

How to listen to the Olivet Discourse

Luke 21:8

March 3, 2024

Well, as we return to our study of the Olivet Discourse, I invite you back to Luke 21, Luke 21. And today we will begin by reading Jesus' answer to his disciples' questions about the destruction of the temple. There are questions about the coming desolation of Jerusalem and its temple and how all that relates to the end; and the end that they had in mind, as Jews of the first century. They had certain expectations. They had certain narrative script in their mind, about how it's all going to unfold, how it's all going to roll out, and Jesus is interrupting their regularly scheduled program, in their minds, to give them something else to consider.

Let's read the section, Luke 21 starting in verse 5, and I'm going to read a significant chunk of this. "While some were talking about the temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and dedicated gifts, He said, 'As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which

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there will not be left one stone upon another, which will not be torn down.'

"And so they questioned Him, saying, 'Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?' And he said, 'See to it that you are not deceived; for many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and, "The time is at hand." Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end *does not follow* immediately.'

Then, "Then He continued saying to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.'

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“It will result in an opportunity for your testimony. So set in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your perseverance you will gain your lives.’

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the countryside must not enter into the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.’

“Woe to those who are pregnant to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be lead captive into all the nations, and

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Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.'

“‘And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish among nations, and perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the POWERS OF THE HEAVENS will be shaken. And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing nearer.’”

That is an incredible answer to a couple of simple questions, isn't it? The disciples asked two simple questions, and they got that. When will the temple be destroyed? What's going to be the sign to warn us? And then Jesus explains everything. Everything starting right then; where they are right then, extending 20 centuries into the future and still counting.

As we could hear, in reading this, and speaking about the destruction of the temple, Jesus started out speaking more

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broadly. He speaks about false messiahs, wars, disturbances, and then, in verse 9, he stops himself and says, "the end doesn't follow immediately." As he continues in verse 10, there is a break and then he continues in verse 10 and he's back to speaking about worldwide trouble, international conflict, seismic events, causes of human suffering, like plague, pestilence, famine. Again, he stops himself in verse 12 to tell the disciples what they can expect leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, which he says very plainly, in verses 20 to 24.

Then in verse 25, he picks up again, where he left off in verse 11, talking about signs of the end, those signs that precede his return. As we think about his answer, it really is impossible for us to imagine what must have been in his mind. He's provided this overview of the future history of the world and, think about, when we think about all that he could have said and we, we, try to imagine, I mean, we can see all that he left out. And yet, we see when he's encapsulated all of this future history of the world, all of this, what he's encapsulated in his answer, what he has encompassed; we marvel, don't we, at the concision and the brevity and the simplicity of his answer.

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It is stunning. I realize, as we enter into Jesus' answer, and as we teach on the subject of eschatology, I realize that I'm speaking to basically two kinds of people. There are two kinds of people listening, and I'm, I'm, going to describe two broad types of people, and I'm going to do so, rather intentionally, for illustration's sake, in terms of the extremes. Okay.

I realize that the extremes probably don't describe you. Probably. Maybe. You're probably somewhere safely nestled in the middle of everything that I'm talking about, and you can look to your left and look to your right and say, well, I'm not that. But there's a reason that I'm stopping and having this conversation with you. At one extreme are those who hear the word eschatology, and that is the last thing that they hear, because they check out mentally. They're like, okay, that is so unfamiliar to me and it is so intimidating; and it's not just the subject of eschatology, it's the word self.

I mean some are intimidated by the subject, some are intimidated by the words that are used: amillennial, post. What is going on here? I don't blah, blah, blah, and they just say, 'that's not

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helping me in my devotional life, me and my coffee and my Bible. And so doesn't help me with my issues. I'm checking out. This is irrelevant to me and I'm indifferent to it.'

By the way, eschatology, don't be scared of that word anymore, okay? It's just, it's the word, *eschaton*. Greek word for, last or last things. *Eeschaton*, and then, *ology*, whenever we say, *ology*, it's the study of something, right? So, it's the study of last things. It's the study of the *eschaton*. Okay. If you ever have a sense of intimidation in your mind about eschatology, come back to this sermon, come to about what, four minutes in, and play this portion. Okay?

So now you understand that word. But there are some who are intimidated by the subject, and I understand that. I really do understand that. At the other extreme are those who have studied the subject of eschatology, or at least they've read or listened to others, who've studied the subject of eschatology. And whatever conclusions that they've come to, in their exposure, have become calcified, and they've erected barriers that prevent them from giving any other view of eschatology any kind of a

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fair hearing, or considering the text in its contexts. Whenever an eschatology passage comes up, they just filter it through what they've already predetermined, 'that that's how I'm going to hear it.'

