

The Olivet Discourse

📖 Matthew 24–25

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Tonight we come to Matthew 24. This is the fifth and final discourse of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew is known for his discourses. In the discourses Matthew records more of Christ's teaching than any of the other gospel writers. The theme of Matthew is two-fold; the offer of the kingdom to the nation Israel and the postponement of the kingdom due to the nation Israel's rejection. As such each discourse is related in some way to the kingdom. The first two discourses fall in the section where the offer of the kingdom is being made to the nation Israel. The first discourse is Matt 5-7, usually referred to as *The Sermon on the Mount* because of the location of the discourse, but I like to refer to it as *The Discourse on Kingdom Righteousness* because Jesus sets forth righteousness as the requirement for that generation to enter the kingdom. The second discourse is Matt 10, *The Discourse on Kingdom Missions*. In it Jesus commissions the twelve to go out to the nation Israel with the message "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" and to do miracles that authenticated this message was from God. Both of those discourses fall within the section where the offer of the kingdom is being made to the nation Israel. Matthew 12 records the unpardonable sin of that generation in attributing Christ's miracles to Satan. Therefore, the last three discourses fall in the section where the postponement of the kingdom is in view until a generation of Israel comes along that welcomes the Messiah. The third discourse is Matt 13, *The Discourse on Kingdom Mysteries*. In this discourse Jesus reveals new truths regarding the kingdom's postponement. Only the remnant who had understood the kingdom message as it was originally offered would understand these mysteries. The non-remnant would be hardened and go to destruction unless they believed and separated themselves from that generation. The fourth discourse is Matthew 18, *The Discourse on Kingdom Greatness*. In this discourse Jesus taught that the period of postponement was preparatory for the kingdom and that we should prepare ourselves for greatness in the kingdom by learning humble servanthood in the present. Those who insist on putting themselves first *now* will be last in the kingdom and those who put themselves last *now* will be first in the kingdom. Those are the first four discourses and since all of these discourses relate to the kingdom either being offered or being postponed then the fifth discourse also relates to the kingdom. This discourse is recorded in Matthew 24-25 and is usually referred to as *The Olivet Discourse* because the location it was given was Mt Olivet or the Mt of Olives. However, I refer to it as *The Discourse on Kingdom Coming* because in it Jesus reveals the conditions in the world that will lead inexorably to His Second Coming and the establishment of the kingdom. It

is therefore an eschatological discourse, dealing with last things.¹ Toussaint says it "...is the longest prophetic message of Christ."² So in it we have the essence of Jesus' teaching on end-times. Most of what we will do tonight is introduction with some exegesis in order to understand the disciple's questions.

Since it is a discourse on eschatology a brief recollection of Jesus' eschatology derived from the OT should be outlined. The OT predicted that Israel would be under divine discipline for four successive Gentile kingdoms; Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. During the kingdom of Rome ten kings would arise to rule. Then an eleventh would arise to power quickly and defeat three of these kings. He would become world dictator and would force a peace treaty on Israel for seven years. During the first three and a half years he would keep his end of the treaty and Israel would enjoy peace but then he would break the treaty by committing the abomination and persecute Israel for the remaining three and a half years. Elijah would return during those days and restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. At the end of the seven years all Israel would call upon the Messiah and He would come to their rescue, defeat the evil dictator and establish His kingdom upon the earth. This was Jesus' eschatology and it may be assumed that His disciples shared this basic understanding of eschatology. Therefore, the discourse is given in this context and the disciples questions cannot be understood apart from this context.

