

“The Day of the Lord - Watch and Pray”

Introduction:

- Today our theme is, again, the Coming of Our Lord Jesus, or to use a word that conveys much meaning, the “apocalypse” of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last time we introduced this subject, and I trust that that was a blessing to you. That the promises regarding the coming of the Lord will be fulfilled exactly as written, in some cases nearly four thousand years ago or more, is most comforting, even for us today who are living under grace.
- We shall see clearly the dispensational significance of these revelations. In our studies here beginning in this lesson, our focus will be on that very thing, the dispensational distinctives between Grace, as we know it today, and Law, as seen in the Tribulation. As we will see, the “dispensational” contrasts between Kingdom preparations and laws, and the principles of grace that are effective today, are great indeed.

Review: Our Lord's Warnings Concerning Things to Come Are Serious

- **Old Testament Prophecy Supports Our Lord's Teaching in Every Way**
- **Our Lord's Teaching Reveals First the Suffering and Then the Glory**
- **Old Testament Prophecy Supports Our Lord's Teaching in Every Way**
 - The Coming of the Lord - His Glory Displayed and His Purpose Realized:
 - Let's not forget that the central theme of the Tribulation Period is the salvation of Israel, nationally. This will be accomplished by the Lord God saving a faithful remnant and creating an elect nation to inherit “the promised land,” thereby fulfilling many of the terms of Prophecy regarding the Seed of the Woman.

Zech. 12:10 ... And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for [his] only [son], and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] firstborn.

- There is a National focus here - Israel in the Land that was Promised. These events are by the Lord scheduled for the end of the Great Tribulation. The spiritual salvation of the Elect Jews [as in Matt. 24:31] shall be accomplished by God.

All unbelievers will be removed and judged at the Second Coming -

there is much in the book of Revelation that is about this. The gospels also are focused on these things.

- Here we have the direct lead-in to our subject today, the Dispensational Significance of all of this. In our last study here, we saw how Ex. 19:5 sets the stage for the end-times prophecies: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth [is] mine”.

The missing link in our understanding here may be misunderstandings about the controlling presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Tribulation period. At that time the elect will be empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit according to Jer. 31 & 32, and that will make this obedience not only a possibility but also a reality for the elect remnant of Israel.

Remember the word of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah that we have examined so often over the many years of our teaching here:

Jer. 31:31-34 [*The New Covenant revealed.*]

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33 But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

[READ] Jeremiah 32:39-42

39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

42 For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

- And so "... all Israel shall be saved." Paul's words summarize the Old Testament prophetic revelation regarding what had been and what would come to be for his chosen people. They had turned against him and had suffered the consequence of that rebellion. Their suffering would continue until the appointed time of their national redemption. That time would come, but not until they had come, as it were, "through the fire" of the Tribulation, a time like no other. But the work of the Lord in them would be so very, very wonderful that the former times would not even come back into their memories. As verse 42 summarizes it so well, "For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them."

Indeed, an elect nation will be created, and it will be the Lord's work to accomplish it. "All Israel shall be saved."

- Now we are well prepared to look at our Lord's teaching regarding this coming prophetic period, the Tribulation.

- ***Our Lord's Teaching Reveals First the Suffering and Then the Glory***

- Christ's teaching here comprises the singular "Olivet Discourse". This teaching is an austere and solemn warning for all those who will live during this time, a time like nothing before upon this earth. Those words should cause all who read or hear them to pause and consider what they are saying.

Matthew 24:1-3

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

...

Matthew 24:4-6, 8-9 [*False Christs and great tribulation, "All these are the beginning of sorrows."*]

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. [*Great trials on the earth will come...*]

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. [*Martyrdom will be the order of the day.*]

Matthew 24:13-14 [*False prophets shall arise, but the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached and many will endure to the end and be saved.*]

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

[READ] Matthew 24:15-22 [*Those discerning the signs must obey: Verses 16 - 20; After those things shall be the coming of the Lord with unmistakable miracles and signs from God.*]

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

- The sign spoken of by Daniel will be the sign that indicates that the second half of the Tribulation has begun. This is where the clock begins for the Jews, as the Lord God now works to create a nation, an elect nation anew, for his name. The elect must immediately leave for the place where God will protect them, as Rev. 12:6 and 13 indicate:

Daniel 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

[READ] Rev. 12:6, 13-14

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

...