In the middle of those two, I Admittedly, those are two extremes, I would say most Christians exist between the middle of those two extremes, but they tend toward one or the other. I'd say most Christians, including you, are those who love God's word, who are really eager to receive whatever the man of God, for the hour, preaches from the pulpit. They're willing to put some effort into listening, trying to understand, try not to be distracted, making sure their heart is tuned in and their brains turn on. And they're, they're, ready to write, if they're note takers; so they're ready to listen carefully and maybe go over it again. They're eager to receive God's blessing and the blessing of hearing, understanding, and then obeying God's word. I think that's most of you. And I rejoice that those who love and want to obey the word of God, I count you brothers and sisters. That's where my heart is, too.



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By God's grace, I also realize, especially when we're tackling the Olivet Discourse and learning its eschatology, that for one reason or another, not everyone is on board. And so, today is going to be a little bit of a different kind of a sermon, one in which I'm overt and direct in calling every single one of us to join the study, to engage the brain, to, to, listen and to learn with a humble heart, and to understand and then obey what is written.

I want to address first those who may be confused by the subject and intimidated and may be a bit indifferent to it. And then I'll address those who think they're not confused at all, but believe they've got this subject pretty well nailed down, thank you very much. And wherever you are at one extreme or the other, or nestled safely snugly in the middle, my desire is that we learn humbly together. That we move through the Olivet Discourse, not checking out, not saying, 'this is eschatology. It's coming somewhere in the sweet by and by, phft, but I live in the, you know, the, the, the very difficult, here, now, now.'

I want you to understand how this applies. I want you to understand why it's so significant. And I don't want to teach over the top of your predetermined conclusions. I don't want to teach over the top of your indifference. I want to expose it, call it to account, and I want to demolish all that. Okay? So I'm just calling my shot right here at the very beginning, so you know where I'm coming from. And I'm saying this because I love you. No matter how I may sound, may sound today to you, no matter how imperfectly I come across, I want you to hear what I'm saying, as an appeal to you, to your conscience, as a Christian, and I want you to hear it conveyed in a loving, caring, shepherding tone.

I'm urging you, whoever you are, and however you may come to the text, I want you to hear and listen to Jesus as a humble believer and join us in learning. My first comment is aimed at you, who may be intimidated by the subject, and I want you to know I get it. I really do. And especially as I've been diving through all the study and work and effort it takes to kind of mine all the things out of Luke 21 and I've had to go into Mark 13, and Matthew 24, and parallels, in the synoptic accounts. It is dizzying. It is. There's a lot there. And I want you to know

that if you're intimidated, I get it. And, and, by the way, if you like to take notes and you're looking for an outline point, let me give you one. Just to make you a little bit comfortable.

Here's a, here's a first point, if you like to take notes, number one: Take heart, have courage, and learn. Take heart, have courage, and learn. And I say that to you, who may be intimidated by the subject. Take heart, have courage, and learn. Trying to get our arms around the doctrine of last things is an intimidating endeavor, because the subject is so, so vast. It does cover the entire scope of Scripture. It covers predictive prophecy. It, it, it. There's figures, and metaphors, and also, literal things too. And how do you tell them apart?

Getting back into the text, in its context, in all the different passages of the Old Testament and the New, and then, the future stuff in Revelation; it's just a huge, huge subject. And anyone who does not admit to being intimidated, at least a little bit by eschatology is either lying in pride or else completely ignorant of exactly what is demanded, to come to a right interpretation of these kind of things.

Bernard Ram is an author of a an older, but very reliable textbook on hermeneutics called *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. He said this about the challenge of interpreting prophecy. Quote, "The prophetic material of Scripture is to be found from Genesis to Revelation. To assemble each passage, to thoroughly digest its meaning, to arrange the passages in a prophetic harmony would involve a prodigious memory, years of exacting work, a masterful knowledge of biblical languages, an exhaustive reading of prophetic literature, a keen exegetical sense, a thorough knowledge of the histories of many people, and a knowledge of all relevant archaeological materials." End Quote.

I'm intimidated. I get to get up before you every single week and have something intelligent to say. And I look at all that and I'm like, yeah, he's got me dead to rights. Ram has described the task accurately. He's also described the inadequacies shared by me, along with every other interpreter; mine, yours, and I'll very quickly add, inadequacies of the interpreters that I have read on the subject. Mistakes in the books that I've read on the subject. You say, 'Travis, well, if

you've identified all those mistakes, why don't you write the book? Phft. It's going to be filled with different mistakes.' So, when I say, I understand your sense of intimidation, I really mean that I do understand your sense of intimidation.

