

The Bible and the Future, January 8, 2017

Class #5 Signs of Opposition and Judgment Before the Great Return,

I. General References to Tribulations Matt. 5:10-12 John 15:20 John 16:33 2 Tim. 3:12

The Bible says in many ways that struggle and difficulty will always be the lot of Christians.

2 Thess. 1:6-8 Matt. 10:34 Colossians 1:24 1 Peter 2:21-25 Romans 8:37-39

Unique teaching in the Olivet Discourse: Matthew 24 (parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21)

In some portions of this long sermon Jesus is clearly referring to events which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The *'Preterist'* view says these are historically past events. But not everything here seems to be confined to already past events. Some sayings are seamlessly intermingled which best refer to yet future happenings close to the Lord's final return! You have to be willing to see this Olivet Discourse as a mixture of two lines of prophecy. The text does not easily yield to a neat "one age or the other" interpretation. Jesus seems to say what you see happening in the present time will intensify and accelerate. Yet you will not be able to take out your stop watch or calendar to know precisely when I will return—so do not try to. The whole point is to be watching and vigilant. I will come when you do not expect me!

Note the discourse roughly divides into these four blocks:

- 1) vss. 4-14 the present age...
- 2) Vss. 15-28 70 AD & fall of Jerusalem...
- 3) vss. 29-31 the Second Coming event...
- 4) vss. 32-44 Stay awake! Watch!

II. Is there indication of **one Great Tribulation of unparalleled Ferocity before the End?**

Most reasoning for this comes from people of the Premillennial/Dispensational persuasion. They mostly theorize the Church of believers being removed from the earth via a secret rapture and the world going through tremendous upheaval in the absence of God's elect. This whole line of reasoning is not persuasive to many of us (see next week's lesson...)

Matthew 24: 15-22, a seemingly prime passage, best applies to the ruin of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

CONCLUSIONS: While there are some definite suggestions of trouble and persecutions at least intensifying before Jesus' appearing, no one should presume that we can accurately measure this time of chaos and pain to know exactly when it will have reached its peak. We should always be able to declare at any hour, "Jesus could come TODAY," without thinking we must wait to see some as yet unseen event to occur!

III. Apostasy: the denial of the faith by some who at first apparently had firmly avowed it. These people are not actually 'losing' salvation because you cannot lose what you never truly had! But they go from some form of nominal profession to denial and blasphemy.

Matt. 24: 10-12 24:24 1 Tim. 4:1 Heb. 3:12; 6:6 2 Tim. 3:1

Consider how all the possibilities of Apostasy presents a great WARNING to all branches of the Church of Christ! Consider how denominational or institutional pride can make us decide these matters only apply to 'other' Christians...

Despite many warnings along this line, consider the safety of God's true children:

Jude 24! 2 Peter 1:10

IV. The Antichrist: Here also, we have strong warnings, yet great caution must be exercised against unbiblical curiosity, so that that we will not end up playing the evangelical game of "pin the tail on the Antichrist!" Reformers like Luther and Calvin were united in pointing to the Church of Rome or the Pope. This sentiment endured right into the 19th century for many. Others have named individuals like Nero Caesar or Adolf Hitler. A case can be made for radical Islam!

Passages: Matthew 24:23-25

Where the word 'Antichrist is actually used: 1 John 4:2-3 1 John 2:22 2 John 7 1 John 2:18

How is the last of these four unique from the first three?

Does the Bible teach there will be one individual figure who is 'THE' Antichrist? Again, the evidence is mixed, but 2 Thess. 2:3-8 is the strongest passage in this light

Some CONCLUSIONS: