

Does The Olivet Discourse Talk About The Rapture?

In Matthew 24 the disciples of Jesus asked Him a question about His return and the end of the age:

Matthew 24:3: “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

Jesus then gave a lengthy response. He began by telling His disciples to let no one deceive them:

Matthew 24:4: “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.”

It's not the purpose of this paper to analyze this entire chapter. Instead I want to focus on these verses, which many people claim are talking about the rapture:

Matthew 24:29-31: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one

end of heaven to the other.”

As you can see, this passage clearly says that these events happen “after the tribulation of those days”. This isn't talking about the return of Jesus at the rapture! Instead it's talking about the return of Jesus after the seven-year tribulation. The tribulation Jesus is referring to is something He described as the worst period in all of human history:

Matthew 24:21: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

The way we can know for sure that Jesus wasn't talking about the rapture is because of the apostle Paul. When Paul taught the Corinthian church about the rapture in his first letter to them, he told them that it was the very first time the doctrine of the rapture had ever been taught by anyone:

1 Corinthians 15:51-54: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

The word “mystery” in this passage has a very specific meaning. It refers to a teaching that had never been revealed before. The doctrine of the rapture was hidden until the apostle Paul taught it to the Corinthian church. That was the first time

anyone had taught that Jesus would come and remove His church from this world before the seven-year tribulation began. When the apostle Paul taught it (first to the Corinthians, and later to the Thessalonian church), it was an *entirely new concept*.

Since Paul was the first one to teach it, that means Jesus couldn't have been talking about the pre-tribulation rapture in Matthew 24! Instead He was talking about events that happen *after* the tribulation (which He made clear).

That means this famous verse isn't talking about the rapture:

Matthew 24:36: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

The day and hour that no one knows (not even Jesus) is the day He will return at the end of the seven-year tribulation. Although He will surely return at the end of that period, no one today knows when that day is going to be.

Likewise, these verses aren't talking about the rapture either:

Matthew 24:37-39: “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

The “coming of the Son of man” that Jesus is referring to is His coming at the end of the seven-year tribulation. Although the world *should* be expecting it (because He warned them in advance that it would happen), they won't be. His return will catch them completely by surprise.

These verses also aren't talking about the rapture:

Matthew 24:40-41: Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

Before the tribulation, Jesus Himself will come and gather the righteous and remove them from this world. *After* the tribulation, Jesus will return and send His angels to gather the wicked and cast them in to Hell:

Matthew 13:40-42: “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

That's what He was referring to in the Olivet discourse – not the gathering of the church, but the gathering of the wicked.

None of the things that Jesus taught in the four gospels are about the rapture. He never spoke of it. The apostle Paul was the very first person to reveal that doctrine.

That means the parable of the 10 virgins isn't talking about the church (which makes sense, because the church is the bride of Christ and it's impossible for the bride to miss her own wedding). It also means the parable of the sheep and the goats isn't talking about the rapture either but is instead talking about the judgment of the wicked when Jesus returns after the tribulation.

In conclusion, there are passages in the New Testament that speak of the rapture, but none of them can be found in the four gospels. Those who apply verses from the four gospels to the rapture are making a mistake.