

The Olivet Prophecy

The Signs of His Coming and of the End of the Age

by
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The Lord provided His disciples with a detailed response to their question about the signs of His coming and the end of the age, a response that clearly relates to the Christian believers of a generation whom the Lord prophesied would read about it in the Christian Bible, and, therefore, recognize, the signs of the times as well as the specific sign of His imminent return.

Toward the end of the Lord's earthy ministry He came out of the temple, and His disciples commented on the buildings of the temple.

In turn the Lord surprised them with a prophecy that the temple would be destroyed with not one stone left on top of the other.

Later He was joined by Peter, James, Andrew and John where He was sitting on the mount opposite the temple, and possibly on the very spot where He would return on the great and terrible day of the Lord.

His disciples had obviously been speculating about His prophecy concerning the destruction of the temple, and they asked Him a specific question, "**Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**"

It is important to note that the entirety of His answer, reported in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 is a response to this question.

Those who reported the conversation were not present, but we should note that the conversation was important enough that each of the writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were compelled to report it.

Be very careful, then, not to make presumptions based on a preconceived understanding of prophetic scripture when examining the specific words of the Lord in response to the disciples' question, "**Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**"

At this point in time His disciples were still Old Testament saints, but the prophetic words He spoke to them were for the church, of which these four would be apostles, and it was reported in the synoptic gospels of the New Testament, which was written for the church, not for the Jews as a people or for national Israel.

Even the parthenetic prophecy directly related to the future of His immediate disciples, as reported in Mark 13:9-11 and Luke 21:12-15, but not reported in Matthew 24, was related to their future as apostles and disciples of the church of Jesus Christ.

That this message was intended only for the church should be both an intuitive and an inductive conclusion by anyone who reads the account, but Dispensational theologians from whom we have assumed a great many false doctrines and false interpretations of biblical prophecy insist that the Olivet prophecy was intended primarily for national, ethnic Israel.

They have no valid exegetical basis for the claim, but they have no choice. This prophecy and the prophetic parables of Matthew 25 totally and completely contradict the concept of a pre-tribulation resurrection-“rapture” of church only saints.

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." Matthew 24:4,5 NASB

This warning obviously does not refer to His immediate disciples who would not be misled. The “many” who will be misled include both believers and non-believers, but the emphasis of the warning is for Christian believers who will be misled at some point by false Christs and false prophets.

When we examine the false Christs of recent history like Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon, and David Koresh, we shake our heads at the stupid gullibility of those who were deceived. But what we will see later in this prophecy is that there will be a time in the future when the appearance of false Christs and false prophets will be accompanied by false signs and wonders so that many will be deceived, including born again, regenerated believers.

But there are certain conditions in a believer’s life that will make him/her vulnerable to the teaching of false prophets and, eventually, to false Christs. We will not dwell on these negative conditions discussed in detail in “**Parable of the Ten Virgins Unveiled**”, but, instead, on the positive conditions that will prevent a believer from being misled and deceived by false Christs and false prophets, even those who manifest false signs and wonders.

The characteristics of believers who will not be deceived or misled are demonstrated succinctly through the Lord’s own words in John 14:21, in Paul’s words in Philippians 3:8-11, and in Peter’s words in 2 Peter 1:4.

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. John 14:21 NASB (Amplified: “make Myself real to him.”)

I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing ... (intimate relationship knowledge, not intellectual knowledge about Him)... *Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know ... (intimate, supernatural, participatory relationship knowledge)... *Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** Philippians 3:8-11 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author’s)

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers... (participants in)... *of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.* 2 Peter 1:4 NASB (emphasis and inserts are the author’s)

The truth so adequately expressed in these passages is that those who are intimately acquainted with Him, not just with a superficial religious knowledge about Him, but in an

intimate, supernatural, personal, experiential, day by day, moment by moment faith relationship with Him, are the ones who will NOT be misled.

Therefore, His primary command related to the entirety of this prophetic discourse is, “DO NOT BE MISLED.” It is our responsibility, then, to maintain our intimacy with Him and with His words so that we will not be misled.

