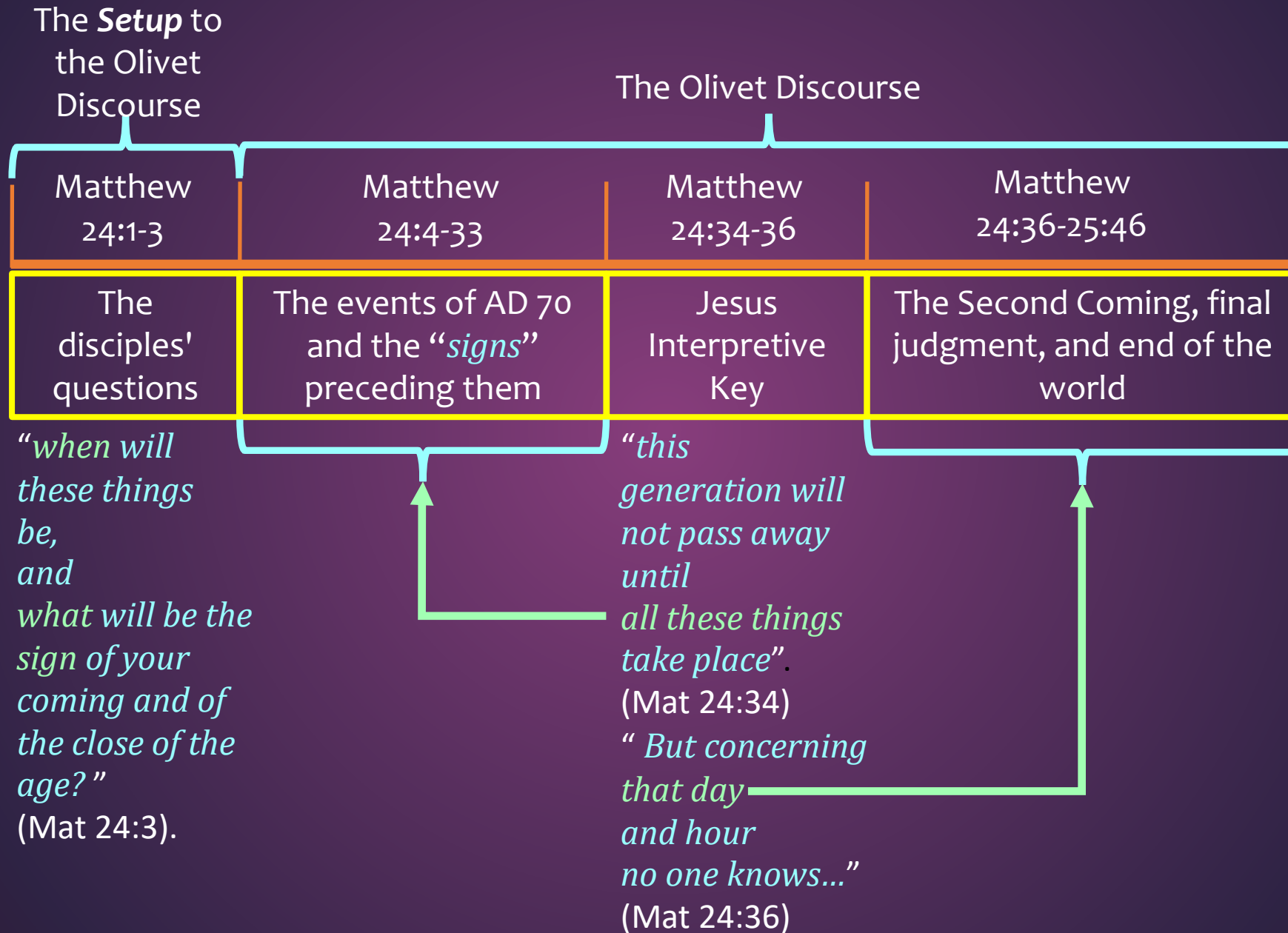




Jesus' Olivet Discourse

"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)

The Structure of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25



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

- **The Beginning of Birth Pains (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.
- **Persecution Predicted (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.
- **Gospel Proclaimed 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*”.
- **Abomination of Desolation (24:15–20)** –
 - Jesus' warning about the “*abomination of desolation*” draws on the prophecies of Daniel, where earlier events under Antiochus Epiphanes foreshadowed the greater judgment that came upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - When we compare Matthew with Luke 21:20 we see that the “*abomination of desolation*” refers to Jerusalem being surrounded by Roman armies, prompting Christians to flee immediately—a warning that, according to Eusebius, they obeyed by escaping to Pella.