A short look at three general interpretations of the discourse is in order.³ First, the past fulfillment interpretation is known as preterism.⁴ Preterism means "past" and teaches that the majority of the discourse has already been fulfilled in the past in and around the events of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. They insist that Matt 24:34 "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" requires that the things in Matt 24:4-33 be fulfilled within the time frame of the generation Jesus was speaking to and therefore require a 1st century fulfillment. They also interpret Rev 4-19 as being fulfilled in the 1st century. In order to maintain this interpretation, proponents must spiritualize the descriptions in both Matt 24:4-34 and Rev 4-19. For example, Ken Gentry⁵ describes Christ's second coming in Matt 24:29-31 as "His judgment-coming"⁶ in and through Titus and the Roman armies in AD70. Every eye did not see Jesus Himself but Jesus coming in judgment through the Roman armies. This is a spiritualized interpretation. It interprets the destruction of Jerusalem as God's final word to Israel. There is thus no future restoration of Israel as Jesus' eschatology, derived from the OT, demands. It therefore falters by setting up Matt 24:34 as a key interpretive center and interpreting every other text with respect to it. The view also puts into question the literal-bodily second coming of Jesus Christ. Second, the present fulfillment interpretation is known as historicism.⁷ Historicism teaches that the discourse is being fulfilled during Church history and so fulfillment is spread out across the last 2,000 years. In order to propagate this interpretation they also must spiritualize the descriptions in Matthew 24:4-34. For example, Louis Berkhof⁸ describes the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as the gospel going to people of all nations during this present time beginning with Pentecost. He states that wars and earthquakes are characteristic of "...the natural order of events,"⁹ thus finding a present fulfillment. Discussion of the anti-Christ and the abomination of desolation is vague. No place is made for Israel and her restoration. All that is discussed is a difficult time prior

and a lot of people saved just prior to Christ's return. Historicism is better than preterism but it still lacks specificity in dealing with the details of the text and fails to understand Matthew's argument relative to Israel's kingdom offer, rejection and postponement until a future repentant Israel. Third, the future fulfillment is known as futurism.¹⁰ Futurism teaches that the discourse will be fulfilled during the future Tribulation in connection with the establishment of the kingdom. This interpretation follows a literal approach to the details of the discourse. For example, the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is usually interpreted in the same way it was earlier in Matthew when preached by John, Jesus and the Twelve, as the good news of the kingdom being "at hand." The abomination of desolation is interpreted in terms of the Book of Daniel and its fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanes. The description of the second coming as all tribes of the land of Israel seeing the Son of Man will be literally fulfilled in the physical, bodily return of Jesus. All that said, there are always exceptions within these approaches and all I have done is given a general sketch of preterism, historicism and futurism. The major point of difference is the literal approach of interpretation. Only the futurist school seeks to consistently apply the literal approach. We are futurists and so primarily I will be teaching the futurist view although there are notable differences within our own camp and I will spend some time pointing out these differences when appropriate.

In 24:1 **Jesus** is seen coming **out from the temple**. It was still Wednesday of Passion Week. He had just given a scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees and a final lament over the nation Israel whose temple was going to destruction because of their rejection. They would not see Him again until they said, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The announcement that the temple would go to destruction must have traumatized them so as He was coming **out from the temple and...going away** His disciples would have been discussing His statement that the temple would go to destruction. As He **was going away...His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him**. They were evidently impressed with the **temple buildings** and could not fathom them going to destruction. The Temple was originally built by Solomon on a square foundation, 500 cubits x 500 cubits in 967BC. This Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586BC. It was rebuilt by Zerubbabel on the same square foundation between 536 and 516BC. During the time of the Hasmoneans, more commonly known as the Maccabees, the Temple foundation was expanded to the south. When Herod the Great came to rule Judea he began an extensive expansion of the Temple foundation further to the south and to the west and the north. He also embellished the buildings on top of the foundation. This work began in 20BC and was not completed until AD64. The disciples were pointing out the **temple buildings** 31 years before the construction was complete. Still, the **temple buildings** were very much completed and appeared magnificent. MacArthur said, "At the time of Jesus' ministry, the temple was one of the most impressive structures in the world, made of massive blocks of stone bedecked with gold ornamentation. Some of the stones in the temple complex measured 40x12x12 ft. and were expertly quarried to fit perfectly against one another. The temple buildings were made of gleaming white marble, and the whole eastern wall of the large main structure was covered with gold plates that reflected the morning sun, making a spectacle that was visible

for miles."¹¹ This magnificent spectacle rendered the temple buildings indestructible to the disciple's minds. "Herod...had planned for his buildings to outlast the pyramids."¹² How it could now be destroyed was impossible for the disciples to understand. So the statement they **came up to Him pointing out the temple buildings** means that they wanted Him to give them more explanation of what He meant.

