

WHAT ON EARTH IS HAPPENING?

What JESUS Said About the End of the Age

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EDITED BY JAMES DENNEY



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What Jesus Said About the End of the Age
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The Long Look Ahead

Matthew 24:1-3

In 1870, a bishop came to an Indiana college campus for a denominational conference. During his visit, the bishop heard the president of the college say something that shocked him. “We live in an age of wonders,” said the head of the college. “I believe the day is not far off when men will fly in the skies like birds.”

“Sir,” the bishop said, “you are speaking blasphemy! The Bible tells us that the gift of flight is reserved strictly for the angels!”

Ironically, that bishop’s name was Milton Wright. Only three decades after he spoke those words, Bishop Wright’s two sons, Wilbur and Orville Wright, made the first successful heavier-than-air flight from a windy hill at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

Before judging Bishop Wright too harshly, we should ask ourselves: Are our powers of prediction any better than his? The fact is, when it comes to forecasting the future, some of the best and brightest minds have had very cloudy “crystal balls.” A few examples:

In 1899, Charles H. Duell, Director of the U. S. Patent Office, assured President McKinley, “Everything that can be invented has already been invented.”

In 1903, the president of the Michigan Savings Bank denied a loan to a young car-building entrepreneur named Henry Ford. The

banker told Ford, “The horse is here to stay, and the automobile is only a novelty—a passing fad.”

In 1921, a *New York Times* editorial ridiculed rocket pioneer Robert Goddard, who predicted that human beings would eventually explore space in rocket-powered vehicles. “Professor Goddard,” said the *Times*, “does not know the relation between action and reaction and the need to have something better than a vacuum against which to react. He seems to lack the basic knowledge ladled out daily in high schools.” In July 1969—less than five decades later—the same newspaper used its largest headline type to announce MEN WALK ON MOON. Inside the paper, the newspaper printed a retraction of the 1921 editorial.

In 1949, *Popular Mechanics* predicted, “Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.” By the end of the century, mass-produced computers, thousands of times more powerful than those envisioned in 1949, could fit in the palm of your hand.

In 1954, the manager of Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry told a young singer, “You ain’t goin’ nowhere, son. You’d best stick to drivin’ trucks.” The singer’s name was Elvis Presley.

In 1962, the Decca Recording Company turned down a mop-haired rock-and-roll quartet, saying, “We don’t like their sound, and besides, guitar music is on the way out.” The band they rejected was The Beatles.

Foretelling the future is a risky undertaking—unless you have the ability to see the future with absolute clarity. Who has that ability? Only God! In Isaiah 46:9-11, He says, “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to ful-

fill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.”

Some people claim to have power to predict the future. But if you closely examine their “predictions,” you find their forecasts either riddled with error or so vague as to be meaningless. But God’s predictions are neither vague nor faulty. Why? Because He has a power that far surpasses that of mere human beings: He not only sees the future, He ordains it and brings events to pass.

Wouldn’t you like to know the future? If it were possible, wouldn’t you like to lift the curtain of tomorrow and read the future as if it were a history book? Well, there truly is a Book of future history. Unlike the mystics and psychics with their fuzzy hit-or-miss “prophecies,” the great Book of future history, the Bible, has a batting average of 1.000. Many of its prophecies have already been fulfilled with astounding precision and reliability. The rest are either being fulfilled right now in our newspaper headlines, or they await an inevitable fulfillment in a certain future.

Most books do well if they are merely “up-to-date.” But the Bible isn’t just up-to-date—it’s ahead of its time!

The Olivet Prophecy:

The Most Detailed Prediction in the Bible

There are many predictive passages in both the Old and New Testaments, but none is clearer or more detailed than the message Jesus delivered from the Mount of Olives. This message was given during the turbulent events of the Lord’s last week before the cross.

Olivet, or the Mount of Olives, is a ridge to the east of Jerusalem overlooking the city. In the Old Testament, Olivet was the place where King David fled to escape the murderous conspir-

acy of his scheming son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15:30), and the place where Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 11:23). It is also the place where the Messiah will stand against the horde of nations that come to attack Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). Olivet is the place Jesus often went for rest and refuge; it was also the site of His ascension (Acts 1:12). The towns of Bethany and Bethphage are located high on the eastern side of Olivet, and the Garden of Gethsemane is situated on its lower western slope.

A *discourse* is a lengthy discussion on a single topic. The topic of the Olivet discourse is a theme that continues to fascinate us today: the ultimate fate of Earth. From that crucial point in time, Jesus looked forward and predicted the destruction of the city of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the social upheaval connected with that event. Then He looked beyond, across the centuries, and outlined the perils of that period between His first and Second Coming—the age in which we live.

