

“The Day of the Lord - Under Grace, Watchings and Praying Are Not the Order of Our Day!”

Review: Our Lord's Teaching Regarding the Tribulation: “Watch and Pray!”

In the Prophesied and Coming Tribulation Period —

- ***Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As In the Days of Noah***
- ***Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As With the Servants***
- ***Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As With the Virgins***
- ***Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As With the Nations***

In the Prophesied and Coming Tribulation Period —

- ***Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As In the Days of Noah***

[READ] Matt. 24:37,42–44

37 But as the days of Noe [were], so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

...

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

- What is the moral of this story? It is that believers living in the time described must be watching for the signs so that they can respond accordingly. Those missing the signs, due to their unbelief and disregard of these commandments, will not be able to respond correctly to the time with its challenges and will accept the Mark of the Beast and be eternally lost. That is the word of the Lord.
- These are detailed instructions for that time and only for that time. They are not for us today. They are entirely about those living in the coming Tribulation period, and here, specifically, to Jews living in the promised land, for which they are directly applicable and essential teaching for that time. Watching and prayer are essential in the Tribulation period, but they are not relevant to our Dispensation of the Grace of God because we do not have either that judgment ahead or that empowering enabling.

Matthew 25 paints the same picture, for Christ's teaching there looks forward to the coming Tribulation and not to the Dispensation of the Grace of God. But after the catching up of the Church, which is His Body, the Lord God will, in the new Dispensational program, focus his work on this program our Lord taught so much about during his earthly ministry.

In the Prophesied and Coming Tribulation Period —

● ***Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: With the Virgins***

- Note the frequent use of the Gk. word translated “watch”. So many today try to somehow harmonize these Tribulation teachings with Paul’s revelation for today, effectively destroying all of the Dispensational distinctives. That is so harmful. Mixing grace and law, even the Kingdom Law or its preview in the Tribulation, renders the Word of God ineffective, easily changing the truth of God into a lie.

Matt. 25:1-13

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five [were] foolish.

3 They that [were] foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, [Not so]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

- Five virgins are of the elect, and five are not. The differences between them are dramatic. Notice that there is nothing here about salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from works. Rather, “watch and pray” are the words that point to salvation here, are they not? When the signs of his coming and the impending judgment are seen, obedience to the principles laid out here will be forthcoming in the believer, since the Holy Spirit will be upon them and his will shall be accomplished, as those many scriptures have made so clear.

Our Outline Today: Further Contrasts Abound: Under Grace, Watchings and Praying Are Not the Order of Our Day!

- Under Grace, Watchings and Praying Are Not the Order of Our Day!
- Concerning the Times & the Seasons, the Pauline Teaching Is For Us
- Concerning the Satanic “Apocalypse” of the Tribulation, It Shall Come

I. Under Grace, Watchings and Praying Are Not the Order of Our Day!

- Take note, for this is critical to our understanding of the Kingdom requirements for entry into that blessed state: Both faith and works were required for entrance into the coming Kingdom. Those that did not have the needed obedience were not allowed in, as both teachings in chapters 24 & 25 of Matthew show.
- So, as you have noticed, dispensational contrasts abound between the legal requirements of the law and the principles of grace, don't they?

II. Concerning the Times & the Seasons, the Pauline Teaching Is For Us

- So, as we are highlighting again today, there are many differences between how the Lord will work during the Great Tribulation and how he is working today under grace. Many, many. Let us now see some of them directly from this word in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian believers:

[READ] 1 Thess. 5:1-5

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

[READ] 1 Thess. 5:6-11

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake ([“gregoreuo”], the word translated “watch” in Mt. 24:42 & 25:13 - watching was an absolute requirement for entry into the Kingdom]) or sleep ([“katheudoo”] - sleeping or being less than mindful regarding the requirements for Kingdom entry, with the five virgins in Mt. 25 being the chosen example) we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

- Note the careful distinction here between the subjects mentioned; in the one case, all of us living under grace as a “rule”. In the other case, those living under the “rule” of Tribulation: principles of waiting and watching and obedience when the signs are seen, just as in our Lord’s teaching as recorded in the Matthew account:
 - Compare the “ye’s”, and the “us”, in verses 1, 2, 3 & 5, with the “they’s” and the “them’s” in verses 10 and 11.
 - The “day” and the “night” here are not emphasizing a moral way of life primarily. Rather, the emphasis here is on the times and seasons. This is a dispensational contrast that is being highlighted
 - Watching and its contrary, sleeping in Matthew 24 & 25 and elsewhere relate specifically to the Lord’s teaching concerning the signs of the times. That warning was critically important for those who would be living during the Tribulation. To fail in that challenge would lead to failing to obey, which was absolutely required for salvation. But though there is grace manifested in every dispensational plan, even in that of the Tribulation, it is not the “rule,” for obedience and therefore works are required. Grace is not the measure of the working of God except in our present dispensation of the grace of God. Today grace and, accordingly, gracious exhortations are the “rule”. During the Tribulation, on the contrary, watching and prayer, and the warnings regarding the necessity of obedience to the signs, were the rule. This difference is an essential and dispensational difference.
- There is a word used here for “sleeping” in a figurative sense, or being “less focused or less mindful”, as it were. There is another word which is sometimes used figuratively but also used of physical death (“κοιμάω” = “koimaoo”), see 1 Thess. 4:13 for example). The word used here in verse 10 (“καθεύδω” = “katheudoo”) is never used of physical death in the New Testament. That is so important to understand as that is critical to our understanding of this verse and its exhortation in the following verse. This verse is not referring to whether we are alive or not, as Paul teaches

in the previous chapter, but whether we must obey the Kingdom requirement.

