

Exegetical Study of Matthew Chapter 24

[Nebraska District Pastor's Conference April 8-9, 1997, Our Redeemer's Lutheran, Martin, South Dakota]

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Introduction

Last summer during an August Sunday worship service a spicy, colorful man intertwined with my congregation for the morning. He sat in the back of the chapel and respectfully held his own as we jumped around from hymnal to Bible to bulletin. He held his peace as I proclaimed God's Word for approximately twenty two minutes. He even held his ground as my beef cake ushers excused and ushered the worshippers out of the nave. I approached our visitor hoping to strike up a meaningful conversation. He held his tongue no longer.

Within seconds I was receiving the brunt of a tongue lashing. My congregation and the Savior I had proclaimed were being labeled "the whore." My life expectancy was being called into question as he heralded an invasion by China and nuclear warheads sometime around Spring or Summer of 1997. Some of the wandering sheep who hadn't departed the nave were getting anxious. Wielding my shepherd's crook I led my guest outside to our courtyard. As he mounted his crutches on the handle bars of his bicycle he turned to me and offered me a choice. "A blessing or a curse I offer you," barked the harbinger of destruction, "tell your people what I have told you and you will be blessed, fail to do so and you will be cursed." I must admit a response of *Gemuetlicher Abend* genre entered my mind. I struck down that impulse and replied in a humble, I pray, witnessing manner, "I must take your curse because I cannot and will not proclaim anything not taught by the Word itself. Have a good day sir." He grinned a grin I can only assume he reserved for those he "cursed" then pedaled his bicycle away. Again, I assume...I assume he departed to pedal his message elsewhere.

Throughout the autumn of 1996 various members of my congregation brought in anonymous letters they had received via the postal service. These letters spoke of an impending doomsday. They painted the picture of mass chaos and massive loss of human life. The main feature shared by these letters was twofold: First, very little Scripture was used in the body of these letters. Indeed, there was no Scripture cited for the comfort of the saints. Second, the cowards who wrote and mailed these messages would not identify who they were.

Now, just recently, a new form of getting "the message" across is hitting our community. Several from my flock have brought in little strips of paper which they have found affixed to their automobile windshields at work, at play, and at the mall.

The message contained on them is as follows:

GOD SAID WAR

There will be a nuclear war in this country
starting approximately 11:00 a.m. April 15, 1997. Nation will come
against nation, Kingdom against kingdom saith the Lord.

There will be a famine for one year.
Jesus is the Lamp, the Light and the Way.
Make ready. He is coming. God loves you.

These are but three local examples of what is happening and will no doubt flourish in the days to come. Stand in line at the grocery store and you will see Billy Graham pictured on the front cover of the *National Inquirer* or the *Sun*. Surrounded by fire breathing beasts, Rev. Graham headlines by proclaiming a fire and brimstone message “the last day cometh”. Meander into any Christian bookstore and take note how many of the newest titles, lend themselves to endtimes messages...the majority do. Listen to your boombox and you will hear REM singing “It’s the end of the world as we know it.” Note how fast they sing it, they must be thinking the τέλος will arrive before their song ends—nice touch. Read your newspaper, especially the editorials dealing with the recent suicides at Rancho Santa Fe and you read statements like:

“...the events in Rancho Santa Fe show us how close in spirit we may be. Perhaps we would be wise, between now and New Year’s Eve 1999 to hold each other’s hands more carefully, and watch where we are going.”

What is “the message?” The message has to do with, eschatology. Now, I realize there is nothing new under the sun. The message of eschatology has been around well before our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ took on our humanity for us and for our salvation. Likewise the message known as eschatology has been used and misused every day since our Lord ascended to His rightful throne of power and mercy. No doubt at the turn of the last millenium, A.D. 999, hordes of people acted and reacted in panic, hysteria and religious conviction that the end of the world was only months away. As the year 2000 peeks around the corner you the ambassadors of Christ must be aware of this—the message of God has not changed one iota. The half truths and outright lies are going to increase yes, but the truth is right here in the sheath. God’s Word is the only offensive and defensive weapon you have. Know the Word! Help your people know the Word! Get a grip on the sword of the Spirit and you and I will have the wherewithal to do battle in the name of Truth. Bless we the Lord, we have the truth. Bless we the Lord, we have Matthew chapter 24. Bless we the Lord, we have the opportunity to study and know it even now. God bless us this day as we wrap our hands and hearts around the handle of His sword.

Verses 1-2

(1) Και εξελθων ο Ιησους απο ιου ιερου επορευετο, και προσηλθον οι μαθηται αυτου επιδειξαι αυτω τας οικοδομας του ιερου. (2) ο δε αποκριθεις ειπεν αυτοις, Ου Βλεπετε ταυτα παντα; αμην λεγω υμιν, ου μη αφεθη ωδε λιθος επι λιθον ος ου καταλυθησεται.

And Jesus went out and was departing from the temple and his disciples approached him to point out the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said to them, “Do you see all these things? Truly, I say to you, not one stone here will be left standing upon a stone, which will not be totally dismantled.”

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - Introduces a new thought.

εξελθων - Aorist Act. Ptc. from εξερχομαι “go out, go away, retire”

απο - used with a verb of motion to indicate the origin or source from

του ιερου - gen. of separation with the prep. απο / article used to make specific

επορευετο -Imperfect M. indic. from πορευομαι “begone, depart”

προσηλθον - Aor. Act. Indic. from προσερχομαι “come to, approach” / followed by an infinitive of purpose

οι μαθηται – from μαθητης – ου ο “learner, pupil, disciple”

αυτους - referring to ο Ιησους

επιδειξαι - Aor. Act. Inf. from επιδεικνυμι “show, point out to,”

τας οικοδομας -Direct Object of επιδειξει / from οικοδομη –ης, η “building, edifice,”

αποκριθεις - Aor. Pass. Ptc. from αποκρινομαι “answer, reply” / Attributive Substantival use of the participle

ου - implies an affirmative reply

βλεπετε - Pres. Act. Indic. from βλεπω “see, look at”

Ου μη - in combo. this is the strongest form of negation “there is absolutely *no way...*”

αφεθη - Aor. Pass. Subjunc. from αφημι “leave, leave standing, remain”

λιθος - subject of the clause

καταλυθησεται - Fut. Pass. Indic. from καταλυω “throw down, destroy, dismantle, demolish” /

κατα intensifies the concept “totally demolish”

Comments:

As Jesus departs from the temple of Jerusalem we note this particular departure takes place on Tuesday of Holy Week. No doubt it takes place later in the day. Our Savior intends to retreat to his place of lodging. Luke informs us of His Holy Week custom: “Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37)

Εξελθων states Jesus had actually left the temple proper. The imperfect tense of επορευετο demonstrates he was in the process of walking away from it. To be sure, he was within sight of the temple, most likely not outside the city walls when his own disciples approach him “to point out, to call his attention to the buildings of the temple.” Mark records the actual words of one disciple: “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” (Mark 13:1) Though no direct question was asked we would do well to understand a question was being directed to Jesus. All day long Jesus had been teaching He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and rejection of Him would result in destruction. Towards the end of His lesson, the Master Teacher had made a startling prophecy to His impenitent Jewish audience: “Look, your house is left to you desolate.” (Matthew 23:38) Desolate means empty and deserted. Desolate is a word that would strike a cord of fear in the hearer’s ear. The Lord’s chosen nation knew all too well the history of their beloved temple and city. Desolation was the word of the day in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar carried the Jews off into the Babylonian captivity. For 70 years God’s people lived in exile and the temple constructed by Solomon lay in ruins, empty and deserted. When the Jews returned to Palestine they rebuilt the temple. Later Herod the Great remodeled it. Now Jesus had used that awful word “desolate” again.