Then He looked past the present day to a time called “the end of the age,” and He set the events of that age before us in searing and vivid detail. His prophecy of the end of the age culminates in His own return to earth and the dawn of a new day.

The Olivet discourse of Jesus is found in three parallel accounts: Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. We will use the Matthew account as our primary text of the Olivet discourse, while drawing upon the parallel accounts as necessary. We will also take side trips to the remarkable Old Testament prophecy of Daniel and the New Testament prophecy of the book of Revelation. In fact, the Olivet prophecy of Jesus is the key that unlocks the true meaning of Daniel and Revelation—two prophecies that also describe many of these same “end of the age” events.

As we read this astonishing prophecy of Jesus, we will discover that the future He predicts is nothing more or less than the unfold-

ing of events from trends that are already at work in human society. The future has already begun. Even as you read these words, we are living out the prophecy that the Lord outlined for us on that Judean mountainside shortly before His crucifixion. As we study the Olivet prophecy, we will not only have a deeper understanding of the future, we will have a more complete understanding of the events taking place around us in our own day.

Leaving the Temple

This amazing prophetic message is introduced to us in the opening verses of Matthew 24. These three verses give us the key to the structure of Jesus' prophecy and the outline of future events:

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:1-3)

Isn't it strange that the disciples came to Jesus and pointed out to Him the beauty of the temple buildings? He had often been with the disciples in the temple area, teaching in those same temple courts. So why were they suddenly interested in pointing out the temple buildings to Him?

This incident grows out of the astonishment the disciples felt at the recent actions of the Lord. The chapter opens with the sig-

nificant phrase, “Jesus left the temple.” It is important to realize what a profound statement that is. He didn’t just walk out of a building. He left the temple—and He would never enter the temple again. He left after having pronounced a sentence of judgment upon the temple and the corrupt “worship” conducted there:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:37-39)

This comes at the close of the most blistering sermon Jesus ever delivered. That sermon, addressed to the scribes and the Pharisees, consisted of a series of “woes” pronounced upon the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. They were supposed to be the teachers of the people but were actually hindering them from knowing the truth of God. Having begun His ministry with a series of eight blessings (the Beatitudes, recorded in Matthew 5), Jesus closed His ministry with a series of eight woes.

Nothing arouses more vehement anger in the heart of God than self-righteous religious hypocrisy. Throughout the Scriptures, God’s most scorching terms are reserved for those who profess to know Him but whose behavior betrays and belies their profession of “faith.”

Cleansing the Temple

Many people do not realize that Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem twice. The first cleansing of the temple is recorded in John

2:13-21, where John tells us that Jesus drove the money changers from His Father's house at the beginning of His public ministry. The second cleansing of the temple took place three years later and is recorded in Mark 11:12-19. It cannot be the same event that John mentions, for this cleansing of the temple takes place near the end of His public ministry, shortly before the Crucifixion.

In the case of the second cleansing, Jesus went to Jerusalem during His final week on earth and began to drive out all of those who bought and sold in the temple area. In this account, Mark records a significant action of Jesus that is often overlooked. Note the words I have inserted in brackets in this passage from Mark 11:

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry [a vessel] through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" (Mark 11:15-17)

Most of us are aware of the fact that Jesus shut down the commercial activities in the temple area. Merchants made a profit by selling sacrificial animals there; money changers profited by exchanging Roman coins (with the offensive image of Caesar on them) for temple currency. The merchants and money changers reaped huge profits from this business, and Jesus stormed in and swept the whole mess out.

But He also did something else, something extremely significant though often overlooked. Mark says that Jesus "would not allow anyone to carry [a vessel] through the temple courts." I have inserted the phrase "a vessel" in that statement because that is what the text literally

says. The New International Version uses the term *merchandise*, which is not what the original Greek text says. The NIV is a sound translation, but the usage of the word *merchandise* here is not the best choice. Mark is not talking about the merchandise of the traders and money changers at this point. The King James Version accurately states that Jesus would not allow anyone to “carry any vessel through the temple.” The word “vessel” refers to a *utensil of worship*. Mark is telling us that Jesus not only shut down the *commerce* of the temple but He also shut down the *religious rituals* of the temple.

Why is this significant? In the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Numbers, God instituted rituals for the temple at Jerusalem. These rituals required the priests to carry many things through the temple area. They had to bring animals into the temple, bind them upon the altar, and slay them. They carried the blood from these sacrifices in basins into the holy place to sprinkle on the altar of incense. Then they had to take the burned carcasses of the sacrifices out again. So there was a continual procession of priests through the temple area all day long, carrying out the system of rituals God Himself had given to the nation of Israel.

