." Unfortunately, his disciples can look forward to even their own families, who we assume will remain unbelievers, persecuting them because of their association with Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, their family members who lack authentic faith will "hate" them and oppose them to the point of helping the authorities to "put [them] to death" on account of their being followers of Jesus. What an awful picture he is painting for his apostles and future believers.

However, this exact situation does not happen in the gospel accounts or the book of Acts, but it certainly becomes relevant for later generations of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Indeed, we will probably see this happen among the Jews on the land of Israel, just as genuine persecution towards the Jews in general and Christians specifically has been and is happening in countries surrounding Israel (and in other parts of the world), as we get closer to Jesus' return.

We can compare what Jesus is saying here with the entire chapter of Micah 7 and especially Micah 7:5-8—

Micah 7:5 Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom guard your lips. **6** For son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household. **7** But as for me, I will watch expectantly for Yahweh; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. **8** Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, Yahweh is a light for me.

Micah was a prophet to both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah in the mid-8th century B.C. He competently criticized the Israelites of both kingdoms for their unchanged hearts and disobedience towards God. Indeed, their behavior was so evil that he in these verses we hear him warn them to trust no one, not even their spouses, because there is so much corruption in the Jewish society that everyone is only out for himself or herself. Now, seven hundred years later, Jesus is saying that the contemporary Jewish culture is and will be just like Old Testament Israel, to the point that a Christians' own fathers, mothers, brothers, and sons will turn them in for their faith in Jesus, resulting possibly in execution and death.

Matthew says the same thing in v. 10, "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another." Luke has similar wording in vs. 16-17, "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of my name." The inevitable circumstances for Jesus, whom the Jewish leaders will soon crucify because they reject his claim to be the Messiah, will offend many (most?) of the Jews so that they, too, reject him. This will obviously place his followers in a precarious situation, resulting in the same kind of harm and suffering that Jesus will endure. It will also result in many Jews' (and Gentiles' later) apparently choosing to become believers in Jesus, but sadly they will give up their faith as the pressure and persecution towards them grows more intense.

Matthew goes on in 24:11 to speak again of lies' being disseminated within the Jewish culture, "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many." However, in this case the lies are coming from "false prophets" (cf. Matthew 24:4,5 regarding false Messiahs). Between Jesus' first and second appearances, not only will men lie and seek to persuade their fellow Jews that they are the Messiah, but also people will claim to speak for God in regard to the Messiah (maybe even Christian Bible teachers) when they are only doing so out of arrogance. They will come up with clever ideas and schemes with the express purpose of leading others away from God and the Messiah, even as they claim to speak biblical truth about God and the Messiah. For example, they may state that the Messiah has already come, as the preterists do, or that God has abandoned the Jews because they abandoned Him when they crucified Jesus, thus declaring the Kingdom of Israel to be gone forever. This will result in people taking their focus off God's promise to the Jews in the Abrahamic Covenant to make them a "great nation" (cf. Genesis

12:1-3), even persecuting them along with unbelievers in the rest of the world. Regrettably, these kinds of teaching can easily produce a dangerous level of antisemitism in both teachers and listeners, that is tantamount to rejecting God instead of obeying Him.

Next, Jesus adds the comments of Matthew 24:12, "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold." There are two options for interpreting his words—

- 1) He could be saying that the level of unbelief and hostility towards God in Jewish (and Gentile) culture will inevitably lead to these same unbelievers losing any ability to act in a loving and kind manner towards one another. In other words, the people of "lawlessness" are the same people whose "love will grow cold."
- 2) He could be saying that the level of unbelief and hostility towards God in Jewish (and Gentile) culture will demotivate even believers in their ability to act in a loving and kind manner towards these who are so hostile towards both God and them. In other words, the people of "lawlessness" are different from the people whose "love will grow cold."

Before we decide which option is correct, I think it is worth considering the next verse, v. 13, in Matthew (as well as at the end of Mark 13:13), "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." There are two options for what he means by the "end"—

- 1) The first option is the end of each individual Christian's life, with Peter, Andrew, James, and John as representatives of all Christians throughout the long time between Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and his *parousia* of setting up the kingdom.
- 2) The second option is the end of this age when he returns.

I think that the second option makes more sense in the light of Jesus' whole point in the Olivet Discourse and his lack of knowledge about exactly how long the age of the Gentiles is going to be. In his comments to them, he is using Peter, Andrew, James, and John as representatives of all Christians during this time between his first and second appearances. Therefore, the second option includes the first option, because it will be imperative for each Christian to persevere in genuine belief until either the end of his life or Jesus' *parousia*, when he restores the Kingdom of Israel, whichever occurs first.

Therefore, I also think that the statement of the increase of "lawlessness" and people's love growing old fits better with the first option regarding it. Jesus is saying that Jewish (and probably, by extrapolation, Gentile) society will slide more and more into immorality—theologically through complete misunderstanding and outright rejection of God, relationally through complete misunderstanding of biblical marriage and other relationships, sexually through complete misunderstanding of the physical roles of men and women that are meant for only a biblical marital relationship between a man and a woman, existentially through complete misunderstanding of the Bible's idea of human responsibility and self-worth, etc.

Plus, if we define "love" as a commitment to truth and worshiping God, along with treating people with genuine humility, kindness, and selflessness, rather than defining it strictly as a feeling accompanied by certain outward actions towards them, then "lawlessness" is foundationally characterized by the absence of biblical truth in individuals' thinking and relating towards God and towards one another. As a result, we can imagine how easy it is for "people's love [to] grow cold," regardless of how much they feel love and affection towards others, because their feelings and actions are based on lies and not on truth. Thus, *warm* love is biblically motivated love and caring for people from the truth about God and includes expressing truth to people, even if it means triggering their ire and persecution. *Cold* love is that which is fundamentally satanically and sinfully motivated and which has its source in lies and a false understanding of reality, resulting in the praise and affirmation of the surrounding culture and society that is mostly hostile towards God.

People in the *cold* love category will love this world, immorality, and themselves with their sinful and selfish pursuits more than they love God and are desirous of eternal life. Nevertheless, as Søren Kierkegaard argues in his book, The Sickness Unto Death, they will be in despair—unwilling to be who they really are, i.e., sinners who should consistently and humbly repent and submit themselves to God as He has instructed in the Bible. While Jesus is referring mainly to the situation for the Jews, the same will

probably be the case for the Gentiles. Therefore, by extrapolation, it will be the responsibility of Christians throughout history and the world to persevere “to the end” of this age in order to “be saved” from God’s wrath and destruction by continuing to demonstrate genuine, biblical love to one another, to their communities, and to the world, while others around them lose motivation to express any kind of genuine love for God and for their fellow human beings. The latter may claim that they love people, even that they are more loving than Christians because they fully accept the (immoral) lifestyles of all their fellow human beings. But instead of loving them, they fundamentally hate them (and their own selves) because they prefer lies to truth and are unwilling to acknowledge and submit to the truth of God in the Bible, whereby they would encourage themselves and one another to flee from the wrath of God by repenting of their sin and pursuing authentic, biblical truth and morality.

Luke finishes his section with vs. 18 & 19. First, Jesus says in v. 18, “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.” If we interpret this literally, it certainly seems contradictory to v. 16 to the effect that Christians will be put to death by their persecutors. Therefore, Jesus must be using an idiomatic expression, so that he is referring to the eternal existence of authentic believers. Even if they are put to death by their opponents who “hate” them, Christians will live on after their resurrection from the dead when Jesus returns as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Revelation 20. All authentic Christians, who are willing to endure betrayal by their family and the world’s hating them, will exist in the eternal Kingdom of God that begins with Jesus’ second appearance. This is also coherent with the next verse, Luke 21:19.

In v. 19, Jesus finishes by saying, “By your endurance you will gain your lives.” He uses the plural τὰς ψυχὰς (*tas psuchas*), and he includes the personal pronoun and adjective “your” (ὁμῶν). The word *psuche* (ψυχή) is translated either “soul” or “life.” But I suggest that, throughout the Bible, the Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ (*nephesh*) and the Greek ψυχή (*psuche*) refer to a person’s existence as a real, living human being. For example, the NAS95 translates Genesis 2:7,

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD [Yahweh] God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [*nephesh*].

The Septuagint translates *nephesh* with *psuche*, but I think the NAS95 is on the right track with the words “living being.” God created Adam, and the result was that he was a real, living, and existing human being. In other words, *nephesh* and *psuche* do not refer a certain part of Adam, i.e., his soul (so to speak). They are the way the biblical author identifies him as a created and existing being who is alive and well on the earth. Indeed, he is an existing human being. This is probably why the NAS95 correctly translates the last words of Luke 21:19 with “your lives” in contrast to the King James Version’s “your souls.” Consequently, Jesus is referring to his disciples’ existence in the eternal Kingdom of God and is saying that the “endurance” and perseverance of their belief in him and their obedience to God will allow them to “gain” (acquire, obtain, and possess) their future “lives.” Indeed, we could use the word “Lives” with a capital “L,” since he means eternal Life in the Kingdom of God, which he will bring about at his grand appearance and *parousia*. It is by the perseverance of their belief in Jesus as their Messiah, king, propitiatory offering, and high priest that authentic Christians obtain entrance into God’s eternal kingdom and the *aionic* Life that will never end.

Matthew 24:15	Mark 13:14a	Luke 21:20	
24:15 “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),	13:14 “But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand),	21:20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.	

At the beginning of this discourse, Jesus declared that the temple is going to be destroyed, and his disciples asked him when this would occur. But they were also curious about his *parousia*, that is, when he would make it clear and obvious that he is the Messiah by destroying Israel's earthly enemies and restoring all the Jews to the land of Israel under his rule. Up until this point in his explanation, Jesus has been describing various events which will occur before he ushers in the renewed Kingdom of Israel. These include—

- 1) Men who will falsely claim to be the Messiah
- 2) Wars and rumors of wars
- 3) Earthquakes, famines, and plagues on earth
- 4) Cosmic disturbances, terrors, and great signs from the direction of the sky
- 5) Bringing Christians before government and religious authorities to accuse them of wrongdoing and with the Christians' providing an explanation of the good news of Jesus as the Messiah
- 6) Persecution, imprisonment, and death to Christians in a world that is mostly hostile to God and to the truth of the Bible
- 7) Betrayal by unbelieving family members that may lead to death for the Christians
- 8) Lies and false ideas disseminated by people who claim to be students of the Bible and to speak for God
- 9) Claims by people to be loving people biblically, but who are promoting hate by basing their behavior on lies instead of on truth, so that people incur God's condemnation and destruction instead of eternal life
- 10) The proclamation of the information regarding Jesus to the entire Middle East and then to the rest of the world

And then, as Jesus puts it at the end of Matthew 24:14, "the end will come," meaning the end of the present age when he appears for the second time and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and when he rules over the whole world. But Jesus has not yet said anything about the destruction of the temple. Now, in Matthew 24:15-21, Mark 13:14-19, and Luke 21:20-24, he finally addresses this topic.

However, in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 respectively, Jesus will comment, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" and "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." We see that Jesus, even though he is God in the story of creation, does not know exactly when his return will take place. This probably also means that he does not know exactly when Jerusalem's destruction will occur or even what Gentile army will perform it. He might guess that it will be the Romans who devastate the city, the temple, and the Jewish people, but there is always the possibility that another Gentile nation will conquer the Romans and become the destroying force of Jerusalem, or even a different Gentile nation much, much later.

Nevertheless, based upon what Luke writes in I think that Jesus switches topics in Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, and Luke 21:20 so as to begin his explanation of the temple's destruction by saying, "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)" (Matthew 24:15). He is telling his disciples or those sometime after them that they will "see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken through Daniel the prophet," and it will be "standing in the holy place." Mark's wording in v. 14 is that it will be "standing where it should not be." Mark realizes how cryptic Jesus is being in regard to his statement about the "Abomination of Desolation," so that he adds "let the reader understand," which Matthew adopts also as a good way of pointing the reader to the right interpretation. They are asking their readers to think very carefully about what Jesus is saying here.

The exact phrase of both Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, "the Abomination of Desolation" (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως, literally "the defiling of the dismal emptiness") is found in the Septuagint in one Old Testament verse, in Daniel 12:11 (cf. מַשְׁקָנִי שְׂמֵהּ = "the object to abhor of being uninhabited"), while there is similar wording in Daniel 9:26,27 (βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων) (שְׂמֵהּ מַשְׁקָנִי) = "the objects to abhor of being uninhabited") and Daniel 11:31 (βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως) (שְׂמֵהּ מַשְׁקָנִי = the object to abhor of being uninhabited").

Without going into a lengthy analysis of all three passages in Daniel, I think that Daniel 11:31 refers to the time of the Seleucid and Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes when he set up a statue of Zeus in the

temple in Jerusalem in 168 B.C. Thus, he defiled and treated the temple sacrilegiously with something that was shameful and, if God so chose, would have resulted in his being destroyed immediately for such a flagrant act of disobedience towards God. Similarly, I think that Daniel 12:11 may refer to the Roman's army defiling and desecrating the land of Israel in A.D. 70 (along with A.D. 132-135) when they destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, leading to the land's becoming depopulated of Jews. Or, Daniel 12:11 may refer to the invasion of the land of Israel by the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 with his army, resulting, first, in forcing the Jews to cease worshiping God according to their understanding of the Hebrew scriptures and, second, the eventual destruction of the Gentile army when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

Above, in a previous section, I explained Daniel 9:24-27 regarding Jesus' comments in Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2, and Luke 21:5b-6 about the future destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. In these four verses of the Old Testament prophet, God tells him that He is providing the Israelites with 490 years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem by Artaxerxes I of Persia in 457 B.C. to reform their ways in order "to bring in everlasting righteousness" for them as the nation of Israel. This means that they have until approximately A.D. 34 to obey God appropriately, i.e., with changed hearts, in order to prevent any more harm and suffering to come to them. In addition, these verses indicate that, after 483 of the 490 years, the Messiah will appear in A.D. 27. But, during the last seven years of the 490, he will be killed. God will then give the Jews until the very end of the 490 years, i.e., A.D. 34, to repent of rejecting Jesus, or He will bring about another (!) destruction of Jerusalem. We know from history that they did not repent, which led to General Titus' of the Romans laying siege to the city and eventually leveling it and the temple in A.D. 70. In this way, God brought about His judgment on the Jews for rejecting Jesus as their Messiah. In other words, as Daniel 9:27 indicates, the "abomination," i.e., the biblical, polluting act, of the Jews of crucifying and killing their Messiah results in the "desolation" of, i.e., the laying waste to, their city Jerusalem and their temple by the Romans.

The question for us is, what "abomination of desolation" that exists "in the holy place" and "where it should not be" is Jesus referring in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14a and that "was spoken through Daniel the prophet?" Certainly, it is not the *past* actions of the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 B.C. according to Daniel 11:31. This leaves the two options of Daniel 9:26,27 and Daniel 12:11—

- 1) Jesus' crucifixion as an act by the Jews that defiled the land of Israel and led to God's judgment on them by means of the invasion of the land of Israel by the Gentile, Roman army in A.D. 70 that then led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, along with dispersing the Jews from their land in A.D. 132-135
- 2) The invasion of the land of Israel by the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 with his army, resulting, first, in forcing the Jews to cease worshiping God according to their understanding of the Hebrew scriptures and, second, the eventual destruction of the Gentile army when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel

Fortunately, Luke's explanation of what Jesus means is explicit. He says, "when [the disciples] see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near." Jesus could be referring to option #2 and the time when the Beast of Revelation (the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2) brings an army into Israel, surrounds Jerusalem, and attempts to annihilate all the Jews. And then Jesus annihilates his army and him when he returns.

But Luke helps us to conclude that option #1 is correct, because he will go on to say that after this event "the Jews will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (21:24). I think that the prophetic books of Isaiah through Malachi and the New Testament book of Revelation make it clear that, while the Man of Lawlessness invades Israel and subjugates the Jews, he does not "lead them captive into all the nations." Instead, the Davidic king and Messiah, whom we know to be Jesus of Nazareth, kills him before he has any opportunity to mistreat the Jews in such a way. This shows that Jesus in all three authors are referring to the events of A.D. 70 and A.D. 132-135 as I describe below. Therefore, Luke is telling us what the "let the reader understand" and "the abomination of desolation" mean in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14.

Similarly, if one of Jesus' main goals in this discourse is to describe the time and events of the destruction of the existing temple, then it makes more sense to interpret him here as referring to the

coming catastrophe by Titus and the Romans in A.D. 70. Then, it may very well be that at least some of Jesus' immediate audience of disciples, who, before they die and after they have had almost forty years to proclaim the gospel to the nation of Israel and a major part of the Roman Empire, even all the way to Rome, will "see Jerusalem surrounded by" the Roman army and experience this highly disturbing judgment by God on the Jews.

Consequently, the "defiling thing" that both Jesus in the Olivet Discourse and Gabriel in Daniel 9:26,27 mean is his crucifixion as the Messiah by the Jews, so that the "desolatings" or "destruction/destructions" are the activities of the Roman army in destroying the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We also know from history that, after the Romans destroyed both Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70, they then killed 580,000 Jews, destroyed 50 fortified towns and 985 villages, and exiled the rest of the Jews from the land of Israel (except for a very small group around the Sea of Galilee) during the Bar Kochba Revolt three-year period of A.D. 132-135. And the Jews did not return in any great number until the middle of the 19th century and the Zionist Movement.

In other words, the great "defiling" sin, which displeases God, of crucifying the Messiah will result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman army which will "be standing where it should not be," i.e., on the land of Israel and in God's city, Jerusalem, and even in His temple, "the holy place." This will be in contrast to what God has promised the Jews in Deuteronomy 28 of their exercising hegemony over the Gentiles and living in complete safety and security on His and their land, including in His city Jerusalem with His dwelling place, the temple. Thus, "abomination of desolation" (the defiling act that results in destruction) means that the cause (the defiling act = the Jews' crucifying their Messiah) will result in the effect (the destruction), i.e., the arrival of the Roman army on the land of Israel and their destroying Jerusalem and the temple, along with dispersing the Jews from their land so that it becomes a kind of wasteland.

Again, I think that the angel Gabriel in Daniel 9:26,27 is referring to God's promise not to destroy Jerusalem during the entire time period of 490 years of which he spoke in Daniel 9:24 ("seventy weeks"). But after the Jews execute their Messiah, Jesus, God will bring about the complete destruction of the city and its temple, which occurs in A.D. 70, along with the death and expulsion of most remaining Jews in A.D. 132-135.

Matthew 24:16-18	Mark 13:14b-16	Luke 21:21-22	
<p>24:16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.</p> <p>24:17 "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.</p> <p>24:18 "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.</p>	<p>then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.</p> <p>13:15 "The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house;</p> <p>13:16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat.</p>	<p>21:21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;</p> <p>21:22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.</p>	

In all three of the above gospel accounts, Jesus is warning his disciples and the Jews who are alive when Jerusalem is destroyed that once the Roman army (for now we know it was they in A.D. 70) has entered the land of Israel, which they will do suddenly and quickly, and they have laid siege to Jerusalem "in Judea," everyone who can should "flee" from the city and the nearby area "to the mountains" in order to find safety. Jesus probably means the Judean mountains east of Jerusalem and even the Jordanian mountains on the other side of the Dead Sea.

And no one should "go down to get the things out that are in his house" or "turn back to get his cloak" if he is working in his "field" (cf. Matthew 24:17,18; Mark 13:15,16). In other words, the Jews, wherever they might be, should not even think of gathering all their possessions to take with them, because it will

too late. The Romans will be advancing on Jerusalem so quickly that everyone must flee immediately in order to avoid death at the hands of this army. Luke includes, “and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city” (21:21), indicating that Jesus is speaking of all Jews in and around Jerusalem when its demise is in the process of occurring because of this Gentile army.

