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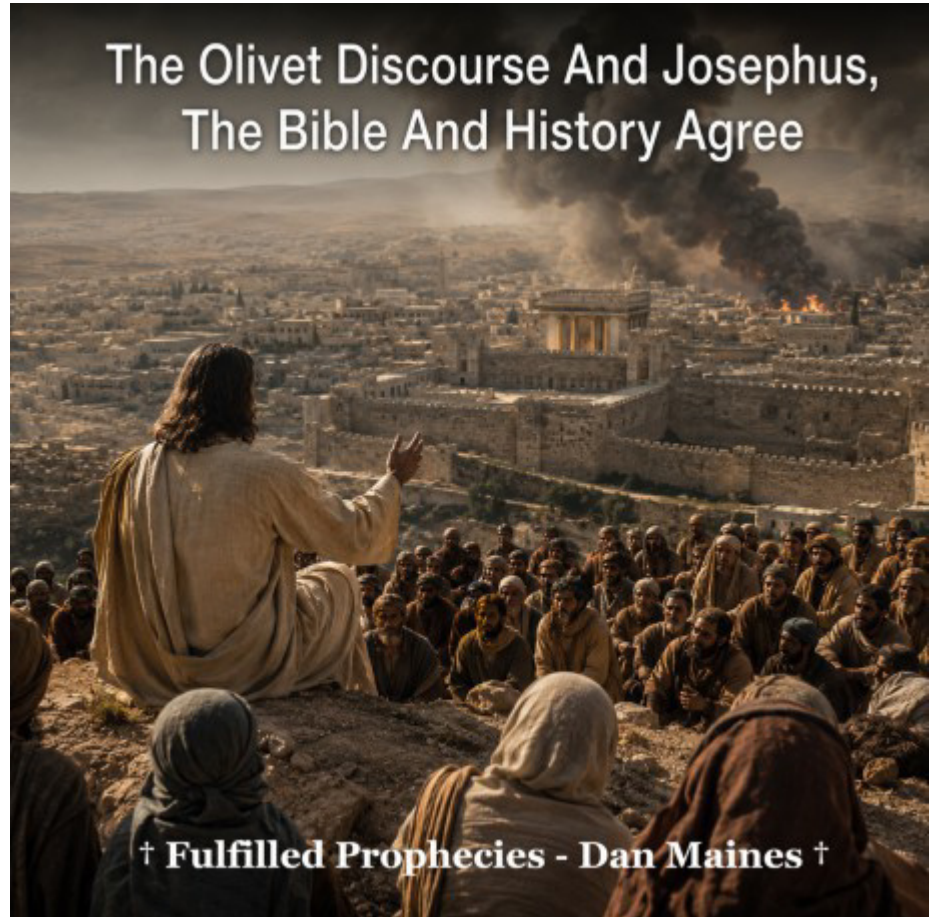
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The Olivet Discourse And Josephus, The Bible And History Agree



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Many people claim the Olivet Discourse is about our future, but Jesus repeatedly said these things would happen in that generation. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 matches the very things Jesus warned about in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

† One of the greatest historical witnesses outside the Bible was Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived through the Roman war and recorded the destruction of Jerusalem in detail.

† What Josephus described lines up directly with the words of Christ. The famine, false prophets, civil wars, surrounding armies, tribulation, burning temple, and millions trapped in Jerusalem were not future events. They happened exactly as Jesus said they would.

The Temple Would Be Destroyed

Matthew 24:1-2

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

† Jesus was speaking about the literal temple standing in front of them, not a future rebuilt temple thousands of years later.

† Josephus recorded that the Romans completely destroyed the temple during the siege of Jerusalem. The buildings were burned and dismantled so thoroughly that the city looked as though it had never been inhabited. (Wars of the Jews, Book 7, Chapter 1)

† Titus originally wanted to preserve parts of the temple, but the destruction became unstoppable during the war. This fulfilled Christ's prophecy exactly. (Luke 19:43-44)

Wars And Rumors Of Wars

Matthew 24:6-7

6 And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

† The years leading up to AD 70 were filled with revolts, uprisings, assassinations, and civil unrest throughout the Roman Empire.

† Josephus described violent rebellions and internal bloodshed throughout Judea before Jerusalem fell. (Wars of the Jews, Book 4)

† Roman historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius also recorded unrest, instability, and disasters during Nero's reign, exactly matching the period Jesus described. (Romans 8:22; Luke 21:9-11)

† Josephus also recorded fierce civil war within Jerusalem itself, where Jewish factions murdered one another while the Romans surrounded the city. (Wars of the Jews, Book 5)

False Prophets And Deception

Matthew 24:11

11 And many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people.

† Josephus repeatedly warned about false prophets deceiving the people during the siege of Jerusalem.

† He wrote that false prophets convinced the people God would deliver them if they stayed in the city, leading many to their deaths. (Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 5)

† Jesus warned His followers ahead of time so they wouldn't be deceived by these claims. (Matthew 24:23-26)

Jerusalem Surrounded By Armies

Luke 21:20-21

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;

† This was not symbolic language. Jesus gave an actual warning sign for believers living in Judea.

† Jesus specifically said those in Judea were to flee to the mountains, proving this was a local first century judgment centered on Jerusalem, not the end of the physical planet. (Matthew 24:16)

† In AD 66, the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem under Cestius Gallus, but unexpectedly withdrew for a short time.

