
CHAPTER 8

JESUS ON ESCATHOLOGY

The focus of Jesus' teaching was on the kingdom of God. He clearly, explains both the spiritual and physical aspects of the kingdom. So the kingdom is inaugurated by the visible presence in His first advent but awaits a consummation. We can begin here and now to enjoy glimpses of the kingdom, through the New Birth in Christ. He uses parables and typologies, and by His death, resurrection and ascension to show that the eschatological kingdom promised to the Messiah, was still future.

Thus, Jesus reminds us in Matthew 11:12 that "from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it." Although all that need to be done has been accomplished and the victory has been won, the enforcement of that victory remains with you and me. We are called to take back what is ours, and Scripture reminds us that force is necessary. The Lord promised that He would go back to the Father for our good, maybe to start preparing the Chuppah, the marriage canopy for the Church's wedding in heaven. On the other hand, that would enable the Holy Spirit to come down on behalf of the Father and the Son; in order to find, prepare and adorn a ready Bride, the saints in Christ for their gathering unto the Lord.

But the grand finale is that Jesus will come back to the earth in full power and honor. *"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."* (Matt. 24:30). While on earth, Jesus accomplished His task as the suffering Messiah, but He is about to be revealed as the conquering King. *"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!"* (1Cor. 16:22). Our Lord is surely coming to deal mercilessly with evil but to reward the faithful!

Yes, God has a progressive unfolding plan, and we are in those final days of what the Holy Scripture calls "the end times". It started at Pentecost, an event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that birthed out the Church of Jesus Christ. Although Scripture reminds us not to try and guess the day and time of the end, we are still called to be wise to the signs of the end. In Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus begins with teaching his disciples about the signs of His coming and of the end of the world. He begins by giving us a prophetic landmark that begins with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (which happened in A.D. 70). He continues with the rebirth of Israel (which officially came about in 1948). He talks about His return and makes an interesting statement that "*this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*" (Matt. 24:34).

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21)

Jesus taught plainly on the subject of Eschatology. Matthew's account gives the scenario when Jesus speaks prophetically about the future of the Temple (Matt. 24: 1). Later, He answers the inquiries of the disciples in what is referred to as the Olivet Discourse. "*Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."* Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:1-3).

Below is an outline from Matthew's account of Jesus' discourse in answer to the three (3) questions which concerned:

1. Matt. 24:1-3 Describe the three key questions Jesus was asked by his disciples concerned:
 - a. The time for the destruction of the then Temple
 - b. Signs of His Second Coming, and
 - c. Signs of the End of the Age(From Matthew 24:4-51, Jesus answers all the three questions)
2. Matt. 24:4-8 Describe the signs of the end times which include the period for the destruction of the then Temple and our present

day but also point to the Second Coming. The discerning mind will notice the frequency and intensity of those signs in our time as the end of the age approaches. The Rapture is not mentioned in the discourse probably because Jesus was dealing with a predominantly Jewish audience and not the Church which was yet unborn. And more so that the disciples could not grasp that truth, as they all looked forward rather to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel in the near distant future while they were yet alive. Read from Luke 19:11-13; Acts 1:4-7.

3. Matt. 24:9-14 Describe the first 3½-year period of the Tribulation.
4. Matt. 24:15-26 Describe the second 3½-year period of the Tribulation referred to as the Great Tribulation due to the intensity of the wrath of God.
5. Matt. 24:27-51 Describe the second phase of Second Coming of Christ with His saints and not the Rapture.

HOW TO DISCERN THE TIMES

Many people have labored to understand how long a "generation" is. Some say 40 years, others 100 years, and others the current lifespan of a man. In reality, even if we could establish the number of years in a generation, that would not tell us when Christ will return. Jesus did not say, at the end of that generation, but during that generation.

We may quote from Matt. 24:21-35 the direct words of Jesus, who said, *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. "See, I have told you beforehand. "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered*

together. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-- at the doors! "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

There are people who try to say that Jesus' eschatology is misleading for He said His return was in the generation to which He spoke referring to Matt. 24:34. But we must take scripture in its entirety. Jesus always disabused the minds of His disciples on the near eschatological kingdom. He taught a present inaugurated spiritual kingdom (Matt. 4:23; Luke 17:20, 21) but a long distant physical earthly kingdom (Matt. 25:14ff; Luke 19:11-13). He even intimated that He was going back to the Father and would send another Comforter.

According to the text, there was to be the generation of those who would witness the destruction of the Temple in 70 A. D., and there will also be the Tribulation generation to witness His visible return (Matt. 24:21-34). We must not forget that Jesus was still answering the three questions posed by His disciples earlier on. Only God knows the exact time of the return, but He will surely return at the end. Indeed, our response to the knowledge that we are in the end times is important. That is why Jesus closes his teaching with three (3) parables of the kingdom of God: one on a faithful servant that became unfaithful (Matt. 24:45-51), another about the ten wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) and a third about talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

The Spiritual Atmosphere of this present Generation

In Matthew and elsewhere Jesus reminds us that there is going to be an increase in problems. There will be tremendous deception, wars and

rumors of wars (tribal conflicts, racial wars, and political wars), famine, pestilence, diseases, and earthquakes in diverse places, affliction, death, hatred, offence, betrayal, lawlessness, sin and evil. We have already seen many of these things happen. We have seen immorality, rape, materialism, cheating, lying, murder, violence, and terrorism become the norm in our day. We are also seeing an increase in witchcraft practices as more and more people seek the occult, necromancy and other spiritualistic dimensions to help them understand what is unknown and uncertainties of the future.

Many seek through mediums, and try to achieve success thereby. We must realize that if a fortune-teller can really tell the future, he will not remain a fortuneteller. If one can control the spirits, he will not end up being possessed by them.

We live in a time when hard drugs from plants are controlling many instead of them exercising the God ordained dominion given to man. We are witnesses to sickness and decay all around us.

In the midst of all the evil, Jesus will return as the only judge. Meanwhile, we need to know the real truth, that there is only one true God, who so loved us, His creation, that He gave Himself for us. He is the God that has the power and has vested all power in Jesus! I have seen His power deal with many demonic problems and heal many sicknesses and diseases, even what is medically incurable. His power restores finances, reconciles relationships and marriages, brings wholeness to people with emotional problems, restores hope and meaning to the hopeless and transforms lives. We notice that Jesus emphasized the role of his disciples in His eschatological teachings.

Believers are to depend on the Holy Spirit's power to be trail blazers for the establishment of kingdom of God during any of the generations in what is called the Last Days (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 1:4-8). We must not fail! We cannot afford to even think of failing.