Having said that, though, try to follow my train of thought, for a moment, and see if you can be encouraged to take up the challenge of engaging mentally, spiritually with your heart and soul, into this study of Luke 21. There's a doctrine in bibliology called, The Perspicuity of Scripture. Again, I'm giving you another term that I don't want your eyes to glaze over. Perspicuity is a, is a, it's a beautiful word. Okay? Look it up. Go do your study. Perspicuity, just simply, simply, means clarity. It's the articulateness of Scripture. It's perspicuous. It is clear. The Bible is clear. It means God's word is clear. That's what, it's, that doctrine is trying to say.

Now we have to say, that not all Scripture is equally easy to interpret. Some things just fall off the page. We know what it means and we can run away with its, I mean that's where your devotional stuff comes from. You know, when you pick up a

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devotional book or a, you know, something that takes you through the month, and devotional thoughts or whatever, it's just picking up things that are lying on the ground. And there's other things, though, require more time. They require more work. It's not the Bible, though, that is unclear. It's us who are unclear.

Some sections require more careful observation than others. But the problem is never with the Bible. We're the problem. We lack crucial information. We lack exposure to things of the past, things of the present, even. We don't understand culture. We don't understand its history. We don't understand why the Prophet said what he said. We've got to admit that. We're, we're, very far removed from the centuries before us: The cultures, the languages. We can also be added to that. We can be very dull in reasoning. We get tired, mentally tired, just trying to study and added to that, is the slowness of heart to believe, like Jesus would say to his disciples, "Oh you who are slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said." We're in that category, too. Let's make no mistake about that.

When we go to Luke 21:7, some might have hoped that Jesus had provided, maybe, some simpler answers to the disciples' questions. That he would accommodate our desire for ease. That he wouldn't make it so difficult for us, that someone wanted him to put the eschatological cookies, so to speak, on the bottom shelf, so, so to speak, to allow us to reach them more easily. So imagine for a moment, will you, and that when answering the disciples' first question, "When will these things be?" Suppose he said, 27 years from now, after Jerusalem has been under siege from the Romans for about four years. Period. That's it. That's what you get to that answer. You see what we would have been robbed of; all the rest of things he said.

Well, what about the second question? "What'll be the sign when these things are about to take place?" Suppose he said, well, when you see the Roman armies taking up positions and surrounding the city, time to get out of Dodge. Period. That's it. Suppose he was that brief and that straightforward in answering their particular questions, satisfying their particular curiosities about that immediate moment. You see what we'd be missing; if it was that simple. Questions answered. Case closed.

Moving on to Luke 22, Jesus could have answered like that, but he did not. Why not? Why not? When we observe his answers, we see written on the page the information that he gave. What we see is his shepherding concern. What we see is a, is the Good Shepherd over his flock. Not just that flock, but the flock coming in centuries. Jesus had more to say, to help the future church across the centuries, down to our very day. It's also true that the church has found plenty to disagree about, plenty to debate about, in wrestling with the right interpretation of Jesus' teaching.

The commitment to humble study, does accomplish the goal of his teaching, because no matter what your eschatological perspective, every orthodox believer will have his heart oriented toward the Lord's soon return, because it is a point of orthodoxy to, to, affirm and confess and believe in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not believe in the second coming, you're not a Christian. It is a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. So the believer who studies eschatology, no matter what the eschatological viewpoint he holds, he will, she will always be encouraged in the study of eschatology,



always even admonished, to turn away from living for this world and stay alert and stay alive, in living in light of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Again, consider Jesus listening to the disciples ask these questions, as he sits on Mount Olivet. As he looks across the Kidron Valley and sees the temple, he sees the future of Israel with a wide lens. Not a narrow lens, funneled through the disciples' concerns, but a wide lens. He sees the future in prophetic perspective. And so, considering what the disciples had asked, just considering the language that they use, as to the sign when these things are about to take place, his perfect mind breaks that sentence down into its constituent parts, and he pays close attention to every word, and every word unpacks a vista of information. What's the sign of these things? Okay, these things. What's incorporated into that?

The, 'these things', the disciples have in mind, narrowly, however narrowly, or broadly they were thinking, he's thinking about how to answer that. What are they conceiving in their minds? How do I help them avoid misconceptions? What is the

sign? Okay, what indeed is the sign? Or what are the signs plural. After all, Luke knows Theophilus, who is the, the, one who he's writing to, in Luke 1, it says that. He knows that Theophilus, along with other readers of his Gospel, Gentile readers, they're going to have access to Matthew, the earliest Gospel. They're going to have access to Mark's Gospel, as well.