But on this day, when Jesus came into the temple He stopped all of the religious rituals in their tracks. He brought to a close—for the first time since the days of the Maccabees in 164 BC—the offerings of Israel. Why? Because Jesus refused to acknowledge the temple worship as having meaning or value any longer. Though the Jewish priests, money changers, and traders went right back to their former activity as soon as Jesus left, and though these practices would continue for forty more years until the Romans destroyed the temple, God no longer accepted those sacrifices.

When Jesus went to the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, He declared all other sacrifices to be null and void. The Old Testament rituals and sacrifices were mere sym-

bols and shadows pointing to the reality of the true “Lamb of God”—and Jesus Himself was that Reality.

Having stopped the sacrifices, the Lord stood in quiet dignity the next day and pronounced the official sentence of rejection:

“Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:38-39)

Having said this, Jesus left the temple, and the disciples went with Him. Silently, they walked down through the valley of Kidron and up the other side to the Mount of Olives. There Jesus sat down on one of the rocks that overlooked the city and the temple area. The disciples were troubled and confused. They could not understand His actions and words concerning the temple. The temple was the focal point of the nation’s life. They regarded it with holy awe as the very dwelling place of God among His people. Its beauty was famous throughout the earth and they could not believe that God would allow any harm to come to it. So they pointed out to Jesus the strength and beauty of the temple. To this, Jesus responded with even more distressing words:

“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” (Matthew 24:2)

The disciples were dumbfounded. They could not believe this would ever happen. True, the nation was in bondage under Rome, and the people of Israel had no final authority in their own land. But the Romans had been in power in Palestine for many years and had not harmed the temple. They were lovers of temples, and they generally preserved the temples and monuments in the lands they conquered. There seemed no reason why this temple should ever be destroyed. Yet Jesus solemnly assured His disciples that there would

not be one stone of the temple left standing upon another. It would be razed to the ground.

The Test of a Prophet

What was Jesus doing when He predicted the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem? It is easy to miss the significance of His prophecy. The fact is that He is *presenting His credentials as a prophet*. The law of Moses requires that whenever a prophet claims to foretell the future, the prophet must give a sign by which his prophecy can be tested. In Deuteronomy 18, in the midst of a prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah, Moses said:

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

Many Bible scholars agree that this prophecy was a foreview of the coming of Jesus Christ. He was that prophet, raised up by God among the people of Israel. He would be like Moses and would speak words that the nation should hear. Moses went on to say:

“But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.”

You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?” If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That

prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

When this admonition was carried out in Israel, it became customary for the prophets to give the people a prediction of something that would occur in the near future. When it came to pass as foretold, the people would know that this was a true and authenticated prophet. But if the sign did not occur as predicted, the prophecy in its entirety was to be rejected as not from God, and the prophet was exposed as false.

So Jesus predicted the downfall of the temple in the near future (about forty years hence) as a sign that all else He included in His discourse was true. This is what lay behind the request of the disciples for a sign associated with His coming.

The parallel account in Luke 21:20 provides additional details of the predicted overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple. In that account Jesus says, “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.” Forty years later, the Roman armies commanded by a general named Titus surrounded the city and fulfilled the prediction to the letter. Along with Titus was a Jewish historian named Josephus, who recorded the terrible story in exacting detail. It was one of the most ghastly sieges in the history of warfare. When the Romans came, the city was divided among three warring factions of Jews who fought each other so bitterly that they were unaware of the approaching Roman army until it was too late. The forces of Titus gave the Jews every opportunity to surrender and save their capital from destruction, but the Jewish people refused to give up.

The long siege inflicted a terrible famine on the city. The bodies of the dead citizens of Jerusalem were stacked like cordwood in the streets. Mothers ate their own dead children to preserve themselves.

The toll of Jewish suffering was horrible but they would not surrender.

When the walls were breached at last, Titus tried to preserve the temple by giving orders to his soldiers not to destroy or burn it. But the anger of the soldiers against the Jews was so intense that they disobeyed the order of their general and set fire to the temple. The gold and silver that was stored in the temple melted and ran down between the rocks and into the cracks of the temple stones. The Roman soldiers took long bars and pried the massive stones apart. In the end—just as Jesus had predicted—there was literally not one stone left standing upon another. The temple itself was totally destroyed, though a portion of a wall around the temple area was left partially intact. This lone portion, called the Western Wall, still stands in Jerusalem today.