Then Luke alone in v. 22 adds another statement by Jesus for why haste and leaving the vicinity will be imperative, “because these are days of vengeance (ἡμέραι ἐκδικήσεως), so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.” We can consider two options for what Jesus means by “these...days”—

- 1) Only the time period of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 and the death and dispersion of the Jews by the Romans in A.D. 132-135
- 2) The time period beginning in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroy Jerusalem and the temple and ending when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel that is still future to us

Certainly, A.D. 70 and A.D. 132-135 were “days of vengeance” from God towards the Jews because of all their unwillingness to obey him and to embrace Jesus as their Messiah, but I think that the context, both before and after these verses in the three accounts, points towards option #2 that will lead up to the final Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5 immediately before Jesus’ grand appearance to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel and on the earth. For example, Matthew 24:6-14 (and related passages in Mark and Luke) describe the difficult situations that will arise for his disciples during the time between his first and second appearances. And the same is true for Matthew 24:19-28, especially with Luke’s talking about the fact that “Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*” [italics mine], so that the verses in between, Matthew 24:15-18, are Jesus’ description of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, about which his disciples questioned him at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse.

It is as though Jesus is saying specifically in Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, and Luke 21:20, “And, by the way, Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed somewhere in the midst of your waiting for my return and all these other kinds of events’ taking place.” In addition, with the words “all things which are written will be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22), he is saying that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the suffering that follows for the Jews during the long period of time leading up to his *parousia* and return, has been predicted in the Old Testament. We have already looked at one of the more important Old Testament passages in this regard, Daniel 9:24-27—

- Daniel 9:24** “Seventy weeks have been specified for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.
- 9:25** “Therefore, know and discern that, from the issuing of the order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.
- 9:26** “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 holy place. Its end will come with a flood. Even to the end there will be war. Desolations are determined.
- 9:27** “And the covenant with the many will remain strong for one week. But in the middle of the week the sacrifice and grain offering will cease. And on the wing of abominations there will be the one who devastates, even up to a complete destruction. And that which has been determined will pour out on the one being ruined.”

Verse 26, in particular, refers to “the prince who is to come” and who “will destroy the city and its holy place,” which I interpreted above as the Roman General Titus with his army who lays waste to Jerusalem and its temple. This will occur when God pours out His wrath and anger on the Jews for all their disobedience and unwillingness to subordinate themselves to Him properly, including and especially because of their rejecting and executing their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, “all things which are written” are the passages mainly in the prophets, Isaiah through Malachi, but that also can be found in, for example, Deuteronomy 28 regarding God’s judgment of the Jews prior to His fulfilling His promise to transform them into a “great nation” according to the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

Matthew 24:19-20	Mark 13:17-18	Luke 21:23a	
<p>24:19 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!</p> <p>24:20 “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.</p>	<p>13:17 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!</p> <p>13:18 “But pray that it may not happen in the winter.</p>	<p>21:23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days;</p>	

Here in Matthew 24:19 (and Mark 13:17 and Luke 21:23a), certainly Jesus is not condemning pregnant and nursing mothers as though they have committed gross immorality by being with child. He is simply stating that the Gentile army’s destruction of the land of Israel (which occurs in A.D. 70) is going to be so extensive and complete that it will be a very difficult time for everybody, especially for those who are additionally burdened by such natural responsibilities as pregnancy and nursing children. These responsibilities will make it more difficult to travel quickly, which will be exactly what all the Jews will need to do in order to escape the destructive effects of the invading (Roman) army. Therefore, Jesus is probably using pregnant and nursing women to refer to all those who will be physically handicapped and unable to flee with great speed from Jerusalem and the surrounding areas to the mountains. As a result, the “Woe” here is not condemnatory but simply, “The invasion by the Gentile army and the destruction of Jerusalem are going to be *particularly* hard for people who are less capable of traveling rapidly so as to avoid the army altogether.”

In Matthew 24:20a and Mark 13:18, while Luke excludes any reference to this prayer, Jesus is saying that the suffering the Jews will endure during this event will be additionally acute if they have to flee from the approaching army when the weather is cold and rainy. It will add that much more difficulty to a situation that is already hard enough. Therefore, he encourages them to pray to God that this will not be the case. But, again, because he will say in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 that he does not know exactly when all these events which he is mentioning will take place, Jesus cannot be sure if God will answer their prayer in the affirmative. Nevertheless, as in all situations in which followers of Jesus find themselves, it is always appropriate to address God with help with, protection from, and even avoidance of suffering and hardship. The fact is that we do not know exactly what God’s plans are for us, just as Jesus did not know precisely when all these events were going to take place, so that, even if things do not turn out the way we want, we still trust God for His sovereign care and love for us as we persevere in our belief in the coming Kingdom of God.

In the last half of v. 20, Matthew includes, “or on a Sabbath.” What is the problem with traveling on the Sabbath day? Technically, it would be a violation of the fourth of the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, which God gave to the nation of Israel when He brought them out of Egypt around 1500 B.C. Therefore, if any of the very religiously scrupulous Jews, even among the Christians, would feel compelled to avoid working by traveling on a Sabbath day, or if they might let their guard down in the midst of obeying this commandment and be unprepared for the sudden danger of the invading army, Jesus is encouraging them to save their lives no matter their hesitation and to remain vigilant at all times as the whole nation approaches the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

This would be similar to the modern state of Israel’s mustering their army and fighting in 1973 when they were attacked by the surrounding countries on Yom Kippur, their holiest day according to the Mosaic Covenant. Perhaps Jesus wants to honor the literal sense of the Mosaic Covenant and is addressing his followers who will be genuinely interested in obeying God properly by not violating the Sabbath commandment. However, he is saying that, when it comes to saving their lives from their enemies, nothing, not even the Sabbath commandment, should stand in their way of doing so. This will also be like what the Israelites did when they left Egypt by the order of God Himself. They began their journey during the first High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which technically should have been a day of rest. But they worked hard to flee Pharaoh and his having enslaved them.

Matthew 24:21	Mark 13:19	Luke 21:23b-24	
24:21 “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.	13:19 “For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.	for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.	

But what happens to the Jews and Jesus’ Jewish disciples after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which we now know occurred in A.D. 70? Matthew’s wording in 24:21 is, “For then there will be a great tribulation...” In this way, Jesus moves on to the rest of history leading up to his return. In other words, after the Romans destroy the temple, there will be great stress and strain on the Jews. Again, and for how long? In light of Jesus’ not knowing when his second coming will occur (cf. Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32), it makes the most sense to interpret the “then” of Matthew 24:21 and “those days” in Mark 13:19 as the entire time period between Jesus’ first and second appearances. In other words, the “great tribulation” takes place not just during a literal “seven years” immediately preceding Jesus’ return (as some people interpret Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 7:14), but it involves the long period of time from Jesus’ first appearance and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 until his second appearance that is still future to us—almost two thousand years later.

Therefore, because the Jews will consistently rebel against God, especially having done so by executing their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth (and not yet repenting as an entire nation), there will be many times between Jesus’ first and second comings when the Jews will experience tremendous suffering as a result of God’s justice and discipline towards them leading up to the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5 and Revelation 6:12-17. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus says that the “great tribulation” will be “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.” Mark writes this in v. 19 with words, “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.” What the Jews go through between Jesus’ first and second appearances cannot be compared with anything they previously experienced during their entire history. This means that even the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and exiles will be considered cakewalks in comparison to what the Jews will suffer when the Roman army destroys Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they expel the Jews from the land in A.D. 132-135, and other people persecute and act violently towards them when they are scattered throughout the world during the long period of time until Jesus returns. Good examples have been the pogroms and ethnic killings in eastern Europe and Russia and the Holocaust in Germany in the 20th century, the attacks by the surrounding Arab countries in both the 20th and the 21st centuries, and the general dominance over the Jews throughout the world by Gentile cultures, the effect of which has caused them to live in enclaves in order to preserve their lives, values, religion, and ideologies—especially in Islamic countries.

Luke further explains in 21:23b that the “great tribulation” will be towards the Jewish people (“wrath to this people,” i.e., the apostles’ kinsmen, the Jews) and specific to the land of Israel (“upon the land,” i.e., the land God promised through the Abrahamic Covenant to the Jews), meaning that it will take place up to (and especially very near!! — cf. Revelation 8-18 and the effects of the trumpets and bowls of wrath) the return of Jesus.

Only Luke in 21:24 states explicitly that the invading Gentile army, whom we now know was the Romans of General Titus of A.D. 70, will not only destroy Jerusalem and the temple, but they will also massacre the Jews on their own land. However, we also know that additional Jews will either be killed or “led captive into all the nations” by the Roman General Sextus Severus during the Bar Kokhba Revolt of A.D. 132-135. Luke also writes in v. 24 that Jerusalem (and therefore the land of Israel) “will be trampled underfoot” and dominated “by the Gentiles” until God is ready to fulfill His promise to the Jews of Genesis 12:1-3 and Deuteronomy 28 to cause them finally to exercise hegemony over all the other nations around the world. This will be when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel as the most powerful nation and country in human history. However, until then, the Jews will find themselves utterly dependent on the

Gentiles for their survival, just as the state of Israel is even today dependent on the United States and other western countries to defend themselves against their surrounding and internal enemies.

These statements in Luke 21:24 are the best clues that Jesus has been talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and not that which will occur during the reign of the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 (the Beast of Revelation 13), because the latter event ushers in the shalom-like kingdom of Jesus as described in Revelation 20. No longer will the Jews “be led captive into all the nations.” Indeed, Jesus and they will rule over the rest of the nations. Consequently, the “times of the Gentiles” are that period of human history when the Gentiles are more powerful than the Jews. But these “times” will come to end and be “fulfilled,” resulting in Jesus’ re-establishing the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and, with the Jews, who will all be circumcised of heart and authentic believers in him, ruling over the rest of the world.

Matthew 24:22	Mark 13:20		
24:22 “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.	13:20 “Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the chosen ones, whom He chose, He shortened the days.		

In these verses, Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20, Jesus implies the degree of difficulty for the Jews and his Jewish followers between the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and his return. Thus, “those days” are the same as in Mark 13:19, which refer to the “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 and the last 2,000 years, during which the Jews have been persecuted so intensely as to almost wipe them out completely—as some, like Adolf Hitler, have intended. As a result, Jesus says that “unless those days had been cut short, no life,” i.e., no Jewish life, would have been saved (Matthew 24:22). In other words, the overall goal of all the other peoples in the world is always to commit the genocide and annihilation of one and only one particular group of people—the Jews. This is why we hear the chants of “From the river to the sea” during the modern protests. People are calling for cleansing the land of Israel from the people of Israel—because they consider them (to whom God *promised* the land in Genesis 12:1-3) to be usurpers.

Plus, given enough time (and apart from the absolute sovereign determinism of God), theoretically the world would eventually reach its goal, and no Jew would be “saved” from elimination from the entire earth. However, and fortunately, God has promised that Abraham’s physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob will eventually become the most powerful nation in all human history (cf. Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Therefore, He has also promised to preserve them through any attempts by the Gentiles to annihilate them, even though these attempts are at least partially in line with His own purposes to judge and discipline the Jews persistently because of their continued rebellion against Him from the time of Jesus’ first appearance to his second coming. This is what Jesus meant by the “great tribulation” in Matthew 24:21 and the “great distress upon the land and wrath to this people” in Luke 21:23b.

In addition, the “chosen ones” of Matthew 24:22 are the Jews as the special, ethnic people of God and, specifically, the 144,000 Jews of Revelation 7:4 and 14:1,3. The number 144,000 is symbolic of those Jews (and therefore a relatively large number of Jews, but not all the Jews both worldwide and on the land of Israel) who survive the final efforts of the Beast of Revelation 13, the last great Satanic and antisemitic government in the Middle East, to destroy them all. But, again, God has promised the Jews, His “chosen ones” in general, to turn them into the greatest nation in history. Therefore, the remnant of the Jews, i.e., the 144,000 of the book of Revelation, become the first generation of authentic believing Jews on the land of Israel under the rule of their Messiah Jesus after he returns.

We conclude then, that despite how long the “days” of the “great tribulation” will end up being, they still will be “short” enough to ensure the survival of the Jews as a distinct and ethnic group. As Jesus intimated above, by submitting to Satan’s desires and purposes, the world’s goal has always been and continues to be to wipe out the Jews completely. If the Gentiles can do this, then they can foil God’s plans

to fulfill His promise to Abraham. Plus, from an existential standpoint, and given enough time, the Gentiles, who are hostile to God, would succeed in achieving this goal.

Satan knows that, if he can eliminate the Jews entirely, then Jesus' achievement by his death of qualifying to be the Messiah and high priest of Jewish sinners, whom God would shape into a great nation on the land of Israel, becomes useless for the Jews. If there are no Jews to become the "great nation" of the Abrahamic Covenant, then God will have failed in fulfilling His promise to them. Consequently, God puts a boundary on even His own response to the Jews' rebellion by not destroying them completely, just as He puts a boundary on His justice towards certain sinners, when He regenerates them and grants them His eternal mercy. And this is true even though the eternal destruction of non-believers will be something He performs at the final judgment. In this latter case, there will be no eternal boundary to His justice. In other words, unbelievers will experience God's punishment to the greatest extent by being destroyed forever.

Matthew 24:23-24	Mark 13:21-22		
<p>24:23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him.</p> <p>24:24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.</p>	<p>13:21 "And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him;</p> <p>13:22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.</p>		

In these verses of Matthew and Mark and as we would expect, Jesus continues speaking of the entire time between his first and second comings. The role of the Jewish Messiah is the greatest responsibility of any created being in history. Therefore, no wonder that opportunistic Jews will falsely claim to be the Messiah. "[I]f anyone says to you [current and future disciples], 'Behold here is the Christ [the Messiah],' or 'There he is,' do not believe him" (Matthew 24:23). Or, as Mark puts in in v. 21, "[I]f anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him." In both cases, Jesus is referring to his current and future disciples, that someone will say that them that he is the Christ, meaning the Anointed One and Messiah of Israel, and Jesus is warning his followers not to believe these false claims.

Also, the word for "then" that Jesus uses in the two accounts is τότε, which definitely means "then" or "at that time." In keeping with the flow of the context, I think that the time will be the extended period between Jesus' first and second appearances. Do not be surprised, he indicates, that false messiahs (and, of course, he means false Jewish messiahs) arise.

Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 24:24 that "false prophets" (again, false Jewish prophets) "will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." Mark's account says the same. First, the word "elect" is exactly the same word as the "chosen ones" in v. 22 in Matthew and v. 20 of Mark. In the context, these false prophets are most likely claiming that they have an accurate understanding of the Hebrew scriptures of Judaism (and, later, the Greek, scriptures of Christianity?) and know when and how the Messiah will appear. They may even be so bold as to declare that the Messiah has arrived and they know exactly who he is. Plus, Jesus may very well be referring to false teachers within both Judaism and Christianity who do not fundamentally care about truth, but, instead, they are primarily interested in drawing attention to themselves and gaining religious and intellectual respectability among other Jews and Christians. In the next section of Matthew 24:25-28 and Luke 17:22-25, Jesus will explicitly indicate why he is so emphatic when he says, "do not believe him [them]" so that his disciples can be confident when they reject the testimony of those who may claim that they either are the Messiah or have found the Messiah and understand the Bible.

But we also know from Revelation 13 that the culmination of this idea of a false messiah and false prophets will be the two beasts respectively, who live immediately before Jesus' return.

Revelation 13:1 And [Satan] stood on the sand of the seashore. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten crowns, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

Rev. 13:11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the land; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. **12** And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the land and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.

The first beast, a messiah-like figure, will be a Gentile, because he is said to come “from the sea,” while the second beast, a false prophet who claims to speak on behalf of God, will be a Jew, because he is said to come “from the land,” i.e., the land of Israel. (The “sea” in Revelation is symbolic of the nations of Gentiles. The “land” is symbolic of the land of Israel and therefore of the Jews.) The Gentile “beast” will invade the land of Israel and rule over the Jews as the principal leader of a coalition of countries in the Middle East. Plus, he will exercise great influence within the rest of the world. Then, the Jewish “beast” will encourage his fellow Jews to follow and submit to the first beast, the Gentile leader, and to his authority.

Thus, Jesus is saying that, periodically, between the time of his first appearance and that of his second coming, false messiahs and false prophets/teachers of God “will arise” and put themselves forth as deserving the attention and submission of the Jews. But to whom is Jesus referring as “the elect” (οἱ ἐκλεκτοί)? There are three options—

- 1) All the *ethnic* chosen people of God, by which he means the Jews, the entire nation of Israel, whether they are authentic believers or not?
- 2) The *inward* and *ethnic* chosen people of God, by which he means Jews who have authentic belief
- 3) The *inward* and *international* chosen people of God, by which he means genuine believers among both the Jews and the Gentiles

Again, as a result of the Jewish-centric and land of Israel-centric context, I suggest that Jesus is referring to option #2, the Jews who are the chosen, changed of heart believers in Jesus as their Messiah. Certainly, the Gentile believers included in option #3 will be just as susceptible to the tricks and stratagems of the false teachers as their Jewish counterparts. Therefore, it will be important for both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians to understand the Bible as well as possible in order to guard themselves from the lies and deceptions of false messiahs and false prophets who claim to know the Bible well and to speak well for God.

In the second verses of this section in Matthew and Mark, vs. 24 & 22 respectively, Jesus indicates that the “false Christs and false prophets will...show great signs and wonders.” We know from the gospel accounts and the book of Acts that God caused miracles to occur through Jesus and the apostles (and apostolic co-workers) in order to verify the divine legitimacy and truth of their ministries. Does it make sense that He would cause actual miracles to occur through these false teachers whom Jesus mentions in the Olivet Discourse? Possibly, if the point of all the actions of these false Christs and false prophets is truly to appear as legitimate as possible to the Jews and even to those who have changed hearts and are exercising genuine belief and obedience towards God. But I think that it is more reasonable to conclude that the miracles of the *false* messiahs and *false* prophets will be just as *false* as they are.

Therefore, the false teachers’ miracles will be deceptive slights of hand that appear real and do possibly cause bona fide Jewish believers to accept them as genuine for a few moments and become persuaded that any one of these men is the Christ or a prophet/teacher of God. Nevertheless, assuming their faith is genuine, they will eventually be able to detect the lack of authenticity in these people and their miracles in order to avoid being led astray from authentically following God and Jesus as the Messiah. These believers will be similar to the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4-8 and 14:1-3, who are close to becoming authentic believers, so that they, too, are not deceived by the “signs” of the second beast of Revelation 13:11ff.

Matthew 24:25-28	Mark 13:23		[Luke 17:22-25]
<p>24:25 “Behold, I have told you in advance.</p> <p>24:26 “So if they say to you, ‘Behold, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them.</p> <p>24:27 “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.</p> <p>24:28 “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.</p>	<p>13:23 “But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.</p>		<p>17:22 And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.</p> <p>17:23 “They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.</p> <p>17:24 “For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky and shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in his day.</p> <p>17:25 “But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.</p>

As above, Jesus continues laying out the spiritual and physical conditions in which the Jews in general and his Jewish followers specifically will live as history gets closer and closer to his *parousia* and return. I think that it will be easier to look first at the verses in Matthew and Mark and then examine the parallel verses of Luke 17 afterwards. Thus, at the beginning of this section, in Matthew 24:25, Jesus states to Peter, Andrew, James, and John (and the other disciples who are listening to his response), “Behold, I have told you in advance,” and in Mark 13:25, “But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.”

He is giving them plenty of time to prepare themselves for the lies and deceptions that will issue forth from false messiahs and teachers. These will be the circumstances as they get nearer to his return, and he is urging all disciples, both current and future ones, during the long period of time between his first and second appearances to guard carefully their own faith and hope in God for His eternal mercy and life in the light of the multiple hardships and deceptions coming upon mainly the Jews. As usual, forewarned is forearmed, so that all followers of Jesus should learn the Bible as well as possible and pay especial attention to its multiple truths—

- 1) That only he is the Messiah
- 2) That the temple will be destroyed
- 3) That the Jews will suffer plagues and famines and find themselves embroiled in wars and the victims of wars, persecutions, and attacks against them
- 4) That authentic Jewish believers will encounter opposition to their faith from the highest level of various governments
- 5) That there will be plenty of false teachers of the Bible who will attempt to mislead them in their worship of God and their moral behavior
- 6) That the end of the Gentile age and the beginning of the Jewish age will definitely occur when he returns

Then, in Matthew 24:26, Jesus continues the idea about false prophets/teachers and again urges his disciples not to be fooled by their reports of the appearance of the Jewish Messiah, “So if they say to you, ‘Behold, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them.”

