`>>>>>>> *Matthew – Lesson 47* <<<<<<<

1) Just to review before we get started, there are really three sections to the Olivet Discourse:
   a) **Verses 4-14** – Jesus describes the circumstances and challenges His disciples will face in the period from Pentecost leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
      i) We should remember that post the destruction of the temple, there is no real Jewish religious structure that would concentrate on causing the disciples problems.
      ii) One source describes it this way:

In the wake of the crisis, a new question loomed large: How were people to express devotion to the God of Israel without the Temple? Ultimately, a reimagined form of Judaism ("rabbinic Judaism") would take shape in small informal disciple circles centered around Torah study.

      i) There were still Jews who gave the church problems but the central Jewish leadership was gone with the Temple's destruction.
   b) **Verses 15-28** – Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the events surrounding it.
      i) This begins with the quote from Daniel, "when you see the abomination of desolation."
   c) **Verses 29-31** – Finally, as N.T. Wright describes it – Jesus uses symbolic language for His vindication after Jerusalem falls.
      i) Vindication here meaning that all that Jesus had prophesied had come to pass and that, in and of itself, proclaims His Sonship, and Messiahship.
      ii) We will be dealing with each of these sections separately.
2) Also, as mentioned earlier, the disciples question which Jesus is answering actually had three different parts.
   a) However. we must assume they must be considered as one and they were looking for one answer with signs – when is Jesus' return going to take place along with the coming of the Kingdom.
   b) This is wrapped up in the fact that they probably assumed that Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple and His return were all at the same point in the future.
3) So, let's begin with the first section …

Matthew 24:4–14(ESV)

4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will
come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. 6 And
you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must
take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom
against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All
these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will
be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and
betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and
lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many

will grow cold. **13** But the one who endures to the end will be saved. **14** And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

4) Once again, we need to remember the pronoun "you" in this section.

5) In this passage, Jesus is describing the circumstances and challenges His disciples will face in the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

6) In the first eight verses, he talks about the world situation that the disciples will observe.

   a) Between Jesus' crucifixion and the destruction of the temple, just in ballpark numbers, there were:

      i) Earthquakes ~10–15 significant.

         (1) Several are specifically recorded in the eastern Mediterranean; many smaller ones would have gone unrecorded.

      ii) Famines ~3–5 significant regional famines.

         (1) Particularly important is the widespread famine during Claudius' reign, including the severe Judean famine mentioned in Acts 11 and by Josephus.

      iii) Wars/revolts ~6–8 major conflicts

         (1) Depends heavily on what qualifies as a "war."

         (2) The period included:

            (a) Roman-Parthian warfare

            (b) Boudica's revolt

            (c) The Jewish Revolt began in 66 CE and did not end until 73 or 74 CE.

            (d) The Roman civil war of 68–69 CE.

               (i) The Roman civil war of 68 to 69 CE delayed the final Roman assault on Jerusalem.

               (ii) Once Vespasian secured the imperial throne in late 69 CE, Titus resumed the campaign, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE.

7) In verses 9 to 14, He speaks of what the disciples will face, the church will face, and one of the most important statements of the section is:

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

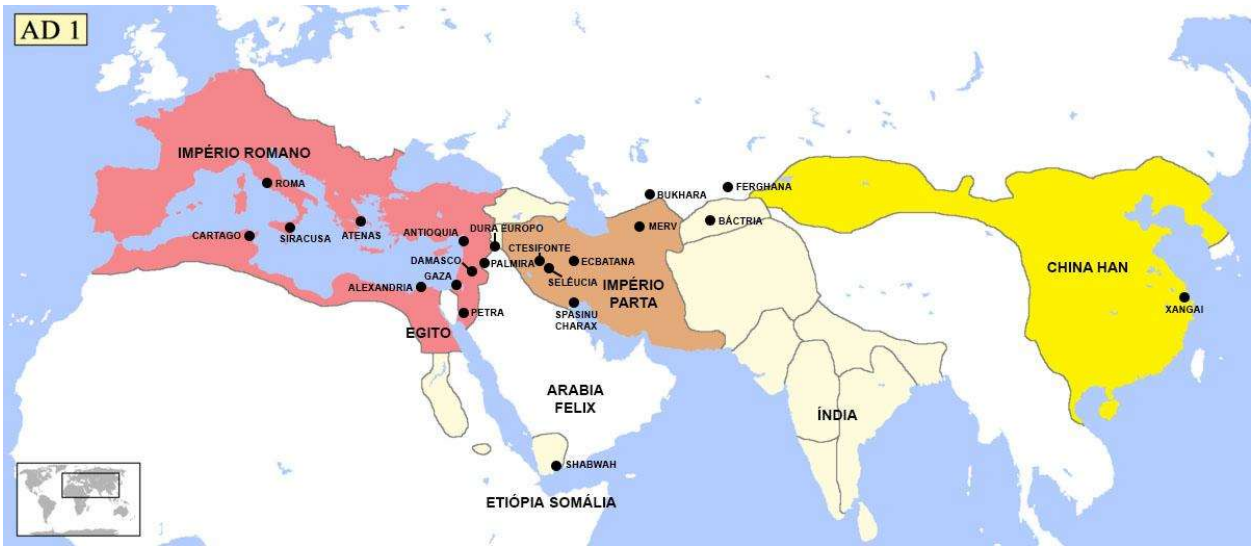
   a) Just a quick note about this verse.

