

## **Doctrine of Eschatology**

### **A Question of Time**

1. There is a form of literature in which much of Biblical language is cast. It is called apocalyptic literature.
2. The distinguishing characteristic feature of apocalyptic literature is that it is extremely rich in graphic imagery that takes on a symbolic meaning.
3. Unfortunately, apocalyptic literature opens itself to imaginative interpretation.
4. Turning to Matthew 24, the guns of criticism have been aimed at the teaching of Christ with its vivid imagery.
5. The Olivet Discourse is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. A parallel reading of the three versions allows for Scripture to interpret itself.
6. Mark's account of the Discourse is very terse. Matthew's account is expanded.

### **A Glorious Temple**

- Mark 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

The Mount of Olives overlooks the city of Jerusalem. There is a valley leading up to the wall facing the Mount of Olives, and that is the Temple wall.

### **First Sign**

#### **Destruction of the Holy Temple**

- Mark 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

As Jesus is exiting the Temple court, He told His disciples that the majestic buildings they were admiring would soon be destroyed. It was a shocking and alarming statement. Forty years before the events, Jesus clearly predicted the destruction of the Jewish Temple, the destruction of the Jewish city of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the people. It all happened in AD 70. The predictions of Christ establish Him as a true Prophet of God. However, the veracity of Christ is called into question because of the apocalyptic language that He employed in the narrative. The Lord spoke of His coming in "clouds of glory", which is problematic to some.

## **Two Questions for Christ**

- Mark 13:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

Peter, James, and John personally asked the Lord when would the Temple be destroyed. Then the three disciples asked Christ what the specific sign would be when the Temple was to be destroyed. In matchless grace, the Lord provided not only “the sign”, but many signs of the approaching calamity. The disciples did not ask how, or what, or even why the Temple would be destroyed, but when. In other words, they immediately believed Jesus. They asked Jesus, “When?”, and that is a question with respect to time. What sign would lead the disciples to the event?

### **Second Sign The Attempt to Deceive**

- Mark 13: 5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: 6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

### **Third Sign Wars and Rumours of Wars**

- Mark 13:7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

The phrase “the end is not yet” should be a warning, by way of application, to modern day prophetic pundits not to look to contemporary events, such as wars, and weather changes, in an effort to set a date for the Lord’s second coming.

### **Fourth Sign Earthquakes and Famines**

- Mark 13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

The events of which Jesus spoke, wars and rumors of wars, along with earthquakes and famines, were contemporary events. They are called the “signs of the times” in popular language today, as prophetic pundits try to interpret the language to refer to today’s events, while neglecting the contemporary understanding of the first century. That is a tragic mistake and misunderstanding of God’s Word.

### **Fifth Sign Personal Persecution**

- Mark 13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

Evidence that Jesus was speaking of a time frame of the first century, and not of events 2000 years in the future, is reflected in the personal pronouns, “yourselves,” “:you,” and “ye.” The disciples, Peter, James, and John were being spoken to. The subsequent biographies of their lives finds fulfillment of the prophecies of Christ regarding personal persecution. The book of Acts records what happened.

### **Sixth Sign Worldwide Evangelism**

- Mark 13:10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

### **Specific Instruction Rely Upon the Holy Spirit for Wisdom**

- Mark 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

### **Seventh Intimate Betrayal**

- Mark 13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

### **Eighth Sign Widespread Hatred**

- Mark 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

There is a false assumption, by way of interpretation, that these prophecies of Christ apply to us, Christians of the contemporary century. It is true, that there are spiritual lessons to be learned by way of application, but the interpretation belongs to Peter, James, John, and the Christians of the first century, not the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Because the false assumption of the words of Christ being for the contemporary church, people find freedom to look for the “signs of the time”. The Bible is interpreted in light of current headlines and sensational charlatans exploit the curiosity of Christians for financial gain. The result is sensational and nonsensical teaching about four blood moons, cobra helicopters in the Revelation, or the rise of Anti-Christ. The prophecies of Christ,

intended for Peter, James, and John, and the early Christians, are as if they were written last week. It is foolish. It is a twisting of Scripture. It needs to stop. It must be remembered that Jesus was answering two specific questions that were asked Him by His own disciples. The answer Jesus gave was for them, by way of interpretation and fulfillment in order to satisfy their hearts, prepare them for tribulation, and establish the Lord as a Prophet of God.

### **Ninth Sign** **The Manifestation of the Abomination of Desolation**

- Mark 13:14 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:

The Lord's reference to "the abomination of desolation" comes from Daniel 12:11. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

The appeal of the Lord to "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" sounds strange to modern ears, but the Jews to whom the Lord spoke, including His close disciples, knew exactly what the Lord had reference to, just as surely as many Americans immediately know the meaning of November 22, 1963. On that day in Dallas, Texas, president John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald.

The Lord was referring historically to Antiochus Epiphanes (IV), who was the ruler of Syria from 175-164 BC.

Antiochus was the "little horn" of Daniel 8:9. "And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land."

In a vain attempt to influence the Jews with Greek culture, Antiochus captured the city of Jerusalem, erected an altar to Olympian Zeus in the Court Temple, and proceeded to perform an abomination of desolation when he offered a pig on the altar of the sacred Temple in Jerusalem to Zeus, thereby desecrating the holy altar.

With that historical allusion in mind, Jesus, in Mark 13:14 tells the Jews that the same type of thing will happen again in their generation. The Lord had in mind the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.