The physical grandeur and greatness of the temple made Jesus’ prediction difficult to receive. Some of the stones used in the temple’s construction may have been as large as sixty feet long, eight feet high and nine feet wide. Josephus adds that the temple was covered with

plates of gold which reflected a fiery splendor as the sun rose and set each day. Every Jew was proud of his temple. It was beautiful, it was solid, it had undergone enough abuse. Jesus' foretelling; words must have provided a difficult challenge even to the minds of His beloved disciples.

However Jesus is very clear with His choice of words. The One who is declared a prophet both in the Old Testament, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brother. You must listen to him. "(Deuteronomy 18:15) and in the New Testament "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5) here exercises His prophetic office. Jesus uses the vivid and intense term *καταλυθησεται* to foretell an utter, complete ruin of the temple. Yes, it's physical strength and grandeur would take a fatal hit as every stone (*ωδε* - here, right before your eyes gentlemen) would be dislodged and dismantled from its present location.

Yes, Jesus knew what was in store for this wonderful physical gift from the Lord. A mere forty years after His use of the future tense *καταλυωσεται* the Romans under Titus totally demolished Jerusalem and her temple.

Verse 3

(3) Καθημενου δε αυτου επι του Ορους των Ελαιων προσηλθον αυτω οι μαθηται κατ' ιδιαν λεγοντες, Ειπε ημιν, ποτε ταυτα εσται και τι το σημειον της σης παρουσιας και συντελειας του αιωνος

Now, as he (Jesus) was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, and said, "Tell us, when will these things, be? and what will be the sign of your return, and of the completion of the age?"

Vocabulary and Grammar:

δε - parenthetic "now"

καθημενου - Pres. M. Ptc. from *καθημαι* "sit, sit down"

του Ορους-ορος-ους-το "mountain, hill" / Article used to make specific

των Ελαιων-ελαια,-ας η "olive tree, olive"

προσηλθον - cf. v. 1

κατ' ιδιαν - used adverbially / literally "according to their own" / "privately, by themselves"

λεγοντες - Pres. Act. Ptc. / Attendant Circumstance

Ειπε - Aor. Act. IMV. from *ειπον*

ποτε - interrogative adverb of time "when"

ταυτα - "these things" obviously refers to what Christ said in verse two, might include similar topics from chapter 23.

εσται - Fut. M. Indic. of *ειμι*

και - simple connective

τι -interrogative pronoun

σημειον - “sign, distinguishing mark, indication”

σης - possessive adjective

της παρουσιας – from παρουσια-ας η “presence, coming, advent”

και - simple connective

συντελειας – from συντελεια-ας η “completion, close, end of the..., complete finish”

του αιωνος – from αιων-ωνος ο “time, age, (or) the world as a spatial concept

Comments:

The parenthetic use of δε alerts us that Jesus has left Jerusalem. We have a new scene before us. Jesus is sitting (καθημαι) at some location on the Mount of Olives “opposite the temple” (Mark 13:3) As our Lord is seated there, four of His disciples, “Peter, James, John and Andrew” (Mark 13:3) break apart from the herd and draw closer to Him. The question they were about to ask no doubt weighed heavily on their minds.

The disciples’ question: “When will these things be?” addresses their craving to know the time and occurrence of the temple’s total demolition. The ταυτα (“these things”) best fits the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem for that is all which has been discussed to this point in Matthew’s twenty-fourth chapter. Even now, as they ask further about its demise they share a bird’s eye view of the magnificent structure.

This verse takes on intrigue when we run into the connectives και and the questions to follow. Just what were the disciples thinking when they linked their questions? Most solid commentators contend it is idle speculation on anyone’s part to climb into these minds and attempt to figure out any and all erroneous views they may have stored in their cranial attics. Were they sold on the concept the destruction of the temple and the coming of Christ were to be simultaneous or quick succession events? Did they hold to the view the temple would endure until the return of Christ and the judgment? Perhaps that was their understanding at this time. What we do know is they struggled with the big picture even as late as Christ’s ascension. In Acts 1:6 we hear them ask “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” What we do know is after the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost they were granted enhanced understanding by the Holy Spirit. Peter says to God’s people.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets (Acts 3:19-21). What we do know is Christ’s disciples were inquisitive about the destruction of Jerusalem *and* His παρουσια *and* the συντελειας του αιωνος. *What we do know is Christ’s response is much most important for our study and understanding.*

Before we move on to the good LORD’s answer observe...our Seminary Dogmatic notes do use the first three verses of this chapter as a proof passage that “all predicted signs have been fulfilled in kind. Especially here the destruction of Jerusalem with its attending horrors was a prelude to the world catastrophe.”

Also as we begin Jesus’ reply in verse four, take note of the following insights from Professor Wilbert Gawrisch:

The question of the disciples. “When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” links the destruction of Jerusalem with the end of the world. In his reply Jesus also speaks of both these events. In fact, these two catastrophes are so closely interwoven in Jesus’ account that, like two strands spun together to form a single thread they cannot always be clearly distinguished.

There are two reasons for this. The one lies in a characteristic of biblical prophecy. Prophecies often speak of related events without putting them into the perspective of time.

The second reason for the problem...lies in the fact that what happened in the destruction of Jerusalem served not only as a prelude to the end of the world, but also as a type foreshadowing the events of the last days. So, for example, unparalleled calamities and indescribable suffering characterize the time of both of these occurrences.

That we have difficulty in fully understanding the prophecies in the Bible that have not yet been fulfilled does not mean, of course, that God’s Word is unclear. The problem lies not in God’s Word, but in us. It lies in our limited ability to comprehend these deep mysteries of God. We are like an old woman with cataracts on her eyes who can barely make out the form of her grandchildren, even though they are standing in the bright noonday sun. The Apostle Paul says we are like children. Our understanding is limited. “Now we know only in part, but the time will come when we will know fully, even as we are fully known” (I Cor. 13:12). (Gawrisch, WLQ, p.20)

Verse 4

(4) και αποκριθεις ο Ιησους ειπεν αυτοις, Βλεπετε μη τις υμας πλανηση

And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that not anyone mislead (deceive) you.”

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και – emphatic

αποκριθεις - Aor. Pass Ptc.

αυτοις - referring to the μαθηται of the previous verse

βλεπετε - Pres. Act. Impv. “see to it” / ongoing!!! / very much in line with the stress on watchfulness in this chapter.