In 24:2 Jesus is very straightforward, **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."** Pentecost said, "This statement, although very clear to us, was incomprehensible to the disciples."¹³ It simply did not fit their expectations of things to come. One of the modern problems that has to be dealt with here is the fact that much of the retaining wall of the temple is still standing since AD70. The reference to **not one stone** being **left upon another** relates not to the retaining wall but to the stones that made up the **temple buildings**. Jesus did not say the retaining wall would be torn down but the temple proper which was made up of all the temple buildings on top of the retaining wall. MacArthur says, "The entire temple mount had been enlarged by Herod's engineers, by means of large retaining walls and vaulted chambers on the S side and SE corner. By this means the large courtyard area atop the temple mount was effectively doubled. The whole temple complex was magnificent by any standard."¹⁴ So understand that it was the temple complex on top of the retaining wall that was torn down, not the retaining wall itself. For perspective of the immensity of the retaining wall, I have some pictures and a copy of the survey of the Temple Mount and its environs by British officer, Capt. Charles Warren, from 1867-70. This was the last major survey ever permitted and all archaeologists work off of Capt. Charles Warren's reports. On it you can see the major elevation changes from Mt Moriah, where the Holy of Holies was located, in all directions to the outer walls. To the Western Wall the descent is 110 feet at the greatest, to the South 161 feet, to the East 161 feet and to the North 131 feet. All the space from Mt Moriah to the outer walls had to be filled and huge stones used to build a sufficient retaining wall around it so they could build the temple on top. It is truly magnificent. What Jesus was predicting in verse 2 was that when the Romans came they would tear down the temple buildings on top of the retaining wall but they did not tear down the retaining wall itself.

Here I have some pictures of the SW corner of the Temple Mount where on the streets below the archaeologists uncovered the debris and discovered massive stones from the temple buildings above and the huge depressions made by them upon impact. They dropped over 100 feet destroying Robinson's Arch and the street that ran next to the retaining wall. One of the more significant stones discovered is known as the "Stone of the Trumpeting Place." This stone had an inscription which read, "Leveit hatekiya lekakh..." (to the trumpeting place to ush[er]...)"¹⁵ In other words, the stone marked the place that the trumpeter stood on the Temple Mount when he blew the trump to usher in the Sabbath. These stones remain as evidence of the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction here that **not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down**. Walvoord said, "The sad fulfillment was to come in A.D. 70, only six years after the temple was completed, when the Roman soldiers deliberately destroyed the temple, prying off stones one by one and casting them into the valley below."¹⁶

If the disciples had been traumatized by His statement before then after verse 2 they were in shock. Between verses 2 and 3 they walked in silence with Jesus from the Temple across the Kidron Valley and up the slope of the Mt of Olives. The walk could easily take 15 minutes. In 24:3 the Lord took a seat **on the Mount of Olives**. From this picture you can see that the **Mount of Olives** is slightly higher elevation than the Temple Mount and so they were in a great position for the following discourse. At that time **the disciples came to Him privately**. The parallel in Mark 13:3 says that only four disciples came to Him, "Peter and James and John and Andrew." These four said to Him, **"Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age."** The answer in verses 4ff will be given to all the disciples.

Many see three questions here but the grammar indicates there are only two. The first question is, **when will these things happen?** This question is asking, "when will the stones of the temple buildings be torn down?" They wanted to know when the temple would be destroyed. The second and third questions are **what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age**. These are really two parts of the same question as evidenced by the single definite article *σης* governing *παρουσιας* and *συντελειας* connected by the conjunction *και*. In their minds the **coming** of Messiah and the **end of the age** occurred at the same time. From the Book of Daniel, they would have been correct, the smiting stone is the Messiah and when He comes the **end of the age** has come and the messianic age will begin.