People may say that the Messiah “is in the wilderness,” probably referring to the area south of Jerusalem, the Judean desert. Or they may claim that he is “in the inner rooms,” probably referring to any home in Israel. Jesus is likely using these two opposite extremes of topography and geography as a merism, where these two parts refer to the whole. He is encouraging his followers not to be tricked by any statement to the effect that the Messiah has arrived, regardless of where someone claims that he is.

And why is Jesus being so emphatic about this issue? Because, as he goes on to say in v. 27, “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.” In other words, his actual “coming” will be as obvious as “lightning” flashing in the sky “from the east...even to the west.” And we learn from the rest of the Bible, that this second “coming” will be when he restores the Kingdom of Israel and destroys their enemies and his enemies who have invaded the land of Israel in order to subjugate the Jews and eventually attempt to destroy them.

It should be no surprise that the Greek word that Jesus uses for “coming” in v. 27 is *παρουσία* (*parousia*), the same word in Matthew 24:3, which means grand appearance or entrance. Jesus’ return will be his grand entrance onto the land of Israel and into the world to establish the first part of the Kingdom of God, when he rules over the entire nation of Jews on the land of Israel, whom God changes so that they all become authentic believers, and he rules with them over the rest of the world and the Gentile nations, who will comprise a combination of believers and unbelievers. This will be the first time in all human history that the nation of Israel exercises this level of power and authority over the Gentiles as God predicted in Deuteronomy 28:13-14,

Deuteronomy 28:13 “Yahweh will make you [the nation of Israel] the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, **28:14** and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

After the disciples initially asked the questions about Jesus’ *παρουσία* (*parousia*) in Matthew 24:3, Jesus then uses the same word here in v. 27. Therefore, we know for sure that he has now moved on from describing the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple and the difficulties of the “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 after it to his second coming and the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, which will bring the fulfillment of “the times [age] of the Gentiles” of Luke 21:24. Never again will any Gentile peoples or nations exercise authority over the Jews (as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Muslim Arabs did), persecute and mistreat the Jews (as the above empires, Germany, and the Muslim Arabs have), or provide the necessary support and material for them to defend themselves against their enemies (as America, Great Britain, and France have). We also know from other biblical passages, especially the Old Testament prophets who predict the regathering of the Jews back into the land which God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22, that never again will any Jew live anywhere on the earth outside the land of Israel. They will all finally be home where God promised to take them and plant them as His people, and they will all finally have circumcised hearts so as to believe and obey God properly as He has always required of them and just as He promised to the Israelites through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:1-6,

Deuteronomy 30:1 “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where Yahweh your God has banished you,
2 and you return to Yahweh your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,
3 then Yahweh your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you.
4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.”
5 Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.
6 Moreover Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.”

We should also note that the title “Son of Man” in Matthew 24:27 is Jesus’ favorite term in the gospels (spoken by or written of him in 80 verses, while “Son of God” appears in 25 verses) for the Messiah and comes from Psalm 8 which David wrote after God had made the Davidic Covenant with him, thus promising that his *human* descendants would be the kings of Israel and that each of them would be His Son. The phrase Son of God comes from the Ancient Near East where the various peoples believed that their kings were the chosen proxies and representatives of their chief gods. For example, the Egyptian Pharaoh was the Son of Ra, who was the sun god and the primary god of their pantheon. When God made His covenant with David, He meant that David, Solomon, Rehoboam, and the other kings of Israel from the line of David were His Son, proxy, and representative, so that anyone who addressed the king needed to consider himself as addressing Yahweh, the transcendent creator, himself. In Psalm 8, David uses the phrase Son of Man to mean the Son of God who comes from the human race, i.e., who is flesh and blood just like his fellows Jews. Therefore, the king of Israel is the Son of God of Man, i.e., the Son of God as a genuine man. However, in the case of Jesus, he uniquely fulfills the role of God’s proxy both by being the very “icon of the invisible God” (as Paul calls him in Colossians 1:15) and by rescuing sinners from God’s eternal wrath and condemnation through his death on the cross (as repeatedly declared in the New Testament and is made the primary point of the letter of Hebrews).

Next, in Matthew 24:28 and similar to what we will encounter later in Luke 17:37, Jesus makes a rather enigmatic and strange comment, “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” Obviously, this is a parable, and he is drawing an analogy between his *παρουσία* (*parousia*) and something or someone else. We can imagine a dying body lying on the ground out in the open space, and vultures are circling overhead, waiting for the person to die. Then, once death sets in, they descend from their position of observation in the sky and land on the ground to feed on the fresh, human carrion. To what is Jesus referring? He has been describing the effects of the Jews’ rejecting him as their Messiah, which has brought God’s judgment on them that has extended in time from the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 to his second coming and restoring the Kingdom of Israel, which is still future to us. With this parable, I think he is indicating that the devastation brought upon the Jews immediately before his return will be so great that it will almost destroy them completely, making them like a dying body lying on the ground with vultures circling over it and looking to pick at the body and consume it as soon as it is assuredly dead.

The vultures, most likely, will be the surrounding Gentile nations who want nothing more than to see the Jews exterminated so that they can finally be rid of them and inhabit their land, the land which God promised them through Abraham. Plus, God’s discipline of the Jews will be so intense that it will look as though they are finished as a people and that the Gentiles are about to achieve their goal. But then, and only then, Jesus will return as their Messiah and will destroy the vulturous and predatory Gentiles, who will have invaded the land of Israel to subjugate and annihilate the Jews completely. If I am right in my interpretation, then this will occur when the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2, who also is the Beast of Revelation 13,16-19, will pursue his satanic goals of leading an army that he has collected from various nations around Israel into the land of the Jews to rule over them and eventually to kill them. And even though the parable does not spell out the actual end, while the rest of the Olivet Discourse describes and implies it, God through the second appearance of Jesus will rescue the Jews from certain annihilation and destroy their enemies.

Jesus’ comments in Luke 17:22-25 regarding his return most likely occurred at a different time from the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, but the statements and ideas are obviously quite similar. In line with what Jesus says in the Olivet Discourse, in v. 22 he says to his immediate disciples and then to others in subsequent generations who believe that he is the Messiah (the “you” of this verse), “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.” In other words, Jesus’ *παρουσία* (*parousia*) and grand entrance to restore the Kingdom of Israel is a long way off in history. Plus, his immediate disciples, who will suffer both persecution from unbelievers and hardship under the oppression of the Roman Empire, eventually resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, will certainly “long” (*ἐπιθυμέω* = “lust” in some verses in the New Testament) for Jesus to return immediately in order to bring a complete and merciful end to their suffering.

Nevertheless, they “will not see” him, because the time between his first and second comings will be too long for their liking. Of course, the same will be true later in history for any believers who are persecuted by the world and experience any kind of suffering, whether because of their faith or because of difficult circumstances that all people encounter. Most Christians will strongly and appropriately desire

Jesus to return while they are alive, but, unfortunately, it will not happen. Only the very last believers, who exist at the end of the present age, will literally “see one of the days” leading up to and including Jesus’ return, so that they are raptured and lifted from the earth according to 1 Corinthians 15:51ff. and 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.

Then, in Luke 17:23, Jesus speaks of the entire time between his first and second appearances, “They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.” As he says in the Olivet Discourse, certain Jews will falsely claim to be the Messiah and other Jews will falsely claim that the Messiah has arrived and they know who he is. It is also possible that Gentiles, during the long time between Jesus’ two appearances, will mistakenly claim that Jesus has returned, whether from evil intent or from simple misunderstanding of the Bible. While Mark’s parallel verse 13:21 says briefly, “Do not believe him,” and Matthew’s verse 24:23 is the same, the expression of this idea in Luke 17:23 changes the wording to “Do not go away, and do not run after them.” Jesus is urging future Jews not to leave where they live on the land of Israel to check out a rumor to the effect that he has returned when it is not absolutely obvious (cf. 17:24). Instead, they should continue living out their authentic belief with love, kindness, patience, and forgiveness towards both believers and unbelievers in the midst of the struggles that they are enduring as a result of their faith.

Subsequently, Luke 17:24, like Matthew 24:27, states how obvious Jesus’ return will be, “For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky and shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in his day.” How will “the Son of Man be in his day”? As we have seen him say in the Olivet Discourse—like lightening! And this will also be Jesus’ *parousia*. It will be the moment that the all believers with some sense of God’s plans and purposes have been waiting for—when the central figure of His story will manifest himself, and he not only restores the Kingdom of Israel, but he also begins the first stage of the Kingdom of God. In other words, God’s kingdom has two phases, the Kingdom of Israel on this earth as described by the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, and then the eternal realm of the new heaven and new earth as explained in Revelation 21 & 22.

In additional to the parallel passage in Matthew 24:25-28, Luke 17:25 says, “But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” Jesus’ is always drawing closer to his crucifixion, and he has been informing his disciples several times that the end of his first appearance on earth is not going to be enjoyable. For example, Mark states plainly in 8:32,

Mark 8:31 And [Jesus] was teaching them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Also, as we will see in Mark 13:30 and Matthew 24:34, the noun γενεά could mean either “generation,” as it is translated by the NAS95 in these two verses and in Luke 17:25, or “race” “ethnic group,” or “kind” (cf. Luke 16:8, NAS95). As a result, γενεά typically refers either to a period of time of 30-70 years, depending on the point of history under discussion, or to a person’s race, ethnic group, or kind of people. Certainly, either meaning works in this context in Luke 17:25, because it is both the Jews overall as an ethnic group, from the time of Jesus’ first appearance to his second appearance, and this generation of Jews taken as a whole in Jesus’ day, who cause him to “suffer many things” by arresting him, putting him on trial, and finally executing him in collusion with the Roman authorities and continue to reject him into the future and up to the moment of his return.

I lean towards “generation” as the meaning here because the context is mostly temporal, where Jesus is talking about his *Jewish* disciples’ looking forward to his return in the future and yet not seeing it. In addition, it is remarkable during human history between Jesus’ first and second appearances, that *his own people*, the Jews, who are God’s chosen ethnic group of people and that obviously involves “this generation” of Jews, reject him.

The bottom line in this section of the Matthew, Mark, and Luke passages is that Jesus’ return will not be a subtle and secret event, as if we could go out into the wilderness or into an inner room and observe someone whom hardly anyone else knows exist. Instead, his return will be the most obvious event in all human history—like bright lightning flashing in the sky and startling everyone—when he returns and destroys Israel’s earthly enemies who have targeted the Jews first for subjugation and then for extermination. But, through Jesus as His primary battle weapon, God will protect and rescue the Jews so that they may live on their land under Jesus’ rule and leadership.

Matthew 24:29	Mark 13:24-25	Luke 21:25-26	
24:29 “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.	13:24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, 13:25 AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.	21:25 “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 21:26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.	

Jesus began his answer to his disciples’ questions by assuring them that eventually he would reappear to restore the Kingdom of Israel. And he has been getting closer and closer to the actual event in his description of history—from false messiahs and false teachers arising, from persecution which his followers will experience because the world is fundamentally hostile to God to enduring in their faith to be saved from God’s wrath and destruction, from wars involving the Jews and the land of Israel to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and finally from the dispersion of the Jews from the land of Israel to his *parousia* and grand appearance to rule the Jews and the world. Now Jesus’ comments definitely place him on the threshold of his return.

And the key to understanding the time of these next events in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is the phrase “immediately after the tribulation” in Matthew 24:29 and the phrase “in those days after that tribulation” in Mark 13:24. Most logically, Jesus is referring to the end of the long, patient judgment and discipline of God towards the Jews that takes place between his first appearance and the second appearance and that is intended to encourage them to change their minds and embrace him as their final and unique Messiah. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus had referred to this long period of time as the “great tribulation.” Also, as he said in Mark 13:19, this will be a time of judgment and suffering from God for the Jews greater than any which they had experienced before, including, for example, the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of the 8th and 7th/6th centuries B.C. respectively. The phrase “in those days” in Mark 13:24 could make it seem that Jesus is talking about the same time as “those days” in Mark 13:17 pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem. But we must remember that he does not know the exact timing of any of these events and has already said that the end of the age of the Gentiles will not be for a long time (cf. Mark 13:7,8). Therefore, he means, “In the days at the end of the great tribulation and just before my return and *parousia*...”

In the subsequent statements, Matthew and Mark use the same basic wording, while Luke changes how he says the same thing. Probably Matthew and Mark are more closely quoting Jesus, while Luke, not unusually, is providing an interpretative explanation of his words. I translate Luke 21:25-26 in this way,

Luke 21:25, “Then there will be signs with the sun, moon, and stars, and distress of the nations on the earth in perplexity at the roaring sound of the sea and the waves, **26** while men faint from fear and the expectation of things which are coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

It is possible to translate Luke’s word “nations” with “Gentiles,” as if Jesus is referring to everyone but the Jews who will become terrified by these circumstances. But I think that he means all the nations, both Jews and Gentiles, and mainly those in the Middle East who will see these cosmic-like and astronomical-like events that with which God is targeting the Jews living on the land of Israel. In other words, Jesus is still being very Jewish-centric, land of Israel-centric, and Middle Eastern-centric.

In addition, assuming that Matthew and Mark are quoting Jesus more closely, they provide words that come from several Old Testament passages. For example, the statement “the sun will be darkened” is used either verbatim or approximately in Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7, Joel 2:2,10,31 & 3:15, Amos 5:18,20; 8:9, and Micah 3:6. The words “the moon will not give its light” can be found in Isaiah 13:10 and Ezekiel

32:7, while “the stars will fall” is from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 34:4. Here are these various verses with a portion of their contexts in approximately the order of Jesus’ mentioning their cosmic disturbances.

First is Isaiah 13:6-13 with important words highlighted that pertain to Jesus’ comments—

Isaiah 13:6 Wail, for the Day of Yahweh is near!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.
13:7 Therefore all hands will fall limp,
And every man’s heart will melt.
13:8 They will be terrified,
Pains and anguish will take hold of them;
They will writhe like a woman in labor,
They will look at one another in astonishment,
Their faces aflame.
13:9 Behold, the Day of Yahweh is coming,
Cruel, with fury and burning anger,
To make the land a desolation;
And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
13:10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations
Will not flash forth their light;
The sun will be dark when it rises
And the moon will not shed its light.
13:11 Thus I will punish the world (עַל-תְּהוֹמָי) (τῇ οἰκουμένη ὅλη) for its evil
And the wicked for their iniquity;
I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud
And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
13:12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold
And mankind than the gold of Ophir.
13:13 **Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,**
And the earth will be shaken from its place
At the fury of Yahweh of hosts
In the day of His burning anger.

These verses above were spoken and written around 701 B.C., and they pertain to the soon to be formed Babylonian Empire of Isaiah’s day according to verse 1 of chapter 13. The verses are describing the downfall of this empire by the Persians in 539 B.C., but only *after* it has invaded and destroyed the southern Kingdom of Judah around 600 B.C. However, when Isaiah speaks of how the sun and moon will become dark and the heavens will tremble with the earth being shaken, I think that he is using metaphorical hyperbole to describe the downfall of the Babylonian Empire by Cyrus, king of Persia. Therefore, these natural sources of light in the skies, along with the regular stability and activities of the heavens above Babylon and the earth below it, will not all of a sudden change so as to produce a permanent disruption of their existence. Instead, God is saying that these aspects of the creation, which the Babylonians worship and count on for their sustenance and existence, will be powerless to protect them from God in the face of His omnipotent judgment and punishment of them for their evil and immoral lives, which have been in violation of His moral commandments. God so abhors the idolatry and worship of the creation by human beings that when He judges them, they immediately find that the very things on which they have depended for their existences are useless in protecting them from the present punishment from God which they deserve.

In addition, God’s judgment and destruction of Babylon appropriately foreshadows and points to the similar events of the “Great and Terrible Day of the Lord” immediately before Jesus returns and God focuses His judgment on the Jews (cf. Malachi 4:5)—with substantial collateral damage among the Gentiles. As a result, Jesus is borrowing the language of Isaiah 13 to refer to his future return when God will bring about the collapse of both the nations who have attacked Israel and Israel itself, because both will have been unwilling to submit to and obey God with humble and penitent hearts.

The second Old Testament passage to consider is Ezekiel 32:2-8 with important words highlighted because they pertain to Jesus’ comments—

Ezekiel 32:2 “Son of man, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him,
 ‘You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations,
 Yet you are like the monster in the seas;
 And you burst forth in your rivers
 And muddied the waters with your feet
 And fouled their rivers.’”

32:3 Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
 “Now I will spread My net over you
 With a company of many peoples,
 And they shall lift you up in My net.

32:4 “I will leave you on the land;
 I will cast you on the open field.
 And I will cause all the birds of the heavens to dwell on you,
 And I will satisfy the beasts of the whole earth with you.

32:5 “I will lay your flesh on the mountains
 And fill the valleys with your refuse.

32:6 “I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood
 As far as the mountains,
 And the ravines will be full of you.

32:7 “And when I extinguish you,
**I will cover the heavens and darken their stars;
 I will cover the sun with a cloud
 And the moon will not give its light.**

32:8 “**All the shining lights in the heavens
 I will darken over you
 And will set darkness on your land,**”
 Declares Adonai Yahweh.

In Ezekiel 32, God is directing the prophet in 585 B.C. to proclaim His judgment against Egypt soon after the Babylonian Empire had conquered and destroyed the southern Kingdom of Judah one year earlier in 586 B.C. Thus, because of Egypt's own arrogance and pride, it too will fall, and its destruction will be great like the cosmic events that are mentioned as metaphorical hyperbole. The chief god of the Egyptian pantheon was Ra, the sun god. But this natural force, the light and warmth of the sun, will be impotent in the face of God's powerful judgment against Egypt. It will be as though the sun loses its light giving ability, because, when they worship it in desperation, the Egyptians will be unable to coax it into saving them from Yahweh. As a result, all the cosmic forces of the sun, the moon, and the stars in the heavens will be helpless and only watch while God performs His destructive judgment and purposes on Egypt.

As with the passage in Isaiah, Jesus is using the language in Ezekiel 32 of these cosmic events to mean that God will judge Israel for their worship of the elements of creation—such as wealth, prestige, and all kinds of immorality. This will occur at the end of the present age just before he returns, and it will be catastrophic for the Jews on the land of Israel and for the surrounding Gentile nations whose intent has been to oppress and even annihilate the Jews.

The third relevant Old Testament passage is Joel 2:1-3;10; 28-32; 3:14-16 with important words highlighted that pertain to Jesus' comments—

Joel 2:1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
 And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
 Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 For the Day of Yahweh is coming;
 Surely it is near,
**2:2 A day of darkness and gloom,
 A day of clouds and thick darkness.**
 As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
 So there is a great and mighty people;

There has never been anything like it,
 Nor will there be again after it
 To the years of many generations.
2:3 A fire consumes before them
 And behind them a flame burns.
 The land is like the garden of Eden before them
 But a desolate wilderness behind them,
 And nothing at all escapes them.

2:10 Before them the earth quakes,
 The heavens tremble,
 The sun and the moon grow dark
 And the stars lose their brightness..."

2:28 "It will come about after this
 That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
 And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 Your old men will dream dreams,
 Your young men will see visions.

2:29 "Even on the male and female servants
 I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

2:30 I will display **wonders in the sky and on the earth,**
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

2:31 The sun will be turned into darkness
 And the moon into blood

Before the great and awesome Day of Yahweh comes.

2:32 And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh
 Will be delivered;
 For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
 There will be those who escape,"
 As Yahweh has said,
 Even among the survivors whom Yahweh calls...