μη τις - “not anyone” / subject of the clause

πλανηση - Aor. Act. Subj. from πλανω “to lead astray, cause to wander, mislead, deceive, trick, lead into error”

Comments:

Jesus had an answer to give and in fact (the Aorist - αποκριθεις) did offer his answer to His beloved followers (αυτοις). Note the topic of setting times and dates etc. is completely lacking—with good reason. You may have already picked up on a trait of sinful human nature

when it comes to setting a date alongside this issue. Recall my reference to a local editorial in which the author wrote: “Perhaps we would be wise, between now and New Year’s Eve 1999, to hold each other’s hand more carefully, and watch where we are going.” I’ll side-step the holding hands issue for now but I would like to ask the author of that quote “what about New Year’s Day 2000? What about January 18, or April 23, or November 2 of the year 2000?” Is it truly wise to be ready for our Lord’s return only until the eve of a new millenium (by the way, the dating system is devised by human beings)? Sinful human nature takes a date and puts far too much stock into it. The result is at best, carelessness, at worst, damnable deception. We will address this issue at greater length later in the paper.

The first word in Jesus’ answer to his disciples’ concerns is telling. βλέπετε is a call to constant vigilance. Its present tense calls upon you and me to be ever watching so that we are not led into error. I recall the hallowed words of my driving instructor when I was taking behind the wheel. “There are many things you may get away with when driving, taking your eyes off the road is not one of them.” Just as there is continual danger on the highways and roads we drive on so too there is continual danger of being led astray and off the road of Scriptural truth. Our Savior’s words here apply equally to pastors and laymen. The only way to be always alert that no one mislead (πλαναω) or run us off the road is to be on the road, in the Word that is,...continually. To borrow Professor Gawrisch’s terminology, if we truly see these things with cataracts in our eyes...all the more reason to be listening to the voice of our Good Shepherd in His revealed Word.

One final thought, it’s as easy to run over the Greek μη τις as it is to run over the English “no one.” Jesus is not merely asking his followers to be watching for the blatant deceiver or trickster. When someone professes we ought to join them in “shedding our container” and hitch a ride on the good ship UFO we are quick to indict. Μη τις demands we tighten up our focus. Not that I’m suggesting a doctrinal mafia be established, however, this μη τις its does speak to the wisdom of our colloquy system, our conferences (with papers presented), our winkles and circuit gatherings etc. It is a blessing we are on the loving watch for doctrinal integrity among our ranks.

Verses 5

(5) πολλοι γαρ ελευσονται επι τω ονοματι μου λεγοντες, Εγω ειμι ο Χριστος, και πολλους πλανησουσιν.

For many will come in my name, saying, “I am the Christ,” and they will deceive many.

Vocables and Grammar:

γαρ - explanatory

πολλοι - subject of clause / emphasized by its position!!!

ελευσονται - Fut. M. Indic. from ερχομαι

τω ονοματι – from ονομα “name, title, person, authority, power, status” / Article makes it specific

λεγοντες - Pres. Act. Ptc.

εγω - “I” - emphasized by position and use of pronoun!!! / “I” not anyone else

ο Χριστος - “the Christ” specific

και - consequential

πολλους - Direct Object of clause / unfortunately the deceivers will have success!

πλανησουσιν - Fut. Act. Ind. from πλαναω (cf. v. 4)

Comments:

Let me do some explaining (γαρ) says our Lord. *Many* will come in my name. Leading off this verse with πολλοι is meant to grab your attention. Our Lord is going for the jugular here, as a sign of the last times, not only a few, but numerous people will appear in Jesus’ name. As Luther points out in His catechism Jesus’ name is far more than five letters of the English alphabet. “His name” always refers to the revelation of Jesus Christ given to us. And that revelation is found in the Scriptures. As the Greek vocable ονομα demonstrates we know that such people will not be limited to appropriating the bare name “Jesus” or “Christ” but will go beyond, appropriating His power and authority. They will ransack the authority of the Word and place themselves above the word which “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” (Heb. 1:2)

Acts 5:36,37 indicates such deceivers were already rapidly appearing:

Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered”

Acts 8:9,10 as well introduces a deceiver:

Now, for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great. and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed ‘This man is the divine power known as the Great Power.’

Paul in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders warns:

I know that after I leave savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from among your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29, 30)

Since the earliest of New Testament times such deceivers have come. We have seen the likes of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, Jim Jones of Jonestown fame, David Koresh and now the very persuasive Marshall Herff Applewhite and his Internet crazed Heaven’s Gate. As Rev. Frederick Wenzel states “Men will be duped. No error or false claim is too crude or too monstrous, but that someone will fall for it.” (Wenzel, *The Wenzel Commentary*, p. 616) And they will deceive *many* (και πολλους πλανησουσιν) reminds us of the millions who have fallen prey to wiles of such as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Russel, Muhammed and *many* others.

Christian men, women and children must always be on their guard against such deceivers. We must also note their very existence and hellish success is a sign of the last times.

Verse 6

(6) μελλησετε δε ακουειν πολεμους και ακοας πολεμων ορατε μη θροεισθε δει γαρ γενεσθαι, αλλ ουπω εστιν το τελος

And you will surely hear about wars and rumors of wars; See to it you are not troubled (alarmed) for it is necessary these things come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Vocables and Grammar:

μελλησετε - Fut. Act. Indic. from μελλω “to be about to” / in general, of what is sure to happen!

δε - continuation of thought introduced by αποκριθεις in verse 4

ακουειν - Pres. Act. Infin. from ακουω, “to hear, to listen to; perceive, hear of (or) about”

πολεμους – from πολεμος “war, battle, combat, strife” / no article used so indefinite

και - simple connective

ακοας - from the noun ακοη “hearing, hearsay, report, rumor” / Direct Object

ορατε - Pres. Act. Inv. from οραω “to see, perceive, see to it; look to it”

θροεισθε - Pres. Pass. Inv. from θροεω “to cry aloud, to trouble - Passive: Be troubled in mind, to be frightened, be alarmed”

γαρ - justification for μη θροεισθε

δει - Pres. Act. Impersonal

γενεσθαι - Aor. M. Infin. from γινομαι “to become, to come to pass, happen”

αλλ’ - *Strong* adversative!

το τελος – from τελος “end, termination, limit” / article used to make specific / refers back to the συντελεια of verse 3.

ουπω - (from ου and the enclitic πω) adverb of time “not yet”

Comments:

With the δε Jesus continues His answer begun in verse four. Another sign of the last times is hearing of wars and rumors of wars. Needless to say there has barely been an age in history that has not witnessed wars. From the time our Savior uttered these words to the present, our sin sick world has nearly always engaged in such battles. What’s interesting about some of the modern day eschatology messages is they discount the past or even the on-going wars and point to the next great war as going to initiate something the previous wars have not. Jesus is not so specific. Note the lack of an article with πολεμους. Also note Jesus himself does not adjoin a specific war with His παρουσια. Such things must happen (δει γαρ γενεσθαι), but (αλλα is a *strong* adversative) the end is not yet. The end is one which our LORD has set. We will hear more about that τελος when we study verse fourteen.