As He continued His prophetic revelation He gave them a list of specific prophetic “signs”, and He tells them that these signs will be like “birth pains”, increasing both in intensity and frequency as the birth event itself, His return, nears.

"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes....

"But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Matthew 24:6-8 NASB

Revelation is the book for determining the order of end time events, and it is prudent to compare any prophetic end time passages found elsewhere with the book of Revelation.

In “**Left Behind?**” and in “**The Four Horsemen**” I demonstrated that the first six seals represented tribulation (the Greek word transliterated as *thilipsis*, Strong’s #2568) and that it was not until the opening of the seventh seal that God’s wrath, the Greek word transliterated as *orge* (Strong’s #3709) is introduced.

Therefore, the first six seals of trouble or tribulation are for the purpose of producing repentance, not for the outpouring of God’s retributive wrath, and there can be no valid argument that the church will not be present during the first six seals, because, as presented in “The Four Horsemen,” the first three seals are already opened.

Although there is no parenthetic in Matthew’s account, there is a parenthetic in Mark’s and Luke’s account in which the Lord reveals a specific prophetic message for these particular disciples. We know this is a parenthetic applicable to His immediate disciples because He prefaces His words with the phrase, “But before all this...” And our confirmation is that this is exactly what happened to them.

"But before all this, they will lay hands on you and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict." Luke 21:12-14 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

"But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ...(Parenthetic applying to His immediate disciple) ... The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit." Mark 13:9-11 NASB (insert is the author’s)

However, the rest of the prophecy is for another “generation” of Christian believers, and when compared and coordinated with Revelation 6 it becomes apparent that when a generation of believers notice that false Christs (misleading many), wars and rumors of wars (i.e. constant conflict in various places around the world), kingdoms against kingdoms (world wars), famines, disease, and earthquakes are increasing both in frequency and intensity, this is the generation that will experience the next important and pivotal event in prophecy, the opening of the 5th seal.

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.” Matthew 24:9 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

Readers who have been trained under dispensational theology will assume that the Lord is describing events that happened to His original disciples or will happen to the Jews, but pay attention.

“Then” refers to a time when the birth pangs have increased to a noticeable frequency and intensity immediately prior to His return. And those who will experience tribulation are those who are hated by ALL NATIONS because of His name.

The Jews are not hated because of the name of Jesus Christ. They are hated because they have been identified as the sons of faith and blessing (Isaac) and the chosen nation of Jehovah, though they lost their covenant status at the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the use of the phrase, “all nations”, indicates a unified, world wide hatred. Although many nations hate Israel, and many nations have historically hated Israel, that unified, world-wide hatred does not exist now, and has never existed historically.

It is for some future generation of Christian believers to be hated by “all nations” because of the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, beginning at Matthew 24:9, this prophecy only relates to a generation of Christian believers from all nations who will be hated, persecuted, and martyred.

This is not an exaggeration by the Lord, nor is it limited to the known nations of the Lord’s day. The One who has known the end from the beginning is telling Christian believers who will read His warning in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, exactly what will happen as the day of the Lord draws near.

In the “**Parable of the Ten Virgins Unveiled**,” which is a part of this prophetic utterance by the Lord, the entire body of Christ is awakened from its slumber by the groomsman’s announcement, “**Behold! the bridegroom is coming.**”

This awakening takes place prior to the opening of the 5th seal during the rise of the pale green horseman’s rise to world prominence, which is the emergence of the Antichrist, and the emergence of the Antichrist will become noticeable in world events and identifiable in scripture shortly after the Gog-Magog war (Ezekiel 38 and 39) during which the Muslim Alliance attacks Israel and the Islamic Third Jihad is defeated in a single day by the supernatural intervention of God.

This event will be noticeable enough to qualify as the groomsman’s announcement, and the worldwide church of Jesus Christ will become intensely aware of where we are in the end times scenario.

What the Lord describes then, as a result of tribulation, has been described in various places in scripture, including the parable of the ten virgins that is a part of this Olivet prophecy.

"At that time many...(Christian believers)...will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many...(which is why the Lord has warned us, "Do not be misled.")