And the questions in Matthew, that are asked in this, in this, Olivet Discourse, are these, "What will be the sign of your coming?" And "What'll be the sign of the end of the age?" So multiple signs? Which sign to talk about? How to fill in their understanding? Another concern: What about all the false signs that will come, many of which will lead many astray? What about the false signs, that'll deceive people? What about the things that they'll see, just living life of a fallen world, and they'll misinterpret that as a sign of Jesus coming? Which sign, then? About which things, that are about to take place, in the context of the future? A world in which many things are going to be changing?

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I mean, the population of the world has increased over the centuries to where we're at now. Billions on the earth. Obviously, billions of sinners living in close proximity to each other, and then, nations of sinners, living next to each other, are going to come into greater and greater conflict, as the centuries roll forward. Many apparent signs are not going to be signs at all. Many are going to come with the intent to deceive. And so, it's vital for Christians to stay alert, exercise discernment. Interesting, isn't it, that he says, very first word in answering their questions, "See to it that you're not deceived."

We can't fully grasp the mind of the Lord and how these simple questions, from these simple disciples, landed on his ears. How his perfect mind saw the future. But in his perfect knowledge, in his shepherding wisdom, he's provided these perfect answers for us. In verses 8 and 9, notice how the commands that accompany the explanation about the future are these: "See to it that you're not deceived." Don't follow deceivers. And then in verse 9, "Don't be terrified."

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Simple Christian, you who may be intimidated or attempted to be intimidated by the subject, you may hope that deceivers won't lead you astray, but that kind of a hope is a false hope, and it is not a strategy for living your life. The Lord promises deceivers are coming. Deceivers are out there. They're coming for you. It's kind of like terrorism. You may try to deny its existence. And you may say, I have no fight with those terrorists. I have no fight with those people across the ocean and on other parts of the world. Oh, but they have a fight with you, and they're going to bring it to you. It's the same thing with deceivers. These things are going to come, and our Lord tells us to watch out. He commands us to discernment. He commands us to avoid deception.

So, if you can't find motivation to learn eschatology for your own sake, just for your souls' goodness, consider learning for the sake of helping other people. Consider learning so you can protect those whom you love, your children, your grandchildren. For many deceivers, 2 John 7, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world." As Jesus predicts future persecution for his disciples, verses 12 and following, he assures them that all will be well, that everything is under his control, that this is

planned, even. Verse 14, "Settle in your heart not to engage in prior preparation." Don't, don't try to prepare now to make a defense later for standing before governing authorities. Why not? Because verse 15, I got it under hand. I'll help you. I'm going to give you wisdom. You're going to be all right. You're going to answer perfectly.

What does that say to you? What does that teach you about your Lord, your savior? What does that teach you about your king? Dangerous days are coming. Treacherous days, verse 16, where people are going to betray; I mean, even your loved ones are going to betray you. That's heartbreaking. Once again, though, Jesus assures them, verse 18, I've got you. I'll take care of you.

I think that's part of the design in God's great sovereign plan of redemption, that one of his disciples, one of the close disciples in the twelve, Judas, would betray our Lord. He understands perfectly what it's like to be betrayed by those he loves. And so, when it happens to you, he says, trust me, persevere to the end and the result, verse 19, "You'll gain your

life." You're going to gain your, and the word there is, *psyche*, soul. You will gain or preserve your soul, just endure.

And so again, simple Christian, you who tempted to be intimidated by this subject, fight the impulse of cowardice or laziness; whatever it's in you, that would rob you of learning whatever you can about your Lord. There is so much to learn about him. For these disciples, these particular disciples, a time is coming, he says, when you need to flee. A time of Israel's judgement, verses 23 to 24, you'll need to flee, yes, versus 20 to 22. There's a time of Israel's judgement coming, verses 23 to 24. But verses 25 to 28, judgement is going to visit the nations, as well.

All those who stomp over Jerusalem and stomp over Israel and the Gentiles, stomping under, keeping Israel under their feet; that's, that's, going to, judgements going to come to them too. And he's going to, it's going to culminate at his return. That's when Israel, repentant Israel, can stand up straight. Verse 20, ah, verse 28 says, that's when Israel can lift up their heads,

because redemption is, their full redemption is drawing near. Therefore, Jesus says in verse 33, just trust my words.

Trust my words, because they're more reliable than heaven above you. They are firmer than the ground beneath your feet. Trust my words, because my words are true and trustworthy. How then should you live? Look at verse 34. "Be on your guard." Trust my words. And that means, "be on your guard so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation, and drunkenness, and the worries of life, and," that, "that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth."

"All those who inhabit the face of the earth," they're going to be living like all the rest of the Gentiles live, just carried, carried off, and all the distractions, and all the regular rhythms of life. Just doing life. Just doing all the stuff. No, no. Don't be caught up in surprise, verse 36, "Keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have the strength to escape all these things," that you're about to, "that are

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about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." In the believing heart, you know this, beloved.

Your faith can wax strong and you can feel like you can conquer anything in the Lord. Your faith can also grow weak through fear, through intimidation, through cowardice, through laziness. We all feel those impulses, every single one of us. And Jesus tells us here at the end, watch yourself. Be on your guard. In no part of his word, in no part of the Bible, do we find any permission to check out mentally, about any section of Scripture. There's no place, no call for us to be excused from some part of the Bible, from some part of its teaching, to ignore any of its truth, to treat any of it as irrelevant. So fight against any impulse within you that says, this isn't for me. Okay?

God has given all Scripture, not just most of it, not just the parts that, kind of, speak to your heart. He's given all Scripture for our good and it is profitable, all of it "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." That includes predictive prophecy too, which, by



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the way, makes up nearly 30% of the Bible. Eschatology; yes, it can be hard to grasp. It can be complex. It is complex. It's challenging to collate all the different data and to understand it. Just be willing to do the work. It will yield riches beyond your imagination. It will thrill your soul. It'll give you a different vision of life, and the future, and everything.

Give yourself to work. There is some gold, that takes a little bit of effort to find, just a little. You can pan for gold in a gently flowing stream, sun shining on you, breeze blowing, and get some specks and flecks and things like that. You can gather it into a little jar and put it on your mantle or maybe sell it for 60 bucks. But to find rich veins of purest gold, you have to be willing to venture deep, and go into dark places and work hard in mining it, and dig it out, and bring it to the surface, so that you can benefit from its treasure. So be willing to put forth a little more effort than you may be used to putting forth, and trust God to reward your effort by teaching you something, to encourage your heart, and strengthen you, so that you may be strong enough to stand before the Son of Man.

Now, having said that, let me speak to the opposite extreme. Those who for, for, whatever reason failed to appreciate Mr. Rams caution, that eschatology is a challenging subject, and you don't have it down as clearly as you think you do. So, second, here's a number two point, if you like to write down notes: Take caution, have humility, and learn. Take caution, have humility, and learn. The perceptive note taker will realize that for both groups of people, the last word in my little point in the outline is the word, learn. Right?

Let's learn together, beloved. No matter what your eschatological perspective; and among us, in our church, are various views; amillennial, post millennial, believers are among us. So, members in a predominantly premillennial church with premillennial elders and those of you who do not understand those words, don't worry, you will understand amillennial, premillennial, post millennial, you'll understand those things. We'll, we'll, get to all that. Let me just briefly say this though, the word, millennial, millennial simply refers to a period of 1000 years. Okay?

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We've just, we just crossed through the millennial celebrations in two, I just, I say just, it is 2024, is this what it's like when you get older, you start to see the time just blinks by. So, I feel like we just came across the Millennium and we're all concerned about the millennial virus, you know, taking away all our computers. I'm still preparing; I don't know. Millennial simply refers to a period of 1000 years. And the reason that's significant in the Bible is that, because it's a reference to the reign of Jesus Christ as King, and the millennial debate has to do with the nature of his reign; whether it's an invisible spiritual reality or also has a visible physical component to it, as well. And the elders teach the latter, not the former.

But no matter what eschatology you hold to, as we get into Jesus' answer, especially in view of his shepherding concerns and shepherding care, I want you to be most attentive to humility. And not just with regard to how you view yourself, and view your knowledge, and view your certainty, and your positions, but even more highly, in regard to your humility about how you think about your brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a predominantly premillennial church. I arrived here and I knew that. But I also realized, like many premillennial

churches, where premillennialism has enjoyed the decades of predominance in the culture, that many premillennial believers have no idea what premillennialism teaches. They don't really. They just understand, maybe, some general points, that they've never really been tested in their positions. They've never really had to defend it.

They've never really had to consider challenges, to reconsider their position, to think about the strength of it. Just think about their foundation. They just never have. I don't say that to despise anybody. I understand that. I grew up in a premillennial church too. And I realized very quickly, as I started to study and become more astute to different things that are there. I, I, said whoa, what? There's, there's, a lot here. There's a lot here that I didn't know. We've got to be willing to learn. And so, so, those who are, and I'll say this, that the premillennial position these days is starting to lose its hold on the evangelical mind. Other positions, amillennialism and post millennialism are taking, taking, more prominence, having more of a voice and that intimidates some premillennial believers.