In the meantime, Jesus urges “See to it, you are not troubled.” Again the present tense and thus a continuation concept spills over into Jesus’ exhortation to us. These are not the words

of a hard body drill sergeant to His sniveling recruits. These words are quite informative and confidence boosting when one considers the will and the power of the One who speaks them. In the hands of the Almighty, wars may indeed be used to spread the kingdom. At the very least they may be regarded as a means by which the LORD lovingly disciplines and schools His elect. Though wars are ugly, violent, and unquestionably the result of human sin and selfishness they never get so far out of control that we might consider striking the following words from our Sunday morning creed: “He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

Because of wars, e.g. the Middle East, Israel and Lebanon, Ireland, and even the recent unrest in Albania which sent our missionaries packing, every Christian ought to be on alert status. These are real signs. They do indicate the world is locomoting toward the judgment Christ will pronounce and carry out at His Second Coming. However, as His child you do not have to lose heart, a wink of sleep, or a day of service to Him because of them.

Verse 7

(7) *εγερθησεται γαρ εθνος επι εθνος και βασιλεια επι βασιλειαν και εσονται λιμοι και σεισμοι
κατα τοπους*

For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes, throughout places

Vocabulary and Grammar:

εγερθησεται - Future Pass. Indic. from *εγειρω* “rise, arise, arouse”

γαρ – explanatory

εθνος - “a multitude associated or living together, race, nation” / lack of article makes it indefinite

επι - accusative and verb indicating direction of the will and action - “against”

και - simple connective

εσονται - “royal power, dominion, kingdom, rule” / again no article – indefinite

και - continues the list

εσονται - Future Mid. Indic. of *ειμι*

λιμοι – from *λιμος* “scarcity of harvest, famine, hunger”

σεισμοι – from *σεισμος* “a shaking, a commotion, earthquake”

κατα - with accusative of place “down through, up through, through-out”

τοπους – from *τοπος* “place” / accusative plural object of the distributive force of *κατα* / actual localities will host these phenomena

Comments:

Jesus gives further explanation (*γαρ*) of the previous verse. With words very similar to Isaiah 19:2 “I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian—brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.” With Cain and Abel, the arrogant men of Babel in our memory banks you can see why Jesus goes into further detail. Wars are

merely the manifestation of the people, the sinful people who make up *εθνος* and who go to great lengths, even attempting to dethrone the LORD God, in order to establish their puny kingdoms (*βασιλεια*). The sinful human heart is ill, greedy and murderous. It has prompted such rising and falling upon one another for the most unethical of motives. Be alert Christian. Just as it has been in days of old, this rising and falling upon one another is going on today. It is a sign that He will come again to judge.

Jesus now adds (*και*) to His list of signposts some calamities to be found in the realm of nature. Famines are also signs shared by the generations. Acts 11:28 tells us: “One of them named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a sever famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (*This happened* during the reign of Cladius.)” In recent years we are well aware of the ravishing famines in Ethiopia and Somalia. Undoubtedly there are famines in *κατα τοπους*, real localities that you and I are not even aware of. The signposts are there.

And there will be earthquakes (*σεισμοι*), seismic activity bearing witness to nature itself groaning and awaiting the great day of deliverance. On November 1, 1755, 60,000 people perished due to a violent earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal. Seismic activity hammered Kobe, Japan recently. What were you thinking when Candlestick Park shook and swayed during the 1989 World Series? “Rats, no ball game tonight?” “Good grief; the end is here!” or “There’s another signpost my ascended Lord and Savior has erected to keep me alert.”

Again, if you love your Dog notes you may wish to heed...they use verse 7 as a proof passage “abnormal physical conditions forebode the collapse of the world. They are signs pointing to Christ’s return.” Yes, they do. Now as we travel ahead to verse eight, I would urge any and all who are contemplating such signposts to recall with whom you travel: “Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the LORD on high is mighty” (Psalm 93:4). We may be prone to cower yea even doubt our position when our eyes behold the seismic power of earthquakes and the stranglehold might of famines. Yahweh, the good LORD who has established His covenant of grace with us is our strength. He says, “*See to it that you are not troubled.*”

Verses 8

(8) *παντα δε ταυτα αρχη ωδινων*

But all these things are the beginning of birth pains.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

παντα - “all” / absolute! / in emphatic position

δε - continues the thought by way of adversities force

ταυτα - “these things” referring to the foregoing observable facts

αρχη - no article stressing quality

ωδινων – from *ωδιν-ινοσ* the pain of child birth, travail-pain, birth pain / derived from the concept

“*חבל הממה*” which the Jews and the rabbis used in anticipation of the sufferings and woes

which they thought would precede the Messiah’s arrival. Jesus uses the term to show these birth-pains refer to His second coming or advent.

no verb – supply copula

Comments:

Our Savior takes the issue by the collar with an adversative *δε* and an emphatic, strategic placement of *παντα*. Absolutely all these signs are but the beginning. Perhaps we might entitle this verse: “no pain, no gain.” Things far more difficult, far more laborious and painful may yet come. To understand the analogy used in this verse I must quote the insights found in our People’s Bible Commentary:

When a pregnant woman experiences her first labor pains, they are usually relatively mild and irregular. The first contractions may occur as much as a month or more before she actually delivers her child. Some people call this “false labor”. But as she starts to dilate in preparation for delivery, her labor pains become more regular and more intense.

Finally, she goes into “hard labor,” and “a woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world” (John 16:21). (Albrecht, *Matthew*, p. 342)

No pain, no gain...it is possible Jesus is telling us that all these signs of the end are going to occur more frequently and more intensely as the world draws nearer to the Last Day. Before we enjoy the glorious new birth, the *παλιγγενεσια* Jesus speaks of in chapter 19:28, we have got some agony to go through. Why? as Albrecht states, “[Jesus’] purpose is not to depress us. He is warning us ahead of time, so that when it happens we will not be tempted to wonder whether he has lost control of his world.” (ibid) The bottom line is this things may get worse than they already are before they get better, but they will get better!

Verse 9

(9) *τοτε παραδωσουσιν υμας εις θλιψιν και αποκτενουσιν υμας, και εσεσθε μισουμενοι υπο παντων των εθνων δια το ονομα μου.*

Then they will hand you over to affliction and they will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations because of my name.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

τοτε - demonstrative adverb of time

παραδωχουσιν - Future Act. Indic. from *παραδιδωμι* - “to give into the hands of another, to give over, deliver”

θλιψιν – from *θλιψις* –*εως η* “a pressing together, pressure, in biblical and ecclesiastical Greek - affliction, tribulation, distress” in other words “suffering that is due to pressure!”

αποκτενουσιν - Future Act. Indic. from *αποκτεινω* “to kill, murder, annihilate”

εσεσθε – Fut. Mid. Indic. from *ειμι*

μισουμενοι - Pres. Pass. Ptc. masc. plural from *μισεω* “to hate, detest”

υπο - used with genitive case to demonstrate efficient cause or agency “by”

παντων των εθνων - absolutely all the nations! - no exceptions

δια - used with accusative to indicate grounds or reason “by reason of, on account of, because of”
το ονομα - article used to make specific / noting that every thing our LORD has revealed about Himself fits under His “name”

Comments:

Then (τοτε) during the beginning of birth pains as described in verses six through eight appear in society and in nature, there will be signs warning of the end, even in the church. Our Sem Dog notes concentrate on this verse “abnormal ecclesiastical conditions, foreboding the collapse of the world are signs pointing to Christ’s return.”

