



Jesus' Olivet Discourse

"Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Mat 24:34-35)

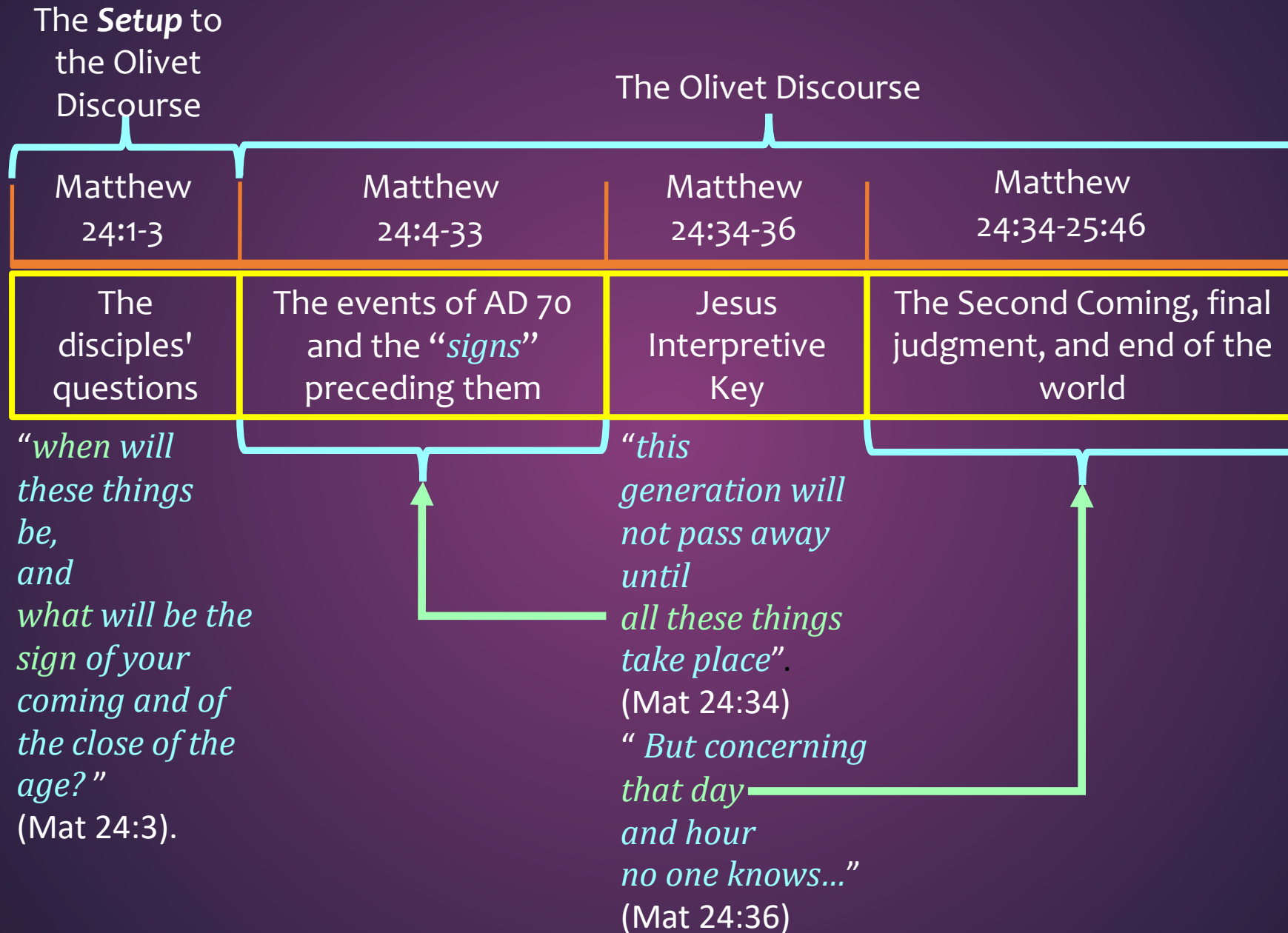
Brief Review of Last Week's Introduction