"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love...(of the Lord)...will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:10-14

In Mark 13:10, a part of the parenthetical message intended specifically for His immediate disciples, the Lord tells them that the gospel must be preached to the entire world (of which the disciples were not even aware). This requirement was given to His disciples prior to the "great commission" of Matthew 28, but in Matthew 24:14 He says it again, as a requirement that must be fulfilled before the "end" can come (i.e. "the last day").

The parable of the ten virgins, giving details of this prophecy, indicates a change of status in the entire true church from that of being "asleep" to that of being awake and trimming our wicks. But the shocking truth is that the intense events and deception after the wake up call will cause at least half of the true church to fall away from the faith.

This massive falling away from the faith will be instigated and led by false prophets whose deceptions are so compelling that even some of the elect will be deceived.

The false prophets that will be instrumental in the falling away from the Christian faith by the foolish virgins will declare themselves to be "Christian" prophets. They will use the name of Jesus Christ and will be empowered by Satan to do false signs and wonders for the express purpose of deceiving those regenerated Christians who do not have the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

This falling away from the faith by foolish virgins will also be accompanied by betrayals both in the church family and in natural families, and those who fall away will then hate the church and hate family members who are of the family of God, the "wise virgins", indicating that their hatred is fueled by demonic influence, just as the hatred of Israel and the Jews has always been.

"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death." Mark 13:12 NASB

The "lawlessness" that will increase is translated in the KJV as "iniquity" (Strong's #458), transliterated from the Greek as *anomia*, also translated as "unrighteousness", and it indicates that even the natural *phileo* love of family members for each other will be obliterated by the spiritual wickedness of those who fall away from the faith.

Likewise, the intensity of extreme tribulation will squeeze and magnify the true character out of people, both good and bad. In America we only have to be reminded of what happened during hurricane Katrina. That event only lasted a few weeks, but the true character of men, women, and children, both good and bad, was exposed and magnified by that event, an event that cannot compare with what is being described in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 22.

The contrast between those whose hearts are "right" (abiding in Christ and His word abiding in their hearts) and those who will respond to tribulation with "lawlessness" is perfectly described in Proverbs 4, and it is the author's strong suggestion that those who receive (by "hearing" and "seeing") this message, meditate and pray about the entirety of Proverbs 4.

But the path of the [uncompromisingly] just and righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines more and more (brighter and clearer) until [it reaches its full strength and glory in] the perfect day [to be prepared].

The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

My son, attend to my words; consent and submit to my sayings.

Let them not depart from your sight; keep them in the center of your heart.

For they are life to those who find them, healing and health to all their flesh.

Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:18-23 Amplified

In this passage we clearly see, and know by experience, that the inner character of a man or a woman is revealed either in acts of faith and true obedience or in acts of lawlessness when tribulation comes. And the greater the tribulation, the more the true character of our hearts is revealed.

If the reader does not have a clear understanding of this process it is suggested that he/she study and meditate on Hebrews 12 for instruction.

The “lawlessness” described in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 is not only a description of mere unbelievers but also of those who fall away from the faith because they follow the teaching of false prophets, who, themselves, have fallen away from the faith and are now empowered by Satan to produce false signs and wonders.

A false prophet is not merely one who is teaching erroneous doctrine, practice, or interpretation of scripture. If that were true the church would already be full of false prophets, but, fortunately for them (those who teach erroneous doctrine), the adoption of false doctrines, false practices, and false interpretations of scripture without a thorough, Spirit-guided exegesis, does not make them “false prophets”. A prophet is one who speaks as the very mouthpiece of God, and a “false prophet” is one who speaks as the mouthpiece of God falsely.

This definition would seem to fit some in the church today, including some with very big ministries, but the “false prophets” in this prophecy are empowered by Satan with powerful, enticing words and with supernatural signs and wonders.

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” Matthew 24:24 NASB

The ultimate false prophet will be associated with the Antichrist when the Antichrist declares himself to be “God” in the temple (i.e. the “revealing” of the Antichrist).