Under pressure, at times deadly pressure...because of Jesus’ name is going to be another signpost. Matthew’s reference in this chapter is quite abbreviated from that of Mark and Luke. It would appear Matthew is content to let stand his quote of our Lord in chapter 10 verses 17-18: “Be on your guard against men: they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.” Luke’s account adds: “...they will lay their hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors and all on account of my name. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me.” I quote extensively so as to provide a basis for understanding the subject of our verb παραδωσουσιν. Persecution of Christ’s own will come at the hands of all walks of life.

The physical persecution and pressure will be intense! The verb αποκτεινω can be so graphic as to mean annihilation. This leaves no room for an accidental death under torture... “ooops, captain we turned the handle on the rack one click too far.” No, this verb implies a willingness and intent to inflict the ultimate punishment. Again, we take notice that these signs have been posted for us. Behold Stephen, stoned to death for his Christian faith (cf. Acts 7:57-60). King Herod put James to death with the sword (Acts 12:1,2). History shows that many disciples have been executed because of their confession of the name of Christ. And though it isn’t fashionable, yet, to report such martyrs’ deaths, we know Jesus’ prophecy is being fulfilled even today.

The other signpost found in Christendom will be “you will be hated by all nations.” As long as Christ’s own are going public, speaking of their Savior globally, there is going to be an unfortunate natural reaction, that is, hatred. Spiritually dead, enemies of the cross will not all be enamored by your biblical message of a Christ crucified and a Christ risen victorious. Paul voices the thought quite vividly in II Corinthians 2:15-16 “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”

Why? How? Can Christ’s own be the smell of death? You proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior of mankind and you will find people, unfortunately many who will be quick to detest you and His message. Proclaim His is the only name given among us by which we may be saved and the opinio legis of your fellowman will kick back like a mule. Either you will receive the death glare of one who refuses to give all credit to the Lord’s undeserved love or you will receive the spiteful ridicule of those who dismiss their accountability all together.

“Because of my name” Jesus says. Though hatred and even physical persecution will be dished out on Christ’s followers, He, His name is the true object of the enmity. In talking with some learned LDS men last year I closed our meeting by saying I would be going home to pray

for them because as well as I could detect (and I told them so) they were severing themselves from Christ and would be spending their eternity in outer darkness...hell. "See," they said, "what a cruel, unloving God you have." I certainly did not hate those men. I know my Savior doesn't, He lived and died for them too. But I also know from our conversation, they cannot stand, they detest God's gift to them.

Verse 10

(10) και τοτε σκανδαλισθησονται πολλοι και αλληλους παραδωσουσιν και μισησουσιν αλληλους

And then many will be entrapped and will betray one another and hate (detest) one another.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - simple connective

σκανδαλισθησονται - Future Pass. Indic. from σκανδαλιζω "to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way; to cause to stumble, to entrap, to be displeased, offended"

και - consequently "and"

αλληλους - accusative direct object of αλληλων "one another, reciprocally, mutually"

παραδωσουσιν - Future Act. Indic. from παραδιδωμι "deliver over, betray"

και - simple connective

μισησουσιν - Future Act. Indic.

Comments:

Another sign within the ecclesiastical realm is that many will be trapped. Unfortunately persecution and hatred will prove to be fatal traps (σκανδαλιζω) for many believers. Bearing the cross, whether it's loss of stuff, or ridicule, or personal injury for the sake of following Christ Jesus is going to be too high a price to pay for πολλοι. One readily thinks of our Lord's parable of the sower: "The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble *persecution* comes because of the word, he quickly falls away" (Matthew 13:20,21). It is heartbreaking to witness it. Persecution, an aspect of cross bearing is not a valid reason to turn one's back on the LORD. Yet, persecution will trap many.

What's more heartbreaking are the evil consequences (και) which result. Often those who turn on Christ, turn on those they once called brother or sister in Christ. For a time in Roman history, Roman officials sought out these renegades who had denied their faith and from them they would obtain the names of Christians. Another sad consequence is where there once was love for fellow believers there is now hatred. Wenzel goes at it this way:

This hatred was not mutual. A true Christian can only have compassion and pity with those who have left them and gone astray. But for some reason those that have gone astray are filled with a deep hatred of their former brethren. In most instances, this

probably is due to a bad conscience in others, to some imaginary wrong some brother has done them. (p. 618)
Indeed, some tough trials lie ahead. Be continually watching! Be alert!

Verse 11

(11) και πολλοι ψευδοπροφηται εγερθησονται και πλανησουσιν πολλους

And many false prophets will rise up and they will deceive many.

Vocabulary and grammar:

και - simple connective

ψευδοπροφηται - “one who act the part of a divinely inspired prophet, utters falsehoods under the name of divine prophecies, a false prophet” / No article stressing quality

εγερθησονται - Future Pass. Indic. from εγειρω (cf. v. 7)

πλανησουσιν -Future Act. Indic. from πλαναω (cf. v. 5)

πολλους - again note the unfortunate success! “Many” will be led into error.

Comments:

This would appear to be a more general reference to the activity of false teachers and their miserable success rate throughout all times. Perhaps these are not as brazen as the characters our Lord introduced back in verse five. Though less radical, they do maintain the capacity of leading Christians into error. It is likely Paul is addressing a fairly parallel issue in Romans 16:18 “For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” Of course you and I must recognize any error, any falsehood, any deception is at best ungodly, at worst, deadly. Simply consider what the very first false doctrine did to our race back in the garden. *That falsehood cost us our peaceful union with our God!*

Verse 12

(12) και δαι το πληθυνθηναι την ανομιαν ψυγησεται η αγαπη των πολλων.

And because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - emphasized!! you may notice Matthew has not been initiating his verses with the conjunction / he does so here

δαι - “because” (indicates reason with accusative case or *here* the articularized inf.)

το πληθυνθηναι - Aorist Pass. Infin: from πληθυνω “to increase, multiply, accumulate”

την ανομιαν – from ανομια “the condition of one without the law, contempt and violation of the law, iniquity, wickedness”

η αγαπη - “affection, good-will, love, benevolence”

των πολλων - generic use of article / by implication: “the great majority”

ψυγῆσεται - Future Pass. Indic. from ψυχω “to breathe, blow, cool by blowing; Passive - to be made or to grow cold”

Comments:

One might be tempted to write this verse off as an indictment of the heathen. It may be much easier to stomach it that way. However that doesn't seem to be the Savior's way here. Following the context and emphasizing his *και* does not permit us to focus solely or even predominantly on the crass unbeliever.