      i) We know that the gospel had spread extensively throughout the Roman world and into several regions beyond it by 70 CE.

      ii) However, the term "all nations" here should not automatically be equated with every modern country in the world.

      iii) Historical documentation of the spread of the gospel by all the disciples is sparse.

~~~ *Side Note: Map Afro-Eurasia in 100 CE* ~~~



The phrase **"the whole world"** needs to be understood against this geographical background.

In AD 70:

- The Roman world was **not the whole planet**.
- China was a major civilization thousands of miles away.
- India was culturally and politically distinct.
- Much of Africa was outside Roman knowledge.
- The Americas were entirely unknown to the Mediterranean world.
- There was no practical way for first-century Christians to evangelize every modern country in the sense we normally mean today.

Yet the **Roman-Mediterranean world was the connected world of the apostles**—linked by roads, shipping, Greek language, Jewish communities, trade routes, and Roman administration.

A map showing the **Roman Empire plus Parthia, India, Han China, and the surrounding peoples** makes the distinction very clear: the gospel could have spread throughout the *known inhabited world of the apostles* without having reached every geographical region on earth.

~~~ *End Side Note* ~~~

8) Ok, looking at the next section, Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the events surrounding it.

.Matthew 24:15–28(ESV)

The Abomination of Desolation

15 "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing

infants in those days! [20] Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. [21] For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. [22] And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. [23] Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. [24] For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. [25] See, I have told you beforehand. [26] So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. [27] For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [28] Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

9) In this passage, Jesus is referring to the events leading up to and surrounding the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE.
   a) One of the strongest reasons I can give for this is again the use of the pronoun you throughout this passage.
      i) To me, this indicates that Jesus is telling the disciples that they would be seeing all this over the forty or so years between the discourse and destruction of the temple.
      ii) Now, obviously, some of them will be martyred or have passed away by then but not all – several were possibly still alive then.
   b) Another strong indicator of this interpretation being correct is that at the second coming and the true return of Christ, will be known by the whole world at once.
   c) Jesus even says as much in the last 3 verses.

[26] So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. [27] *For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.* [28] *Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.*

   d) In other words, "lightening comes from east and shines as far as the west" indicates that the whole world will see His coming.
   e) "Wherever the corpse is there the vultures will gather" means that they can ignore anyone telling them that Jesus has returned and is in a certain place.

10) Looking at a few other things in this passage:
   a) All of what Jesus says between verses 4 and 13 easily fits between the time of this discourse and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.
   b) Verses 4-8 talk about events that can be verified through history.
   c) We know that many of the disciples see all the things that are mentioned in verses 9 through 13.

11) We really find more of the apocryphal language coming in verses 14 through 28 but again this is easily understood from the perspective of what was normal for these folks.

12) There are three specific points I would like to touch on:
   a) **First** – how to interpret the "abomination of desolation?"

i) As you probably recall, this is a phrase out of Daniel.

ii) One source gives a list of five different things this could refer to:

(1) Roman military presence surrounding Jerusalem.

(2) Roman standards and their idolatrous imagery.

(3) The desecration of the Temple.

(4) The Jewish Zealot desecration of the Temple through murder and profanation.

(5) Ultimately, the Roman standards were being brought into the Temple.

iii) This source further cites some references in Josephus.

(1) Josephus describes both internal Temple desecration and the Romans ultimately bringing their standards into the Temple.