“But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” Matthew 24:13 NASB

Endurance here is related to tribulation, which is not the wrath of God. “Tribulation” is the Greek word transliterated as *thilipsis* (Strong’s #2347) which denotes being squeezed or put in a tight place (i.e. a powerful temptation) also described as “trouble, affliction, or distress.”

The Lord tells us specifically that we will experience tribulation in this world even though we are not appointed for the retributive wrath of God.

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 NASB
(emphasis is the author’s)

However, the Lord's instruction in verse 13 is to endure the tribulation that includes false prophets, the falling away of fellow Christians, including the members of one's own household, who then betray parents, brothers and sisters, and children, and the birth pains that the entire world is experiencing in terms of wars and rumors of wars, kingdoms against kingdoms, famine, disease, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

Endurance does not mean physical survival, though physical survival is not unimportant. It means to endure without denying Christ and falling away.

The countless number of martyred tribulation saints from every nation, tribe, and tongue described in Revelation 7 tells us that tribulation will include the GLOBAL martyrdom of saints (betrayed by family members and by some whom we thought to be brothers and sisters in Christ) killed by both sanctioned and unsanctioned Antichrist authorities, and, in all likelihood, by Jewish religious authorities in Israel (i.e. The Israel Faithful and Temple Mount Movement) who will have re-instated the temple worship and sacrifice system again after the Gog-Magog war ends Islamic resistance.

A large number of Jews, particularly secular Jews, will turn to Christ immediately after the Gog-Magog war. The seeds planted by Messianic Jews and missionaries in Israel will be rewarded as many in Israel turn to faith in Jesus Christ. But an equal number will follow the Israel Faithful into the revival of the Levitical priesthood and the renewal of the temple worship and sacrifices again, and these will imagine that they are doing God a favor by persecuting Christians.

Thus there will be a tremendous amount of religious conflict in Israel after the Gog-Magog war and after Israel is included in the ruling ten nation Security Council of the re-organized United Nations, to which most of the nations in the world have surrendered sovereignty in order to restore world peace and prosperity.

Only the conflict will no longer be between Muslims and Jews, it will be between religious Jews and the rapidly growing number of Messianic Christians.

Those who believe in the heretical "dual covenant" theology (i.e. national, ethnic Israel and the church redeemed under separate covenants) will be appalled by the persecution of Christians in Israel at that time, a persecution that will rival the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, except that the Christians will not take up armed resistance to the persecution.

The "Open Doors" ministry lists the "Top 50" and "Top 10" nations where Christians are currently under persecution, with those in the "Top 10" being routinely killed for their faith in Christ. The church of America and the western nations basically ignores this truth, but at some point in the future, the experience of Christian believers in the "Top 10" today will be a global experience for all Christian believers.

Not long ago I awoke from a spiritual dream immediately before my alarm clock went off. In the dream I was driving a van and my family was with me when we spotted a huge tornado in front of us. I quickly turned off to the right, but there was a tornado coming toward us from the right as well. We turned around to go to the left, but a third tornado was approaching from that direction, too.

As we looked behind us, thinking that we could go back to where we came from, that way was also blocked by a tornado, and all we could do to seek safety was to get out of the vehicle and lie flat in a shallow depression.

When I awoke in a cold sweat I asked the Lord what the dream meant, and the Spirit caused me to understand that there is no escape from the coming storm, no secret pre-tribulation "rapture," and no hiding place of our own device.

Some who are reading this are thinking that when tribulation comes they will protect themselves either by hiding in the wilderness, by arming themselves, and by hoarding food, medical supplies, and gold. As an individual with strong survival skills that was, in fact, my own first natural instinct. But keep this simple fact in mind. There is no hiding from the eyes of Satan. Wherever you go, be certain that he knows where you are, and he can convey that information to his servants. Be certain, too, that our only real protection is the Lord by grace through faith.

And which of you would hoard to protect your own family and loved ones only to turn others who are in need away? (And, as I write this, it occurs that this very temptation will test the faith of some who are reading what I have just written.)

Likewise, if we take up the sword for protection, we will die by the sword. That does not mean that the Christian should not learn self-defense under ordinary circumstances, but during the tribulation, self-defense, though of some use in repelling lawless men, will be of no effect in repelling Antichrist authorities.