- The Olivet Discourse (found in Matthew 24–25 with parallel accounts in Mark 13 and Luke 21) is Jesus' final major discourse in Matthew, which he delivered on the Mount of Olives.
- The preceding chapters (Matthew 21–23) provide the essential **background** for this discourse: Jesus **repeatedly** announces **judgment** on Israel through symbolic actions, parables, and His condemnation of the Jewish leaders.
- Matthew 23 ends with Jesus declaring the temple “*desolate*” and pronouncing judgment on “*this generation*.”
- In Matthew 24:2, Jesus **shocks** his disciples by predicting the complete destruction of the temple.
- The disciples then ask Jesus “*when*” these events will occur and “*what... sign*” will precede those events.
- The disciples mistakenly assume the temple's destruction, Christ's coming, and the end of the age are all one event.
- In his Olivet Discourse, Jesus' answers the disciple's questions and corrects their misunderstanding about the timing of the events.

Brief Review of Last Week's Introduction

- The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 addresses **two** different future events:
 - The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (A.D. 70) (24:4–35)
 - Christ's Second Coming and the final judgment (24:36–25:46)
- Jesus' timing statement (“*this generation*,” Matt. 24:34) indicates that everything pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem in 24:4–33 would occur within the lifetime of His hearers.
- Furthermore, these events would be preceded by recognizable signs (wars, false prophets, the abomination of desolation, Jerusalem surrounded by armies), enabling believers to flee the coming tribulation.
- In **contrast**, the Second Coming has **no** advance signs—its day and hour are **unknown**.
- Therefore, in giving this discourse Jesus warns his original audience to:
 - Watch for the signs concerning Jerusalem's coming judgment, and be prepared to flee the city when it was time to do so.
 - **Always** be ready for his Second Coming by living as faithful and wise servants since he could return at any time and there will be no advance notice.

The Structure of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25



Signs of Jerusalem's Fall We Have Looked at so Far

- **24:4–8** – Jesus warned of false messiahs, wars, famines, and earthquakes—the “*beginning of birth pains*” signaling that God's judgment on Jerusalem was approaching.
- **24:9–13** – Jesus also predicted there would be persecution, apostasy, false prophets, and increasing lawlessness, and he called on His followers to remain faithful through the coming crisis.
- **24:14** – Jesus also predicted that in the period before Jerusalem fell, the gospel would be proclaimed throughout the Roman world, as a testimony to “*all nations*”.
- Furthermore, we demonstrated that historically, ***all*** of these events predicted in Matthew 24:4–14 took place in the lead up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. and were therefore fulfilled within “*this generation*” as Jesus had promised.

Abomination of Desolation (24:15-20)

*24:15 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. (ESV)*

Abomination of Desolation (24:15-20)

- The expression “*abomination of desolation*” comes from a series of prophecies in the book of Daniel where this or a similar expression is used:
 - Daniel 8:13 – “*the transgression that makes desolate*”
 - Daniel 9:27 – “*on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate*”
 - Daniel 11:31 – “*And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate*”
 - Daniel 12:11 – “*the abomination that makes desolate is set up*”
- When we looked at each of these passages in their original context in our study of the book of Daniel, I showed that:
 - Daniel 8:13 and 11:31 were fulfilled in an event that occurred under Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C., when he desecrated the temple by stopping the sacrifices and erecting a pagan altar on which swine were offered (1 Maccabees 1:54–61).
 - Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 were fulfilled during the Roman siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.
- It would seem that the earlier event (under Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C.) **foreshadowed** the greater judgment that Jesus was now warning was about to fall upon first-century Jerusalem.