Jesus first takes issue with the cause: “the increase of lawlessness.” Laxity and permissiveness within ecclesiastical ranks will be on the increase. Setting aside Biblical precepts and distancing from the morality of His revealed will is going to be a fact (Aorist - *πληθυνθηναι*) of life. Whether it's pre-marital sex, co-habitation, divorce, roles of God's kind of men and God's kind of women, church fellowship, communion practice, One and only One complete Savior, you name it there will be increasing numbers who will levy the charge “that crusty theology belongs to yesteryear, it no longer applies to us.”

How else can you explain a modern day “theologian” going public with this drivel: “Christ's death in the atonement for the sins of man is the grotesque product of the male imagination...I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff.” (Newsweek, November 28, 1994, p. 62) How loving can it be to pawn off that kind of thinking on your children during bed-time devotions?

Jesus then relates the sad effect. “The love of the many will grow cold.” Obviously love for God will go first. It may start by calling His love weird or the cross “not necessary” or “not applicable” to today's modern circumstances. Next to go will be love for one another. Once people let down their spiritual guard, false doctrine, apathy, indifference begin to jab away. Pretty soon a wicked right cross or left hook takes away spiritual breath. Once one ceases their spiritual breathing (cf. Bivens-Valleskey's “*New Life in Christ*” Lesson 18) faith dies and with it its glorious fruit: love.

“Love comes from God... This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (I might add, a bloody, hanging on a cross sacrifice) for our sins” (I John 4:7,10) It is sad to admit, yet it is true, one of the signposts our Lord sets up displays the antithesis of these wonderful words in I John. Not just a few but many will begin to shut themselves off from His *αγαπη* and will thus freeze out their God given ability to love as He loves.

II Timothy also gives us ample commentary on this verse:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power(3:1-5).

Be continually watching! Be alert!

Verse 13

(13) ο δε υπομεινας εις τελος ουτος σωθησεται.

But the one who perseveres to the end; this same one will be saved.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

δε - “but” continues the thought by way of contrast

ο υπομεινας - Aorist Pass. Ptc. from υπομενω “to remain, abide, persevere” / Attributive Substantival use / singular subject to emphasize the need to apply this to oneself

εις - denoting duration through time

τελος - no article to stress quality “the end, the goal of life itself”

ουτος - demonstrative pronoun “this one” / the one just named - refers to ο υπομεινας

σωθησεται - Future Pass. Indic. from σωζω

Comments:

In the midst of these somber prophecies our Lord plants a beautiful tree of hope. The elect of God (cf. v.22) have glorious promises to grip. Jesus Himself predicts triumph for His church. Those who by God’s grace share the confession of Peter “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) know that Christ has built His church on that confession and “the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (16:18). Those whom the Spirit guards and keeps in the saving faith know that the words of Revelation 2:7 are graciously for them “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

Continue to keep watch! Be alert!

Verse 14

(14) και κηρυχθησεται τουτο το ευαγγελιον της βασιλειας εν ολη τη οικουμενη εις μαρτυριον πασιν τοις εθνεσιν, και τοτε ηξει το τελος.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited world for a witness to all the nations and then the end will come.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

κηρυχθησεται - Future Pass. Indic. from κηρυσσω “to herald, proclaim openly, publish”

τουτο - demonstrative

το ευαγγελιον - originally referred to the reward given to a messenger of good news, later came to refer to the good news itself; here article is used to make specific

της βασιλειας - subjective genitive / again article makes it specific - Christ’s kingdom

ολη - from ολος - η -ον “whole, all”

τη οικουμενη - “the world, the inhabited earth”

μαρτυριον - “testimony, witness”

πασιν τοις εθνεσιν – πασιν makes it universal or absolute “all the nations”

και – consequently

ηξει - Future Act. Indic. from ηκω “to come, arrive, be present”

το τελος - article makes specific / the end of the αιων

Comments:

The hope planted in verse thirteen is nourished and nurtured by the awesome promise of this verse. This gospel, this good news which Jesus Himself had been proclaiming will penetrate the whole inhabited world. Despite the hardships and birth pains to come, the very means by which the Spirit creates and sustains saving faith will not flicker and die. Quite the contrary, the reason the end has been put off to this point is that our Lord is still spreading His kingdom into human hearts.

In his *Biblical Christology*, John Schaller further helps us understand ευαγγελιον:

Christ provided for the proclamation of this gospel throughout the world and to the end of time, assuring his messenger that he is always present to assure the efficacy of their message (cf. Matt. 28:19f.; Mark 16:15f.).

Note “the gospel of the kingdom “ is not only the gospel announcing the kingdom, but primarily the gospel by which the King exercises the power of his saving influence (Schaller, *Biblical Christology*, p. 201).

In regards to understanding this sign Professor Gawrisch writes,

This sign is often misunderstood. People think that the end is still a long way off because there are still many who have not heard the gospel. They overlook the fact that, according to the Bible, the gospel was carried to the ends of the earth already in the days of the apostles (Ro. 10:18). Paul tells the Colossians that it “has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven”(Col. 1:23) (op. cit., p. 24)

The question remains—does Jesus give us this sign for us to calculate the end of the World? Not to the extent that we would contradict clearer passages of Scripture. One such passage we will observe in v.44. Only He who executes the plan and answer to our prayer “Thy Kingdom Come” will determine when the gospel has been preached in the whole world as He wants it done.

Meanwhile you and I have our charge “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) and as we do so faithfully we can “look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:12).

Our Dog notes refer to this verse and most likely the μαρτυριον πασιν τοις εθνεσιν, by stating “the standard according to which Jesus will judge the world is, naturally, His Gospel [because unbelievers reject the Gospel they subject themselves under the Law].”

Indeed the “testimony” can be directed in two paths, just as testimony works in the courtroom setting. Testimony can lead either to acquittal or to a guilty verdict. So it will be with all the nations. Those who hear and believe may be certain of acquittal: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned” (John 3:18). Those who refuse Jesus as their heavenly attorney and substitute will go before the Lord’s holy court on their own merits. The testimony will lead to the only other verdict: “but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:18).

Notice, many millenialists teachings go beyond what our Lord tells us here. In a nut shell we are to expect increasing hostility toward the believers because of Jesus’ name, many who first

believed will fall away, the *αγαπη* love granted many will turn to icicles, and gospel preaching will go on until it penetrates the whole world—and then the end. Our Lord speaks of no other world era, no “Golden Age” intervening. Be continually watching! Be alert!

Verse 15

(15) Όταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ βδελυγμὰ τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ρηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,

When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—he who reads, let him understand

Vocabulary and Grammar:

Όταν - particle of time (combo of *στε* & *αν*) “at that time that, when, whenever”

οὖν - conjunction “accordingly, therefore” / indicates that something follows from another (not temporally but consequentially)

ἴδητε - Aorist Act. Subj. from *οραω* “to see with the eyes, to see, experience”

τὸ βδελυγμὰ - “a foul thing, a detestable thing, abomination”

τῆς ἐρημώσεως - from *ἐρημωσος* “a making desolate, desolation”

τὸ ρηθὲν - Aorist Pass Ptc. from *ειπον* “speak, speak of, say about”

διὰ Δανιὴλ - “by, by means of”

ἐστὸς - Perf. Act. PTC. acc. sing. neut. from *ιστημι* “to stand, set, place”

τόπῳ - no article - generic use

ἁγίῳ - from *αγιος-α-ον* “reverend, set apart for God, pure, holy”

ὁ ἀναγινώσκων - Present Active, Ptc. from *ἀναγινωσκω* “distinguish, recognize, acknowledge, read”

νοεῖτω - Pres. Act. Imperative from *νοεω* “perceive with the mind, understand, ponder, heed”

Comments:

It would appear that verses four through fourteen apply predominantly to the general signs preceding Christ’s *παρουσια*. Though many of those same signposts were being erected and seen prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, the following discourse narrows its focus to the initial question asked by the disciples in verse 3 “when will these things (the total demolition of the temple, their house left desolate) happen?”