(2) He describes the shedding of priestly blood in the Temple as a desecration and later describes Roman standards being erected there and sacrifices offered to them.

iv) All of these things take place as indication that the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (unstated) are imminent.

v) This is the reason behind the things Jesus says about fleeing.

(1) The Romans were going to burn and destroy not only the temple and the surrounding area but most of the rest of the city as well.

~~~ Side Note: Details of Jerusalem/Temple Destruction in 70 CE ~~~

Jerusalem itself was largely destroyed along with the Temple in 70 CE, although it is important to distinguish the Temple's destruction from the destruction of the entire city.

- During the Roman siege under Titus, the sequence was roughly:
- The Romans breached Jerusalem's defensive walls and progressively took control of the city.
- The Temple was destroyed by fire in August 70 CE. This was the catastrophic event at the heart of the destruction.
- The Romans then captured the remaining parts of Jerusalem, including the Upper City.
- According to Josephus, Titus ordered the city and Temple to be razed, leaving only a few structures, particularly three towers of Herod's palace and part of the western wall—to serve as evidence of the city's former strength.
- Archaeology confirms widespread burning and destruction throughout Jerusalem, not merely at the Temple precinct.

One important qualification we must make is, when we say "Jerusalem was destroyed," we shouldn't picture every building being completely obliterated. Some structures survived, deliberately or otherwise. The Romans retained portions of the city's fortifications and Herodian towers for their military garrison.

~~~ End Side Note ~~~

b) **Second** – as just stated, people fleeing and those consequences rule this out as the second coming event.

i) When Christ comes the second time it will be to take the saints home with him and all humanity to judgement.

(1) It will be instantaneous – there will be no time nor any place to escape from it.

(2) We will be looking at this in more detail shortly but from verses 40 and 41 we see:

Matthew 24:40–41(ESV)

40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.

c) **Third** – there is again, the use of the "you" pronoun troughout.

i) This is particularly of interest in light of the few verses that precede verse 27.

ii) In these, Jesus is telling the disciples to beware of those who are saying in different ways that the Christ has already come – don't you believe it!

13) Finally, we touched on verses 27 and 28 a moment ago. They combine to bolster what Jesus is saying about his coming.

What other interpretations might you have heard?

To ask a pointed question, does this explanation make sense to you?

1) These next 3 verses really cause major differences in the way the scholars we mentioned earlier describe their meanings.

Matthew 24:29–31(ESV)

The Coming of the Son of Man

29 "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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

2) Ok, let's look across the four scholars we are applying. Again, most others fall somewhere under these in their interpretations.

a) R.T. France: Apocalyptic description of Jerusalem's judgment; "coming" = vindication of Son of Man.

b) N.T. Wright: Symbolic language for Jesus' vindication after Jerusalem falls.

c) D.A. Carson: He is in the camp of these verses meaning the literal second coming.

d) Dale Allison: Deliberately ambiguous; likely both judgment on Jerusalem and foreshadowing final coming.

3) I have read this passage through a number of times and I personally think Jesus is continuing to describe the events following the fall of Jerusalem.

a) This is the view of N.T. Wright and R.T. France.

b) As France points out, the language used is apocalyptic.

4) Considering the apocalyptic descriptions; there are lots of similar descriptions of God coming in this manner, the darkening's etc. in the Old Testament.

   i) Isaiah 13:10 in describing the judgment of Babylon:

Isaiah 13:9–10 (ESV)

10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.

   ii) Ezekiel concerning judgment upon Egypt:

Ezekiel 32:7–8 (ESV)

7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. **8** All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD.

   iii) And one other in Joel:

Joel 2:30–31 (ESV)

30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. **31** The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

   b) So, there is a well-established prophetic vocabulary of cosmic collapse in which the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars represents the collapse of a nation, kingdom, or political/religious order.

   c) All of which is probably appropriate for the destruction not only of the temple and Jerusalem but more to the point the Jewish religious system that had stood for centuries.

5) In verses 30–31, Jesus continues His description of His vindication and the establishment of the present Messianic era.

6) This is the age ushered in by His death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement at the right hand of God.

7) This is dramatically confirmed by the judgment upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

8) An important Old Testament reference here is from Daniel.: If you listen carefully, you can hear the vindication and kingdom transfer being discussed.

Daniel 7:13–14 (ESV)

The Son of Man Is Given Dominion

13 "I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;

his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

Does this make sense to you – agree, disagree, questions, comments?