Our only hope will be to walk by faith during that time, just as the Lord's original disciples did, even if it leads to martyrdom.

Read the book of Acts again, multiplying everything by seven, and you will have an idea of what to expect, both in terms of tribulation and in terms of our faith. Because it is at this time that I expect the latter rains to fall, beginning with the 4th seal of Revelation and gradually increasing all the way through the 6th seal.

In Hebrews we are told to run the race with endurance, and, in so doing, not to consider the Lord's discipline as punishment, but as proof of His love as He prepares us to overcome tribulation so that we might share in His righteousness.

A natural example would be a young man's instruction to endure the hardship of basic training in the Marine Corps, because without it he cannot survive actual combat. The training is hard and mostly unpleasant, but it is necessary in order for us to overcome. (See "**Giant Killing Faith**")

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin...Hebrews 12:1-4 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

The Lord's experience of enduring the cross and enduring the hostility of sinners even to the point of the shedding of His blood is to be our example both now, and, particularly, during the time of tribulation when many will not endure and will grow weary and lose heart.

Dispensational, pre-trib "rapture" theorists assume that it is the Laodicean type of church, the church that makes the Lord want to vomit, that will be "raptured" away before the tribulation on the basis of a promise made only to the Philadelphian type of church, and that it will be the saved Jews, whom they wrongly believe to be the 144,000 and their followers, who successfully evangelize the world in the three and a half years before they have to flee to the wilderness.

But remember that the Lord is giving this prophecy to the founding apostles of His church who have been commissioned with the gospel message to the end of the age.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

The commission belongs to the church until the end of the age (i.e. "the last day"). Therefore, it is the church that must endure the refining fire of the tribulation, during which two astonishing things are prophesied to happen.

First, there is an apostasy or falling away from the faith by those who do not "endure", and second, there is an amazing evangelization that takes place among every nation, tribe, and tongue.

(This apostasy of believers is the experience of the "foolish virgins" in the parable of the ten virgins, and the amazing evangelization of every nation, tribe, and tongue is the experience of the "wise virgins" in this same prophetic parable, Matthew 25: 1-13., spoken immediately following what He tells them here.)

An astonishing revelation comes to us in Matthew 24:15 when the Lord tells His disciples, ***"Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)..."*** (emphasis is the author's)

The "abomination of desolation" is the terminology given to Daniel in describing the revealing of the Antichrist as the false prophet declares him to be "God" and "Messiah." This is a huge pivotal point in the tribulation, taking place immediately before the opening of the seventh seal, but the disciples are told that they, the church, will "see" it.

This, of course, does not mean that the entire church will be present in Jerusalem when this takes place, but, because the Antichrist will want the entire world to "see" him as he reveals himself as "God", it will be on television, in the news, on the Antichrist twitter, Skype, etc. all over the world.

It has been suggested to me that Christians cannot be present while the Antichrist is in power, because we would know who he was and expose him to the entire world.

Really? So what? A large majority of Americans today claim to be "Christian", and we know that abortion is murder. But who believes us? And what have we been able to do about it in this great "Christian" nation of America? It will be the same during the tribulation when we are hated and persecuted by all nations. But who will believe us? After all it will be the Antichrist who "saves" the world by bringing in world peace and prosperity during the most unstable world condition in history up to that time.

There are only two places in the New Testament where the Lord's own words indicate that His church will "read" what He is saying, and Matthew 24:15 is one of these. The other, of course, is Revelation 1:3.

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near."

What they will be "reading" is the Olivet prophecy in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the book of Revelation and Daniel's prophecy, as well as numerous other prophetic passages concerning the end times, and they will be reading it out of a Christian Bible, not the Torah.

Some have used the instructions of what to do when the Antichrist is revealed as an indication that this message is for the Jews, not Christians, but let me remind you one more time:

1. Peter, James, Andrew, and John represent the church, not Israel and not the Jews;
2. The Lord knows that this prophecy, as well as the book of Revelation, will appear in the New Testament of the Christian Bible, not in the Torah;
3. The instructions we have in the "great commission" also begin with Judea. Therefore, this instruction, beginning with an instruction to those in Judea to "flee", is not an indication that this prophecy is for the Jews; "Judea" is a metaphor representing our immediate location, wherever that may be;
4. The "Sabbath" is a metaphorical representative of the day of worship, not exclusively the Jewish day of worship (as Seventh Day Adventists and the Worldwide Church of God believe.).