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So, if you're in the other camps, other than what the elders teach, I understand how you, how you got there and I, I'm going to speak to some of that in a second. But I just want you to be very humble and careful with how you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ. And I will say this too, premillennial believers, you be very careful in how you treat your amillennial and post millennial brothers and sisters in Christ, too. We need to move together, as a church, no matter what eschatology you hold to, be attentive to humility.

Let me say this first, that the elders, though we are teaching a premillennial position and we do embrace and welcome amillennial, post millennial, believers into membership at Grace Church, we're so grateful to have you, that the elders, in exercising oversight, I want you all to understand that we exercise oversight with a very high regard for the conscience. We don't want to ever burden the conscience of believers except with what the Lord actually says and teaches. And we don't want to coerce the conscience, which means we acknowledge that there are individual differences. There are different kinds of discipleship that people have had as they've learned and they've come into the church.

There's an individual freedom, as each Christian needs to mature in his or her understanding of the Scripture. The elders want to protect that, and highly regard that, and never encroach upon that; apart from what the Scripture commands us to, beyond the doctrines that bear directly on salvation; so, such as, the authority of Scripture or the exclusivity of Christ in his gospel, salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and other cardinal doctrines like that. And the second coming of Jesus Christ, by the way, which is a cardinal doctrine. We want to honor, setting those things aside, we want to honor the freedom of the conscience, to learn, and to grow, and to mature, in knowledge and understanding. We all need to do that, every single one of us.

So, as long as members of our church walk together in love and humility, we're good to go. We're good to go. The elders are very happy with that, pursuing the same goal of loving God and loving one another, walking in humility with one another and pursuing the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That's what we get to do together, and we rejoice in that. Just want to encourage that.

Secondly, the elders recognize that, really, it's due to the sorry state of much, eve, eve, evangelical theology in the past. And I would just say there has been good theology in continuity going back through the past, but it's not really been at the popular level. A lot of really good thinking and theology never makes it into widespread publication or widespread broadcast. And that's a whole another section of a sermon, that I'm not going to preach today, about the Christian publishing and conferencing and, and, marketing ministries or ministry. Marketing ministry. No, take that back. It's not a marketing ministry. It's a marketing endeavor to make a lot of money. So, I just, that's another sermon. You could tell that I would love to preach it, but I'm not going to right now.

But listen, in the past 50 plus years, confusion is very common in a weak evangelical theological time. And this confusion, that's common, widespread is rife in eschatology, which no wonder because it's a difficult subject. Some of you who have read a bit on this subject, I know you're, I'm not going to get any protests from you, if you hold a different position. I understand.

I, in fact, for some of you, weak evangelical theology may be the very reason that you migrated away from a premillennial view, point of view, to embrace amillennialism or post millennialism. And I get that. For many decades in American Evangelicalism, Arminianism, and premillennial theology was predominant. Many have seen the two viewpoints conjoined and they see the one as necessarily connected to the other. The one is flowing from the other. And so those among us who have been, red pillled, to use an expression, they leave Arminianism and embrace Reform Theology, and they end up embracing amillennial or post millennial eschatology, as well. That seems to them to be the logically consistent thing to do, and I understand how that happens.

I appreciate the author Matt Wehmeyer, who made this observation, which I've also observed in my ministry, and I love the way he articulates this. He writes this, in the opening to his book. He says, "Some Christians are quick to embrace amillennialism." He's just pointing out that one because of his subject of his book. But he says, "Some," question, "Christians are quick to embrace amillennialism simply because they see it



as the Reformed position on the end times. This appears to be the most to be most common among former Armenians. After an initial exposure to Reformed theology, they spend the next several years diligently studying the Bible's teaching on predestination before finally identifying themselves as Calvinists. But their subsequent conversion to amillennialism takes place overnight and sometimes with very little first hand study of the biblical text, simply because they see it as an indispensable part of the Reformed system. In contrast, the commitment to sola Scripture at the heart of Reformed theology should drive us to a careful exegesis of the relevant biblical passages in search of what God has revealed about the end times. Only then is the student of Scripture ready to take a firm position on this difficult issue." End Quote.

So while I do sympathize, I really do, I also caution you, that not all that glitters is gold. Some things that glitter may seem like gold, but they are iron disulfide, pyrite, also known as fool's gold. It takes a trained eye, an experienced investigation, to know what to look for, to know what you're looking at, and to know how to bring all that data together and collate it and then interpret it. It does take time, and deep

study, and understanding. For example, it is a basic hermeneutical error to let one verse, such as Luke 21:32, interpret an entire passage, to interpret an entire discourse.

