

Luke 21:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

Analysis

And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? The disciples ask two questions: *pote tauta estai* (πότε ταῦτα ἔσται, 'when will these things be?') and *ti to sēmeion hotan mellē tauta ginesthai* (τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα γίνεσθαι, 'what the sign when these things are about to happen?'). They want chronology and warning indicators. This reflects natural human desire to know the future and prepare for catastrophe.

The questions reveal confusion about eschatological timelines. The disciples likely conflated the temple's destruction with Christ's second coming and history's end—understandable since the temple's fall seemed apocalyptic. Jesus' answer (vv. 8-36) addresses both near-term events (Jerusalem's destruction within that generation, v. 32) and distant-future events (His return, vv. 25-28). Distinguishing these remains exegetically challenging. The passage teaches both imminent judgment and ultimate eschatological fulfillment—a **pattern of near and far prophetic horizons** common in Scripture.

Historical Context

The disciples addressed Jesus as *Didaskale* (Διδάσκαλε, 'Teacher/Master'), showing respect for His prophetic authority. Their questions reflect apocalyptic expectations common in Second Temple Judaism. Jews anticipated divine

intervention, Messiah's coming, enemy judgment, and kingdom establishment. The disciples assumed these things would occur together. Jesus' prophecy about the temple's destruction fit their apocalyptic framework, so they sought details. They didn't understand that His kingdom would come in stages—first through His death and resurrection, then through the church age, finally in His glorious return. Understanding this progressive fulfillment is crucial for interpreting the Olivet Discourse correctly.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why do humans naturally want detailed timelines and signs for future events, and what does this reveal about our need for control?
2. How does conflating near-term and distant-future prophecies lead to misinterpretation of eschatological passages?
3. What does Jesus' method of answering questions about the future teach about how much detail God chooses to reveal about coming events?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-------|----------|-----------|---------|--------------------|-------|
| Ἐπηρώτησαν | δὲ | αὐτὸν | λέγοντες | Διδάσκαλε | πότε | οὐν | |
| they asked | And | him | saying | Master | when | but | |
| G1905 | G1161 | G846 | G3004 | G1320 | G4219 | G3767 | |
| ταῦτα | ἔσται | καὶ | τί | τὸ | σημεῖον | ὅταν | μέλλῃ |
| these things | be | and | what | G3588 | sign | will there be when | shall |
| G5023 | G2071 | G2532 | G5101 | | G4592 | G3752 | G3195 |
| ταῦτα | γίνεσθαι | | | | | | |
| these things | come to pass | | | | | | |
| G5023 | G1096 | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Mark 13:14 (Parallel theme): But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

Matthew 24:3 (Parallel theme): 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?

Luke 21:32 (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Daniel 12:8 (Parallel theme): And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?

Daniel 12:6 (Parallel theme): And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

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