The gist of the following passages are summed up in Matthew 24:21:

"For then...(after the revealing of the Antichrist and the opening of the seventh seal)... there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

It should be of interest that the "great tribulation" in this passage again uses the Greek word transliterated as *thilipsis* (Strong's #2347) and not the word transliterated as *orge* (Strong's #3709) meaning "wrath".

It is, however, after the opening of the seventh seal, and after thirty minutes of silence, ("about half an hour") that God's judgment begins to be poured out on the unrepentant, unbelieving world.

In "**Left Behind?**" I demonstrated that the only church receiving a promise that could be interpreted (albeit inaccurately) as "removal" was the Philadelphian church. Pre-tribbers, like Dr. Tim LaHaye, attempt to use that passage as a promise to the universal church. But that "assignment" of the promise specific to the Philadelphian church because of their faith and endurance under tribulation, to the universal church (who do not qualify for the promise) is an entirely corrupt exegete of scripture.

The promise, too, was to "keep" them from the "hour" of trial coming on the whole world, which cannot be stretched exegetically, to include the entire time of tribulation.

Likewise, the absolute proof that the promise given to the Philadelphian type of church is to the end times Philadelphian church is that the "hour of trial" has not, yet, come on the whole world. Therefore the promise is specific to some future group of Christian believers who will qualify as belonging to the Philadelphian type of church.

This, of course, relates to individual believers and does not relate to any specific fellowship of believers.

The prophetic picture He has given the church in this passage is that we will be present to witness both the great apostasy energized by demonically empowered false prophets and the revealing of the Antichrist.

This is mirrored in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 NASB:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it ... (the last day resurrection-“rapture” of all the saints)... will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (inserts are the author’s)

Tribulation is intended to produce repentance, and, because a countless number of tribulation saints are saved and martyred, we can assume that the “trouble” preceding the revealing of the Antichrist is the crucible that produces an end time revival of evangelistic fervor. But what happens after the Antichrist is revealed?

“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” Matthew 24:22 NASB

Who are the “elect”? The short answer is “all those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” The specific answer, in regard to this particular passage, would include the church and the Jews and Gentiles who are judged to be “sheep,” because they helped and protected Christians during the tribulation. This latter group will enter into the millennial kingdom as natural, but regenerated, men who will be saved at the Bema judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46).

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” Matthew 24:23,24 NASB

This instruction, whether we want to believe it or not, is for the church. And the elect are in danger of being misled, only if they are not already intimately acquainted with the Lord at this point.

“Behold, I have told you in advance.” (or “warned” you) Matthew 24:24 NASB (inserts are the author’s)

Imagine the consternation of Peter, James, John, and Andrew at this point being warned about “all these things”, not knowing, of course, that most of this prophecy did not apply directly to them but to some generation of disciples in the future who would actually experience these things.

“So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the

east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:26,27 NASB

We know that no one ever said to Peter, James, John and Andrew, “Behold, He is in the wilderness.” But that is exactly what will be said to some group of disciples late in the tribulation, and there is one very specific difference that can be discerned between the appearance of false “Christs” in the world and the literal coming of the Lord.

False “Christs”, including the false “Christ”, the literal Antichrist, though surrounded by false signs and wonders, always appear in the world.

The Lord, on the other hand, will come on clouds of glory.

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” Matthew 24:29-31 NASB

"And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.. Mark 13:27 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

The gathering from the “four winds” is a gathering from the farthest end of the earth (i.e. those saints who are still alive) and from the farthest end of heaven (i.e. those who are dead in Christ). And it happens just as John, who stood with the Lord on Mount Olivet as the Lord revealed this future event, prophesied...on “the last day”.

