

The Six Mountains of Jesus

Part V – The Mountain of Revelation

I. The Mt. of Olives and Matthew's Motif

a. Matthew appears to see the Mt. of Olives as Jesus's chosen place of retreat and base of operations in the days preceding his crucifixion.

b. However, there are two links between Matthew's depiction of events on the Mt. of Olives and the final Mountain of Commissioning.

1. Matthew 26: 30-32:

Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

"I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.'

2. Matthew 24: 3 and Matthew 28:20

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?!'

...and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.]

c. These two passages seem to show that Matthew wanted them to be linked together.

II. The Mount of Olives Setting Pre-Matthew

a. Mark 13 shows a pre-Matthew apocalyptic discourse by Jesus.

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?' Then Jesus began to say to them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, *but the end is still to come.* For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

b. There are primarily three theories about this discourse:

1. Mark constructed it from an apocalyptic document from a Jewish source written when the Emperor Caligula threatened to raise a statue to himself in the temple (40 AD).

2. This was a summary of an original shorter discourse spoken by Jesus at various times during his teaching.

3. Mark assembled apocalyptic material from a number of sources to address his Christian community during the time of Rome's war with Israel, known as "the Jewish war."

c. The Mt. of Olives was regularly associated with apocalyptic events in Judaism.

d. Most interpreters now agree that the apocalyptic discourse in Mark was an interpretation of Jesus's apocalyptic teaching in light of the prophecies of Daniel (from where Jesus's discourse derived many of the images). It was written in the context of the threatened desecration of the temple by Caligula. Mark supplemented this teaching with other apocalyptic sayings of Jesus. The mountain setting in Mark resembles the mountains of revelation encountered in pre-Christian apocalyptic stories, of which there were many. (apocrypha)

2. For both Mark and Matthew, the Mt. of Olives was **a mountain of revelation** for future events common in Jewish apocalyptic literature.

III. The Mount of Olives in Matthew

1. Matthew took over Mark's Mt. of Olives references. The significance of the Mt. of Olives for Matthew lies in the structure of his gospel, *therefore its main connection is not so much with the Mt. of Olives itself, but its connection to the final mountain of commissioning.*

2. The key to this link is the phrase that Matthew shares in both discourses – "the end of the age."

3. Both terms deal with the nature of the time between Jesus's suffering and death and the end of the age - *the "interim period."*

4. Jesus's Olivet Discourses and are addressed to Jesus's disciples, both in the time when Jesus spoke them and in Matthew's time in the church (which is our time as well.)

5. Both passages describe the nature of the Church's existence in the world and its relationship with the Lord between Jesus's crucifixion and second coming.

a. The Church lives in a world that has been placed under the authority of Christ, whose presence with the Church is promised until the end.

b. The task of the Church is to invite all nations to acknowledge Jesus's authority by joining the Kingdom of God and its community of believers in the task of discipleship.

IV. The Nature of the “Interim Period” in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew

1. It is important to discern in Matthew 24-25 the relationship between the “end of the age” and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus mentions them both in his discourse on Mt. Olivet.

Matthew 24: 15-22

‘So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; someone on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; someone in the field must not turn back to get a coat. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath. For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Matthew 24: 29-31

**‘Immediately after the suffering of those days
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from heaven,
and the powers of heaven will be shaken.**

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other

2. For Matthew, the destruction of the temple and the second coming of Christ are chronologically joined together in his discourse on Mt. Olivet.

3. Some commentators (especially those in the past) speculated that Matthew was written either just before or after the fall of the temple in 70 AD, when the return of Christ would have been immediately expected by the Christian community. *There is an historical pattern in connecting catastrophic events with the return of Christ.*

4. **But**, this contrasts sharply with Jesus’s final words to his disciples on the Mountain of Commissioning, and it also conflicts with **Mark’s interpretation of the fall of the temple in Chapter 13:**

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!’ Then Jesus asked him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.’ When he was sitting

on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?’ Then Jesus began to say to them, ‘Beware that no one leads you astray.

5. Interpreters generally agree that one of Mark’s purposes in sharing this teaching from Jesus was to dampen enthusiasm in the Christian community for the destruction of the temple during the events of the *Jewish war in Palestine* so that Jesus would return. **(sound familiar?)**

6. Just like in Mark, Matthew **separates the fall of the temple from Christ’s return** as indicated by the question that the apostles ask him after he speaks of the temple’s destruction in Matthew 24:

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, ‘You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.’

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will this be, / and /what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’

7. In Matthew 24: 15-22 Jesus appears to provide the answer to the apostles’ *first* question:

‘So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; someone on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; someone in the field must not turn back to get a coat. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath. For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

8. **For Matthew, the return of Christ and the end of the age are one future event.** This is reinforced by the fact that Jesus’s words from Matthew 24: 30-31 cannot be identified with a Gentile mission that is already in progress in Matthew’s time. The gathering of the Gentiles will come in the future, when the Church’s mission is complete.

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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. 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.

9. In Matthew 24: 36, Jesus tells his disciples he does not know when the end of the age will take place **(this was from a pre-resurrection perspective):**

‘But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father...

10. For Matthew, what precedes Jesus's return in his pre-resurrection discourse is a period of tribulation between **the fall of the temple and the end of the age** – *an unspecified time for Jesus, because only the Father knows*:

Matthew 24: 9-14

'Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

11. For Matthew, the Church is in an interim period between the resurrection (and for Matthew's church, the fall of the temple) and the return of Christ which will bring about the close of the age. This interim period is characterized by three things:

- a. Tribulation from without the church.
- b. Apostasy from within the church. (false prophets, etc.)
- c. The Church's mission to the world.

12. Matthew urges the Church to be watchful, so that when Christ returns they will be faithfully following his commands:

Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

13. Unlike Mark's apocalyptic discourse, Matthew emphasizes this interim period and the obedience of the Church.

V. Similarities between the Mt. Olivet discourse and the Mountain of Commissioning

1. The mountain setting
2. Jesus with his disciples
3. Teaching about the time leading up to the end of the age
4. The mission of the Gentiles leading up to the end of the age
5. A view of discipleship centered on obedience to the Lord's commands/command

VI. Differences

1. Urgency and tension in the Mt. Olivet teaching vs. calmness and confidence in the post-resurrection teaching on the Mountain of Commissioning

2. Jesus emphasizes his absence from the disciples in Matthew 24-25 as these things unfold, but in Matthew 28 he declares his presence with the disciples until the end of the age.

3. *As Matthew moves from the Olivet teaching to the Commissioning, there is a dramatic change in Jesus's presentation of the interim period before his return at the end of the age.*

1. Both emphasize the ethical imperatives of the interim period for Jesus's disciples.

2. *Because of the realized and abiding presence of the resurrected Lord in Matthew 28, the interim period is seen from a whole new perspective.* Matthew's gospel waits for these events take place (the resurrection of Jesus) before he announces its full significance for the Church.

a. in Matthew 28, Jesus's authority enfolds **BOTH** heaven and earth.

b. The mission of the disciples to share the good news includes **BOTH** Israel and the nations.

c. Matthew basically completes the apocalyptic vision that he began.

e. **Jesus's apocalyptic preaching was pre-resurrection, with the end of the age known only to God. Jesus's post-resurrection declaration in Matthew is that he now has all authority n heaven and in earth – HE WILL DETERMINE THE END OF THE AGE. HUMAN HISTORY IS NOT DETERMINATIVE FOR JESUS'S RETURN. It is not for us to know, but to do.**