The Jews viewed history as composed of two ages; the age preceding Messiah and the Messianic age. Pentecost says, "In Jewish eschatology two ages were recognized, the first was this present age, the age in which Israel was waiting for the coming of the Messiah; the second was the age to come, the age in which all of Israel's covenants would be fulfilled and Israel would enter into her promised blessings as a result of Messiah's coming. The present age would be terminated by the appearance of Messiah, and the coming age would be introduced by His advent."¹⁷ Since Jesus had just revealed that the temple would be destroyed they were wondering if this would happen soon so that the kingdom will come. They had in mind Zechariah 14 which taught that Jerusalem would come under siege with great destruction of the Jewish people and then immediately be followed by Messiah's coming as King. Since this is what was in their mind let's turn to Zech 14. Zech 14 is the key passage behind the Olivet Discourse. In Zech 14:1 we read, "Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. ²For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." Vv 1-2 teach that Jerusalem would be invaded by all nations and suffer great loss. Verse 3, "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. ⁴In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south." They were sitting on the Mount of Olives when Jesus was saying these things and so that explains why they were thinking of this passage. The point is that when Jerusalem was under siege the Lord would come and destroy those nations and rescue Israel. Verse 5, "You will flee by the

valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him! ⁶In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. ⁷For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. ⁸And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. ⁹And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one." So the sequence in their mind was 1) a siege against Jerusalem by all nations with great loss of Jewish life, 2) the Lord coming to fight against those nations, rescuing Israel and 3) the establishment of the Lord's kingdom. Probably in the disciples mind the destruction of the Temple, His return and the establishment of the kingdom are all linked. Bruce agrees saying, "The questioners took for granted that all three things went together: destruction of temple, advent of Son of Man, end of the current age." They want to know *when* the Temple will be destroyed and *what the sign* of His coming to fight the nations and rescue Israel and establish the kingdom will be.

Matt 24:4 is where Jesus begins to answer. The first thing we want to point out is that there is nothing in the entire discourse that relates to the Church. The discourse relates to the nation Israel, Jerusalem and the Kingdom. Some people find the Church in verse 13 as the ones who "endure to the end" by persevering in good works. Others find the Church in verse 14 as those who are presently responding to the gospel of the kingdom" by which they mean a spiritual kingdom. Others find the Church in verses 22 and 24 and 31 under the title "the elect" and conclude a mid or post-trib rapture. Still others find the Church in verses 40-41 under the picture of the two men and two women who are taken to show a pre-trib rapture. All of these identifications fail by failing to understand the disciple's questions as they arose out of Zech 14. As Pentecost said, "...Jesus was here revealing the prophetic program for Jerusalem, the nation Israel, and the people of Israel. He made no reference to the church or the prophetic program for the church. Jesus did not speak here of events that will precede the consummation of the program for the church at the Rapture (John 14:1-4; 1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:13-17)."¹⁸ It must be remembered that the Church at this time was largely a "mystery." It had only been mentioned in passing in Matt 16:18 and 18:15. In short it may be said that the Olivet Discourse is Jesus' last words to Israel and the Upper Room Discourse is Jesus' first words to the Church. Therefore, any attempt to find the Church in the Olivet Discourse is sorely misguided and will only lead to mass confusion.

The second thing we want to point out is that He doesn't answer the first question about when the temple will be destroyed. The only mention of the temple is in 24:15 by referring to "the abomination of desolation." This was something spoken by Daniel the prophet and certainly relates to Dan 9:27 which occurs in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. So we know Matt 24:15 is the mid-point of Daniel's 70th week. But no mention of when the temple will be destroyed is recorded by Matthew. This has been a great concern for many. Toussaint said, "Why would Matthew include the first question of the disciples and then leave the answer unrecorded? If the second question is answered, how can one with consistent logic contend that in Matthew the first is not?"¹⁹ Walvoord

gives a good answer, "Matthew's account of the Olivet discourse records that portion of Christ's answer that relates to His future kingdom and how it will be brought in, which is one of the major purposes of the gospel."²⁰ In other words, it was not within the scope of Matthew's argument. If you turn to the parallel in Luke 21 you will see the answer to the first question. In verse 7 you can see that this is the same discourse, "They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" Then Jesus begins to answer in much the same way that Matthew records His answer in Matt 24. "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. 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. ¹⁰Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." These things find wonderful parallel in Matthew 24:4-8 but verse 12 states something that has no exact parallel. Note, "But before all these things," that is the things of vv 8-11, "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. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute." And so forth and so on. Verse 20, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 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; ²²because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled." These things relate to the events leading up and including the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, many of which are described in the Book of Acts. McClain says, "It should be obvious that in this section of Luke's account we have the answer of Christ to the disciples' question about the judgment of Jerusalem and the temple, for here HE speaks especially of the events which will occupy the time from His departure to the destruction of the city in A.D. 70."²¹ This section has no exact parallel in Matthew 24. Therefore, the sign that Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, including the temple. Verse 21, What's so unique about this is what you see in verse 22, "these are the days of vengeance." Vengeance against who? Vengeance against Israel. Why? Because that generation had rejected Him and committed the unpardonable sin. Who were those who would escape? Those Hebrew Christians who heeded Christ's words. And the sign for them to escape is verse 20, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies..." Arnold Fruchtenbaum said, "According to this prophecy, the Temple and Jerusalem were both to be destroyed. The Hebrew Christians were told that when they saw armies surrounding Jerusalem, they were to flee....So when for some unknown reason the Romans temporarily lifted the siege for a few days, the Hebrew Christians took the opportunity to flee to the city of Pella in the Transjordan. Soon after that, the Romans returned and besieged Jerusalem again, and in a.d. 70 Jerusalem and the Temple were both destroyed....It is at this time that the term *Meshumod* or *Meshumodim* began to be applied by the Jewish community to Hebrew Christians, and it is still used today. It comes from a Hebrew word meaning to destroy, but it is used in the sense of traitor."²² Therefore, the answer to the disciples first question

regarding when the temple would be destroyed is it would be destroyed when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies. The Messianic believers heeded Jesus' words and escaped destruction. Matthew does not record this answer because as Walvoord pointed out, his major purpose is the kingdom and so he only records the answer to the second question which deals with the sign of Messiah's coming and the end of the age to usher in the kingdom.

Now we come to Matthew 24:4 which is Jesus' answer and all I want to do tonight is look at how various dispensational futurists have outlined these verses. When I say dispensational futurists I'm specifying because there are futurists who are not dispensational. These would be covenant premillennialists who hold to a post-trib rapture. So they are futurists but they're not dispensational. All I'm looking at is notable differences within our own camp of dispensational futurists and on this point it's somewhat distressing that we can't get together but maybe things are just getting worked out slowly over time.

The first view is that vv 4-14 are general signs of the present age and vv 15-28 are specific signs of the future tribulation. This is the view of John Walvoord. He expressed it by saying that Matthew 24:4-14 is "describing the general characteristic of the age leading up to the end, while at the same time recognizing that the prediction of the difficulties, which will characterize the entire period between the first and second coming of Christ, are fulfilled in an intensified form as the age moves on to its conclusion. If Matthew 24:4-14 deals with general signs, then verses 15-26 may be considered specific signs."²³ In other words, 24:4-14 deals with general signs throughout the present age all the way to the second coming and 15-26 deal with specific signs in the future tribulation when these signs intensify. He points out that things like false Christ's and wars and rumors of wars and famines and earthquakes have occurred during the present age and some have intensified. He points out that false prophets have plagued the Church and that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached more and more as the end of the age approaches. However, a weakness of this view is that he is seemingly inconsistent in 24:13 when he says that this refers to the very end at the second coming when those who are alive and remain will be delivered by Christ. In general, his idea is that all these things will intensify through the entire Church age and get really bad when He comes. It's an interesting idea. Walvoord was, of course, the greatest prophecy scholar of the 20th century but he held a strange view of some things. For example, he held that there were no seal judgments in the first half of the tribulation, the seals, trumpets and bowls were all in the second half of the tribulation. I don't know anyone else who still holds that view today. His reasoning was that Israel is under a peace treaty in the first three and one half years and so he concluded there couldn't be any disturbances from the seal judgments. However, there is a difference between having geopolitical peace and geophysical peace. Israel will have geopolitical peace in the first half of the tribulation, they will not have geophysical peace. Overall I think this view is weak. First, verse 8 says these are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Birth pangs come only in the final hours of a pregnancy. It does not fit the birth pangs metaphor to stretch them out over the entire Church age. It is better to view them as things that occur in the first half of the tribulation. Second, Walvoord specifically pointed out an increase in earthquakes. However, an increase in earthquake data does not mean an

increase in earthquakes. As more and more seismographs have been installed around the world more and more earthquakes have been located. That does not mean there are more earthquakes, only that we are detecting more earthquakes because of more widely dispersed seismographs. Steve Austin has shown from the data held by the National Earthquake Information Center that in the 20th century there was an overall slight decrease in earthquake frequency and that during the latter half of the 20th century there was a slight decrease in earthquakes registering 7.0 or greater on the Richter scale, relative to the earlier half of the 20th century.²⁴ This slightly decreasing pattern is consistent with the creationist idea that there has been an exponential decline in tectonic movement and volcanism since Noah's Flood. Therefore, the claim that we are seeing gradual increases of the things in Matthew 24:4-8 is simply not true. The next major increase in earthquakes will occur during the first half of the Tribulation on a global scale.