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

- **The Great Tribulation (24:21–22)** –

- The “*great tribulation*” does **not** refer to a future worldwide catastrophe just prior to Christ’s return, but to the **horrific destruction** that occurred in Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
- This interpretation fits well with the local Judean setting described in this section and meets the requirement of Jesus' timing statement that it will take place in “*this generation*”.
- The “*days... cut short*” referred to in this section probably refers to God's providential preservation of His people during the Roman siege.

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

- Jesus gives a **second** warning that the crisis surrounding Jerusalem would produce false messiahs and deceptive prophets offering false hope of deliverance.
- Jesus’ “*coming*”, like “*lightning*”, would be visible to all as the Roman armies come from the “*east*” to surround the city.
- The proverb about “*vultures*” gathering around “*the corpse*” is a metaphorical description of God's covenant judgment falling on apostate Israel.

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

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

- The cosmic disturbances (sun and moon darkened, stars falling) are a metaphorical way of describing the collapse of the Jewish political and religious authority using familiar Old Testament judgment imagery.
- “*The sign of the Son of Man*” is the destruction of Jerusalem itself, publicly demonstrating that the rejected and crucified Christ had been enthroned in heaven with power and glory.
- The mourning “*tribes of the land*” occurred as a result of Israel experiencing this covenant judgment.
- The sending of Christ’s “*messengers*” [translated “*angels*” in the ESV] with the Jubilee “*trumpet*” describes, **not** the final trumpet and bodily return of Christ at the end of history, but the worldwide proclamation of the gospel and the gathering of His elect in the New Covenant age.
- From the above summary we can see that, not just some or most, but **all** of the events predicted in Matthew 24:4–33 took place in the period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. and were therefore fulfilled within “*this generation*” as Jesus had promised.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree (24:32-35)

*24:32 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.”³³ So also, when you see **all these things**, you know that he is near, at the very gates.³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until **all these things** take place.³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (ESV)*

The Lesson of the Fig Tree (24:29-33)

- In this section Jesus gives a metaphor to explain the nature of the “*signs*” that has just given us that will precede the final destruction of Jerusalem.
- When you see buds on a fig tree (usually in mid-spring), you know summer is near.
- Likewise, when the members of Jesus’ audience see the “*signs*” that Jesus has just described to them, they will **know** that the time for Jerusalem’s destruction is **near**.
- Furthermore, as Christ’s original audience heard this message, (in AD 30) they could be certain on Christ’s **sworn authority** that the final destruction of Jerusalem and its temple along with the signs that precede it, were going to occur **within** that “*generation*” (40 years), i.e. by A.D 70.

As With Noah's Flood, The Second Coming Will Come Unexpectedly (24:36-44)

24:36 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 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. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (ESV)

As With Noah's Flood, The Second Coming Will Come Unexpectedly (24:36-44)

- Matthew 24:36 marks a *major transition* in Jesus' teaching.
- In Matthew 24:4–35, Jesus described “*signs*” that would *precede* Jerusalem's destruction.
- Beginning with “*that day and hour*” in verse 36, however, Jesus begins describing things related to His Second Coming, End of the World, and Final Judgment—whose timing *cannot* be known in advance – for there *are no signs* that precede it (cf. Acts 1:7).
- Even the Son, during His earthly ministry, did not know the time; only the Father knew.
- The “*days of Noah*” illustrate the *suddenness* of Christ's return (Matt. 24:37–39; Gen. 7:6–24).
- Notice Jesus' emphasis is *not* on the people's *wickedness* but on their *ordinary activities*—eating, drinking, and marrying.
- Life continued business as usual until the flood arrived *unexpectedly* and swept them away.

As With Noah's Flood, The Second Coming Will Come Unexpectedly (24:36-44)

- Likewise, Christ's return will come **without** a warning sign that allows people to anticipate that the time is near (cf. 2 Pet. 3:4).
- The two people in the field and the two women grinding grain picture the final separation of the saved and lost (cf. 13:30; 25:31ff).
- Most likely the person "**taken**" is removed in judgment, just as people were "taken" by the flood in judgment, while the those "**left**" were preserved.
- This also fits with the way that Matthew repeatedly pictures the wicked being removed or cast out (Matt. 7:21–23; 13:41–42, 49–50; 24:51; 25:30, 41, 46).
- The "**thief**" illustration reinforces the unexpected nature of Christ's coming (Matt. 24:43–44; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3).
- So, the point is this: we must **always** remain ready by living as faithful and wise servants since Jesus might return at any time and there will be no advance notice.

The Parable of the Servants Left in Charge (24:45-51)

24:45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (ESV)

The Parable of the Servants Left in Charge (24:45-51)

- This parable teaches that Jesus' disciples must wait for his return as responsible servants who will ***give an account*** of how they have lived.
- Readiness does not mean watching ***passively*** for ***signs***; it means faithfully doing the work Christ has assigned.
- The faithful and wise servant cares for the other members of the household and gives them what they need at the proper time.
- When the master returns, this servant is ***rewarded*** with ***greater*** responsibility, much as in Matthew 25:21, 23.
- The ***wicked*** servant views the master's delay as an opportunity to live selfishly.
- He abuses his fellow servants and associates with drunkards, forgetting that the master may return any time.
- His severe punishment, being placed among the hypocrites—where there will be "***weeping and gnashing of teeth***", shows that merely ***appearing*** to belong to Christ's household does not guarantee salvation.

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13)

25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (ESV)

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13)

- The parable of the ten virgins teaches that we must remain prepared for Christ's return, even if He comes much later than expected.
- The parable reflects weddings of that day in which a bridegroom might participate in ceremonies at the bride's home and then at some later time lead a nighttime procession to the place of the wedding feast.
- The "*bridegroom*" here represents Jesus.
- The Bridegroom's arrival represents Christ's glorious return at his Second Coming.
- The ten virgins represent those who profess to belong to Christ.

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13)

- Outwardly the ten virgins appear remarkably similar: they all expect the Bridegroom, carry lamps, desire to join the celebration, grow drowsy, fall asleep, and awaken at the midnight announcement.
- Notice their sleeping is not condemned.
- The command to “*watch*” in verse 13 does not mean that Christians must ***constantly*** be thinking about Christ’s return and never rest.
- It simply means that they must remain ***spiritually prepared***.
- The difference between the two groups was established before they fell asleep: five had prepared for a possible delay, while five had not.
- The inability of the unwise virgins to borrow oil from the wise virgins illustrates that spiritual readiness cannot be borrowed from another person.
- In the final judgment, no one will be given credit for another person’s faith, character, good works, or relationship with Christ (Psalm 49:7; Proverbs 9:12; Galatians 6:5).

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13)

- The bridegroom's arrival at midnight emphasizes both delay and suddenness.
- The foolish virgins' cries, "*Lord, Lord*," echo Matthew 7:21–23 – They expected to be admitted, but their outward association with the wedding party did not prove that they truly belonged to the Bridegroom.
- "*I do not know you*" is a judicial declaration that they do **not** belong to Christ (Matthew 7:23; 12:50; 2 Timothy 2:19).
- The closed door represents the final and irreversible separation of the saved and the lost (Matthew 8:11–12; 13:30, 48; 22:1–13; Luke 13:25).
- After Christ returns, there will be no opportunity for last-minute preparation or a second chance (2 Corinthians 5:9–10; Hebrews 9:27).
- The central message remains clear: because no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44), Christians must be ready **now** and be prepared to **persevere** for as long as necessary.
- Genuine disciples persevere rather than displaying only temporary enthusiasm (Matthew 13; Mark 4; John 8:30–31; 1 John 2:18–19).
- Faithful waiting consists of: present readiness, lifelong endurance, and long-term service.

Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

25:14 "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

25:24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶ But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (ESV)

Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

- The Parable of the Talents teaches that waiting for Christ means actively serving him, not merely watching for his return.
- The “*master*”, representing Jesus, entrusts each “*servant*” with a vast amount of money according to his ability.
- The “*talents*” talked about in this parable do not refer to natural skills and abilities but to a large sum of money.
- A talent in that day was equal to roughly twenty years of a laborer’s wages.
- Even the servant receiving one talent was therefore given a substantial trust.
- The first two servants immediately put their master’s money to work and doubled it.
- Although they received different amounts, both received exactly the same praise: “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

- God does not judge disciples by comparing them with others, but by whether they faithfully use what he has entrusted to them (Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2; 1 Peter 4:10).
- Their reward includes greater responsibility and sharing their master's joy.
- The third servant did nothing.
- He portrayed his master as harsh and used fear as an excuse, but his failure to earn even interest on the money he was given exposed his laziness, distrust, and unwillingness to serve.
- His sin was not merely doing something wrong but failing to do good (Matthew 25:41–45; James 4:17).
- His judgment—outer darkness with “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*”—shows that he was not a genuine believer (Matthew 7:21–27; 22:13).

Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

- The point of the parable, then, is this, while we are waiting for the Lord's return, we are to be faithful in using the opportunities for service which the Lord has given us.
- Whatever we have belongs to God.
- We are stewards who will give an account for how we made use of everything God has given us. See Matt. 25:14; also Luke 16:2; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2; 6:19, 20; 1 Peter 4:10.
- Those who profess to serve God but neglect to use the resources and opportunities the Lord has entrusted to them in service to him, and who make excuses for not doing so, show that their professed faith is not genuine and they will be condemned in the last judgment.

The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

25:37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?' 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?' 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" (ESV)

The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

- Matthew 25:31–46 brings the Olivet Discourse to its climax with a majestic picture of the final judgment.
- When Jesus returns in glory, accompanied by his angels, he will sit upon his throne as the divine King and Judge (Matt. 25:31; cf. Dan. 7:13–14; Matt. 13:41–43; 16:27; 24:30–31; 28:18).
- All humanity will be gathered before him, and he will separate individuals as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matt. 25:32–33; cf. Matt. 13:47–50; Rev. 20:11–15).
- The right hand represents acceptance and honor; the left represents rejection.

The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

- The sheep are invited to “*inherit the kingdom*” prepared for them “*from the foundation of the world*” (Matt. 25:34).
- The word “*inherit*” is important: they do not earn the kingdom but *receive* what **God** graciously prepared for them.
- Their good works are therefore the *fruit* of salvation, *not* its *cause*.
- They have been saved by grace, but that grace has transformed their attitudes, loyalties, and actions (Eph. 2:8–10).
- Grace and faith are never alone; genuine faith produces a changed life.

The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

- The King commends the sheep for feeding him when hungry, giving him drink when thirsty, welcoming him as a stranger, clothing him, caring for him when sick, and visiting him in prison (Matt. 25:35–36).
- Their surprise—“*When did we see you?*”—shows that they were not consciously performing charitable works to earn eternal life.
- Their service flowed naturally and humbly from their transformed character.
- In contrast, the goats’ failure consists largely of sins of omission: they neglected to do the good that love required (Matt. 25:42–45; cf. Heb. 2:3).
- Their neglect revealed their lack of genuine faith.
- The passage calls believers to watch for Christ’s return, trust entirely in his grace, care faithfully for his people, support those who proclaim his gospel, and remember that even the smallest unnoticed act of Christian love is seen and remembered by the Lord (Matt. 24:42–44; 25:13; 1 Cor. 15:58).

Final Takeaways From the Olivet Discourse

- Matthew 24:4-33 – Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D 70
 - Demonstration that Jesus knows the future with uncanny accuracy
 - Reminder that when those who call themselves God's people rebel against him, he will eventually bring judgment
 - We can be thankful that the last vestiges of the Old Covenant were done away with in A.D. 70, and we now are the beneficiaries of a New Covenant that was inaugurated by Christ's death on the cross.
- Matthew 24:36-25:46 – Second Coming, End of the World, Final Judgment
 - Christ will return without prior warning; therefore, we must remain vigilant, being constantly faithful in our Christian walk
 - Outward association alone with other faithful Christians brings no assurance – we must have our own genuine relationship with the Lord.
 - If our faith is genuine, there will be ***visible evidence*** of it in the way we live our lives – especially in service to God's people

Class Discussion Time

- Now that we have given you a high level view of the Olivet Discourse in one lesson are you able to see how there is a clear division (explained by Christ in the text itself in 24:34-36) between:
 - “*all these things*” - the description given of the events of A.D. 70 and the signs that precede them in 24:4-33
 - “*that day*” – the description given of the Second Coming, end of the world, and final judgment in 24:26-25:46
- Does seeing this clear division help you make sense of this difficult passage?

Class Discussion Time

- I listed a number of final takeaways from the Olivet Discourse as a way of knowing the practical applications that come out of this passage.
- Did any of the takeaways listed (most of which you probably already knew) serve as a needful reminder to you? If so, which one(s) and why?
- Can you think of any takeaways or practical applications of this passage that I might have overlooked in making this list?