This prophecy, so remarkably and exactly fulfilled and confirmed by secular history, is convincing proof that God will fulfill every other part of His plan for the outline of history. As Jesus Himself said when He sat upon the Mount of Olives, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Now that we have demonstrated the certainty and reliability of the Lord’s Olivet prophecy, let’s take a look at the structure of the Olivet discourse as Jesus outlines it for us in these opening verses.

Three Tough Questions

In Matthew 24:3, the disciples ask one question that is actually three questions. They say, “Tell us when will this [the destruction of the temple] happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” The three questions embedded in this sentence are:

- (1) When will the temple be destroyed?
- (2) What will be the sign of your coming?
- (3) What will be the sign of the end of the age?

The Lord's answer to the first question, as we have already seen, is recorded in Luke 21:20. The temple would be destroyed after these disciples saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies. A number of these disciples were, in fact, still living when the Roman general Titus fulfilled that prediction.

The second and third questions are perfectly natural in view of the instruction of Moses to demand a sign from those who claim to prophesy in God's name. There is a major difference between what the disciples had in mind when they asked these questions and what we think of when we read them. The disciples asked out of confusion. There were many things they could not see, or would not believe, and so their questions were difficult to answer.

They were like the little boy who asked his father: "Daddy, why does the sun shine in the daytime when we don't need it, and not at night when we do?" That kind of question is difficult to answer not because the answer is so hard but because the question is so wrong.

To a significant degree, we can understand much better than they what their questions meant, for we have the history of twenty centuries to look back upon. We also understand the importance of Christ's death and resurrection—an idea they were not ready to accept. They could not understand all that Jesus said to them. Though He had repeatedly predicted His own death and resurrection, they couldn't conceive of such a thing. Since they would not allow themselves to face the terrible specter of His death, they could not have any clear idea of what He meant when He said He was coming again.

So what did the disciples mean when they asked Him about His coming? They did not picture a second advent. They did not envision Jesus coming from heaven to earth. What they had in mind when they asked about His coming was a *political revolution*, which would lead to Jesus being crowned King and Messiah of Israel.

In this passage, the disciples use an interesting word for “coming.” It is the Greek word *parousia*. This word appears four times in Matthew 24—in verses 3, 27, 37, and 39. It is not the usual word for “coming.” This word means more than the mere arrival of a person. It also implies that the person will have a *continuing presence* after his arrival. This is important to understand, because the meaning of the entire Olivet discourse turns on the definition of this word *parousia*, or “coming.” There are other places in this passage where the English word *coming* is used, but it is not the same Greek word; hence, it conveys a distinctly different meaning.

Even after the Resurrection, the disciples continued to ask Jesus questions that reflected a political concept of His coming. In Acts 1:6 they asked, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” They were still expecting Jesus to reign in a political sense over the nations of the earth. He did not deny that this would eventually occur, but He reminded them that the times and seasons are the Father’s prerogative to determine.

So when they asked Him on the Mount of Olives, “What will be the sign of your coming?” they were not asking about His return to earth—the Second Coming of Christ. They were asking about His coming into His political and messianic kingship over the nation of Israel.

Like the boy who asked why the sun didn’t shine at night when it was needed, these disciples had asked a question that was fundamentally wrong in its assumptions. Yet Jesus treated that question as if it were a legitimate inquiry about His second advent.

The Close of the Age

The disciples also asked for a second sign concerning the close of the age. They do not ask, as the King James Version translates, about “the end of the world.” Their question has nothing to do with the end of the world. The world will go on for a long time after the events of the Olivet discourse are fulfilled. What will end is not the world itself but the age in which we live. In this matter they seemed to have a clearer understanding than they did of the Lord’s “coming” or *parousia*. Even so, they clearly believed that the “end of the age” lay immediately ahead, not centuries away.

It should not surprise us that the disciples misunderstood the nature of Jesus’ message. They had heard Jesus teaching the parables of the kingdom (see Matthew 13) and had heard Him speak of the close of the age when He would send His angels throughout the earth to gather men to judgment. They also knew the Old Testament predictions of how the promised Messiah would reign over the earth. They surely knew of Daniel’s remarkable prophecy (see Daniel 9) that there would be a period of 490 years (seventy weeks of years, or 490 years) from the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity until the time of Messiah the Prince. From that prophecy, they may well have known that the 490 years were almost completed. Little wonder that they expected the close of the age to be imminent.