Now go back to the original question one more time as the disciples asked, “When will these things happen and what will be the signs of Your coming and of the end of the age?”

After completing the prophecy He gives them a parable related to the signs of the time.

"Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” Matthew 24:32-34 NASB

Hal Lindsey, author of Late Great Planet Earth, prophesied that the “fig tree sign” indicated the “rapture” of the church on May 14, 1988. In this he calculated that a “generation” was exactly 40 years and one generation after Israel was restored to national statehood on May 14, 1948 worked out to be May 14, 1988.

This exegetically foolish interpretation of prophetic scripture turned out to be false, but Hal Lindsey sold 15 million books to gullible Christians. And he still has a thirty minute “prophecy” show on television, which amazes me and proves just how easy the “elect,” who are obviously not deeply connected to the Spirit of truth, are fooled.

A thorough exegete of scripture, even without the guidance of the Spirit of truth, would reveal that the fig tree putting on leaves was not a “sign” but a metaphor in the form of a parable.

The Lord’s reference to the fig tree (“...and all the trees...” Luke 21:29) putting on leaves as a natural sign that summer is near is compared with the prophetic events He has revealed to them as being spiritual signs to the generation who will witness, notice, and experience them, which is the answer to their original question.

“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

Likewise, the very word, “generation,” in this passage, transliterated as *genea* (Strong’s #1074), in context, obviously means the whole multitude of mankind or, at least, the whole multitude of Christians living at the time the fig tree and all the trees begin to put on leaves. It does not mean forty years as Hal Lindsey foolishly speculated.

The disciples were instructed that “all these things”, including the birth pains increasing both in frequency and intensity were the “signs”, and, that just as we naturally know that spring is coming when the trees put on new leaves, so we will know that His coming is near when we see “all these things” taking place.

So who is the “this generation” that will not pass away until all these things come to pass?

This is so simple that I cannot believe anyone who reads the scripture with a clear mind could possibly miss it. The fact that they do miss it, by the droves, is proof of the power that strongholds of presumptive “truth”, false teaching, and doctrinal error have in hindering the simple, straight-forward, Spirit revealed truth of scripture.

The generation (entire group or class of people) who see “all these things” (the final escalation of birth pains) taking place is the generation who will experience the tribulation and the return of Christ.

Many have already noticed that the fig tree and all the trees are beginning to put on leaves, but the event that the Lord describes in the parable of the ten virgins, which is a part of His answer to the disciples’ question, scripturally represented by the groom’s announcement, “Behold! The bridegroom is coming,” will cause the entire body of Christ to notice that the fig tree, and all the trees, are putting on leaves. (See **“The Parable of the Ten Virgins”**)

If that be us, our children, and our grandchildren, so be it. My own immediate response when the truth hit me was fear. I don’t want to experience tribulation any greater than what I am already experiencing, and I don’t want my children or grandchildren to experience it, either.

But, on the other hand, I am sick of the fact that the church, after 2000 years of history, is still divided and immature, tossed around by every wind of teaching and the cunning and craftiness of deceived men, most of whom have doctorates in biblical Greek and Hebrew, and the shockingly poor witness we bear, both to the world and to one another.

If it takes the crucible of tribulation to mature us so that we speak the truth in love, and we “grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part,” builds itself up in love...then so be it.

If it takes the crucible of tribulation, including my own martyrdom, or the martyrdom of my children and grandchildren to reveal the glory of Christ in the world and bring millions upon millions from every nation, tribe, and tongue to saving faith...then so be it.

It is not my wish to be included in “this generation”, but, based on the revelation of scripture by the Spirit of truth, it is now my hope.

If the truth is too hard to bear, be very careful that you do not reject it without prayerfully examining the scriptures to see whether or not what is being said here is true.

Our future, our children’s future, our grandchildren’s future, and the future of friends and family may hinge on our response.

If we fall back on the demon-inspired dispensational, pre-trib “rapture” mush we have been fed by those who themselves have been fed by the same unscriptural mush, we do so only by ignoring the prophetic warning of the Lord Himself.

"See, I have told you ...(or “warned” you)...in advance.” Matthew 24:25
(insert is the author’s)

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