3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
 For the Day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision.

3:15 The sun and moon grow dark
 And the stars lose their brightness."

3:16 Yahweh roars from Zion
 And utters His voice from Jerusalem,
And the heavens and the earth tremble.
 But Yahweh is a refuge for His people
 And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

I think that, unlike Isaiah and Ezekiel above, Joel is addressing the few years or days just before Jesus' return when God will judge and discipline His chosen people, the Jews, for the last time. A large, Gentile army will invade their land and cause great destruction to such an extent that it will appear as though the army is going to annihilate the Jewish people who have been living on the land. But similar to Isaiah and Ezekiel, Joel mentions cosmic and astronomic events, to which Jesus refers in his comments to his disciples. Will these events actually occur as described, or are both Joel and Jesus speaking of them metaphorically? I think that it is latter as in Isaiah 13 and Ezekiel 32 above. There are only two options for whom (or what) human beings might worship—

- 1) The Creator
- 2) The things of this creation

God appropriately brings judgment on people for the latter, and the cosmic and astronomic events in Joel 2 & 3 refer to how the creation and the things within it that both the Jews and the Gentiles tend to worship will not help them when God executes His judgment on them.

Nevertheless, Joel also indicates that some of the Jews (“all flesh” in 2:28 = “your [the Jews’] sons and daughters”) will genuinely cry out to God to rescue them from both their earthly enemies and the lack of help from the cosmos in the face of His disciplining them and judging them. As a result, God will fortunately respond by saving them from complete extinction and by transforming them into authentic believers when Jesus returns. These will be the “144,000” Jews of Revelation 7:4-8, who will be somewhat inwardly inclined towards God and then become fully committed to Him when God pours out His Spirit in their hearts.

The fourth Old Testament passage to observe is my translation of the combination of Amos 5:18-20 and Amos 8:4-14 with important words highlighted that pertain to Jesus’ comments—

Amos 5:18 Woe to the ones who desire for themselves the Day of Yahweh. For what purpose will the Day of Yahweh be for you? **It will be darkness and not light, 5:19** just as a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him, and he goes home and leans his hand on the wall, and a snake bites him. **5:20 Is not the Day of Yahweh darkness and not light? Is there not gloom instead of brightness in it?**

8:4 Hear this, those who trample the needy in order to cause the humble of the land to cease, **8:5** saying, “When will the new moon pass, so that we may sell grain, and the sabbath, so that we may open the grain market, to cause the ephah to be smaller and the shekel larger, to deceive with false scales, **8:6** to buy the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and so that we may sell the chaff of the grain?”

8:7 Yahweh has sworn according to the pride of Jacob, I will never forget all their actions. **8:8** Because of this, **will not the land quake**, and will not all those who dwell on it mourn? All of it will rise up like the Nile, and it will be tossed about and sink like the Nile of Egypt. **8:9** And it will happen in that day, declares Adonai Yahweh, **I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will cause it to be dark on the land in the day of light. 8:10** I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentations. And I will cause sackcloth on everyone’s loins and baldness on every head. I will establish it like mourning for an only son, and its end will be like a bitter day.

8:11 Behold, days are coming, declares Adonai Yahweh, and I will send hunger on the land—not a hunger for bread and not a thirst for water, but for hearing the message of Yahweh. **8:12** They will tremble from sea to sea, and from the north to the east. They will roam to and fro to seek the message of Yahweh, but they will not find it. **8:13** In that day, the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst. **8:14** Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, and they say, “As your god lives, Dan,” and “As the way of Beersheva lives,” indeed, they will fall and not rise up again.

The book of Amos lays out “the messages of Amos” (דְּבָרֵי עָמוֹס) (λόγοι Αμώς) as addressed to the whole nation of Israel, i.e., all the Jews in both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. While the first use of “Israel” in verse 1 of chapter 1 refers to all the Jews, the rest of the book indicates that Amos’ intended audience was mainly the northern Kingdom of Israel prior to its demise at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The earthquake mentioned in verse 1 probably took place around 750 B.C. Consequently, Amos begins speaking on behalf of God two years before this date, and he declares judgment on all of Israel, both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, while foretelling what he calls the Day of Yahweh.

There were two of these days in ancient times—the first when the northern Kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. and the second when the southern Kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. But the description of the events in Amos 5 & 8 that took place in the 8th and 6th centuries B.C. certainly sounds like the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5, which will produce the final judgment of the Jews by God before He fulfills His promise to Abraham to make them the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3. And, again, I suggest that Jesus uses the metaphorical and hyperbolic language of Amos to refer to his return when, similarly, the elements of the creation that His people, Israel, have been counting on to help them sustain their lives and protect them from their enemies will be found to be useless in avoiding the wrath and judgment of God that comes upon them for the last time.

The fifth important Old Testament passage is my translation of Micah 3:1-12 with important words highlighted that relate to Jesus' comments in the Olivet Discourse—

Micah 3:1 Then I said, "Hear now, heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know justice, **3:2** you who hate the good and love evil, who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones? **3:3** They eat the flesh of My people, and they strip off the skin from them. They break their bones and cut them up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle. **3:4** Then they will cry out to Yahweh, but He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, because they have practiced evil deeds."

3:5 Thus says Yahweh against the prophets who lead my people astray, who when they bite with their teeth, they proclaim, "Shalom." But against him who puts nothing in their mouths, they declare holy war. **3:6** Therefore, it will be night for you without vision and darkness for you with the practice of divination. **And the sun will set on the prophets, and the day will become dark upon them. 3:7** The seers of dreams will be ashamed, and those who practice divination will be embarrassed. And they will cover their moustaches because there is no response from God. **3:8** However, I am filled with strength, with the Spirit of Yahweh, and with justice and courageous might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

3:9 Now hear this, leaders of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, you who consider justice an abomination and twist everything that is straight, **3:10** who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with the abuse of justice. **3:11** Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price, and her prophets practice divination for a price. Yet, they rely on Yahweh, saying, "Is not Yahweh in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us." **3:12** Therefore, on account of you, Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a pile of ruins, and the mountain of the house will become high places of the forest.

The first verse of the book of Micah indicates that this prophet, whose name means "Who is like Yahweh?", proclaimed his messages during the reigns of Jotham (750-735 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), kings of the southern Kingdom of Judah. This verse also says that Micah was speaking on behalf of God in regard to both "Samaria," the northern Kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem and the southern Kingdom of Judah. Plus, he was from Moresheth, which is possibly Moresheth Gath in the Philistine area near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The second verse of the book begins, "Hear, O peoples, all of you." This means that God is addressing at least those of the Middle East at the time of Micah (and, by extrapolation, all the peoples of the earth), but the book goes on to show that He is interested in mostly the sins of the Israelites in the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Indeed, God declares that He is going to destroy both kingdoms. Yet there is hope in the end that He will restore them, the entire nation of Israel, to their land and to their prominence. This, of course, would be when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation" according to Genesis 12:1-3.

In the above verses of chapter 3, God criticizes the rulers of both Jewish kingdoms for their mistreatment of their fellow citizens. In addition, a time is coming soon when the Assyrians will invade the north and the Babylonians will invade the south, so that the rulers will cry out to God for protection from these fierce enemies. Yet, God's response will be to ignore their appeals for help, so that the Assyrians and the Babylonians will accomplish their goal and destroy both kingdoms, which occurs in 722 B.C. and 586 B.C. respectively. Thus, God speaks of darkness falling on "the [Jewish] prophets," which, in the context, refers to their being "ashamed" and "embarrassed" because their rosy predictions for His people will turn out to be the exact opposite when their cities and towns are destroyed by the Assyrians and Babylonians and the people are either killed or dispersed from the land and taken into captivity. Jesus uses similar language from Micah 3 to refer to the time just before his return when the elements of the creation, including other nations, which the Jews of the modern state of Israel have relied on for weapons to fight against their enemies, will become useless in the face of God's intentional and overwhelming judgment of them.

The sixth and last Old Testament passage to consider is Isaiah 34:1-5, with highlighted words that are similar to Jesus' statement and special note of the Septuagint translation of v. 4—

Isaiah 34:1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!

Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.

34:2 For Yahweh's indignation is against all the nations,
 And His wrath against all their armies;
 He has utterly destroyed them,
 He has given them over to slaughter.

34:3 So their slain will be thrown out,
 And their corpses will give off their stench,
 And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.

34:4 **And all the host of heaven will wear away,
 And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
 All their hosts will also wither away**
 As a leaf withers from the vine,
 Or as one withers from the fig tree.

[Septuagint 34:4 And heaven will be rolled up like a scroll;
And all the stars will fall like leaves from a vine,
 And as leaves fall from a fig tree.]

34:5 For My sword is satiated in heaven,
 Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom
 And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.

In chapter 34, Isaiah is speaking from Jerusalem and addressing “all the nations,” while focusing on the people who live across the southeast border of Israel, the Edomites, who are descendants of Esau. The Edomites, therefore, represent all the peoples of the earth, or at least of the Middle East, who figure most prominently in opposing the nation of Israel and rebelling against Yahweh, their God. Thus, His solemn statement to these Gentile peoples is that He will destroy them and their armies. Most likely, God is ultimately referencing the end of the present age, when the armies of these surrounding peoples invade Israel initially to subjugate the Jews and then to annihilate them, not knowing the Jesus is about to return and destroy them. I have highlighted the text of v. 4 in the Septuagint, which reads, “all the stars will fall,” meaning that the darkness of destruction will descend upon God’s people, the nation of Israel, as it will have also descended upon the Gentiles who have attacked them with the purpose of killing them. However, in spite of the Jews’ disobedience and idolatrous worship of the creation (like the Gentiles), God will protect His chosen people and rescue a relatively small number of them—the “144,000” of Revelation 7:4-8. These Jews will become authentic believers and the first generation of the nation of Israel living on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Then there is the last part of Jesus’ list of cosmic events in Matthew and Luke, that “the powers of the heavens will be shaken,” which Luke also includes in his description and, therefore, must be important for understanding all that Jesus is saying here. As I mentioned above, Luke interprets Jesus’ words of Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24-25 rather than stating them directly. He says in 21:25-26, “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world.” Then, Luke adds, “for the powers of the heavens will be shaken,” which must relate to “the things which are coming upon the world.” In this way, Luke refers to Matthew’s and Mark’s cosmic elements of the coming disturbances that include the sun, the moon, and the stars, along with the sea and the waves.

Therefore, the question is whether these “powers” are strictly “in the heavens” and above the earth (as Mark seems to intimate in v. 25) or both in the sky above the earth and on the ground on the earth? In addition, what will these “powers” be and how will they be shaken? Perhaps we can find help from the only other verse in the New Testament that uses the word “powers” with the word “heavens.” It is Ephesians 6:12, where the apostle Paul is encouraging his readers to stand firm in their faith against the lies and deceptions of Satan, and which I translate,

Ephesians 6:12 because our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the religious forces of this darkness, against the spiritual elements of evil in the heavens.

The NAS95 translates the words τὰς ἐξουσίας (*tas exousias*) with “the powers,” whereas I use the words “the authorities.” But Paul is clearly associating these with “the religious forces of this darkness”

and “the spiritual elements of evil in the heavens.” While it seems only natural to interpret these powers, authorities, forces, and elements as being up there somewhere above the earth and, therefore, Satanic and demonic beings who somehow can influence human beings on the earth, the context lends itself better to seeing all these as earthly, religious rulers who *permanently and consistently* (“in the heavens”) affect the course of history (at least until Jesus returns and establishes the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel) by persuading other sinful human beings to reject God and the truth of the Bible.

While Jesus is using slightly different words, αἱ δυνάμεις (*hai dunameis*), which can also be translated with either “the powers” or “the authorities,” I think he means the same thing as Paul in Ephesians 6:12. God is going to shake the earthly authorities and powers who seek to promote their own erroneous religious beliefs, whether they are doing so from their *political* positions in the governments of countries and nations or from their *religious* positions in the other religions of the world, and whether their beliefs refer to some sort of “god” or are completely atheistic. And when He shakes them, they will lose their power and influence over people, because it will become painfully obvious to all who have believed and followed them that they are very, very wrong and, therefore, useless to prevent God from destroying those whom He has targeted for destruction. And God will focus His destructive judgment on mainly unbelieving Jews, but it will also affect unbelieving Gentiles.

It seems to me, too, that the following statements by the Old Testament prophet Haggai are addressing the same issue,

Haggai 2:6 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, “Once more in a little while, I am going to **shake the heavens and the earth** (וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם) (ἐγὼ σείσω τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν), **the sea also and the dry land.**

2:7 I will shake all the nations (וְהָרַעַשְׁתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם) (καὶ συσσειώω πάντα τὰ ἔθνη); and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,” says Yahweh of hosts.

2:8 “The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,” declares Yahweh of hosts.

2:9 “The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,” says Yahweh of hosts, “and in this place I will give peace/shalom (שְׁלֹמֹם) (וְיִבְרְכָם הוֹדָה אֲנִי) (καὶ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ δώσω εἰρήνην),” declares Yahweh of hosts” [emphasis mine].

Here in Haggai 2:6-9, God speaks of shaking “the heavens and the earth,” along with “the sea and the dry land.” By going on to say that He “will shake all the nations,” so that they bring their “wealth” to “this house,” which is God’s house, the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, He is declaring that He will bring to an end those earthly powers and authorities that have seemed so permanent, untouchable, and unassailable throughout human history and at the end of the present age, while they have also proclaimed religious and belief systems which have been erroneous and hostile to God and the biblical truth. Similarly, God is talking about His actions against “all the nations” which have antagonistically opposed Him—both in the Middle East, who have been hostile towards the people of Israel and attacked them, and in the rest of the world, who have supported these enemies of the Jews. Yet, in the end, with this prediction by the prophet Haggai, God indicates that He will bring “peace,” literally *shalom*, to Jerusalem and world, which we know will occur at Jesus’ *parousia* and return, when he restores the Kingdom of Israel and rules the rest of the world during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

The apostle Paul quotes Haggai 2:6 in his encouragement to the persecuted, Jewish believers in the book of Hebrews when he says,

Hebrews 12:25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if those did not escape on earth when they refused him who was imparting a divine message, how much more shall we not escape, who turn away from him who is from heaven.

12:26 His voice shook the earth then, and, now, He has promised, saying,

Yet once more **I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven** (ἔτι ἅπαξ, ἐγὼ σείσω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν).

12:27 As for the statement, “Yet once more,” it refers to the transformation of shaken things, as they have been made, in order that unshaken things may remain. **12:28** Therefore, because we receive an unshakeable kingdom, let us be grateful, in view of which we serve God acceptably with reverence and awe, **12:29** because, indeed, our God is a consuming fire [emphasis mine].

Like the Old Testament prophets and Jesus, I think that Paul is referring to earthly religious and political rulers who advocate erroneous belief systems that are contrary to the Bible, even though both Haggai and Paul refer to them as existing on “earth” and in “heaven.” They are definitely *on earth* because this is where they physically reside, and they are *in heaven* because they have acquired a rather permanent status and are considered by others to be worthy of a level of worship that only God deserves. In other words, people submit themselves to these rulers’ ideas and grant them authority in their lives that only God deserves.

But these religious and political rulers, along with their foolish ideas and notions, are the shakable things that God is going to “shake” and subsequently destroy, so that only the “unshaken things may remain,” i.e., Jesus and the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God, which will be the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This will be the “unshakeable kingdom” that the Jewish readers will “receive” and for which they should now “be grateful” as they anticipate it from God, who “is a consuming fire” and will destroy Israel’s enemies

This also fits with the vision of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12-17—

Revelation 6:12 And I looked when he broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; **13** and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. **14** The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. **15** Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; **16** and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; **17** for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” [emphasis mine]

The above vision is like the Old Testament passages to which Jesus alludes so that the description of these events is metaphorical and hyperbole. In addition, like Jesus’ comments, the vision is a summary of the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord as mentioned in Malachi 4:5, so that it is not as though all the actual sources of light in the day and night skies will miraculously become dim. Instead, the vision is foretelling the disruption of the power and authority that earthly rulers, including Jewish earthly leaders, wield to create safety and security for themselves as opposed to trusting God for all that they need to exist in the present realm. This vision probably includes at least the seven bowls of wrath that the book of Revelation goes on to describe in chapters 8 and 16 respectively and that God will direct mainly towards the Jews on the land of Israel in order to encourage them to change their minds and hearts and become authentic believers in Him and their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Therefore, it seems that Jesus is referring to the above Old Testament passages and using their language and terminology to indicate that the Jewish and Gentile earthly powers and authorities, along with any natural elements in the creation that people worship and rely on as they should God alone to sustain their lives and exist, will become so chaotic and tumultuous that they will become useless and powerless to protect them from God’s judgment which is coming upon them when he returns.

Thus, these may be global events that will include the worldwide, financial collapse described in the visions of Revelation 17 & 18 and not just confined to the Middle East. And they will be so disturbing to unbelieving Gentiles and Jews that they will faint from fear and the possibility that more unnerving events are soon to appear—which they will. Their terror will arise from the appearance of God’s wrath on earth and towards the Jews specifically in the Middle East, so that they fear for their lives, which is what they desperately want to preserve—in contrast to Christians who are eagerly looking forward to eternal life. Plus, according to Paul in Romans 1, the unbelievers will be terrified of encountering God’s eternal wrath and destruction, even if they are not willing to admit that this is part of their fear. As a result, these events just before Jesus’ *parousia* and grand appearance will be the final act by God to bring about the relatively short but intense time of even greater tribulation for mostly the Jews, but for the Gentiles also to a degree.

Another way to say what Jesus means by these cosmic disturbances and catastrophes is that, in an Ancient Near Eastern manner, he is predicting that God will take the natural, created forces of reality, which both Jews and Gentiles tend to worship and seek to use to acquire as much material and social success as possible, thinking that they can manipulate these forces to obtain and preserve the highest level of stability and security in their lives, and He will prevent them from achieving any satisfying sense of safety in the midst of His earthly judgment on the people of Israel and the surrounding Gentile nations.

Therefore, the emotional and psychological effect of these disturbances will be to instill the profoundest fear in all the people. Plus, the events mentioned in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew, Mark, and Luke probably refer to the same ones of the sixth seal and at least the seven bowls of wrath, if not also the first seven trumpets, of the book of Revelation, leading up to the final Great and Terrible Day of the Lord as God directs His judgment towards mainly the Jews on the land of Israel.

For example, the first four trumpets appear as described here in Revelation 8:6-12—

Revelation 8:6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. **7** The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth [land]; and a third of the earth [land] was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

8:8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, **9** and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

8:10 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. **11** The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

8:12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. [So that Jesus could be referring to the trumpets as the beginning of the end just before he returns.]

And Revelation 16:17 speaks of the seventh bowl of wrath in this way—

Revelation 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." **18** And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth [land], so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. **19** And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. **20** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **21** And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

While perhaps these events of the trumpets and bowls of wrath occur over the course of two to three decades, by using the word *εὐθέως* (*eutheos*) in Matthew 24:29, which is translated "immediately" in the NAS95, Jesus may mean not only "immediately after the [long] tribulation" (of at least two thousand years), but also *for a few decades* there will be occurrences in the natural realm supernaturally produced by God mainly on the land of Israel and among the surrounding Gentiles, which will prevent both the normal means of human government and the normal sources of physical sustenance for Jewish society in Israel (and, to a degree, in the surrounding Gentile countries and the rest of the world) from protecting them from God's judgment, so that these terrifying experiences will deeply affect all sinners such that their shattered nerves will produce within them a severe "fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world" (Luke 21:26).

As additional information regarding God's purposes of bringing about the return of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel, here are some of my notes from the prophet Habakkuk's prayer Habakkuk 3, and I quote below vs. 2-7 of the prayer,

Habakkuk 3:2 Yahweh, I have heard the report about You and I fear.

Yahweh, revive Your work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember mercy.