The destruction of the Holy Temple would have happened soon after the death of Christ, except for one fact. While He was on the Cross Jesus prayed for the people, and God delayed the execution of His judgment until AD 70.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots" (Luke 23:34).

In AD 70, Israel was made even more desolate, for there did come one upon the wings of abominations in the person of the ruthless Roman general Titus. In AD 70, Rome was weary of the Jewish revolts.

For about three and one-half years Rome laid seized to Jerusalem, and finally conquered the city completely. The Holy Temple was destroyed, and the prophecy of Christ in Mark 13:14, using a previous typology provided by Daniel in the form of Antiochus, was finally fulfilled.

### **Specific Instruction Given on How to Avoid the Great Tribulation Flee and Pray**

- Mark 13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

With all the modern day discussion about the Rapture, and the church escaping the great tribulation by disappearing suddenly from the earth, Jesus gave specific instruction to His disciples. Christians were to escape the impending great tribulation by fleeing to the mountains. More than a million Jews were slaughtered in the Holocaust of AD 70. Many Christians, who remembered the words of Jesus, fled to safety, and were spared the slaughter. They stood in contrast to the many Jews who went to Jerusalem seeking refuge from the Roman army behind the massive walls of the great city.

### **Tenth Sign Divine Intervention**

- Mark 13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. 20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was a form of affliction, “such as was not from the beginning of the creation”. The theologian Loraine Boettner commented on the degree of suffering the Jews endured in AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem.

“Because of the horror of World War I and World War II it has been argued that the emphatic statement of Jesus in Matthew 24:21 and Mark 13:19, a statement confirmed by Josephus and others, have yet to be realized. Critics point to the numbers slain, the amount of property destroyed, the duration of time in suffering, and the extent of the geographical coverage of persecuted Jews in the 20th century, and then declare that the words of Jesus have yet to be fulfilled. This commitment to simple numbers, how many bodies killed, how much money taken from the Jews in AD 70 compared to modern times, misses the point of the words of Jesus to His generation. It is the KIND of the days of vengeance that must be considered, for in the period of the great tribulation (AD 30 to

AD 70) there was nothing less than Almighty God divorcing His ancient wife who had proved unfaithful to Him. It was the time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). It was the period of God concentrating His wrath upon His elect nation in particular. (Luke 21:22-23; Daniel 12:1). There have been, of course, other periods of tribulation of suffering in which greater numbers of people were involved, and which continued for longer periods of time. But considering the physical, moral, and religious aspects, suffering never reached a greater degree of awfulness and intensity than the siege of Jerusalem. Nor have so many people ever perished in the fall of any other city. We think of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima as causing the greatest mass horror of anything in modern times. Yet, only about one tenth as many people were killed in Hiroshima as in the fall of Jerusalem. Add to the slaughter of such a great number the bestiality of Jew to Jew, and of Roman to Jew, and the anguish of a people who knew they were forsaken of God, and we see the justification for Christ's words, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (*The Millennium*).

**Specific Instruction**  
**Believe Not Those Who Teach a New Coming of Christ**

- Mark 13:21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

The church is commanded not to believe those who teach a secret, silent coming of Christ. The Rapture is the type of teaching Jesus warned would happen.

**Eleventh Sign**  
**Workers of Signs and Wonders**

- Mark 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

**The Usage of Apocalyptic Language**  
**Mark 13:24-27**

**Twelfth Sign**  
**Celestial Changes**

- Mark 13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

In giving an answer to Peter, James, and John, when the great tribulation should occur, and what the sign of that event was, He spoke of celestial perturbation, or changes, on a cosmic scale.

### **Thirteenth Sign The Son of Man Coming in Clouds**

- Mark 13:26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Jesus includes His coming in glory as part of the prophesy association with the great tribulation, and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 for He said, “Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done” (Mark 13:31).

### **Separation at the Second Advent**

- Mark 13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

### **Patience in Waiting for the Lord’s Return**

- Mark 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

### **An Important Time Passage**

- Mark 13:30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

### **Divine Certainty**

- Mark 13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

There are several options in dealing with the words of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse concerning the cosmic unrest and His coming in the clouds in glory as part of the great tribulation period.

One option is to say that Jesus was mistaken. This is the position of Liberal Theologians and unbelieving skeptics, in order to discredit Christ, and destroy the integrity of Scripture.

A second option is to embrace eschatological diplopia, or double vision. This is the position of Dispensationalism. The System teaches of a future great tribulation culminating in the battle of Armageddon, and the return of Christ in clouds of glory. In the Dispensational view, the term “generation” is spiritualized, and refers to a time frame reference for a future generation other than “this generation”, or the present generation to whom Christ spoke. It is contended Jesus really meant to say, “that generation” etc. The immediate problem with this is that every other time the phrase “this generation” is used in Scripture, it clearly means the generation to whom Jesus spoke.

A third option, is to teach that the Second Coming of Christ occurred in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. The Full Preterist view teaches this.

A fourth option, called the Partial Preterist view, advocates that the great tribulation of which Jesus spoke occurred in AD 70, and Jesus used apocalyptic language to speak of His coming in judgment at the end of the Jewish age, not His final coming at the end of time. The Bible makes a distinction between the age of the Jews, and the age of the Gentiles.

### **Human Uncertainty**

- Mark 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

### **Specific Instruction Watch and Pray**

- Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.