

ESCHATOLOGY

FALL ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL SERIES

POSTMILLENNIALISM

Doesn't this view contradict our Lord's own words?

1. Luke 13:23-25 “Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, 24 “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, “Lord, Lord, open for us,” and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,.’”

–This question is provoked by the small beginnings of the kingdom.

Comparatively few in Israel are following Jesus.

–The prophets speak about the nations streaming to Zion (e.g., Isaiah 2:1-4).

So, Where are the nations?”

–Jesus responds by calling the people to give earnest heed to their own salvation and not worry about how many or how few others there will be.

–Nothing is said here about the number of the saved.

2. Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

–This must be understood in light of the first century response of unbelieving Israel. Many are going in the way of destruction but only few are finding the way of life.

–Are there only a “few” of the Jews who are being saved? The answer is “yes.”

–The Kingdom of God was not received by those to whom it was first revealed. So its beginnings are exceedingly small (like a mustard seed).

–But in saying this Jesus is not speaking about the whole history of the church. Both the question and Jesus’ answer are about the time of His own ministry and the reaction of the Jews of the first century.

3. Matthew 22:14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

- This is the closing statement of the parable of the wedding feast which speaks about the rejection of the Jews of God’s call to enter the Kingdom.
- Again, this must be understood in light of the (nearly) whole-sale rejection of the Jewish nation. The Lord “came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”
- Many were called to the kingdom feast, but few responded.
- Thus, few of the chosen nation will be saved. But that doesn’t mean that only a few will be saved when it is all said and done as He goes on to point out.
- The gospel was first proclaimed to Israel, but with their rejection, it was taken to the Gentiles. Despite the rejection of the Jews, the “the wedding is filled with guests” (Matthew 22:9-10) while those who presumed that they had a place at the banquet, (the Pharisees and those who followed them) were cast out (Matthew 22:11-13)

4. Matthew 24:37-39 “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 “and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

–This passage must be understood in its context.

–In Matthew 24, Jesus is teaching His disciples about the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. The condition of Israel when its time of judgment arrived, is like unto that of the world at the time of the flood.

–Jesus is describing the “last days” of Israel and the old world order (A.D. 30-70) – the days preceding the final destruction of Israel and Jerusalem for their unbelief.

–This section begins in 23:34-36 where Jesus pronounces woes upon the scribes and Pharisees because they are like their “fathers” who murdered the prophets God sent to them.

–This is the basis of Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem (23:37-38).

–Hearing this, the disciples ask Jesus the question that provokes the discourse of chapter 24 (Matt. 24:1-3 “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”).

–They ask when this destruction is going to happen. They are not asking about the end of the world, but about the end of the Temple era – which would be the end of the old World order and the beginning of a New world.

Jesus responds to the disciples' question by giving them signs of the coming "end":

1. There will be false Messiahs (vv. 4-5)

2. There will be wars (vv. 6-7a)

3. There will be natural disasters (vv. 7b-8)

4. Persecution (v. 9)

5. Apostasy (vv. 10-13). These bring us up to the end with the addition of one further decisive event:

6. The gospel will be preached to all the nations (v. 14). This seems to have been impossible prior to 70 A.D. but Paul mentions more than once that the gospel has been preached to all the world (Col. 1:5-6,23; Rom. 1:8; 10:18).

7. There will be the Abomination of desolation (vv. 15-18). Jesus refers to Daniel's vision (Dan. 9:26-27) and Matthew makes a special point of calling our attention to it ("let the reader understand" v. 15).

The phrase "the wing of abominations" (Dan. 9:27) probably refers to the corrupt garments of the unfaithful priests of Israel – and especially, the High Priest who opposed Jesus and attacked God's people. It was their sins which caused the Lord to leave the Temple desolate and allow it to be destroyed by the Gentiles.

The Great Tribulation: The years which preceded this destruction were the years Jesus calls “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:16-21). This language could only have meaning if it refers to something that would happen in the first century. Further, it would be a great problem for pregnant women to flee then and fleeing on the Sabbath would be difficult. But not today. Note that it occurs in the “middle” of history. The culmination of the Tribulation will be the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:23-24).

And He goes on to tell them when these things will come to pass. The time is not far off but very near (v. 34 “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.”). All these things will take place before the generation then living has died.

The word “generation” does not refer to the “race” of the Jews. In every place in the gospels that this word is used, it refers to the generation of people then living not to a race of people. Jesus is speaking of the generation of people then alive. The generation that He had called “wicked and perverse” (Matt. 12:39,45; 16:4; 17:17). The generation He said would receive punishment for all the “righteous blood shed on the earth” (Matt. 23:35). Their house would be left desolate (Matt. 23:38).

Israel is going to be destroyed because they rejected their true king. They are like the wicked servants who spurned their master saying “We will not have this man to rule over us.” (Luke 19:14). This is shown when the chief priests cry out at Jesus’ trial after Pilate asks, “Would you have me crucify your King?” (John 19:15) They reply, “We have no king but Caesar!” And they called down the guilt of Jesus’ crucifixion upon themselves (Matt. 27:24-25 “And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children.”).

It was thus for a long series of rebellion and hatred that God was now about to deliver them up to destruction (I Thess 2:14-16).

So, Jesus’ here is not prophesying about a judgment coming in the far off future, but to one near at hand. He refers to the Temple and says not “one stone” will be left upon another. He was speaking of the destruction that would befall the Temple then standing (Luke 21:5-6).

The destruction of the Temple would be the final act signifying that the old world had been replaced by the new heavens and new earth. It marked the “end of the age.” From the beginning of the world up to 70 A. D., the world centered around the house of God, finally coming to be erected in Jerusalem.

After 70 A.D. the world still centers around the house of God but His House is now the living temple made up of His people. It doesn't exist in only one location but is everywhere God's people meet.

The Jews by their rebellion were cast out of God's household. Paul describes it as being cut off from the covenant tree (Rom. 11). They had done what Jesus had foretold they would do. Rejecting all the prophets, they had finally rejected God's Son. They had to perish.

The "last days/times" were the last days of Israel. It was the last generation when God gave Israel one last chance to repent before He cut them down and threw them into the fire. But Israel continued to be worse and worse – like the world before the flood – they cried out for judgment and were completely oblivious to the judgment that was coming.

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