The second view is that vv 4-14 deal with the first half of the tribulation and vv 15-28 deal with the second half of the tribulation. This is the view of Ryrie. If you have his study Bible look at the end of the note on 24:3. "Verses 4-14 list characteristics of the first half of the tribulation period, whereas verses 15-28 deal with the second half." This view has in its favor a strict chronology leading all the way to the second coming. However, it has many short-comings. First, Jews rarely wrote in strict chronologies. For example, Gen 1 gives a chronology of creation but then Gen 2 backs up and gives more details about the most important day of creation, the sixth day. This is an oriental style of writing that is much like modern journalist style. An author may give a general overview and then back up and cite important details. This seems to be Matthew's style as we will see. Second, it's difficult to imagine that vv 9-14 are the first half of the tribulation since it describes Israel being hated and persecuted by all nations when Daniel revealed that Israel would enjoy peace during the first half of the tribulation (Dan 9:27). Therefore, the view of Ryrie is a weak view.

The third view is that vv 4-6 deal with general characteristics of the Church age, namely false Christ's and local wars, vv 7-8 deal with the sign that marks the end of the age which is interpreted as WWI and WWII, vv 9-14 deal with the first half of the tribulation and vv 15-20 the events of the second half of the tribulation. This is the view of Fruchtenbaum. This view has some problems. First, he says verse 6 is describing local wars whereas verse 7 is describing global wars. The problem is that verse 7 begins with an explanatory *γὰρ*. Jesus is not introducing a change of subject in verse 7 but an explanation of verse 6. The wars may be either local or global but they can't be one and the other. Second, vv 9-14 describe hatred and persecution of the Jews but that won't happen until the second half of the tribulation. Third, it's a strict chronology and that doesn't fit Jewish ways of writing.

The fourth view is that vv 4-6 deal with the disciples, vv 7-14 are general picture of the period just before His coming and vv 15-22 describe the specific sign that will signal that the end is near. This is the view of Toussaint. I don't have any one statement but this is what I gathered from his book. It's definitely better than the other views. One problem is the same as Fruchtenbaum. He makes a distinction between vv 4-6 as dealing with the disciples in the 1st century and vv 7-17 dealing with the general period just before His coming in the future

tribulation is missing the mark when verse 7 begins with an explanatory *γὰρ* and so signals that verse 7 is an explanation of verse 6. You can't separate them by over 1900 years. They are either both local events or both global but they can't be one and the other.