What they did not understand and could not be expected to see was that there would be a wide chasm of time between the hour in which they asked their question and the close of the age in the distant future. We cannot blame them for failing to understand this, because it is difficult to distinguish between the two comings of Jesus in the Old Testament prophecies. It is rather like looking at the evening sky and seeing the moon and the planet Venus side by side. They may appear to be side by side, yet the moon is about

240,000 miles away while the planet Venus is at least 25 million miles beyond the moon. Those two objects are literally worlds apart. So it is with the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah.

Peter wrote that the prophets foresaw “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:11). But to those ancient prophets, it seemed as if the sufferings and the glories were all part of one great event. What looked to them to be one great mountain range of fulfillment was actually two widely separated ranges with a great valley of time in between.

For instance, Isaiah 9:6 records the well-known prediction of a coming child: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” That is a prophecy of our Lord’s first advent as a baby in Bethlehem. But the rest of the verse says, “And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” So the latter part of the verse clearly refers to His reign in the days of a kingdom that will eventually cover the earth. The first half of this verse was fulfilled 2,000 years ago. The second half will not be fulfilled until the Lord returns to earth again. Yet these two events were brought together into a single verse with no hint of any intervening time.

The Sign of the End of the Age

Next, the Lord takes their questions and answers them in reverse order. They asked about the sign of His presence and the sign of the end of the age. He answers the last question first. The sign of the close of the age is found in Matthew 24:15—“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel . . .” We shall examine that sign later in this book.

Jesus gives the sign of His coming in Matthew 24:30. “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.” This, too, we shall closely examine later in this book. But for now it is important to understand that, throughout the Olivet discourse, Jesus takes pains to make clear to His disciples that the end of the age is an event that takes place in the distant future.

In this great prediction, Jesus illustrates two important principles of prophetic fulfillment: First, God’s prophecy is fulfilled according to His timetable, not ours. We cannot know when the fulfillment of a prophecy will take place. Jesus warned in Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”

Second, God’s prophecy is often subject to what we might call “double fulfillment.” In other words, a single prophecy may be fulfilled in two different ways at two different times. For example, Jesus predicted the encirclement and destruction of Jerusalem by hostile armies, and his prophecy was fulfilled just forty years later. But that historic fulfillment was also a preview of another day in the distant future when Jerusalem would again be surrounded by armies and face a time of destruction on a never-before-imagined scale. That second destruction will come at the close of the age in which we now live.

Notice that Jesus spoke to His disciples as though they would live to see all the events He predicted. Obviously, therefore, He was speaking to them as representatives of Israel and of the Christian church. Some of the disciples did in fact live to see the destruction of Jerusalem as Jesus foretold it—but none of them would live to see the end of the age; none would pass through the Great Tribulation.

The disciples were uniquely representative men, because they were both Jewish and Christian. They were men of Israel and men

of the church. They represented the nation of Israel and God's dealings with that remarkable people. But after the cross and Pentecost they were Christians, part of the church, so they also belonged to the unique body, the Christian church, that would fulfill God's purpose throughout the intervening centuries before the end times. So the message Jesus spoke on Mount Olivet includes truth for the church in its relationship to the present age, and also truth for Israel in its time of trouble at the end of the age.

As Jesus sat on that mountainside, facing the darkest hour of His life, He knew about the scheming of His enemies, the betrayal that Judas planned, the frailty and unreliability of His friends, and more. The very disciples who clustered around Him, to whom He entrusted this message, would forsake and deny Him within a few short hours. He saw the darkness of those next few hours, but He looked beyond those moments of suffering to the light and glory that lay beyond. Though everything around Him seemed utterly hopeless, He quietly and resolutely declared what the end would be, without a hint of uncertainty or doubt.

All things, He said, find their significance and meaning in relationship to Him. Any event not related to His purpose in the age is without meaning or significance. As we listen to His declaration of the outline of human history, we face the inevitable question: How does my life relate to these great events? Am I contributing to the anarchy and horror of the last days, or am I part of the eternal program of God, a program that is bringing human history to its appointed climax? When the Son of God returns to establish His kingdom on the earth, will I rejoice to see Him? Or will I despair, knowing that I am about to be judged for my sin and rebellion against Him?

We do not live our lives in an isolated segment of time. All the events of human history are interwoven into a great plan that is bringing the Olivet prophecy to pass. We are either working in con-

cert with God's eternal plan—or we will be swept away by it. What part are you playing in the great events that Jesus prophesied from the Olivet mountainside?

These are the questions that confront us in the Olivet discourse. These are the questions that, as we move through the coming pages, you must answer for yourself. 9