3:3 God comes from Teman,
And the Holy One from Mount Paran.
His splendor covers the heavens,

And the earth is full of His praise.
3:4 His radiance is like the sunlight;
 He has rays flashing from His hand,
 And there is the hiding of His power.
3:5 Before Him goes pestilence,
 And plague comes after Him.
3:6 He stood and surveyed the earth;
 He looked and startled the nations.
 Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered,
 The ancient hills collapsed.
 His ways are everlasting.
3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan under distress,
 The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.

Consider first,

Genesis 15:13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. **14** But I will also judge (יִשְׁפֹּט, κρίνω êγώ) the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

Here we find the idea that God judges and punishes those who mistreat His people, Israel. Adopting an antisemitic attitude will only result in God's condemning and destroying a person or nation.

Then there is the Hebrew word שָׁפַט in Habakkuk 3:5, which can mean pestilence as in,

Exodus 5:3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence (בַּדָּבָר) or with the sword."

But it obviously can mean word or message, too, which is how the Septuagint translates it in Habakkuk 3:5. Yet, "pestilence" makes more sense in parallel to רָשָׁף, which means "plague," in the second line. Thus, God threatens Israel with disease and death if they do not obey Him.

Also, there is in regard to the Egyptians,

Exodus 9:3 "behold, the hand of Yahweh will come with a very severe pestilence (דָּבָר קָבֵד) on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks."

God followed through on His promise, and a large amount of the Egyptian cattle died the next day. Then there is in regard to the Jews from a list of things God will do to the Jews if they disobey the Mosaic Covenant,

Leviticus 26:25 'I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence (דָּבָר) among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands.'

The Hebrew word רָשָׁף can mean plague or pestilence too as possibly in,

Deuteronomy 32:24 'They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague (רָשָׁף) and bitter destruction; and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust.'

God is speaking about the nation of Israel because of their disloyalty towards Him, even as He was bringing them out of slavery from Egypt. And then this from the mouth of Jeremiah regarding foreign nations,

Jeremiah 28:8 “The prophets who were before me and before you from ancient times prophesied against many lands and against great kingdoms, of war (לְמִלְחָמָה, εἰς πόλεμον) and of calamity (וְלָרָעָה) and of pestilence (וְלָדָבָר).”

In other words, God threatens Egypt, the Jews, and other Gentile nations with war, catastrophe, and diseases for their disobedience towards Him. There is also,

Obadiah 15 “For the day of Yahweh draws near on all the nations (עַל-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם, ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.”

And, in Ezekiel 30, God speaks of “a time [of judgment] for the nations,” where He mentions Egypt, Ethiopia, Arabia, and others. Thus, God’s wrath and judgment will basically be worldwide. These same acts of judgment show up also in Seals 1-4 of Revelation 6 as well as in the Olivet Discourse, especially in Luke’s account. Therefore, wars, natural catastrophes, and diseases will be common occurrences as manifestations of God’s judgment on specifically the people of Israel, but also on the rest of the nations, until Jesus’ return. God has called all human beings and all nations during all human history to be repentant and moral as the Jews will be during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Therefore, to the extent that nations and individuals reject God, they subject themselves to the risk of God’s judgment as revealed through wars, natural catastrophes, and deadly diseases. Plus, with these instruments of judgment, God is always encouraging all people to face into their sin, their mortality, and their powerlessness over their lives and this creation so as to repent and believe in Him for the sake of their eternal salvation. Nevertheless, the majority of humanity do not repent and believe, and God’s multiple instruments of judgment keep showing up. Thus, like Habakkuk, authentic believers, both Jewish believers and Gentile believers, also experience the effects of God’s judgments—in spite of their being His people. They may even die in the midst of them, which is why they must use these times to increase their knowledge and understanding of God, their so as to persevere in their faith and belief in Him and, thereby, gain eternal life and mercy.

There is also,

Ezekiel 38:18 “It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “that My fury will mount up in My anger. **19** In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.”

And,

Revelation 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” **18** And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth [land?], so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. **19** The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. **20** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **21** And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

God’s multiple predictions of judgment on the Jews and the Gentile nations, and His multiple rescues of the Jews for complete annihilation, are intended to motivate all sinful human beings to repent of their sin, obey His moral commandments as an outward demonstration of their inward change to humble repentance, and look forward to His future salvation and promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God when Jesus will rule God’s people, first on this earth and then on the new and eternal earth.

Matthew 24:30	Mark 13:26	Luke 21:27-28	
24:30 “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.	13:26 “Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory.	21:27 “Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 21:28 “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”	

In this part of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus finally arrives at a description of his return when he will restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel by alluding to Daniel 7:13-14 where the prophet sees a vision of a man approaching God on a throne, and God gives this man a kingdom that will last forever—

Daniel 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven,
One like a son of man was coming.
And he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.
7:14 “To him was given a sovereign government, glory, and a kingdom,
So that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language may serve him.
His sovereign government is an everlasting one, which will not pass away.
And his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

Daniel speaks of seeing “one like a son of man,” and it is tempting to think that this is the Son of Man as Jesus often calls himself in Matthew 24:27 and other passages of the gospel accounts. But I think that the phrase in Daniel 7:13 means simply that he is seeing a human being. And he is “like” a human being because he is a human being. Previously, I suggested the Jesus’ use of the label “Son of Man” in the gospels is a reference to Psalm 8. Nevertheless, it makes sense also that this human being in Daniel 7 is the final Davidic king of Israel, who we now know from the New Testament is Jesus of Nazareth—like the final “Son of Man” of Psalm 8. As a result, in the verses above of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus exploits Daniel’s comments of this man’s “coming on the clouds of the sky” to refer to himself as the long-predicted Messiah and king of Israel. Therefore, he is saying that he is the human being in the vision of Daniel, who first comes “with the clouds of heaven,” then is “presented” before God, and lastly is given a “sovereign” and “everlasting” government, which all the nations will “serve” and “will not pass away.”

In this way, Jesus is saying that he will return and be Israel’s king who will receive from God the Kingdom of God on earth. The vision in Daniel indicates that Jesus’ “sovereign government...will not pass away.” But if the vision is confined to the first stage of the Kingdom of God when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants, the Jews, the most powerful people in all human history on this earth, then Daniel means that Jesus’ rule over the nation of Israel (and the rest of the earth) cannot be replaced by any other nation, country, or empire when he returns as he rides on the clouds of the earth’s sky in the same manner that the vision shows the “son of man” when he approaches God on His throne.

Consequently, as Jesus says in Mark 13:26, there will be “great power and glory” associated with his return that will be even more powerful and glorious than that which he displayed at his first coming when he performed multiple miracles, died on the cross, was raised from the dead, and ascended from the earth into the sky. This new “power and great glory” of Matthew 24:30 will also be so much more

magnificent than during Jesus' first appearance because he will enter into the final position and role that God has planned for him from all eternity as the ruler of His people first on the present earth and then on the new, eternal earth.

Clearly, during his first appearance, Jesus healed the sick, the lame, and the blind and raised the dead, only to subject himself willingly and freely, but in the appearance of a powerless way, to his religious and political enemies, who killed him by executing him on a cross. In stark contrast, when he returns and makes his *parousia* and grand appearance as Israel's final king and the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God, he will subject himself to no one but God the Father, and no one but God the Father will exercise power and authority over him. Instead of his enemies crushing him by crucifying him, he will crush them and free the Jews from their enemies, so that all other human beings throughout the world will submit to him. Thus, Jesus will finally acquire his final position, status, and role in the present realm as the most glorious person whom God has brought into existence in cosmic history. And his glory will persist into the next creation as described by Revelation 21-22.

Jesus also says in these verses of the Olivet Discourse that "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky," and "they will see" this sign. Who are "they"? Certainly, "they" are the people of Israel to whom Jesus will come directly "on the clouds of the sky" as Mark says in v. 26 and Luke indicates in v. 27. But this event will probably also be quite obvious to others in the surrounding countries of the Middle East. In addition, Matthew speaks of how "all the tribes of the earth will mourn" as they witness Jesus' spectacular entrance back into the world. But who are "all the tribes of the earth"? Are they literally every human being who is living in the world at the time of Jesus' return? Or are they the people of the Middle East who are close to the actual location of Jesus' return above the city of Jerusalem? Or are they just the "tribes" of Israel or not the "earth" but on the "land" of Israel as the Greek word *gay* (γῆ) could be translated? My guess is that Jesus is talking about all the peoples of the entire earth. The phrase "all the tribes of the earth" is found in the two other places in the Bible. First is Genesis 12:1-3—

Genesis 12:1 Now Yahweh said to Abram,
 "Go forth from your country,
 And from your relatives
 And from your father's house,
 To the land which I will show you;
 12:2 And I will make you a great nation,
 And I will bless you,
 And make your name great;
 And so you shall be a blessing;
 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,
 And the one who curses you I will curse.
 And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

The last line reads in the Greek Septuagint, καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς. The statement of Jesus in Matthew 24:30 reads, καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς. The last five words of these Greek statements can be translated, "all the tribes of the earth." In other words, God tells Abraham that all the different peoples and groups of people in the world will find "blessing" from Him by being "in" Abraham, which is to say, by adopting the same kind of belief in God that Abraham had. The rest of the Bible makes it clear that this blessing is eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Consequently, it is very possible that Jesus is alluding to the same groups of people of Genesis 12:3 and saying that they "will mourn" when he returns. What kind of mourning will this be? Will people be sad because they now realize that Jesus suffered death on their behalf and that they have rejected him up to this point in their lives—so that they will make a quick decision to believe in him and be saved from God's eternal condemnation while they genuinely weep over their sin? Or will they be sad because they are acknowledging that Jesus' return means God's eternal condemnation for them because they have been and now remain committed to rejecting him, thus stuck in the hardness of their hearts and unwilling to repent of their sin?

We will hold off on answering these questions until after considering the other passage where the phrase "all the tribes of the earth" is found, which is in Revelation 1:4-7—

Revelation 1:4 John to the seven assemblies that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, **5** and from Jesus the Messiah, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood—**6** and he has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. **7** Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Yes! Amen.

Here in v. 7 of Revelation 1 I think that “all the tribes of the earth” refers to both Jews and Gentiles. When Jesus returns, the Jewish nation dwelling on the land of Israel, whose ancestors killed and crucified Jesus, will “see” him. This is to say that they will know that he has returned. And some of the *Jews* will mourn their collective error of having rejected Jesus as their Messiah so as to repent of their individual sins and become believers on the land of Israel when the millennial kingdom arrives. These will be the 144,000 mentioned first in Revelation 7, and their repentance will be according to what God predicts through the prophet Zechariah—

Zechariah 12:10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

As a result of their “weeping bitterly,” I think it makes more sense to interpret these Jews as being sensitive to the truth of their sin and genuinely repenting of their repentance. They will realize that their nation “pierced” and killed their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. But, in the midst of his return and grand appearance to restore the Kingdom of Israel, they will confess their sins as the result of God’s having poured out His “Spirit of grace and supplication” on them. In line with Zechariah 12:10, I think that Revelation 1:7 means that some of the *Jews* will mourn their sin with appropriate repentance, while the rest of the *Jews* will remain rebellious and unrepentant towards God. In addition, some of the *Gentiles* in the surrounding countries of the Middle East and in the rest of the earth will mourn over their sin with genuine repentance and faith, like the “144,000” repentant Jews of Revelation 7, while the rest of the Gentiles will remain rebellious and unrepentant towards God.

Thus, in Matthew 24:30, I think Jesus means the same thing as the combination of Zechariah 12:10 and John’s statement in Revelation 1:7, that, to a degree, the certainly the people in the Middle East and probably the entire world will know that Jesus has returned when he makes his *parousia* and grand appearance to destroy Israel’s enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel, along with ruling the rest of the world. Therefore, some people will find themselves mourning their sin and repenting of it, while most of the Jews and the Gentiles will remain stubborn and hard-hearted towards God. Obviously, the latter will eventually experience God’s wrath and eternal destruction.

The final comment of this part is in only Luke 21. He adds v. 28, an exhortation by Jesus to his disciples (and to those who follow them in history as bona fide Christians up to the time of his return), “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” The “redemption” and freedom of which Jesus speaks is the Jews’ finally receiving the fulfillment of God’s promises to them going all the way back to Genesis 12:1-3. God unequivocally declared that He was going to shape the Jews into a “great nation,” indeed, the most powerful nation in all human history. The rest of the Bible makes it clear that this takes place when their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, rules over them and likewise exercises his reign over all the Gentile nations. Because Jesus is talking about his return when God will fulfill His promise to the Jews, he encourages his disciples to “straighten up and lift up [their] heads, because [their] redemption is drawing near.” He wants his followers and future followers to consider that, when the various cosmic and cataclysmic “signs” that he has described in the Olivet Discourse begin to occur, they can be confident that he is close to appearing in the sky to restore the Kingdom of Israel and to bring eternal forgiveness for their sins and to free them from their enemies in this world who have been hostile towards God and them. In other words, such events as these should lighten their hearts if they are feeling depressed or down because of the painful circumstances they are experiencing as described in the prophetic books of the Old Testament and in the book of Revelation.

Matthew 24:31	Mark 13:27		
24:31 “And he will send forth his angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER his chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.	13:27 “And then he will send forth the angels, and will gather together his chosen ones from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.		

In the above verses of Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27, there are two options for what Jesus means—

- 1) Jesus as God’s proxy (therefore, God Himself as the transcendent author of reality) will gather “his chosen ones,” the Jews, from around the world and bring them to the land of Israel to be the first generation of authentic, Jewish believers as their Messiah Jesus restores the Kingdom of Israel
- 2) Jesus as God’s proxy (therefore, God Himself as the transcendent author of reality) will gather “his chosen ones,” all the Gentile and Jewish believers from all history, so that they meet Jesus in the air as he returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15, which also mentions the trumpet).

In other words, are the “chosen ones” God’s chosen *ethnic* group, *the Jews*, or are they His chosen *authentic believers, both the Jews and the Gentiles of authentic faith from all history and all nations* — or, at least, during Christian history? Probably, most people interpret the “chosen ones” as option #2, all the believers, both Jews and Gentiles (where the Gentiles comprise the majority), who become Christians from the time of Jesus’ first appearance to his return. This would comprise the fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 with the evangelizing of the gospel throughout the entire world. Nevertheless, we should consider several Old Testament passages while seeking to understand Jesus’ point. The first is Malachi 4:1,

Malachi 4:1, “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and **all the arrogant and every evildoer** will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says Yahweh of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch” [emphasis mine].

Similar to the options for interpreting Jesus in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27 above, is God speaking in Malachi of,

- 1) the destruction of all unbelieving Jews around the world when He brings about the final, earthly judgment on them just before the return of the Messiah, or
- 2) the destruction of all unbelieving Jews on the land of Israel just before the return of the Messiah?

There is also Exodus 19:16 that may be helpful for understanding what Jesus means,

Exodus 19:16 So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that **all the people who were in the camp** trembled [emphasis mine].

Clearly, Moses is referring to the Jewish Israelites whom he has led out of Egypt and who are gathered at Mt. Sinai to receive the Mosaic Covenant from God. These are God’s “chosen ones” as a result of His first promise in the Abrahamic Covenant to make them eventually the most powerful nation in human history. And He instructs them with the Mosaic Covenant as to how He wants them to demonstrate their greatness through their moral, ritual, and civil obedience to Him.

We can also consider Deuteronomy 7:6-8,

Deuteronomy 7:6 “For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen (בְּחַרְתָּ) (προείλατο) you to be **a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth**

- 7 Yahweh did not set His love on you nor choose you (בְּחַרְתָּ יְיָ בְּכֶם וְיְיָ בְּחַרְתָּ אֶתְכֶם) (προείλατο κύριος ὑμᾶς καὶ ἐξελέξατο ὑμᾶς) because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,
 8 but because Yahweh loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, Yahweh brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” [emphasis mine].

Again, Moses is identifying the Jewish Israelites as a special group on earth. They are God’s “own possession out of all the peoples who are the face of the earth.” Therefore, the Jews are truly His “chosen ones” ethnically speaking.

Deuteronomy 30:1-4 attests to the same idea,

- Deuteronomy 30:1** “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where Yahweh your God has banished you,
 2 and you return to Yahweh your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,
 3 then Yahweh your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather **you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you.**
 4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back” [emphasis mine].

Here, Moses is talking about both the Israelites, the Jews, whom God will bring back to the land of Israel, and the Gentiles, into whose nations God will scatter and disperse the Jews. The former are His chosen ones as described in all these Old Testament passages, while the latter are not God’s chosen ones, because, as Gentiles, they cannot trace their lineage back to Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, it is only the Jews who are the “chosen ones” (to use Jesus’ wording), whom God will scatter and disperse from the land of Israel into other countries and nations and then “gather” them and “bring [them] back” into the land of Israel in accordance with His promise in Genesis 12:1-3 and the Abrahamic Covenant to make them a “great nation.”

There is also Psalm 105:6, where I highlight the whole verse,

Psalm 105:6 O seed of Abraham, His servant, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones (בְּחֻרְיָיו) (ἐκλεκτοὶ αὐτοῦ).

The same Greek phrase as is found in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27, ἐκλεκτοὶ αὐτοῦ (*eklektoi autou*) is how the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word (בְּחֻרְיָיו), which also means “His chosen ones.” And the psalmist identifies these people as the “seed of Abraham” and the “sons of Jacob,” who can be only the Jews, the nation of Israel. These are God’s *chosen* people who will receive His promise of the Messiah from the line of David and becoming the most powerful nation in human history, because the psalmist goes on to say in vs. 7-11

- Psalm 105:7** [God] is Yahweh our God;
 His judgments are in all the earth.
105:8 He has remembered His covenant forever,
 The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,
105:9 The covenant which He made with Abraham,
 And His oath to Isaac.
105:10 Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
 To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
105:11 Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan

As the portion of your inheritance.”

Thus, God will “remember His covenant..., which He made with Abraham,” saying to them, “I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance” (cf. Psalm 105:8-11). In other words, God will bring His chosen ones, the Jews, back into the land where He has scattered them to install them on the land in peace under their ruler and Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

And here is Isaiah 11:11-12 with important words highlighted,

Isaiah 11:11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand **the remnant of His people**, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble **the banished ones of Israel**, and **will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth**.

I think that chapter 11 of Isaiah is speaking of Jesus’ return when he will restore the Kingdom of Israel, and the whole earth will experience a level of peace and security that has not yet existed, because he will reign over not only the nation of Israel, but also the rest of the nations as well. As the above verses indicate, God will bring “**the banished ones of Israel**,” *the Jews*, back into the land of Israel, so that He “**will gather the dispersed of Judah** [again, *the Jews*!] **from the four corners of the earth**.” Even though God Himself has scattered the Jews into all parts of the world, nevertheless, He will recover them from there so that they may live again on the land which He promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22.

The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word (קָרַע), which means “assemble” in v. 12, with the same word that Jesus uses for “gather together” in Mark 13:27, συνάξει (*suvakseî*), which means either “he will assemble” or “he will gather.” The word for “gather together” in Matthew 24:31 is a form of this word, ἐπισυνάξουσιν (*episunaksousin*), which means the same thing, “they will assemble” or “they will gather together.” Thus, it is God’s chosen ones, the Jews, whom He assembles and gathers into the land

And there is also Isaiah 27:12-13,

Isaiah 27:12 “In that day Yahweh will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and **you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel**.

13 It will come about also in that day that **a great trumpet will be blown**, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship Yahweh **in the holy mountain at Jerusalem**” [emphasis mine].

These two verses are also in the context of God’s *restoring Israel* and giving them the greatness that He has promised them in Genesis 12. This will be, as Isaiah 27:6 says, when “Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit.” In other words, God will gather the Jews back into the land of Israel when “**a great trumpet will be blown**” (like that which Jesus mentions in Matthew 24:31), just as God has promised them, so that their success and prosperity will affect the entire world. Thus, according to Isaiah 27:13 above, the Jews “who were perishing” and “scattered in the land of Egypt” and “in the land of Assyria,” will immigrate to the land of Israel and “worship” their God, “Yahweh,” at Mt. Zion in “Jerusalem.” Again, these are the chosen ones of God, the people of Israel, whom he brings back to the land which He promised them through the Abrahamic Covenant.