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

- So the return of the Lord as scheduled in prophecy shall occur. No one knows the time of this, but the signs will declare that the divine clock has now been started, and events will occur precisely as scripture has declared:

Matthew 24:29-31

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

- The parable of the Fig Tree highlights the critical nature of those days and their significance:

Matthew 24:32-35

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

- Today we will begin to see dramatic dispensational contrasts between our current dispensation of God's grace and the coming Tribulation. Those that seek to place the Body Church in that period have no scriptural basis for their teachings. For today, grace reigns. But the times of the coming Tribulation period are all about watching and waiting, for when the signs are given, only the elect of God will see them and fully obey them, and only the elect will be protected by Almighty God and his angels from the worst of the coming trials during the Great Tribulation.

Our Outline Today: 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***

Next Time:

- ***But, Under Grace, Watchings and Praying Are Not the Order of Our Day!***

In the Prophesied and Coming Tribulation Period —

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

[READ] Matt. 24:37-44

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

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. *[All were lost, taken away, except for the ones in the ark who were preserved whole]*

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two [women shall be] grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. *[The ones "taken" are the ones removed to the lake of fire in judgment; the ones left behind are ushered into the Kingdom blessings.]*

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 simple. During the Tribulation period, as in Noah's day, life would go on in what might seem to be a normal way, until the end when it would be too late. The believer in that day must be watching for the signs so that he 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. See 2 Thess. 2:3-11 & Rev. 13 and following.

So the sign revealed in Daniel 9, regarding the exact midpoint of the 7-year Tribulation, is indeed a most critical one.

- 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.

In the Prophesied and Coming Tribulation Period —

II. Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As With the Servants:

Matt. 24:45-51

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed [is] that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite [his] fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for [him], and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint [him] his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [*Compare Matt. 13:42 &*

Is. 33:14]

- This is all about discerning the signs of the times. One must “watch” to discern them, and one must be obedient when they are seen. Otherwise one is “lost”. Those who do not watch and are not obedient are, in the end, removed when the Lord returns.

So, again, the warning is simple. It may not seem that the time is short and that the return of the Lord may be far off, so living like it is near is not required. But, our Lord says that proves unbelief, with the consequence of eternal damnation. Watching and prayer are essential in the Tribulation period but 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 —

III. Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: With the Virgins:

- Note the frequent use of the word for “watch” here in this chapter, as we pointed out earlier in our studies on “The Long War Against God” many years ago. That so many today try to somehow harmonize these Tribulation teachings with Paul’s revelation for today, effectively destroying all of the Dispensational distinctives, is so sad indeed, isn’t it? 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.

[READ] 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. Faith is involved, however, by implication, since apart from believing the gospel of the Kingdom these five virgins could not have been properly obedient. But these exhortations are all about works, aren’t they?
- “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.

In the Prophesied and Coming Tribulation Period —

IV. Watchings and Prayer Were the Order of the Day: As With the Nations:

- We see a similar teaching in the rest of chapter 25. We find there the parable of the talents, which is equally based on the knowledge of the Lord's return. One must be ready, for the judgment will reveal the truth. Only the signs can provide that knowledge.

Matt. 25:31-34, 41, 45-46

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

...

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

...

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

- There is something quite profound taught here. Many non-dispensational commentators are teaching that somehow it is a spiritual thing to be bound by these work requirements since it should be clear that no one could ever keep these Kingdom laws completely; therefore, grace is being exemplified here. But this is not true. The Lord explains this here in verses 44 & 45. The righteous were not treating those around them "as if they were the Lord" at all. In fact, they answer his statements with the transparent question [and this is an amazing question indeed], as the Lord has just explained that they, being righteous, would now be receiving their inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom. So their question implies that they did not understand what he had just said. This is very interesting indeed.
- Because these teachings are directed at Gentiles, it is clear that there is salvation for Gentiles in the Tribulation period, although it is not so clear as to what the basis of it will be. Apparently it is the witness of the Jews that leads Gentiles to their messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the subject of their saving faith. They will submit to the rule of the Jewish people as Isaiah 60 reveals; there will be no anti-semitism as the Tribulation period comes to a close:

Isaiah 60:12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

Isaiah 60:1-3

1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Conclusions / Exhortation:

- Encouraging, brethren? I would hope so. For the Lord God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Earth and all that is in it, shall keep his promises, whether to Israel or for us members of his heavenly body!
- Again, as we have been emphasizing for a while here in our studies, the Tribulation for Israel will be a time of suffering before their Messiah's glory is fully revealed. But for us, beloved, our hope is in the imminent return of Christ for his church. This most "blessed" hope will be glorious indeed.
- For Israel, both faith and obedience are requirements, **not** faith alone. But for us, faith and faith alone (with works "prohibited" in the statement of the gospel of grace itself) are the essence of our eternal inheritance.
- But the bottom line is simply this: During the Tribulation period, God's elect remnant shall be saved to his eternal glory. Israel will have been fully prepared for their Millennial ministry to the nations. And the glory of the Lord will be displayed upon them. Amen and amen.