Jesus connects this verse with the foregoing using *οὖν*. The force of this “therefore” is not a temporal force which would have indicated all the foregoing signs would be posted as indicators of Jerusalem’s fall. The force of the *οὖν* is more of consequence. Therefore, things being the way they are, be watching and on the alert.

Apparently Jesus has at least three passages from the prophet Daniel in mind. Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 all foretell an abomination that causes desolation. Using the prophetic perspective Prof. Gawrisch encouraged in an earlier quote you may well conclude Daniel’s

prophecy saw preliminary fulfillment when Antiochus Epiphanes set up an altar to the pagan god Zeus in the temple of Jerusalem in 168 B.C. βδελυγμα as used in Revelation 17:4,5 stands for idolatry and its attending filth.

Now Jesus is indicating, in answer to the disciples “when will these things happen?” a similar desecration of the temple will precede the destruction of Jerusalem. The safest bet is to make use of the wider context of Scripture especially here our parallel account in Luke 21:20 proves helpful: “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.” Of course this happened in plain view when Titus and his Roman legions annihilated Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Since Mark uses the same phrase “let the reader understand” as Matthew does here it would seem most reasonable to attribute this a direct quote from our Lord. In its simplest sense I take it to be Jesus’ way of saying, no one is without excuse, they could have, should have been forewarned. Perhaps John 15:22 states the case best: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.”

Verse 16-17

(16) τότε οι εν τη Ιουδαια φευγετωσαν εις τα ορη (17) ο επι του δωματος μη καταβατω
ραι τα εκ της οικιας αυτου

Then those who are in Judea—let them flee to the mountains. He who is on the house-
top, let him not come down to carry off anything out of his house.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

οι - subject coupled with a supplied copula

τη Ιουδαια - place where

φευγετωσαν - Present Act. Imperative from φευγω “to flee away, seek safety by flight”

εις τα ορη - most likely the article refers to the quality of the mountain, mountains provide crags and caves as refuge,

ο - again, subject coupled with a supplied copula

του δωματος – from δωμα-τος “a building, house, house-top, roof”

καταβατω - Aor. Act. Imperative from καταβαινω “to go down, come down, descend”

ραι - Aorist Active Infinitive from αιρω “to lift up, take up, elevate, take away, carry off, carry away with oneself”

τα - neuter indefinite pronoun used substantively “anything, something”

αυτου - genitive of possession / referring back to the subject of the clause

Comments:

Be continually watching. Be forewarned. Then when you see the aforementioned abomination mentioned by Matthew and Luke, “let those in Judea flee to the mountains.” Jesus’ warning applied to those living in the first Christian century. Jesus’ warning implies the dangers involved will not be isolated to those living within the walls of Jerusalem proper.

Historians contend that many Christians heeded this advice of Jesus and made use of the neighboring hills. Some apparently sought refuge as far East as the city of Pella in the Transjordan mountains.

Verse seventeen stresses the haste involved. If you've seen the movie "Twister" or lived in a tornado ally, you may more fully appreciate Jesus' words. When these things happened, there would be no time for packing luggage and belongings. When the attack came it would be like a violent, unpredictable whirlwind which could demand the very life of someone who dilly dallied. Jesus' words here act as the emergency broadcast system. Be continually watching! Be alert!

Verse 18

(18) και ο εν τω αγρω μη επιστρεψατω οπισω αραι το ιματιον αυτου.

And he who is in the field let him not turn back to take away his garment.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - continuation of the list

ο - subject with supplied copula

επιστρεψατω - Aorist Active Imperative from επιστρεφω "intransitively - "to return, turn back, turn one's self about"

οπισω - adverb of place & time "back, behind"

αραι - cf. v. 17

το ιματιον - accusative direct object of αραι from ιματιον "a garment, cloak or mantle (the upper garment)"

Comments:

Obviously, the only place of safety would be outside of Jerusalem. With all inclusive concern Jesus addresses not only those in the city but those outside. When these things happen a return to retrieve even the smallest or most basic item could cost dearly. The Lord Himself hath spoken. The emergency plan is posted. Be continually watching! Be alert!

Verse 19

(19) ουαι δε ταις εν γαστρι εχουσαις και ταις θηλαζουσαις εν εκειναις ταις ημεραις.

And Woe to those who are with child (pregnant) and to those who are nursing in those days!

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ουαι - Note the *emphatic* position / an *interjection of grief* or of denunciation "alas!, woe!"

ταις εχουσαις - Present Act. Ptc. from εχω

εν γαστρι - from γαστηρ "the belly, womb, stomach" [εν γαστρι εχειν - to be with child, be pregnant]

και - connective to ουαι / Woe to the following as well...

ταις θηλαζουσαις - Present Act. Ptc. from θηλαζω "to give the breast, give suck, suckle to nurse"

εν εκειναις ταις ημεραις - "in those days"

Comments:

The dangers and risks, perhaps impossibilities of a hasty flight for those with newborns are known to the Lord and He expresses His sorrow, His dismay. Undoubtedly we might recall the words of Luke 23:29 as another—let the reader understand—"For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'"

Verse 20

(20) προσευχεσθε δε ινα μη γενηται η φυγη υμων χειμωνος μηδε σαββατω.

But keep praying that your flight does not happen in winter time nor on the Sabbath.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

προσευχεσθε - Present Mid. Imperative from προσευχομαι "to pray, to offer prayers"

δε - continues the thought by way of contrast

ινα -

η φυγη - Subject of the clause

χειμωνος - "stormy weather, winter, the winter season"

μηδε - (μη + δε) a negative disjunctive conjunction "and not, neither, nor"

σαββατω - from σαββατον "sabbath day" / no article...indefinite...any sabbath day

Comments:

The very one who is, and was and will be has seen His own wrestle with Him in prayer. Abraham, Jacob, Moses all have demonstrated the humble yet confident act of Christian prayer. The very one who said "Ask, seek, knock" is encouraging a constant use of this precious weapon He bestows on His own.

Winter (χειμωνος) in Palestine is the rainy season. For this flight to take place then would prove more dangerous. Often the roads and streams would be impassable during the winter.