And here is Isaiah 43:5-7 with important words highlighted,

Isaiah 43:1 But now, thus says Yahweh, your Creator, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel,
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are Mine!

43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.

43:3 “For I am Yahweh your God,

The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your place.

43:4 "Since you are precious in My sight,
Since you are honored and I love you,
I will give other men in your place
and other peoples in exchange for your life.

43:5 "Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will **bring your offspring from the east**,
and **gather you from the west**.

43:6 I will say **to the north**, 'Give them up!'
and **to the south**, 'Do not hold them back.'
Bring My sons from afar
And **My daughters from the ends of the earth**,

43:7 Everyone who is called by My name,
And whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

We see that in the above passage from Isaiah 43, God is speaking to "Jacob" and "Israel," i.e., the Jews. He has "formed" them and been with them through the hardships, "the waters" such as the Red Sea, of life. He is their "Savior" and will take the lives of others, their enemies (especially those who invade their land before Jesus returns), in place of theirs, because He loves them. In other words, He will preserve them as a nation while He destroys those who oppose them. And God tells them in vs. 5-7 not to "fear," because He is going to "**gather**" the "**offspring**" of Israel, and "**bring**" them, His "**sons**" and "**daughters**," from the far reaches "**of the earth**," to return them to the land which He promised them according to the Abrahamic Covenant. God also tells the Jews in v. 10, which I have not quoted, that the Jews are His "witnesses," His "servant whom [He has] chosen," where the word for "chosen" in the Septuagint is ἐξελεξάμην, the verb form of ἐκλεκτός in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27. Thus, God has "chosen" the Jews to be His people on this earth who, according to Deuteronomy 4, have the responsibility to portray Him accurately to the rest of humanity by their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

This is like Jeremiah 31:7-11,

Jeremiah 31:7 For thus says Yahweh, "Sing aloud with gladness for **Jacob**, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise and say, 'O Yahweh, save **Your people, the remnant of Israel**.'

8 Behold, **I am bringing them from the north country**, and **I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth**, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; a great company, **they will return here**.

9 With weeping they will come, and by supplication **I will lead them**; I will make them walk by streams of waters, on a straight path in which they will not stumble; **for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn**" [emphasis mine].

At the beginning of Jeremiah 31, God says that "at that time," He will be "the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be [His] people." I think that He is speaking of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel, while also ruling over the rest of the world. It will be then that "all" the Jews will worship Him appropriately, i.e., with changed hearts, so that He can call "**all**" of them His "people." They are the ones whom he "**will gather**" from the ends of "**the earth**," in order to bring them back to the land of Israel and establish them there without their fearing their enemies ever again, because their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will protect them and rule the whole world. And by being "**a father to Israel**," God has made the Jews His chosen ones towards whom He always remains faithful according to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Another Old Testament passage that mentions a "trumpet" is Joel 2:1,19, & 28

Joel 2:1 Blow **a trumpet in Zion**, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let **all the inhabitants of the land** tremble,

For the day of Yahweh is coming; surely it is near.

2:19 Yahweh will answer and say to His people,
 “Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,
 And you will be satisfied in full with them;
 And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

2:28 “It will come about after this
 That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
 And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 Your old men will dream dreams,
 Your young men will see visions.

2:29 “Even on the male and female servants
 I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” [emphasis mine]

In the second chapter of Joel, the prophet is announcing “the day of Yahweh,” which v. 11 that is not quoted, says will be “great and very awesome.” I think that Joel is referring to the final act of God’s judgment, discipline, and training towards the Jews, like the previous destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel around 700 B.C. and of the southern Kingdom of Judah around 600 B.C. The ‘day of Yahweh’ of Joel 2 will be when God encourages the whole nation of Israel, scattered throughout the world, to repent of their sin of rejecting Jesus as their Messiah and to embrace him as their king, high priest, and savior from God’s eternal wrath. As a result, Joel addresses “**all the inhabitants of the land**” of Israel, and, by extrapolation, those who have been dispersed into other nations and countries, but who are still the ethnic, chosen people of God, the Jews. Once God has blown “**a trumpet in Zion**” (whether metaphorically or literally) and disciplined them, He will have gathered them back into their land and will “pour out [His] Spirit” on them, so that they will become great and mighty, and He “will never again make [them] a reproach among the nations.”

And Zechariah 9:13-14 also refers to a trumpet’s being blown in the midst of God’s activities,

Zechariah 9:13 For I will bend **Judah** as My bow, I will fill the bow with **Ephraim**. And I will stir up **your sons, O Zion**, against **your sons, O Greece**; and I will make you like a warrior’s sword.

14 Then Yahweh will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning; and Adonai Yahweh **will blow the trumpet**, and will march in the storm winds of the south [emphasis mine].

Certainly, “**Judah**” and “**Ephraim**” are the Jews, the “**sons**” of “**Zion**” in contrast to the “**sons**” of “**Greece**,” the Gentiles, and, in Zechariah 9, God predicts the coming of the humble Jewish king, who will be “just and the one who saves,” either saving the Jews from their earthly enemies through his collective power with God the Father during his second appearance, or saving them from God’s eternal condemnation through his death and resurrection during his first appearance, because this humble Jewish king is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Eventually, the whole nation of Israel will become an instrument of war and destruction in the hands of God, when He “**will blow the trumpet**” and “march” with them to destroy His and their enemies—the Gentiles in the surrounding area of the Middle East, including Greece. This, too, must be the first possible salvation of Jesus, when he returns to conquer both Jews and Gentiles and to restore the Kingdom of Israel. The passage also intimates that the Jews are God’s ethnic chosen people whom He will use to carry out His special purposes with respect to the other peoples of the earth, that will mainly comprise the Middle East, even “Greece” to the west and just beyond Turkey.

And then, there is the final Old Testament passage of Zechariah 10:6-10 in regard to God’s chosen people and with certain important words highlighted,

Zechariah 10:6 “I will strengthen **the house of Judah**, and I will save **the house of Joseph**, and I **will bring them back**, because I have had compassion on them. And they will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am Yahweh their God, and I will answer them.

7 “**Ephraim** will be like a mighty man, and their heart will be glad as if from wine. Indeed, their children will see it and be glad. Their hearts will rejoice in Yahweh.

8 “I will whistle for them to **gather them together**, for I have redeemed them; and they will be as numerous as they were before.

- 9 When I scatter them among the peoples, they will remember Me in far countries, and **they with their children will live and come back.**
- 10 I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon until no room can be found for them."

Zechariah 10 is similar to chapter 9 in that God is predicting and promising that He will "**bring...back**" His people, the "**house of Judah**" and the "**house of Joseph**," into "**the land of Gilead and Lebanon**," which both are parts of the original land of Canaan that God declared to Abraham in Genesis 15 that He would eventually give to his physical descendants, the Jews. Indeed, the people of Israel whom God has dispersed "**among the peoples**" will "remember" God "in far countries" and return to Him in their hearts. Plus, God will cause them to return to the land that is rightfully theirs because of the Abrahamic Covenant. Again, it is clear that the Jews are God's *ethnic* chosen ones, while the Gentiles are technically outside this group—unless they, too, become chosen ones by acquiring changed hearts who exhibit authentic belief in God, just as He has promised that the Jews will become.

Before, on the basis of all the above Old Testament passages, we decide who are the "chosen ones" to whom Jesus is referring in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27, we should consider a few New Testament passages that also will be helpful. First is Matthew 24:22, which we saw above in the Olivet Discourse,

Matthew 24:22 "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of **the chosen ones** (ἐκλεκτοῦς) **those days will be cut short**" [emphasis mine].

I previously stated that I think that Jesus is referring to the Jews in general. From an existential perspective, the Jews would all be wiped out if God granted their many enemies enough time to complete their goal of killing all the Jews in the world. Indeed, Jesus is implying what God states in the above Old Testament passages, that He will definitely fulfill His plans and purposes for the Jewish people, His ethnic "**chosen ones**," to bring them back into the land of Israel and to make them the most powerful nation in all human history under the rule of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Another helpful New Testament passage is John 6:39-40,

John 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent me, that of **all that He has given me** I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

40 "For this is the will of My Father, that **everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him will have eternal life**, and I myself will raise him up on the last day" [emphasis mine].

Jesus is referring to people whom God the Father will give him as fellow participants in the Kingdom of God when it comes into existence "on the last day," by which he most likely means his return at the end of this age. They can be identified spiritually as those who have seen "**the Son**," Jesus, either with their own eyes or in their mind's eye when they hear the gospel being proclaimed, and individually they "**believe in**" Jesus in order to "**have eternal life**." Therefore, we can infer that these people whom Jesus raises from the dead are "**given**" to him by God the Father because they are the chosen ones whose hearts He changes, so that they acquire authentic belief in Him and Jesus and obey their moral commandments appropriately.

Are these believers only Jews? In the context of his *Jewish* audience and by speaking of God's giving him those whom he does not lose, Jesus may be referring to only Jews. However, we know from the rest of the Bible and, especially, the New Testament that God has chosen many Gentiles whom He changes inwardly and who obtain "eternal life" just as believing Jews do. Nevertheless, my guess here, because it is *Jews* who are listening to him, that Jesus is referring to Jews only for the sake of communicating to them that, as he says in vs. 32-35 not quoted, he is the "bread of life." Moses and the Mosaic Covenant are not that which Jews should metaphorically ingest in order to receive the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. Jesus is! He provides the Jews both with becoming the "great nation" of the first promise of Genesis 12:1-13 and with acquiring eternal life of both the first and the second promises. In other words, participating in the "great nation" of Israel means that a Jew has fulfilled the necessary condition of authentic belief to obtain eternal life after living within the "great nation."

Next, there is Romans 8:33 with three highlighted words,

Romans 8:33 Who will bring a charge against **God's chosen ones** (κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν Θεοῦ)? God is the one who justifies.

Interpreting what Paul means by the “**chosen ones**” in this context is relatively easy. He is writing to Gentile Christians who may soon encounter both Jewish believers and Jewish unbelievers who are returning to Rome after eight years of being banned from the city by Emperor Claudius. In the midst of encouraging his Gentile readers of God's love and commitment to them, Paul asks, “Who will bring a charge against God's **chosen ones**” such that God would stop loving them and they receive His condemnation instead of salvation? The “**chosen ones**” must include the Gentile Christians since Paul is writing to them and intends them to be the main beneficiaries of what he is writing. Therefore, in this context, the “**chosen ones**” are believers among both the Jews and the Gentiles, which is clearly different from the Old Testament passages when they confined the meaning of the phrase to the Jews.

There is also 1 Corinthians 15:50-53,

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; **we** will not all sleep, but **we** will all be changed,

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**; for **the trumpet will sound**, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and **we** will be changed.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality [emphasis mine].

The question here is, to whom is Paul referring by “**we**”? Again, like his letter to the Romans, he is writing to mainly Gentile Christians in the very Gentile city of Corinth in Greece, among whom some of the Gentiles (and probably a few Jews, too) have become believers in Jesus as the Messiah and source of eternal salvation from God's wrath and destruction. Therefore, while Paul is certainly Jewish, his readers are mostly Gentiles, so that the “**we**” comprise both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus as the Messiah. As with the verse from Romans, the implied “chosen ones” of God are different from only the Jews in the Old Testament passages.

Plus, Paul mentions the sound of a “**trumpet**,” which in the context is the “last” of several or many trumpets, either metaphorical or literal, and probably refers to events which will have particular significance near and at the time of Jesus' return—like those in the visions of the book of Revelation.

Another helpful passage for thinking through Jesus' meaning of the “chosen ones” is Ephesians 1:3-6,

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed **us** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He **chose** (ἐξελέξατο) **us** in him before the foundation of the world, that **we** would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He **predestined** (προορίσας) **us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on **us** in the Beloved [emphasis mine].

As with Romans and 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing to mostly Gentile Christians. And even though, a few verses later, he switches from the 1st person pronoun “**we**”/“**us**” to the 2nd personal plural pronoun “**you**,” I think that initially he means all bona fide believers in Jesus in the above vs. 3-6. He says in v. 4 that God “**chose us** in him before the foundation of the world.” Are these only Jews whom God “**chose**”? No. I think Paul means all authentic followers of Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles. These, then, are also different from the “chosen ones” of the Old Testament passages, in that they include more than the Jews, i.e., Gentiles who have genuine faith in God and His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

The final New Testament passage to consider is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.**
- 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that **we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord**, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with **the trumpet of God**, and **the dead in Christ** will rise first.
- 17 Then **we who are alive and remain** will be caught up together with **them** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so **we** shall always be with the Lord.
- 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words [emphasis mine].

The Thessalonian readers are mostly Gentile Christians with a few Jewish believers as indicated in Acts 17:1-9. In the passage above, Paul encourages the Christians that “with **the trumpet of God**,” Jesus will descend towards the earth with believers, who have died before his return, and will receive believers who are still “**alive**” during this moment. In this way, God will gather His chosen ones, who, unlike those in the Old Testament passages, must both Jews and Gentiles who are authentic believers in God, going all the way back to at least Abel.

Therefore, after considering both the Old Testament and New Testament references to the “chosen” people of God, there are two main choices for whom Jesus means by “His chosen ones.” They are:

- 1) According to the Old Testament and two other verses in the gospel accounts, Jews who are living on the land of Israel or have been scattered throughout the world, so that God gathers the latter back into the land of Israel with the additional action of making them all authentic believers in Him and in Jesus, so that they become the first generation of the restored Kingdom of Israel under Jesus’ rule after he returns.
- 2) According to passages in Paul’s letters in the New Testament, both Jews and Gentiles who have become believers in God and eventually in Jesus (if they have lived after Jesus’ first appearance), so that God gathers them to Jesus either by raising them from the dead or by lifting them from the earth when Jesus descends towards the earth and returns to the land of Israel.

As I suggested above, the typical and popular interpretation of the “chosen ones” is all genuine believers in God—that is, option #2 above. However, I think that this interpretation does not adequately take into account the immediate context of Jesus’ speaking to his *Jewish* disciples and their familiarity with the Old Testament passages which I have presented in this section. Both the Jewish context and the language reminiscent of the Old Testament which Jesus uses point to option #1 making more sense. God will fulfill His promise to Abraham and bring the Jews back into their land which He promised to them in Genesis 12-22 and continued to mention in the rest of the Old Testament, so that He will inwardly change them, i.e., the 144,000 of Revelation, and restore the Kingdom of Israel once He destroys their enemies when Jesus returns. In other words, there will be Jews on the land of Israel and throughout the rest of the world, who remain interested in God and are loyal to Him, but who are not fully changed inwardly until Jesus returns. In this way, they become the “chosen ones” whom God gathers and returns to the land of Israel, so that they constitute the seedbed of Jews who continue to live, generation after generation, in the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 as genuine, mortal believers.

Nevertheless, there are New Testament passages that do indicate that all the chosen ones who have been genuine believers in God throughout all history will be gathered to Jesus when he returns. And some will be resurrected from the dead, and some will be lifted from the earth—both Jews and Gentiles.

Matthew 24:32-33	Mark 13:28-29	Luke 21:29-31	
24:32 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;	13:28 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.	21:29 Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 21:30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.	

24:33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that he is near, right at the door.	13:29 “Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near, right at the door.	21:31 “So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the Kingdom of God is near.	
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In typical fashion, Jesus now presents a parable, an analogy from a common occurrence in life for his listeners, in order to teach them an important lesson about recognizing the signs of the times as his return approaches. In this case, the parable involves a “fig tree” which “puts forth its leaves” such that any person who is familiar with the horticulture of fig trees may “know that summer is near.” This is the way that Matthew and Mark indicate what Jesus says. Luke’s account, on the other hand, adds “all the trees” to “the fig tree” which “put forth leaves” so as to signal the fact “that summer is now near.”

This is a very simple analogy. Every year in the spring leaves begin to appear on fig trees (and other deciduous trees that lose their leaves in the autumn). And every year, after the leaves sprout on the branches of the trees, summer follows shortly thereafter. Consequently, the emphasis of the parable is on the nearness of summer to spring when leaves appear on fig trees and other deciduous trees. Consequently, it is clear that Jesus tells the parable to emphasize the short time between two events in it, the appearance in the spring of leaves on trees and then summer which follows soon after.

In the next verse in each gospel account, Jesus presents the analogue of the sprouting leaves and the nearness of summer. He says in Matthew 24:33 and Mark 13:29, “So, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that he is near, right at the door.” Luke 21:31 provides an interpretation of this latter statement, “recognize that he is near, right at the door,” by saying “that the Kingdom of God is near.” Therefore, the second event of the analogue is easy to interpret. It is the *parousia* and grand appearance of Jesus when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. This will be when he rules over the remnant of Jews who become authentic believers under his authority and who then help him to rule the rest of the world. We can call this the first stage of the “Kingdom of God,” which Luke mentions explicitly, as it comes into existence and will eventually transition into the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21-22. The first stage will be the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 followed by the second stage of the eternal earth of Revelation 21-22.

In addition, the three gospel authors refer to “all these things” (Matthew) and “these things” (Mark and Luke). I suggest that there are at least two options for interpreting “all these things” in Matthew 24:33 and “these things” in Mark 13:29 and Luke 21:31—

- 1) “These things” are all the events Jesus has mentioned up to this point regarding the great tribulation, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the warning against false messiahs and teachers, and the astronomic signs just before his return.
- 2) In spite of the word “all” in Matthew 24:33, only the astronomic signs of Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, and Luke 12:25-26 immediately before Jesus’ return are “these things.”

While Jesus certainly would want all followers in Christian history not to despair over the long time it will take for him to return, I think that the parable of “the fig tree” as referring to the nearness of his return lends itself to interpreting “these things” as #2, just the astronomic events immediately preceding his *parousia*.

In other words, Jesus is using the appearance of leaves on the fig tree (and “all the trees” in Luke) with summer following right afterwards to say that when his disciples (theoretically those to whom he is actually speaking on the Mt. of Olives, but more obviously whoever are his followers in the distant future according to previous verses in the Olivet Discourse) observe the sun and moon being darkened along with the stars falling and the heavenly powers being shaken, so that people cannot rely on the elements of the creation to shield them from the wrath of God, they can know that his return to restore the Kingdom of Israel as the first stage of the Kingdom of God will happen very soon (relative to the long period of time of the “great tribulation” when God targeted the Jews for suffering and persecution in order to encourage them to become believers in Jesus as their Messiah).

In other words, “these things” in this section refer to only the last signs of God’s judgment on the Jews, the astronomical events of Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, and Luke 21:25-26, so that when Jesus’

followers “see these things,” they can know that they are coming out of the long winter of the great tribulation of pain and suffering that the Jews have been enduring. Thus, Jesus is also emphasizing the importance of his followers’ truly knowing their biblical theology well enough that they immediately grasp the significance of these astronomic events and not be led astray by other people’s reaction to them of dismay, perplexity, and fainting from fear—that Luke mentioned in vs. 25-26 above.

Rather than succumb to this negative reaction, Jesus’ disciples and followers should and will rejoice at what they see and experience. In Luke 21:28, Jesus has already encouraged them to “straighten up and lift up [their] heads, because [their] redemption is drawing near.” As a result, all Christians must persevere in their faith and be ready to recognize the signs of the times when these last astronomic events begin to occur. Plus, we can look at everything that is going on around us and assume that they are contributions to the recurring events of the first five seals of the book Revelation, while we look forward with great anticipation to the sixth seal of the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord when God brings upon the Jews His last and harshest judgment and discipline with the various astronomic events that Jesus lists here. These will indicate that his return is very, very close.