Abomination of Desolation (24:15-20)

- Jesus' intended meaning when using this phrase can be seen by looking at the *parallel* account in Luke 21:20.
- Where **Matthew**, writing to a largely **Jewish** audience, speaks of the "*abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel*" ...
- . **Luke**, writing to a largely **Gentile** audience, explains it as "*Jerusalem surrounded by armies*":

Matthew	Luke
24:15 <i>So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),</i> 24:16 <i>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.</i>	21:20 <i>But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.</i> 21:21 <i>Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...</i>

Abomination of Desolation (24:15-20)

- The Roman army carried banners with images that the Jews considered idols.
- When the Romans brought these banners into the temple area and offered sacrifices to them, they committed the ultimate act of desecration against God's temple – an “*abomination of desolation*”.
- Jesus here is warning his audience that when they see these things, they are to flee Judea immediately (Matt. 24:16–20).
- Eusebius (A.D. 260–339), the early Christian historian records that Jerusalem's Christians, heeding this very warning, fled to the nearby city of Pella (60–70 miles northeast of Jerusalem) before the Jerusalem fell, escaping the catastrophe that claimed over a million Jewish lives.

The Great Tribulation (24:21-22)

24:21 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. (ESV)

The Great Tribulation (24:21-22)

- The “*great tribulation*” described in Matthew 24:21–22 was not a global, end-times catastrophe, but a local, historical event fulfilled during the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.
- We know this to be the case because of the:
 - Explicit timeline given by Jesus in Matthew 24:34, which declares that “*this generation*” would not pass away until all these things occurred.
 - Immediate context which describes local, first-century Judean circumstances, such as fleeing to nearby mountains, flat-roofed houses, and Sabbath travel restrictions (24:16-20).
- Futurists often point to the hyperbolic language used of the “*great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be*” and argue that such strong language **has** to be referring to some horrible tribulation at the end of the world that we’ve never seen.
- In making this argument the futurists overlook the fact that scripture **frequently** uses this kind of hyperbolic language to describe judgments of God that we **know** have occurred in the past.

The Great Tribulation (24:21-22)

- For example, concerning the Egyptian plague of the firstborn we read:
“There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again”. (Exo 11:6)
- Concerning the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem we read:
 - *“And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.”* (Ezekiel 5:9)
 - *“For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.”* (Dan 9:12)
- The point of this kind of language is that the destruction will be severe, excruciating and unique.
- And indeed, the events of the A.D. 70 **were** severe, excruciating and unique!
- In the introduction to his *Wars of the Jews*, Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes this tribulation experienced by the Jews in AD 70 using similar words when he says:
 - *It appears to me that the misfortunes of all men from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to those of the Jews [in the Roman siege of Jerusalem], are not so considerable as they were.*

The Great Tribulation (24:21-22)

- Concerning the statement that “*if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved*” – the word “*saved*” here is probably a reference to ***physical*** deliverance, not spiritual salvation.
- Some commentaries suggest that this may be referring to the temporary lifting of the Roman siege under Cestius Gallus, that allowed the Jewish Christians who heeded Christ’s warning to flee Jerusalem and to escape to Pella.

False Christs and False Prophets (24:23-28)

24:23 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. (ESV)

False Christs and False Prophets (24:23-28)

- In Matthew 24:23-28, Jesus *revisits* and *intensifies* His earlier warnings regarding the rise of false christs and false prophets.
- Driven by a strong desire to survive and intense anxiety during times of severe tribulation, people are highly susceptible to deceptive promises of rescue.
- In their desperation, many Jews firmly expected a Messiah to appear and deliver them from the Roman Empire before Jerusalem could be destroyed.
- The ancient historian Josephus documented that numerous false prophets were used by political tyrants to deceive people, leading thousands into the wilderness with fraudulent signs and promises of divine deliverance.

False Christs and False Prophets (24:23-28)

- Jesus warns His disciples not to believe those who will claim that he has returned and is hiding “*in the wilderness*” or in “*inner rooms*” – because his coming will not be hidden.
- His “*coming*” will be visible for all to see, like lightning that flashes across the sky - you can't miss it.
- In the context, the “*coming*” Jesus is referring to is his coming in judgment through the Roman armies that will surround the city.
- He compares the arrival of these armies to “*lightning [that] comes from the east and shines as far as the west*”.
- It's interesting to notice that the Roman armies would have come from the east in their march on Jerusalem.