The fifth view is that vv 4-8 deal with the first half of the tribulation, vv 9-26 deal with the second half of the tribulation, v 15 goes back and describes the sign that the second half of the tribulation is beginning which culminates with the second coming. This is the view of Pentecost, Barbieri, Showers, myself and others. I have thought this is the best view for a long time. Pentecost says, "There seems to be evidence to support the view that the first half of the week is described in verses 4-8. The parallelism between verses 4-8 and Revelation 6 seem to indicate that the first half of the tribulation is here described... There are indications that verses 9-26 describe the events of the last half of the week. The abomination of desolation (24:15) is clearly stated by Daniel (9:27) to appear in the middle of the week and continue to the end of the period. The word "then" in verse 9 seems to introduce the great persecutions against Israel that were promised them and were described in Revelation 12:12-17, where John reveals that this persecution will last for the last half of the tribulation period (Rev. 12:14)."²⁵ This view overcomes most, if not all the difficulties. First, it observes that vv 4-8 are paralleled by the six seals in Rev 6. Barbieri says, "The events described in verses 4-8 correspond somewhat to the seven seals in Revelation 6... That period will be characterized by (a) false Christs (Matt. 24:4-5; cf. Rev. 6:1-2; the first seal is Antichrist), (b) **wars and rumors of wars** (Matt. 24:6; cf. Rev. 6:3-4; the second seal is warfare) in which nations **will rise up against** each other on a global scale (Matt. 24:7a), and (c) unusual disturbances in nature including **famines** (v. 7b; cf. Rev. 6:5-6; the third seal is famine; the fourth and fifth seals are death and martyrdom [Rev. 6:7-11]) **and earthquakes** (Matt. 24:7b; cf. Rev. 6:12-14; the sixth seal is an earthquake)."²⁶ So while things like false Christ's, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes occur during the present age on a local scale (even WWI and II were not truly global events), it is a fact of history that they have occurred in every age. The distinguishing mark of their occurrence as described here is their global scale. Second, when these things occur on a truly global scale then the "birth pangs" will have come. When birth pangs come it is not yet the end but they are pre-cursors to the end. Once they begin they will continue inevitably and in increasing intensity until the kingdom is born. Third, verses 9-14 describe Israel under tribulation. Daniel 7:21 and 25 indicate that Israel will be persecuted for three and a half years at the end of anti-Christ's reign. Dan 8:24-25 discusses the degree to which he will destroy Israel. Rev 12:12-17 confirm that Israel's persecution will last for three and a half years during the last half of the tribulation. Therefore, verses 9-14 describe the second half of the tribulation. Fourth, the abomination of desolation in Matt 24:15 is a major marker for when Israel's time of difficulty begins. Dan 9:27 says that the anti-Christ will break his covenant in the middle of the week by committing the abomination of desolation. That is what Jesus is quoting. This is the signal for Israel to get the hell out of dodge. It will occur in the land with Israel regathered and a temple rebuilt. Fifth, it is characteristic of Jewish writings to move forward with a chronology, as in vv 4-8 covering the first half and then vv 9-14 the second half of the Tribulation, and then go back to major on milestones. Verse 15, the abomination of desolation is a major milestone. It actually

occurs at verse 9 where the text says “then” to signify a change.” “Then” is the adverb τότε. It’s an adverb of time which can be translated “at that time.” If we ask at what time? Jesus answers in verse 15, “When you see the abomination of desolation...” This is a very common way for Jews to write. They give a chronology and then back up and cover major milestones. This is how the creation account is written, this is how the battle of Gog and Magog is written, this is how the seals, trumpets and bowls in the Book of Revelation are written. Verse 21 also uses “then” in an explanatory passage that describes the second half of the tribulation as “a great tribulation.” That means as far as timing is concerned it also overlays with verse 9 and 15. That agrees with all the passages that say that the last three and a half years will be the time of the world’s greatest difficulty. Alright, that gives us an overall for how we are going to approach the chapter. I’m interpreting it as totally future, 4-8 is the first half, 9-14 the second half, 15 is the sign that marks the beginning of verse 9, verse 21 overlays with verse 9 as the beginning of great tribulation. This is known as consistent futurism and it has been in the works for many, many years but I think we are about there.

¹ The division of systematic theology known as “eschatology” derives from the Greek word εσχάτος and λογος which mean “words concerning last things.”

² Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 266.

³ A fourth view is known as idealism. It is not dealt with here. For details of all four views see LaHaye and Ice, *The End Times Controversy*, pp 18-24.

⁴ The ‘past’ view is technically known as preterism. There are varying degrees of preterism; mild, moderate, extreme (or consistent, logical).

⁵ Ken Gentry is a postmillennialist.

⁶ Kenneth Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation*, p 96.

⁷ The ‘present’ view is technically known as historicism.

⁸ Louis Berkhof was an amillennialist.

⁹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p 703.

¹⁰ The ‘future’ view is technically known as futurism.

¹¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1438.

¹² J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 397.

¹³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 397.

¹⁴ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1438.

¹⁵ Dan Bahat, *The Atlas of Biblical Jerusalem*, 28.

¹⁶ John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 180.

¹⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 398.

¹⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 398.

¹⁹ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 268.

²⁰ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 24:3.

²¹ Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p 364.

²² Arnold F. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: It's Theology, History and Philosophy*, p 39.

²³ John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 183.

²⁴ <http://www.icr.org/article/424/>

²⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p 278-9.

²⁶ Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 76.