In Luke 21:32, Jesus says, "truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place." Some say that that verse means that everything Jesus said in this whole Olivet Discourse, but with the exception of the second coming; if they're orthodox, they'll separate that out. But everything that Jesus said is fulfilled within the lifespan of the disciples, that is, at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Some will even say, that yes, his coming is encapsulated into that, but not the second coming. Okay?

So he came in judgement with the Romans and judged the city and that's what is meant by the, 'coming,' here, not the second coming; others say, 'Well, not everything Jesus said.' But there are interpreters that can't agree about what is fulfilled, what's unfulfilled, what 'all things' means. There's divergent of opinion. And not only are there many views on the meaning of 'this generation' and I want you to know, I'm not agnostic about

that either. I have to interpret that verse, too. And I have a view, but it is an error to make one verse the interpretive key that unlocks the meaning of an entire discourse. That is just basic hermeneutics.

And yet, it's violated all the time, and I would say violated not just in amill or post mill, but in premill circles too. Another way people make mistakes, is when it comes to parallel accounts in the synoptic gospels. So, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the synoptic Gospels. Synoptic means, with the same eye, with the same views. So they all kind of look at the story of Jesus Christ, the narrative of Jesus Christ, kind of, from the same perspective, telling it in chronological order. That's what synoptic means.

But throughout our study of Luke's Gospel, you've been hearing me cite parallels in other gospels, making comparisons, making contrasts. Not everybody does that well. And I don't profess that I am an expert in it, and I just try to do my best and try to deal with the data. But not everybody does that well. And many commit critical errors in synoptic studies, and

particularly this error: Highlighting the similarities between the accounts and totally failing to point out the differences. That is vital.

It is vital to see the differences, as well, and I can understand, when untrained layman make those kinds of mistakes. But these are errors that have been published in commentaries, published in books on eschatology. They've been repeatedly rehearsed and spread through popular preaching, and popular teaching, and podcasts, and blogs. It's out there. And there are reasons for this, these synoptic errors. It comes from the history of Protestant interpretation and the so-called dealing with the, the, so-called synoptic problem. It's due to the pernicious, widespread, pervasive influence of liberal German higher criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, all that stuff. All this is just trying to get the reader to look beyond the text, through the text, under the text, to see what, where the text is derived from.

They don't accept that it's breathed out by God. So they say, they say, 'well, how do we develop this?' And they have an

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evolutionary mindset, that's, that believes in simple to complex. And they apply that evolutionary mindset, simple to complex, to the text of Scripture. We'll probably start out here with a little story that then was expanded into a myth. And then these different writers picked up on the myth, and it was kind of propagated, and it perpetuated through writing. And then, and then, the Christian community grabbed that myth, and then and on and on it goes. And then they say, and we ended up with Mark; Matthew, Mark and Luke.

All of that stuff about synoptic issues, German higher criticism, Weilhausen, Griesbach, all their, all these different German authors; all that is missed, by sincere Bible students who go to online and buy commentaries, who go and shop for books on Amazon, and listen to preachers, and follow podcasts. I just, there's far too much you can tell, far too much to explain in any detail, at this point.

But let me point you to just one example in Luke 21 and parallel language in Matthew and Mark, and I'm not going to unpack it all right now. I don't want to fire that shot. I'll

wait till we get there. But I just want to point it out to you, so you can write down the verses. Write down the sections, and then you can do your own reading and, and, and, I want you to do the exercise of noting the similarities and noting the differences in these parallel, seemingly parallel accounts.

Just read and take note, of not just the similarities, but the differences too, and you're gonna see that. Here's the verses, Matthew 24:15 to 22. I'll say it again. Matthew 24:15 to 22, and then Mark 13:14 to 20. Those two passages are true parallels. Matthew 24:15 to 22 and Mark 13:14 to 20 are true parallels. Luke 21:20 to 24, has very similar language to those other two texts, but it is not a true parallel. Are there similarities between the three accounts? Absolutely there are similarities. There are reasons for that too. But it's the differences that distinguish Matthew and Mark from what Luke records.

I'll just give you that as a little assignment to do and you got plenty of time because you know me, I'm not going to be able to do Luke 21:20 to 24 for years, Matthew 24:15 to 22, Mark 13:14 to 20. Jesus refers there to, refers the reader there to

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Daniel's abomination of desolation occurs at the midpoint of the great tribulation, but then Luke 21:20 to 24, Jesus is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. It is an error to read Matthew 24 and Mark 13 through the lens of what Jesus says in Luke 21:20 to 24. It's just one example.