False Christs and False Prophets (24:23-28)

- Futurists want to read this passage literally as a description of Christ at his Second Coming, riding across the sky like lightning.
- But there is Old Testament precedent for this kind of language being used figuratively.
- For example, when the Jews first returned home after their Babylonian captivity, they were small in numbers and fearful of being attacked by their neighbors.
- But the Lord assured them through the prophet Zechariah that he would protect them from their enemies, saying:
 - *Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope... I will stir up your sons, O Zion... and wield you like a warrior's sword. Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. The LORD of hosts will protect them.*
(Zec 9:12-15)

False Christs and False Prophets (24:23-28)

- Jesus concludes this warning with a stark proverb:
“*Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather*” (Mt. 24:28).
- This is metaphorical language to describe the judgment that will come against Israel.
- In the Old Testament, leaving dead bodies exposed to birds of prey was a vivid symbol of a divine covenant curse (Dt. 28:26; Hos. 8:1).
- The Roman army served as God's providential instrument of vengeance.
- Appropriately, the Greek word for eagle (aetos) directly mirrors the sacred eagle standards carried at the head of every marching Roman legion, which poured into the city to fiercely devour the fallen nation.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

24:29 "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. (ESV)

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- The cosmic disturbances in Matthew 24:29 (*“the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven”*) are very similar to language we saw in Rev 6:12-13.
- As we saw when we looked at that passage, these kinds of apocalyptic expressions **also** appear elsewhere in the Old Testament where they are used to metaphorically describe the prophetic judgments that God was about to bring on a nation:

Nation	Passage	Cosmic Imagery	Historic Fulfillment
Babylon	Isaiah 13:1-19	sun, moon, stars darkened	conquered by the Medes in 539 BC
Egypt	Ezekiel 32:2-12	sun, moon, stars darkened	conquered by Babylon in 567 B.C
Edom	Isaiah 34:1-4	the skies roll up like a scroll; stars fall	military defeat; depopulation
Judah	Jeremiah 4:11-29	the heavens give no light	conquered by Babylon in 586 B.C.
Judah	Joel 2:1,10	heavens tremble; sun, moon and stars go dark	overrun by locusts and/or invading army

- In the ancient world, heavenly bodies represented governmental rule. Their failure in this case represents the total collapse of Jewish political authority.
- Additionally, this imagery matches the literal war-zone reality of skies blackened by the thick, billowing smoke of Jerusalem's burning ruins.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- Matthew 24:30 reads: *“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”*
- The futurists think this is a clear reference to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world, and indeed, this verse, if taken all by itself, out of context, **could** be taken that way.
- But as we look at the larger **context**, the things talked about in **this verse** are **among** the *“things”* that Jesus says just a few verses later would take place **before** those in his audience passed away (24:34).
- Since that *“generation”* **has** passed away and Jesus did **not** return and the world did **not** end – either Jesus was wrong or this verse must be referring to something else!
- In seeking to understand this verse, it is important to notice that Jesus is actually alluding to a couple of Old Testament passages in this verse.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- One verse he alludes to is Daniel 7:13-14, where the prophet Daniel says: *“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. 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.”*
- Notice the parallels:

Daniel 7:13–14	Matthew 24:30
“One like a son of man”, coming “with the clouds of heaven”	“they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven ”
he came to the Ancient of Days	(Jesus omits this part because His audience already knows the Daniel passage.)
“to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom”	“with power and great glory”.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- Notice in Daniel's vision, the Son of Man does not come *from* heaven to earth; He ascends *to* heaven to receive dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of Days.
- In other words, this is a vision of Christ's ascension and enthronement in heaven following His resurrection, *not* His Second Coming at the end of the world.
- By deliberately quoting Daniel 7, Jesus identifies Himself as the enthroned Messiah who receives universal authority from the Father.
- The destruction of Jerusalem then becomes the public proof that this enthronement has taken place.
- This also explains the expression, "*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man.*"
- Grammatically, the Greek here could also be translated, "*then shall appear a sign that demonstrates that the son of man is in heaven*"
- In the current context, I think that is the best way to understand this phrase.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- So, in other words, it's not saying that the Son of Man ***appears*** in heaven, but that a "***sign***" appears, demonstrating that the Son of Man is now reigning in heaven.
- I believe the "sign" here is best understood as the destruction of Jerusalem itself.
- The city's fall vindicated Jesus' prophetic claims and demonstrated that the One rejected and crucified by Israel had indeed been exalted to God's right hand (Ps. 2:6–12; Ps. 110:1–6; Eph. 1:20–22).
- Matthew 24:30 further states that when this devastating sign of Christ's dominion occurs the "***all the tribes of the earth will mourn***".
- As I have pointed out before, the Greek word for "***earth***" can be translated "***land***" – in which case Jesus would be saying that the "***tribes of the land*** [i.e. the Jews] ***will mourn***" as they come under divine judgment for rejecting their Messiah.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- Matthew 24:31 says, *“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.”*
- Again, the futurists think this is a clear reference to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world, and again, this verse, if taken all by itself, out of context, **could** be taken that way.
- But again, as we look at the larger **context**, the things talked about in **this verse** are **among** the *“things”* that Jesus says just a few verses later would take place **before** those in his audience passed away (24:34).
- I see this verse as describing the worldwide expansion of the gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem, not the gathering of believers at the Second Coming.
- The word translated *“angels”* can also be translated “messengers”, depending on the context (e.g., Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:27; Luke 9:52).
- In this context, I believe it refers to Christian “messengers” (i.e. missionaries and evangelists) who carry the Gospel into *“all the nations”* as commanded in the Great Commission (Mat 28:19).