† Early Christians reportedly escaped during this opportunity and fled to Pella before the final destruction came. Eusebius later recorded this historical tradition. (Ecclesiastical History,

Book 3, Chapter 5)

Days Of Vengeance

Luke 21:22

22 because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Jesus said all things written would be fulfilled in those days, not thousands of years later.

† The destruction of Jerusalem was covenant vengeance for rejecting the Messiah and persecuting the prophets. (Matthew 23:34-38)

† This directly refutes the idea that most biblical prophecy remains unfulfilled.

Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:21

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 again.

† Jesus was directly drawing from Daniel's prophecy concerning the destruction connected to the end of the Old Covenant age. (Daniel 12:1)

Daniel 12:1

1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

† Jesus connected Daniel's great time of trouble to the events surrounding Jerusalem's fall in their generation.

† Josephus described the suffering inside Jerusalem as unlike anything the nation had ever experienced.

† Starvation became so severe that people fought over scraps of food, houses were filled with dead bodies, and lawlessness consumed the city. (Wars of the Jews, Book 5)

† Josephus even recorded a horrifying case of a mother eating her own child during the famine. (Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 3)

† This was covenant judgment upon apostate Jerusalem just as Jesus warned. (Deuteronomy 28:52-57)

The Abomination Of Desolation

Matthew 24:15-16

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 - 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

† Luke's parallel account explains this clearly by identifying Jerusalem surrounded by armies as the sign of desolation.

(Luke 21:20)

† Josephus recorded that Roman standards and idolatrous emblems were brought into the temple area after the city fell. (Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 6)

† The Roman armies represented the desolating power that brought covenant judgment upon the city and sanctuary.

Signs In Heaven

Matthew 24:29-30

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. 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.

† This was prophetic judgment language used throughout the Old Testament for the fall of nations and covenant systems. (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7-8)

† Isaiah used the same kind of language when God judged Egypt, yet nobody believes the literal stars fell from the sky at that time. (Isaiah 19:1)

Isaiah 19:1

1 The pronouncement concerning Egypt:

Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt;

The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence,
And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

† God coming on clouds represented divine judgment, not a visible bodily descent from outer space.

† Josephus recorded extraordinary signs in the heavens before Jerusalem fell, including a star resembling a sword, chariots and armies seen in the clouds, and a supernatural light around the altar and temple. (Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 5)

† These signs terrified the people and matched Christ's warnings concerning judgment upon Jerusalem.

Not One Generation Later

Matthew 24:34

34 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus placed all these events within the lifetime of His own generation.

† A biblical generation was the people then living, not people thousands of years later. (Matthew 23:36)

† Jerusalem fell about forty years after Christ spoke these words, exactly within that generation.

† Josephus becomes one of the strongest historical confirmations that Jesus told the truth.

Historical References

† Flavius Josephus recorded the famine, civil war, false prophets, destruction of the temple, surrounding armies, heavenly signs, and tribulation during the Jewish War.

† Eusebius recorded that Christians fled Jerusalem before its destruction after remembering the warning of Christ.

† Tacitus recorded unrest and turmoil throughout the Roman Empire during the reign of Nero and confirmed the devastation surrounding Jerusalem's destruction.

† Suetonius also documented disturbances, uprisings, and instability throughout the empire during this same period.

† The historical record and the biblical record agree together that the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in the first century.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Jesus proved Himself to be a true prophet because every warning He gave came to pass exactly as He said.

† We don't need to fear modern newspaper headlines or future speculation about the end of the world because Christ already fulfilled these covenant judgments.

† The kingdom isn't waiting to arrive. Christ reigns now.
(Ephesians 1:20-23)

† The destruction of Jerusalem marked the end of the Old Covenant system and confirmed the full transition into the New Covenant age. (Hebrews 8:13)

† Understanding the fulfilled perspective removes fear and replaces it with confidence in Christ's completed reign.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why do futurists ignore Josephus when discussing Matthew 24?

A: Because Josephus directly documents the same events Jesus described. His writings strongly support a first century fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse rather than a future tribulation thousands of years later. (Matthew 24:34)

Q: Did Jesus really mean their literal generation?

A: Yes. Jesus used the phrase this generation consistently for the people living at that time. (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34)

Q: Why is Josephus important to this discussion?

A: Josephus was an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem and recorded the exact kinds of events Jesus predicted, including famine, false prophets, tribulation, heavenly signs, and the temple's destruction.

Q: Did the early Christians understand the Olivet Discourse as first century prophecy?

A: Yes. Early believers fled Jerusalem before its destruction because they recognized the signs Jesus gave. (Luke 21:20-21)

Q: What about the coming on the clouds in Matthew 24?

A: The Old Testament repeatedly uses cloud coming language for divine judgment against nations. Jesus used the same covenant judgment language concerning Jerusalem. (Isaiah 19:1; Matthew 24:30)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 24:1-2, 6-7, 11, 15-16, 21, 29-30, 34; Matthew 23:34-38; Matthew 23:36; Luke 19:43-44; Luke 21:20-22; Daniel 12:1; Deuteronomy 28:52-57; Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 19:1; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Hebrews 8:13; Ephesians 1:20-23

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 4-7; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, Nero and Vespasian sections

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