- Verses 9 and 10 therefore provide the clear dispensational teaching in a nutshell: Whether we watch or not, whether we are focused and alert or not, we should live together with him. This is so clearly a dispensational statement of great contrast with the teaching regarding the coming Kingdom and the requirements laid down for entry into it. So clear! So clear indeed. The unlimited pouring out of the abundance of grace on believers today is the only basis for many of Paul's exhortations, including this one here.

However, that watchfulness and focus are not required of us is no license for us to be the opposite, of course. No! We are to be these things in a general sort of way, for the fruit of the Spirit would produce it; it is just that we are not required to be such, and the specifics for us today are very different. Waiting patiently for that great sign of Daniel 9 & 12 and Matthew 24 is simply not only wrong but dangerous today. That is specifically for the Jews and primarily those living in and awaiting the Lord's return in Judea and Jerusalem, not us today, at all.

And the outpouring of grace on us sinners of the Gentiles is the basis of the purely gracious exhortation of verse 11:

1 Thess. 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

- It is therefore because we have not been appointed to wrath but to salvation (and this is, of course, the pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church which is His Body), that we are so exhorted. Such blessings indeed are ours under the fullness of the grace of Christ. Those that do not rightly divide the word of truth and properly distinguish the dispensation of God's grace cannot have this comfort in its truest sense. Really.
- But that is not the end of the story, for our apostle continues the general subject of these dispensational differences in his second letter. False teachers were leading many astray, as he writes in the first letter. It seems that the evil teaching had continued even after Paul's letter was received in Thessalonica. For now he writes in very stark terms what that coming period will be like. He taught them this before but they had either forgotten or willingly bought into the lies of the enemy.

III. Concerning the Satanic “Apocalypse” of the Tribulation. It Shall Come:

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:1-4

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:5-12

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. [*“let” = “withhold”, or “restrain”, for it is the same Gk. word in these several places.*]

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 [Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. [*See Matt. 24:15, Dan. 9:27 and 12:11*]

- The argument is simply that they should be encouraged because it is clear that the “day of Christ (or the Lord as in some manuscripts)” cannot be active since the evidence of that time is not visible. It is really that simple.
- This chapter begins with the exhortation, and it will end with one. These are “gracious” exhortations stating the free blessing provided and exhorting based upon the reception of those blessings. The interpretation must be dispensational, for the differences in how Almighty God has worked have varied so much as the dispensations have changed.
 - The apostle writes that believers under grace should not be troubled “as if” they were soon going to be in the midst of the coming Tribulation or that they were already in that prophesied period; rather, they should rejoice as those who were to be

delivered from that time. Also, remember, this second letter was written after the first, and the teaching of chapters 4 & 5 of the first letter was surely written on the hearts and minds of these believers. They provide the immediate context of this letter.

- So these “grace” believers were living in an entirely different and unique dispensational context. By detailing the lives of those living in the Tribulation, the apostle effectively shows the contrast. They surely know these differences well, as they have already been taught; therefore, they may be exhorted to “remember”.
- Verse 3 is the most important verse here. As you will recall from our former teaching on the Rapture or Catching Up of the Body of Christ, the “falling away” here in this verse is the “departure” of the believers when Christ calls us home into heaven’s glory. The main events of the Tribulation period cannot occur until we have been removed from this earth. Then God can return to his work upon this earth in reference to the nation of Israel. Satan will advance his work in response to God’s work. The book of Revelation (and Daniel) gives many details, as we have seen.
- Verse 7 teaches us that the satanically empowered signs and wonders and other miracles that will be used during the Tribulation period to convince many to obey antichrist and his representatives will be in a restrained form, also seen during this current dispensation. This explains some of the cults of our day and movements where such miracles are claimed. But this is satan’s work and must be countered with the teaching of the word of grace as we are enabled.

Conclusions:

- The most important conclusion to be drawn from our study here is that the character of the times we are living in today under the outpouring of the grace of God is entirely different from the character of the times that believers in the coming Tribulation will endure. There are several reasons for that: Satan and his evils are suppressed due to the church’s presence. But also, there is an essential difference in how the Lord God is working. Today, grace is ruling. But in that coming time, after our catching up into glory, the requirements of watching for the signs and obeying the Lord when they are seen will dominate. The difference in the empowering of the Holy Spirit in believers is also significant ensuring that indeed “all Israel shall be saved.”
- Paul’s teaching in the Thessalonian letters, though written early in his apostolic ministry, makes it clear that watchings and prayer, while the order of the day for those believers living in the coming Tribulation, are not the order of the day for us

today, living under the fullness of God's wonderful grace. We need to know this well. Amen?