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

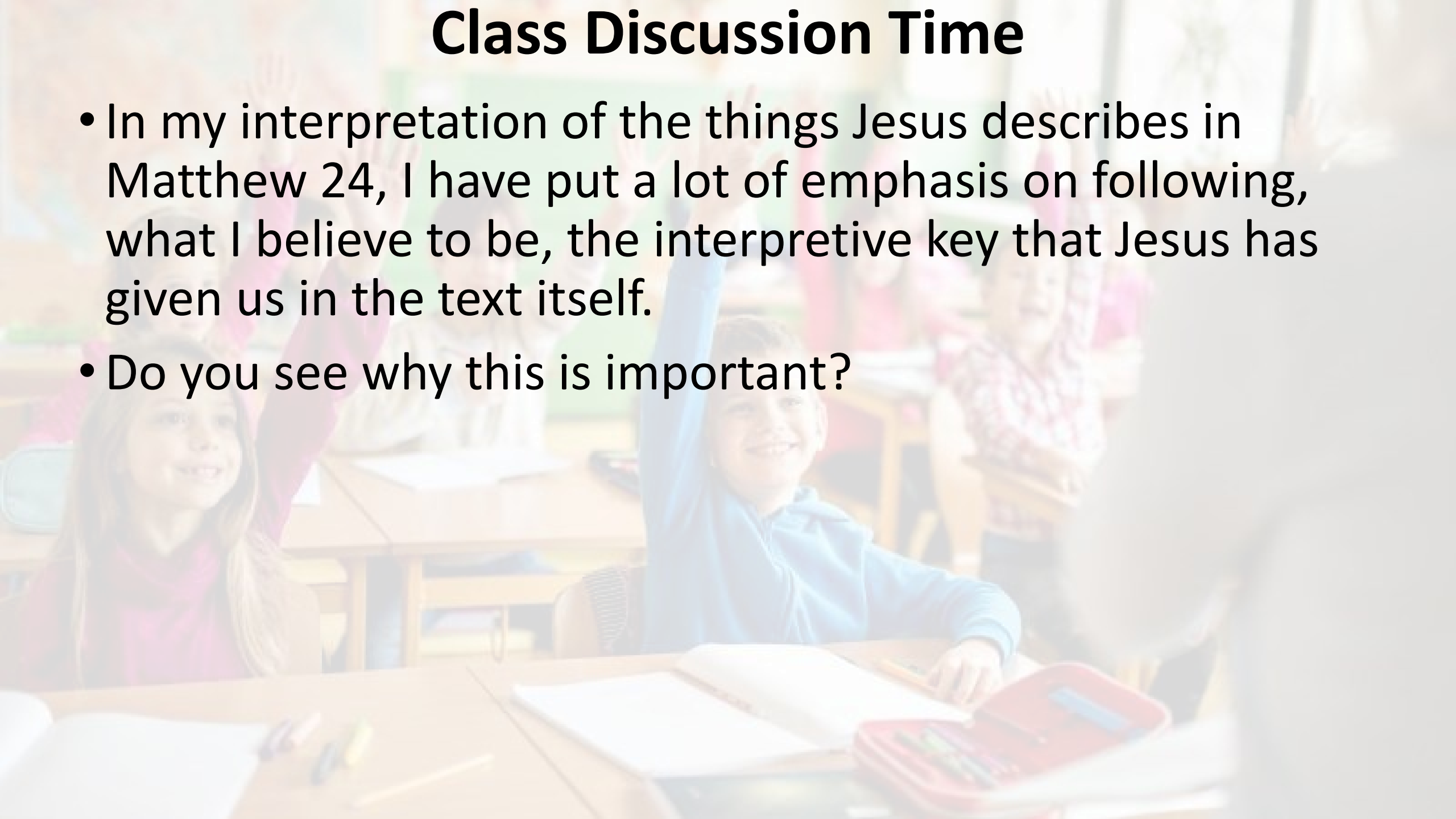
- What about the “*loud trumpet call*”?
- Kenneth Gentry suggests this the key to understanding the trumpet is its Old Testament background.
- He argues that Jesus deliberately draws upon the Jubilee legislation in Leviticus 25.
- Under the Mosaic Law, the Year of Jubilee was announced by the sounding of a trumpet on the Day of Atonement:
 - *Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land.* (Lev. 25:9).
- The Jubilee proclaimed liberty throughout the land.
- Debts were cancelled, slaves were released, lost inheritances were restored, and God's people experienced a fresh beginning.
- Gentry suggests Jesus intentionally adopts this imagery because Christ Himself inaugurates the ultimate Jubilee through His redemptive work.

The Coming of the Son of Man (24:29-33)

- Jesus described his purpose in coming that time he read a quotation from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor... Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* (Luke 4:18-21)
- The *“the year of the Lord's favor”* is a reference to the year of Jubilee.
- So, in saying, *“this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”* Jesus was declaring he was ushering in a perpetual, spiritual Jubilee where humanity's debt of sin is canceled, the spiritually blind can see, and captives to darkness are set permanently free.
- Years later, when the temple order collapsed in A.D. 70, the old covenant system finally gave way to the fully established new covenant.
- At that point Christ's messengers continued going into all the world joyfully trumpeting the gospel of salvific liberation.
- So, in light of all this, I believe the *“loud trumpet call”* in Matthew 24:31 is not the last trumpet being sounded at Jesus' Second Coming, but an announcement of redemption in the post AD 70 new covenant age.

Class Discussion Time

- In my interpretation of the things Jesus describes in Matthew 24, I have put a lot of emphasis on following, what I believe to be, the interpretive key that Jesus has given us in the text itself.
- Do you see why this is important?



Class Discussion Time

- Do you have any questions or doubts about any of the things I covered in today's material?
 - *The abomination of desolation* (Mat 24:15)
 - *The great tribulation* (Mat 24:21)
 - *as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man* (Mat 24:27)
 - *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* (Mat 24:30)
 - *he will send out his angels [=messenger] with a loud trumpet call [=an allusion to the Year of Jubilee].* (Mat 24:31)
- Do my explanations seem reasonable?