By the way, the word in both Matthew 24:33 and Mark 13:29 is θύραις, literally “doors” or “gates,” which is to say that the word is plural and not singular. In this case, I think that Jesus is more likely referencing the gates of a city, and probably Jerusalem, and not the doors of a house. It will be as though he is standing not inside the city, but at its gates and ready to enter it. And he will enter into the city soon after “these things” just as anyone would expect a person, maybe even a king, to do so after the loud announcement and great fanfare of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the powers of the heavens, since this will be Jesus’ *parousia* and grand appearance.

He will have traveled to the city so to speak and has arrived at its gates. Therefore, the point is that, just as someone does not remain long at the gates of an Ancient Near Eastern city, because he is there to do business (even conquer the city), Jesus will return to the actual city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel very soon after the above signs have begun to occur. While the great tribulation for the Jews will take place over a long period of time, from Jesus’ first coming to his return, the time between “these things” of Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, and Luke 21:25-26 and his second coming and appearance as the king of Israel will be quite short in comparison. It is to this short time to which Jesus is referring with this parable and analogy.

As I said earlier, Luke 21:31 changes the wording from “he is near, right at the gate” to “the Kingdom of God is near (ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ).” While Matthew and Mark probably quote Jesus verbatim, Luke, in typical fashion (cf. Luke 21:23b-24), interprets his words and explicitly declares that Jesus’ return will result in his establishing the Kingdom of God. The first stage of this kingdom will be Jesus’ restoring the Kingdom of Israel in accordance with the disciples’ question at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse (cf. Matthew 24:3, “Tell us, when will these things happen [the destruction of the temple], and what will be the sign of your coming (τῆς σῆς παρουσίας = of your grand appearance when you will restore the Kingdom of Israel” and Acts 1:6, “Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel (εἰ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ)?”). In this way, Luke is explaining what Matthew and Mark actually record as Jesus’ words, “he is near, right at the door (gates),” i.e., that Jesus is very close to making his grand appearance in order to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel.

Again, this will be Jesus’ *parousia* (παρουσία – Matthew 24:3), when, as Luke indicates, the Kingdom of God technically arrives. In other words, the Kingdom of God begins with the restored Kingdom of Israel and culminates in the kingdom of the new heaven and the new earth of Revelation 21-22. Here, though I think that Jesus is talking about only the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel, i.e., the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. By taking the entire Olivet Discourse as the context, Luke, therefore, adds good data for interpreting the predictions of the Old Testament prophets for a glorious future for Israel as literally going to happen eventually at Jesus’ second coming. This will be when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to cause his descendants to become the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3.

Matthew 24:34-35	Mark 13:30-31	Luke 21:32-33	
24:34 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.	13:30 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.	21:32 “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.	

24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.	13:31 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.	21:33 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.	
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Here, in all three synoptic gospels, Jesus comments on how certain it is that his predictions of future history will occur. He says first, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” Then, he states clearly, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Similar to the previous few verses, there are two options for interpreting “all these things” that will “take place”—

- 1) Everything that Jesus has mentioned up to this point regarding the great tribulation of the Jews which begins after his first appearance, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the warning against false messiahs and teachers, the astronomic signs just before his return, and his return.
- 2) Only the astronomic signs and his return of Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, and Luke 21:25-27.

It would seem that the parable regarding the nearness of summer after leaves appear on a fig tree and Jesus’ referring to “these things” that happen immediately before his return point to option #2—just like the previous section and in such close proximity to the previous section. However, I suggest that with his statement in all three gospel accounts regarding “all these things” (“all things” in Luke), Jesus is not intending to lead his listeners towards truly “all” that he has described that will begin soon after his departure at the end of his first appearance and that will end with his return. This is to say that option #1 is correct here. Thus, Jesus is saying that this “generation” will not disappear “until” the final cataclysmic signs of God’s judgment on the Jews, the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5, Revelation 6:12-17, and the seventh bowl of wrath of Revelation 16 take place. However, there are at least two possibilities for what Jesus means by “this generation” (ἡ γενεὰ αὐτῆς, *hay genea hautay*)—

- 1) Where “this generation” is speaking of either
 - a) The generation, i.e., forty to sixty years or so, of Jews who are present before him and listening to him speak about “all these things,” or
 - b) The generation, i.e., forty to sixty years or so, of Jews who will be alive when “all these things” come to an end immediately before Jesus’ return in the distant future.
- 2) Where “this generation” is better translated “this race” or “ethnic group,” i.e., the Jews, so that Jesus is speaking of all the Jews between his first and second appearances.

Probably, most other uses of *γενεά* (*genea*), which can mean either “generation” or “race, in the New Testament mean “generation,” i.e., a period of time of anywhere from 40-60 years. But this does not have to lead us to conclude that Jesus means the same here in the Olivet Discourse. Indeed, this could be the one and only time in the New Testament when the word means “race”—if it is coherent with the rest of the passage.

However, before we decide which of the above options is correct for “this generation,” there are also two options for understanding what Jesus means overall in these verses—

- A) Jesus is making a temporal point (a point regarding time) that once the events and signs of “all these things,” leading up to and including his return, occur, it will be less than a generation of years, approximately 40-60 years in the Ancient Near East because of their life expectancy, before the Kingdom of Israel comes into existence.
- B) Jesus is making a theological point about the absolute certainty of God’s fulfilling His promises to the Jews to make of them a great nation according to Genesis 12:1-3.

If option A is the correct interpretation, then, for example, Mark 13:30 should be tied to the previous two verses, so that Mark 13:31, which seems to be making the point of the absolute certainty of the events occurring, especially his return to restore the Kingdom of Israel, stands alone and should not be tied to Mark 13:30. If option B is the correct interpretation, then Mark 13:30 should be tied to v. 31, which seems most likely to be making the point that God will surely fulfill His promises to the Jewish people and make them the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3, thus affirming option B.

In the light of the disciples’ ongoing concern about the fulfillment of God’s promise to transform the Jews into a great nation, option B, God’s surely fulfilling His promise in the future to make the Jews the greatest nation in human history, makes more sense along with the correct interpretation of “this generation” (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη) being #2 above, so that Jesus is speaking of “this race” or “this ethnic group” of Jews and not of this “generation” of Jews which will last for 40-60 years. In other words, the Olivet Discourse is really all about the Jews, which should be no surprise since he is answering the questions about the Jewish temple and his return as the Jewish Messiah to his very Jewish disciples and students. Therefore, Jesus is saying that God will *definitely* and *most certainly* cause the Jews to play their divine and biblical role right up to the end of the present realm and in spite of their disobedience, which will result in the destruction of the temple, multiple times of suffering for the Jews, and catastrophic, astronomic signs immediately before he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel. As a result, no one will be able to destroy or do away with the Jews so as to prevent God from using them as He foretold and promised in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22.

Consider, for example, Jeremiah 31:35-37 as referring to the same point that Jesus is making about the permanence of the Jews in God’s plans and the permanence of God’s plans with respect to the Jews,

Jeremiah 31:35 Thus says Yahweh, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; Yahweh of hosts is His name:

36 “If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares Yahweh, “Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.”

37 Thus says Yahweh, “If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,” declares Yahweh.

God is saying in Jeremiah 31 that not even the Jews’ rejection of the most important person in cosmic history, Jesus of Nazareth, who is their Messiah, high priest, and king, can dissuade Him from making them the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3 on the land of Israel and ruled by this same person. Consequently, Jesus will *definitely* return and restore the kingdom to Israel, so that the Jews will not disappear as an ethnic group in spite of the great tribulation which they will experience and the many times that it will look as though they are about to get wiped out, e.g., during the holocaust of World War II and later when the Beast of Revelation and his government and armies make their appearance in the Middle East and invade the land of Israel. The key word of Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, and Luke 21:32 is “until” (ἕως, *heos*). The Jews will survive and play their divinely appointed role in human history as teachers of the Gentiles “until,” i.e., right up to the time of (and even after) Jesus’ return—because his second appearance will be the Jews’ transition to being the most powerful nation in human history which God has promised them.

There is, therefore, no doubt that the Jews will survive all the difficulties in history brought about by the judgments of God in response to their disobedience and rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. Nevertheless, Jesus could also be implying that eventually the race of Jews, the nation of Israel, will “pass away” in that they will no longer be featured in human history. Even though this will happen at the end of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when God destroys the present realm and creates a new heaven and earth, Jesus is probably not referring to this aspect of the Jews’ role in cosmic history. Nevertheless, we should note that, on the new earth, all believers of all time, from at least Abel to the last Jew and/or Gentile who becomes the last Christian during the millennial kingdom, will live for all eternity with God, and Jesus will rule over them *without there being any ethnic distinctions*, such as those which characterized the Jews by their obligation to the Mosaic Covenant and the Gentiles by their lack of obligation to this covenant during the present realm (cf. Revelation 21-22).

In addition, the passing away of “heaven and earth” here is probably the same as that of Matthew 5:18,

Matthew 5:18 “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

I think that, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is referring to the end of the present cosmos after the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and before the creation of the eternal heavens and earth of Revelation 21-22. There are ten uses of the phrase “heaven and earth” in the New Testament, and both words are always singular. This is the third use. Five of them pertain to the “passing away” of the heaven and the earth, and five pertain to God as the maker (ποιεω) of heaven and earth. Thus, the “passing away” is the end of the present realm and the earth on which we are now living and the beginning of the new, eternal realm and the earth on which all believers will live for all eternity.

Jesus is also indicating that, during the transition from this temporary heaven and earth to the new eternal heaven and earth, the present “heaven and earth will pass away.” However, he says unequivocally that his “words will not pass away,” because the message of God’s plans and purposes is permanent—even if the present creation is not. Again, no one can prevent God from fulfilling His eternal plans, which will include an eternal realm when God brings to an end the role of the Jews as a peculiar people on this earth and unique instructors of the rest of humanity.

Matthew 24:36-41	Mark 13:32		[Luke 17:26-37]
<p>24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.</p> <p>24:37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.</p> <p>24:38 “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,</p> <p>24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.</p> <p>24:40 “Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.</p> <p>24:41 “Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.</p>	<p>13:32 “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.</p>		<p>17:26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:</p> <p>17:27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.</p> <p>17:28 “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;</p> <p>17:29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.</p> <p>17:30 “It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.</p> <p>17:31 “On that day, the one who is on the</p>

			<p>housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.</p> <p>17:32 “Remember Lot’s wife.</p> <p>17:33 “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.</p> <p>17:34 “I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.</p> <p>17:35 “There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left.</p> <p>17:36 [“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.”]</p> <p>17:37 And answering they said to Him, “Where, Lord?” And He said to them, “Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered.”</p>
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This is a long section in Matthew 24:36-41, one verse in Mark 13:32, and non-existent in Luke’s account of the Olivet Discourse. Instead, Luke writes something similar in 17:26-37, which I have included in the far-right column. In Matthew 24:36 and Mark’s one verse, Jesus says, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” With these words, Jesus indicates that there is no created being, whether we are talking about an earthly human being, including the Son of God, Jesus himself, or we are talking about a heavenly being such as a conventional angel, who knows when the end of the present age will occur with its signs and the grand appearance of Jesus to restore the Kingdom to Israel. Instead, only God, the transcendent creator, knows when He will bring about the Messiah’s return.

Jesus has also explained in the previous parts of his comments that the end of the present realm, leading up to his return, is a long way off, but it *definitely* will occur. And since neither “the angels of heaven” nor he knows exactly when his second coming will occur, the implication is that, despite the details Jesus has presented in answer to the disciples’ question, everyone simply needs to be on alert and wait for his return to come about. Jesus calls this event “that day,” a phrase that is used often in the New Testament to refer to the culmination of this age when Jesus appears again in order to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. For example, Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10,

2 Thessalonians 1:9 These [people who reject God throughout their lives] will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when he comes to be glorified in His saints **on that day**, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed [emphasis mine].

We should note, too, that if, in Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, and Luke 21:32, instead of referring to the Jewish *race*, Jesus had meant that his return would occur during the lives of the present generation of Jews, who might live for another 40 years or so, then the statement in Mark 13:32 somewhat contradicts this. Even though the Jews would not know the exact “day or hour,” a pretty good guess would be that he will return in about 40 years. This is a lot more accurate than trying to determine the date of an event thousands of years in the future. Therefore, since Jesus did not mean *generation* but *race*, he is not speaking of his return taking place in A.D. 70, when the Romans will destroy Jerusalem and the temple (as the preterists believe). Indeed, everything in the Olivet Discourse, taken together in their context, speaks of a time much farther in the future for his *parousia*, his grand appearance to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary makes these interesting comments, “Few would challenge the authenticity of this verse [Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32]. The early church is unlikely to have created a logion that has resulted in such consternation and embarrassment as this one has. ‘That day’ clearly refers to the Parousia. It is the great day, the eschatological day that will bring to an end ‘those days’ (vv.17, 19, 24). Of ‘those days,’ i.e., the days that precede the time of the End, certain signs have been given; but of ‘that day’ neither the angels of heaven nor Jesus himself knows the time. Only the Father knows that time... Jesus’ ignorance of the day or hour of his *parousia* must be understood in terms of the New Testament teaching concerning the Incarnation. A real Incarnation involved such lack of knowledge. Jesus purposely laid aside temporarily the exercise of his omniscience as part of what was involved in his becoming man.”

However, if Jesus is ontologically only a created being like all other created human beings and a character (indeed, the main character) in God's story, which is the only rational way to understand his beingness and ontology, then it stands to reason that, according to Jesus, the transcendent creator God has not provided him with the information of the exact time of his return, even though Jesus is the icon/image of the invisible God (cf. Colossians 1:15) and God's proxy within the creation as is meant by the title Son of God going back to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, with Psalms 2, 8, and 89 to assist in grasping its meaning. Jesus is God, but he is God in the story, who is living out his role as a character in the story just as much as we are living out our roles as rational, moral, human characters in God's story.

Next, Jesus indicates in Matthew 24:37-41 that his *parousia* and return will be “like the days of Noah,” where “before the flood they were eating and drinking” and “marrying and giving in marriage.” In other words, the people of Noah's day were going about their lives normally, not thinking that the disaster of the flood was about to hit them. And they were still clueless “until the day that Noah entered the ark” and “the flood came and took them all away.” Luke presents the same story and explanation in 17:26-27, but he says that the flood “destroyed them all.” In both accounts, the effect of the people's ignoring the signs of Noah's building the ark was that they died in the flood, while Noah lived through it. Then, Luke adds another story in 17:28-29, that of Lot in the city of Sodom. People there, too, were “eating..., drinking..., buying..., selling..., planting...,” and “building.” But “on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.”

Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 24:39 that people will think similarly until “the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man.” Indeed, “there will be two men in a field,” and “one will be taken and one will be left.” There will be “two women...grinding at the mill,” and “one will be taken and one will be left” (cf. Matthew 24:40-41). Luke writes in 17:30 that it “will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.” Again, “the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and, likewise, the one who is in the field must not turn back” (cf. Luke 17:31). Then, in Luke's account, Jesus exhorts his listeners to “remember Lot's wife,” because the one who “seeks to keep his life will lose it,” while the one who “loses his life will preserve it (vs. 32-33). In other words, similar to what Jesus says in Matthew, Luke writes in v. 34, “on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.” And then Luke mentions in vs. 35-36 both instances of the two women “grinding at the same place” and the “two men...in the field” respectively. One each is “taken,” and the other is “left.”

While it is common, especially for dispensationalists, to interpret the people who are “taken” as being lifted from the earth during the “rapture” that Paul mentions in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, it is more coherent to understand that these persons are “taken” in judgment just as, in Matthew 24:39, the “flood came and **took** them all away [emphasis mine]” and, in Luke 17:27,29, “the flood came [and the fire and brimstone from heaven] and destroyed them all.” This means that the people who are “left” are those Jews who

survive God's final judgment towards them, the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5, so as to enter into the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, when God will fully change their hearts and cause them to become authentic believers in Jesus, who has just appeared to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. These new Christians will become the first generation of bona fide believing Jews during the millennial kingdom.

A More Detailed Explanation of Matthew 24:37-41 and Luke 17:26-36

Starting in Matthew 24:37 and Luke 17:26, Jesus continues in the same manner as before by offering analogies. This time it is to illustrate the attitude of unbelievers during the time of his "coming," his *παρουσία*, which means his blessed appearance for the purpose of restoring the Kingdom of Israel. He is saying that unbelievers who are alive at the time of his return will be like unbelievers in Noah's day.

Then, in Matthew 24:38 and Luke 17:27, Jesus describes the time of Noah before God brought the flood on the earth. Unbelievers were under the distinct impression that life as they knew it would continue uninterrupted. Therefore, they lived life as any normal person would who basically did not have a care in the world right up to the day when Noah and his family boarded the ark and before the rains began. Therefore, even the divine sign that Noah was offering them of building the ark and entering it was irrelevant as far as the unbelievers were concerned. They simply continued on their merry way, living life as if no cataclysm or judgment from God was coming upon them.

In Matthew 24:39 and the last part of Luke 17:27, this all sounds like the breaking of the 6th seal in Revelation 6:12-17, which also corresponds to the 7th bowl of wrath of Revelation 16:17-20 (The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord), when God finishes His judgment of the Jews mainly on the land of Israel.

Luke adds another analogy in 17:28,29. Similar to the time of Noah was God's destroying Sodom and Gomorrah when Lot was living in Sodom. The unbelieving people in these cities were living their lives as if nothing cataclysmic was going to happen to them. As far as they were concerned, their lives were as normal and going to be as normal as they had been up to that time. This response of the unbelievers can be attributed to their hardness of heart. They were unwilling to read the signs correctly and flee from the wrath of God. As the rest of Sodom lived life normally, when Lot and his family left the city, the unbelievers of the city thought nothing of it, i.e., that he knew something that they did not and was escaping God's judgment that was coming on the city. Therefore, they were completely caught off guard and died in the fire and brimstone that descended on them, so that none of them escaped death. They all died in the divine holocaust, except Lot's family because they fled the city.

At the end of Matthew 24:39 and in Luke 17:30, Jesus goes on to say that the unbelievers who are living on the land of Israel when he returns will experience the same kind of natural and cataclysmic destruction as the people of both Noah's time and Lot's time. The revealing of the Son of Man, the Davidic king as he is described in Psalm 2, will spell physical disaster for the unbelievers. As suggested above, even though it would be easy to understand Matthew 24 with the help of Revelation 6 and 16 as referring to global judgment and destruction, I think Jesus is more likely confining his meaning in this passage to divine judgment and destruction of unbelievers on the land of Israel, while not absolutely excluding the possibility that the destruction will extend to a degree beyond the Middle East and the Roman Empire.

It is also easy to see how the preterists conclude that the return of Jesus was at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 because of the similarity of language here to Matthew 24:15ff. But I think that Luke 21:20-24, with the comments about Jerusalem's being surrounded by armies in response to the disciples' question regarding the destruction of the temple, clears up the confusion by showing that Matthew 24:15-21 is about A.D. 70. As a result, Jesus is now using similar language to refer to the events of his return, because, as he says in Matthew 24:39 and Luke 17:30, the Jews will go through the same kind of suffering.

Going on to Luke 17:31, Jesus uses the same language when he referred to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in Matthew 24:15-20 and Mark 13:14-18. Here, in Luke 17:31, he means basically the same thing, that the judgment of God will come so suddenly and quickly on the land of Israel that authentic believers should flee any obvious coming disaster without thinking that it is more important to save anything but themselves with their faith intact. Of course, genuine and authentic believers among the Jews will be lifted from the earth to join Jesus as he descends, while strictly unbelieving Jews will incur God's wrath and judgment and be killed. Nevertheless, there will also be the "144,000" Jews of Revelation 7 & 14 who will be inwardly disposed towards God and whom He will

protect from His judgment and death. These will go on to become genuine believers as the future generation of Jews living on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

In Luke 17:32, Jesus speaks of Lot's wife as a comparison to unbelievers who will incur God's judgment and destruction just before he returns. She looked back, i.e., hesitated in her heart from leaving the comfort and security of the city of Sodom (if you can call living in the midst of such people who are outwardly hostile to God comforting and secure), thus violating God's specific commandment not to do so. As a result, God killed her on the spot. Jesus is therefore encouraging the believers during God's judgment of the land of Israel before His return to remain steadfast in their hearts—to trust God with authentic faith in their hearts in order to escape the destruction coming on the Jews. And, indeed, they will be spared as Jesus goes on to explain.