Now, dear Church, why am I taking this time to say all this and not make any, any, significant progress in the text? Why would I? Why would I do that to you? It's because I love you all very much and I want to see all of us, as a church, walking together, learning together, moving forward together. We used to say, back in my military days, you're only as fast as your slowest man. As far as it depends on me, I intend to leave no man behind, no woman either for that matter. I want us to make progress together. Move together as a church.

What Jesus says, in the text, actually justifies this time I've taken to try to get us all on board, because he begins his answer in verse 8 by saying, "See to it that you're not deceived." Deception can come in many forms. False Christs, people pointing to signs and chasing the end times, and date

setting, and reading newspapers, and interpreting the Bible through the newspaper headlines.

Another way to be deceived is to just simply ignore your duty to study the text for yourself. Another way to be deceived is to think you've, all, got it all down, and just refuse to accept any other position, any other contrary evidence. Lots of ways to be deceived. And so, I want to tell you, at the very starting point here, this is an application of what he says in verse 8A. "See to it that you're not deceived."

Now with the time remaining, I don't have any time remaining. You know what? I've got five minutes and I've got lots of notes. You know what I'm going to do to you? I'm going to read my conclusion and close in prayer. You're welcome. I got another whole point here and, and, we'll just have to punt it to next week. But I'll just leave you with this extended quotation. What I want to close with from a beloved pastor, good commentator, J.C. Ryle. And he reflects on that opening line, I just mentioned in verse 8. "See to it that you'd be not this misled.



See to it says you're not deceived, lead astray, because this comment really does unpack and really encapsulate my concern for all of us; is what he said. "Our Lord's reply to [the disciples'] question," what's, "was long and full, and it began with this caution: "Watch out that you are not deceived (verse 8).

"The position which this caution occupies is very remarkable. It stands at the beginning of a prophecy of great length and universal importance to all Christians. This prophecy reaches from the day that it was delivered, to the day of the second coming; and reveals matters of the most tremendous interest, both to Jews and Gentiles; and it has much in it which is yet to be fulfilled. And it begins with this cautionary word about not being deceived: "Watch out that you are not deceived."

"The necessity of this caution has been continually proved in the history of Christ church. Perhaps on no subject have divines." He's talking about commentators, pastors, theologians. "Perhaps on no subject have divines made so many mistakes as in the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy. On no subject have they shown so completely the weakness of human intellect and

confirmed so thoroughly the words of St. Paul, "Now we see but a poor reflection. ... Now I know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

"Dogmatism and obstinacy in maintaining untenable positions, rash assertions and speculations have too often brought discredit on the whole subject of prophetic Scriptures, and have caused Christianity's enemies to blaspheme. There are many books on prophetic interpretation, on the titles," title, "pages of which might justly be written: 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?'

"Let us learn from our Lord's words of warning to pray for a humble, teachable, spirit whenever we open the pages of unfulfilled prophecy. Here, if anywhere, we need the heart of a little child as we pray, 'Open my eyes that I may see.' (Psalm 119:18).

"Let us beware, on the one hand, of lazy indifference which turns away from all prophetic Scripture because of its difficulties; and let us beware, on the other hand, of that dogmatic, arrogant spirit which makes people forget that they

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are students and causes them to," to, "talk as confidently as if they were prophets themselves. Above all, let us read prophetic Scripture with a thorough conviction that the study carries with it a blessing that more light may be expected on it every year. The promise remains in full force: 'Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy.' (Revelation, 1:3; See Daniel 12:9)." End Quote. Amen and Amen.

My hope, beloved, is that you will join wholeheartedly. Throw yourself into the study of the Olivet Discourse, no matter where you're coming from; What end of the spectrum. Comfortably in the middle, no matter what view you hold. Let's learn humbly together. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the, the, word that you've given us this morning. We thank you for the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that his answer to the disciples' questions were not as brief, as some may have hoped, but that he actually did look down the quarters of time to see the things that would be beneficial for us today. We thank you for the glory of the grace of the gospel. We thank you for the glory of your

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redemptive plan. We thank you for the fact that you are sovereign over all things and your providence is unfolding even as we speak.

We thank you that we rest in your hands, belonging to you on the right side of history, because of your grace and because of Christ's finished work on the cross. We thank you that he rules and reigns even now. He sits at your right hand. We thank you that he intercedes for us. We thank you the Holy Spirit is praying for us, as well. We thank you that the Triune God is for us, who can be against us. Please help us to have courage, confidence, and humility, to study and to learn, well. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.