The next statement of Luke 17:33 is not found in the parallel passage of Matthew 24:36-41, but the point is the same. Just as Lot's wife in her heart did not take seriously God's warning and wanted to preserve her life in Sodom rather than obey God and trust Him for a new life after the city had been destroyed by His judgment, the unbeliever who places all his hope in holding onto life in this world (even life on the land of Israel – cf. John 6) will be judged and destroyed by God during the cataclysmic events which He will bring on the land of Israel before Jesus' return. In contrast, the believer who is willing to let go of the things of this world and his existence in it as that which is most important to him will keep himself alive into eternal life.

Then, in Luke 17:34-36, as in Matthew 24:36-41, the life of the unbeliever will be “taken” (ὁ εἰς παραλημφθήσεται) in the judgment of God on the land of Israel while the believer will be left on the earth to be raised *immortal* and morally perfect in the first resurrection of Revelation 20 very soon after these catastrophic events and then inhabit the millennial Kingdom of Israel with Jesus' ruling over it. Also, of course, the “144,000” Jews of Revelation 7 & 14 will be left to inhabit the millennial kingdom as *mortal* believers.

Luke's Conclusion in Luke 17:37

Finally, in Luke 17:37, as a result of what Jesus has said about the destruction coming on the land of Israel, his disciples specifically ask him where God's judgment will take place. It seems a bit strange that they need to ask this if Jesus really has been encouraging them to focus on the land of Israel. But, at this point in the disciples' journey of learning what Jesus is teaching them during his first appearance on earth, no question by them should really surprise us. Plus, Jesus has just mentioned Noah and Lot, both who lived outside the land of Israel per se. Consequently, it makes sense that Jesus' disciples are wondering if what he is talking about will happen somewhere else in the world.

His answer is the same as Matthew 24:28 except Luke uses the word “body” (τὸ σῶμα) instead of “corpse” (τὸ πτώμα). However, I think that Jesus is making the same point, that the fallen, dead (or at least dying) body, where vultures are circling to move in and devour it once it is assuredly dead, is where the cataclysmic events will take place. And what is the “body” that is dying and will become like a corpse? Jesus has been describing the effects of the Jews' rejecting him as their Messiah which has brought God's judgment on them that has extended from the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple to his second coming and restoring the Kingdom of Israel. Jesus now indicates that the devastation brought upon the Jews just before he returns will be so great that it will just about destroy them as a people, making them like a corpse lying on the ground with vultures looking to pick at the dead body and consume it. The vultures will be Gentile nations, who want nothing more than to see the Jews exterminated so that they can inhabit their land. And it will appear to the whole “world” as though this may actually happen—until Jesus returns and destroys these vulturous and predatory Gentiles, who will have invaded the land of Israel under the leadership of the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2, subjugated the Jews, and then sought to destroy them completely (cf. Revelation 19).

Considerations Regarding the Extent of Jesus' Perspective in Matthew 24:37-41 & Luke 17:26-37

There are four possibilities for the extent of Jesus' perspective in this section and where *in his mind* the “two men in the field,” the “two women...grinding at the mill,” the “one who is on the housetop,” and the “two in one bed” will be—

- 1) Global, i.e., Jesus is thinking of how the whole world will experience both God's judgment and salvation just before Jesus' return

- 2) The area of the Middle East and Roman Empire in Jesus' day, i.e., Jesus is thinking of his immediate area and the empire which is ruling Israel, which was the extent of world that the Jews knew
- 3) The area of the Middle East surrounding the land of Israel, i.e., Jesus is thinking of Israel, Syria, Egypt, and the other lands and ethnic groups proximate to Jerusalem and Israel
- 4) The land of Israel only, i.e., Jesus is thinking of only the Jews who are actually on the land which God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22

Certainly #1 and #2 are possible, but the question by the disciples in Luke 17:37, "Where Lord?," i.e., where will God's judgment be poured out, and Jesus' answer, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered," makes me think that he is referring in the entire Olivet Discourse to the land of Israel and the surrounding Middle Eastern area, because his purpose is to focus his disciples' attention on their homeland and the future, *local* effects of the Jews' rejection of him as their Messiah, king, and high priest (cf. Luke 17:25).

Consider, in addition, the visions of both the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-17 and the seventh bowl of wrath of Revelation 16:17-21 as described below,

Revelation 6:12 I looked when he broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; **13** and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. **14** The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. **15** Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; **16** and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; **17** for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Revelation 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." **18** And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. **19** The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. **20** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **21** And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

The "cities of the nations" in Revelation 16:19 may be all those in the world where Jews live and where God focuses His judgment and final destruction, so that the only Jews left will be those who are inclined enough in their inwardness that they survive and become the first generation of Jews to live in the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Or the vision may be pointing to only Jerusalem and the cities in the surrounding countries who have invaded Israel to subjugate the Jews and even annihilate them. My guess is that the latter interpretation is correct, so that this lends weight to option #4 above and interpreting Jesus as referring in his statements in this section to the area of the Middle East in accordance with the perspective of the Old Testament prophets. Nevertheless, the ramifications of the entire biblical message will be worldwide, even if the Bible's perspective is limited to the imaginations of its human authors.

Matthew 24:42-44	Mark 13:33	Luke 21:34-36	
24:42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.	13:33 "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.	21:34 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and	

<p>24:43 “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.</p> <p>24:44 “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.</p>		<p>drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;</p> <p>21:35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.</p> <p>21:36 “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”</p>	
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In this section, Jesus is warning his disciples to be “on the alert” for his “coming” from his place after his ascension back to the earth and Jerusalem, from which he will rule over the Jews and a renewed Kingdom of Israel. In Matthew 24:42 and Mark 13:33, he puts it simply, “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming,” and, “Take heed, keep on the alert, for you do not know when the appointed time will come” respectively. Maybe Jesus used the words “the appointed time,” and Matthew interprets them as the “day your Lord is coming,” thus meaning his return. Jesus wants his disciples to remain vigilant, watchful, and alert between now and his return. Because of the long period of time between his first and second appearances, it would be easy for his disciples to lose their focus on the goal of being ready with true and authentic belief that will allow them to obtain God’s gifts of eternal mercy and life through Jesus’ advocacy when he returns.

Therefore, Jesus is urging them (and any of his bona fide disciples after them) to commit themselves to looking for his *parousia* and being on their guard with unfailing belief and obedience at all times. He does not want the length of time to dissuade them from believing that he will return and from continuing in their desire for eternal life so that they would incur God’s judgment and destruction instead, thus proving that they never had authentic belief in the first place.

In Luke, Jesus makes the point slightly differently, which probably indicates that he said it this way, too, so that Matthew and Mark present certain statements by Jesus, while Luke present his other comments. Starting in v. 34, Luke writes, “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap.” Thus, Jesus mentions specific ways that his disciples could take their focus off the goal of persevering in belief and obtaining God’s eternal mercy and life when he returns. One way would for their inner beings to be oppressed with “dissipation and drunkenness,” where both words refer to participating without limits in a drinking party. This would be to cause oneself to end up in an unconscious and oblivious mental state through the use and overuse of alcohol, which is certainly one way to deal with the pain of life—by putting one’s mind in a state of stupor, like a coma, in order to avoid the pain and suffering of life.

Another way, in Luke 21:34, to take one’s eyes off the goal of eternal life is through “the worries of life.” Jesus probably means allowing the normal concerns that every human being faces, while existing on this earth, to so dominate his mind and emotions that there simply is no room within him to think about God and His promise of forgiveness and life in the eternal Kingdom of God. The person frets and frets and becomes so caught up in the worrisome stuff of this earthly existence that God and eternity are the farthest things from his mind and heart. When either drugs or worry, or both, consume a person’s attention and philosophy of life, then “that day will...come on [him] suddenly like a trap.” It will be like a person who is walking through the woods with all the cares of the world on his shoulders, and, because he is focused completely and only on his own concerns, he encounters a catastrophe that was completely unexpected. And it is “that day,” the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, along with Jesus’ return, that springs upon the person. He was totally unwilling to acknowledge God and His truth, His impending

judgment, His inevitable condemnation, and His future eternal destruction. Plus, it will be too late to change his mind and heart in order to seek God's forgiveness and gift of life.

In Luke 21:35, Jesus states that "it," i.e., "that day" of v. 34, "will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth." But, again, there are three possibilities for interpreting "on the face of all the earth" (ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πάσης τῆς γῆς),

- 1) All the people of the entire earth, where the Greek word γῆς means "earth" and not "land," so that Jesus is talking about a global judgment and destruction by God
- 2) All the people in the Middle East and the Roman Empire of Jesus' and his disciples' day, where the Greek word γῆς means "earth" and not "land," so that Jesus is referring to a judgment by God that will take place mostly on the land of Israel and the surrounding countries with collateral damage in areas of Europe, Africa, and perhaps India
- 3) All the people on the land of Israel, where the Greek word γῆς means "land" and not "earth," so that Jesus is talking about a very local judgment and destruction specific to the Jews

In order to figure out which option above is correct, we should first consider verse 36 in Luke 21, "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." The warning here by Jesus for his disciples is the same as in Matthew 24:42 and Mark 13:33, that they should remain vigilant and watchful and seek God's strength in order to survive "all these things," which will be all that God will bring *mainly* upon the Jews on the land of Israel and *also* upon the surrounding Gentile nations during the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord that will involve both the invasion of the Man of Lawlessness' army on the land of Israel and Jesus' return to destroy them.

Therefore, even though Jesus speaks of "**the face** of all the earth" [emphasis mine], which definitely sounds like #1, the "entire earth," to our ears, I think that either option #2 or option #3 makes more sense. As far as the Jews of Jesus' day were concerned, the Roman Empire was "the face of all the earth," so that Jesus is speaking mainly of God's *regional* judgment on both Jews and Gentiles. Nevertheless, He will spare some unbelievers in the surrounding Gentile countries who will submit (albeit grudgingly) to Jesus' authority in Jerusalem, while His judgment on Israel will remove all unbelieving Jews (and Gentiles, i.e., the invading armies of the Man of Lawlessness) from the land of Israel. As a result, I lean towards option #2, the Middle East and the Roman Empire of Jesus' day, being the correct interpretation. Without going into more detail regarding Ezekiel 38,39; 2 Thessalonians 2; and Revelation 9 & 16, I think that this interpretation fits with these passages.

Segueing back to Matthew 24, in v. 43 Jesus presents another parable that is analogous to his second coming and that parallels Luke's account of avoiding a mindset and lifestyle that ignores God and His plans and purposes. He says, "Be sure of this, if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into." It is a straightforward analogy. The owner of a house would love to know exactly when a thief is going to burglar his home at night, because then he would stay awake and be ready for him to protect himself and prevent it from happening. He certainly would not fall asleep at the appointed time and permit the thief to succeed in his plans.

Then in Matthew 24:44, Jesus explains the analogy. Like the house owner who would be waiting for the thief if he knew exactly when he was coming, Jesus' disciples need to be as alert and ready regarding God's final judgment on the Jews and the surrounding Gentiles that accompanies Jesus' return. But Jesus has said in v. 42 that the people "do not know which day" he will appear. This adds that much more weight to Jesus' imperative regarding their readiness. If a person knows exactly when something bad is going to happen and, as a result, has a heightened awareness of his circumstances, then all the more reason for Jesus' Jewish disciples to maintain a level of sensitivity to the events leading up to his return and during his return. And the implied reason is so that they adopt an inward condition of genuine belief and confident expectation of God's fulfilling His promise of making the Jewish people the most powerful nation in human history according to the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22. This will allow them to endure the hardships of especially the end times with authentic faith in order to gain eternal life and to participate in the restored Kingdom of Israel.

Matthew 24:45-51	Mark 13:34-37		
<p>24:45 “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?”</p> <p>24:46 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.</p> <p>24:47 “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.</p> <p>24:48 “But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’</p> <p>24:49 and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;</p> <p>24:50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,</p> <p>24:51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.</p>	<p>13:34 “It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.</p> <p>13:35 “Therefore, be on the alert — for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning —</p> <p>13:36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep.</p> <p>13:37 “What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”</p>		

In this final section, Jesus presents two more parables, one in Matthew and the other in Mark. They both concern his return and the spiritual and theological perspective which his disciples should adopt as they wait for him. Looking at the parable in Mark of 13:34-37 first, Jesus begins by saying, “It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.” The “It” is mainly the “day your Lord is coming,” to which Jesus referred in Matthew 24:42 and Mark 13:33, the latter where he calls it “the appointed time,” i.e., of his return. There is also the fact that Jesus will soon be leaving his disciples when he ascends from the earth, “lie a man [going] away on a journey.” And then there will be all the events between his first appearance and his second appearance—the wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, persecution of God’s people and Christians, and the astronomic signs immediately before his return. of God’s judgment immediately and including Jesus’ return. This will be like the owner of a house, who takes a trip, and he assigns various household responsibilities to his servants and instructs the doorkeeper always to be on the alert for his return. Jesus, likewise, is assigning various responsibilities of taking care of his household to his apostles and future disciples and followers—that each one should take seriously his tasks and purposes in regard to the people of God, both the Jews, especially those who become authentic believers, and the Gentile believers.

Then, in v. 35 of Mark 13, Jesus continues, “Therefore, be on the alert — for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning.” Jesus says “you,” so that he is incorporating his disciples’ experience into the parable. They

have not been informed by God and Jesus, “the master of the house,” as to when he is returning to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. It might be at any time during the night. Interestingly enough, Jesus says nothing about the master’s returning during the day. Why not? Perhaps, circumstances like this typically resulted in the return of the “master” during the night, because he is simply going to another person’s home for an evening and night gathering, even a party. Therefore, the “his slaves” would expect him to return at least by the next morning. Or maybe Jesus is highlighting the difficulty that his disciples will have of persevering in their belief during the hard times of the “great tribulation” between his two appearances that will culminate in the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord and Jesus’ return. Just as it is difficult to stay awake at night after a long day, it will be hard for his followers to remain “alert,” meaning people of authentic belief during God’s actions of judgment and discipline towards the Jews. Indeed, his disciples and future followers must persevere in their faith and belief in God and in him as His Messiah. Plus, they must continue to carry out their individual responsibilities as those who are committed to obeying God and His moral commandments—especially within the “household” of the community of believers.

If his disciples do not persevere in their belief and obedience to God, then Mark 13:36 indicates that the master, i.e., Jesus, will “come suddenly and find [them] asleep,” meaning without authentic faith and not committed to loving their fellow Christians properly and obeying God according to his moral commandments. Then, in v. 37, Jesus ends the above analogy by again exhorting his disciples, “What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert.’” He wants them, and he says “all” of them down through the years between his first and second appearances, never to let their guard down, spiritually speaking, and, instead, to persevere in their faith and obedience to God, regardless of how difficult life becomes for them and how long God chooses to wait to bring Jesus back. And in this context of the “ethnic group” (not “generation” per se) of the Jews of Mark 13:30, God’s actions of judgment, discipline, and destruction will take place towards mainly the Jews on the land of Israel and also the surrounding Gentile nations, so that Jesus’ followers’ responses will have repercussions pertaining to their eternal destiny, i.e., whether they obtain eternal life by means of their authentic faith and belief or they incur God’s wrath and destruction due to their stubborn unbelief.

The parable in Matthew 24:45-51 is quite similar to that in Mark 13:34-37. While the main point is the same, i.e., that his disciples must persevere in their belief and love for God’s people, the Jews, and one another, there is the additional element of abusing God’s people, which demonstrates a lack of authentic belief and concern for His eternal mercy and life.

Jesus introduces this parable in Matthew 24:45, “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?” Implied is that the master is leaving his home but will return at a later day. As the master leaves, he gives one of his slaves the responsibility of caring for ‘his household’ by making sure they are properly and consistently fed. Then, in v. 46, Jesus says, “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.” Obviously, the important thing for the slave is that he receives and performs the responsibility which the master has given him with all that he expects and demands. And it is a fairly simple responsibility—to provide his family and the rest of his slaves (assuming he has both), with their food to keep them alive and sustained while the master is gone on his journey.

Jesus continues in v. 47, “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” In other words, by fulfilling the initial responsibility of feeding his whole household and providing them with physical sustenance, the slave will be demonstrating his ability and the proper character to take on more responsibility once the master returns. Indeed, he will make the slave responsible for “all his possessions,” i.e., everything he owns. The implication is that this master owns a lot of property, so that the slave will end up being in charge of that which is quite large and significant.

However, as Jesus goes on to say in vs. 48-51, “[48](#) But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ [49](#) and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; [50](#) the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, [51](#) and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus speaks of another real-life situation where the master’s slave may not be “faithful and sensible” as he had hoped, but of such poor character that he takes advantage of the master’s absence, shirking his responsibility to care for his household and acting in a very selfish and unruly way. He even beats his fellow slaves and hangs out the local drinking crowd. Then, in the midst of his irresponsible behavior, the slave does not know exactly when his master will return, and, in addition, does not care that he is

returning (when it is obvious to everyone that masters do return eventually!). The slave cares more about doing only what he wants to do, even if it is in complete disobedience to his master. Indeed, he goes on flaunting his immoral behavior in the light of the possibility that the master may return at any moment.

Consequently, the master surprises him and comes home “on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know.” Then, the master punishes “that evil slave” appropriately. He “cuts him in pieces and assigns him a place with the hypocrites.” In other words, he punishes him according to what is just and right and also destroys him. Jesus is therefore teaching that unbelievers will suffer a measured punishment for their sins and then be destroyed by God.

As we can see, this parable has two main characters—a master and his slave. And Jesus is asking of his disciples, “What kind of ‘slave’ of him, their master, are they willing to be?” Will they be “faithful and sensible” so as to fulfill their responsibility to God’s people, the Jews, and especially to his followers (even among the Gentiles) and help them persevere in their faith and obedience to God? Or will they reject this responsibility and pursue lives of unbelief and abject immorality in comparison to God’s commandments?

If they remain faithful to the task that God and Jesus have given them, then they will acquire more responsibility after Jesus their master returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. But if they act like the “evil slave” remain committed to disobeying God, then they will incur His wrath, punishment, and destruction. As a result, with this parable, Jesus is both encouraging and warning his disciples, and probably especially his closest disciples who are listening to the Olivet Discourse, his apostles.

Will they believe in and follow God and His commandments through him, the Messiah, by caring for their fellow Jews’ and fellow Jewish Christians’ physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs, so that they will be doing so if they happen to be alive when Jesus returns? And, by the way, no one knows exactly when he will return, so that it is imperative that they all do what they ought to do in the light of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. If they, or any other followers of Jesus do not fulfill their responsibility appropriately, then they are clearly demonstrating that they do not care about God and His future judgment and the consequences they will incur if they are found to be abject rebels against God. God will punish them according to His measured justice and ultimately destroy them. Instead, if they are willing to be obedient to God and to Jesus, then He will grant them even more responsibility in the Kingdom of God by their enjoying authority over and the use of all that God has planned for those who submit themselves to Him during their existences in the present realm. Thus, when Jesus returns, however long is the time between his first and second coming, the true disciple, who, with his authentic inwardness, has carefully and consistently sought to love God’s people, the Jews, and their fellow Christians, will enjoy God’s blessing him with the eternal Kingdom of God.

We may even go so far as to conclude that the ramifications of what Jesus is saying is that the responsible disciple who is either resurrected or raptured at Jesus’ return will be put in charge of helping to rule over the nation of Israel and the rest of the world during the millennial kingdom, even acting as a priest to people to instruct them in the truth about Jesus as the Messiah. Consequently, this would be the disciple’s main task and responsibility during the millennial kingdom (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Revelation 20:4), which will be in contrast to the person who ignores what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah and incurs God’s condemnation at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15.