Why Jesus spoke of the Sabbath day has several possibilities. Sabbath law is not being advocated by the Lord of the Sabbath but He does realize the potential risks a Sabbath day flight might present. He is well aware that those schooled by the Mosaic covenant would need time to break themselves away from their retired tutor (i.e. Sabbath Law). The following possibilities then exist: 1) Jesus would like to spare those who would sacrifice their lives by adhering to the Sabbath regulations which only allowed for a journey equal to three quarters of a mile. 2) Jesus was concerned for the frail consciences that would "break" the Sabbath regulation in order to spare themselves: 3) Jesus was concerned about the needless offense taken by others. In any case our Lord couples the running theme: "be continually watching" with a "pray continually." Watch and pray.

Verse 21

(21) *εσται γαρ τοτε θλιψις μεγαλη οια ου γεγονεν απ' αρχης κοσμου εως του νυν ουδ' ου μη.*

For then there will be a great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world until now, neither may it ever be [again]

Vocabulary and Grammar:

γαρ - explanatory “for”

θλιψις - cf. v. 9

μεγαλη - “great, large, numerous”

οια – from *οιος-α-ον* “what sort of, what manner of, such as”

ου γεγονεν - Perf. Act. Indic. from *γινομαι*

απ' αρχης - “from the beginning” cf. v. 8

κοσμου – from *κοσμος* “order, adornment, the world, universe”

ουδ' - a negative disjunctive conjunction (*ου + δε*) “but not, and not, not even, neither”

ου μη γενηται - strongest negation! “may never be” Aorist M. Subjunc. of *γινομαι*

Comments:

Professor Brug would explain prophetic perspective as looking down a line of telephone poles. A prophecy before your eyes may indeed speak to the first pole you behold, but do not discount that same prophecy applies to a “pole” down the line, a pole you cannot see right now. My prior quote of Professor Gawriscch also tipped us off that two catastrophes are interwoven in Jesus’ reply to His disciples, like two strands spun together to form a single thread, they cannot always be clearly distinguished.

I’m setting myself up for confession time. My “cataracts” are bugging me at this point. I do see the first pole clearly in this verse. The explanatory *γαρ* and the assist from Luke 21:20 appears to bulk up the *τοτε*. Jesus is no doubt sharing the reason for the hasty flight warnings of verses fifteen through twenty. A wicked abomination will appear in the holy place.

And there will be great tribulation in that city and temple of God. The world up to 70 A.D. had seen some great catastrophes. The flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the tenth plague and the drowning of Pharaoh’s army, even the earlier destruction of Jerusalem—none of these events can be compared to the devastation and *θλιψις μεγαλη* which befell God’s people and holy Zion in 70.A.D. Sparing you the gory details of historians I will but share what Luke adds in his twenty first chapter:

This is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (21:22-24)

Jesus predicts great tribulation for the city, the temple which housed the people who had minimized their sin, mocked their God and arrogantly stood before Him as the executioner. It happened.

However is Jesus our prophet also looking down the line of poles when he speaks the words of this verse? Second part of my confession/admission: “I would not discount it.” Scriptures use the term “tribulation” as being an integral part of our existence here on sin infested earth. θλιψιν is a direct result and consequence of human nature and the presence of sin in our world. Jesus himself addresses the issue in John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble (θλιψιν). But take heart! I have overcome the world!” Paul and Barnabus use the same term describing the Christian life, in Acts 14:22: “We must go through many hardships (θλιψεων) to enter the kingdom of God.” Revelation 7:14 describes the glorified saints as “those who have come out of great tribulation” (της θλιψεως της μεγαλης).

Taking note of Jesus’ entire reply to this point in the chapter it behooveth us to realize that what Jesus and the rest of Scripture foretell is not a situation that is so drastically different from what the world—especially His church—has experienced before. The Word presents a picture of “the conditions under which the church must function in a sinful world that is degenerating. The great tribulation, then, is scripturally not a matter of change but rather a matter of increasing intensity to the point where” (Johnston, *Does Scripture Teach Millennialism?*, p.34) verse twenty two applies mightily.

Verse 22

(22) και ει μη εκολοβωθησαν αι ημεραι εκειναι, ουκ αν εσωθη πασα σαρξ δια δε τους εκλεκτους κολοβωθησονται αι ημεραι εκειναι.

And unless those days be shortened, no flesh would have been saved; but because of the elect those days will be shortened.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ει μη- “except, unless”

εκολοβωθησαν - Aorist Pass. Indic. from κολοβωω “to cut off, mutilate;...of time: shorten, abridge, curtail”

αι ημεραι εκειναι - subject of εκολοβωθησαν

αν - introduces the apodasis of the Past Contrary to Fact conditional sentence used here

πασα σαρξ - “all flesh” / no article makes this indefinite reference to all mankind, stress is on the physical life tho’ the spiritual isn’t too far behind

εσωθη - Aorist Pass. Indic. from σωζω cf. v. 3

δε - adversative

τους εκλεκτους - “picked out, chosen, select, called out ones”

κολοβωθησονται - Future Pass. Indic. from κολοβωω cf. above

Comments:

The severity and intensity of the θλιψις μεγαλη would be so great that if God did not step in the result would be complete (πασα σαρξ) extermination. As history states, the siege of Jerusalem took place during a period of four to five years beginning in 66 A.D.

The Lord in His tender care for the elect choose to spare the physical lives of some of Jerusalem's inhabitants. The elect are those whom Scripture indicates were elected to salvation. In his Biblical Christology, John Schaller echoes a true Scriptural view on this point:

According to the Scriptures, God did from eternity ordain that certain human beings definitely known to him, shall be brought to faith in the manner, and through the means, appointed by himself, and shall be saved without fail (Schaller, op. cit. p. 30).

Without fail, the Lord will see to it that every one of His elect will come to saving faith.

It is possible that some of the σαρξ saved by the shortening of days was flesh inhabited by some who were yet to come to faith in their Savior. We do not know that for certain but we do know not one of His elect would ever be taken away from Him. The Formula of Concord bears this out as well:

The eternal election of God, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but it is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto; and upon this [divine predestination] our salvation is so founded that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matt. 16:18, as it is written John 10:28: Neither shall any man pluck My sheep out of My hand. And again, Acts 13:48. And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. (*Concordia Triglotta*, F.C. XI r 8, p. 1065)

God looked at the elect and their interests and in their interest let up on the punishment of those already condemned.

To be sure, if this verse is interwoven into the single thread of Christ's prophecy that also addresses the Last Days, you and I may take supreme comfort and refuge in it.

Verse 23

(23) τότε εαν τις υμιν ειπη, ιδου ωδε ο Χριστος, η, Ωδε, μη πιστευσητε

Then if anyone says to you 'Behold, here is the Christ or there he is' do not believe it!

Vocabulary and Grammar:

εαν - Introduces a FMV protasis, such statements would occur

ειπη - Aorist Act. Subjunc. from ειπον

Ιδου - demonstrative particle introducing Direct Discourse "Behold! See!, Lo!"

ωδε - adverb "here, in this place"

Ωδε - (ο, η, το + enclitic δε) "this one here, there"

πιστευσητε -Aorist Act. Subjunc. from πιστευω "to believe, place confidence in"

Comments:

Then, at the time of great distress and tribulation one can expect the emergence of designer saviors. The fall of Jerusalem was going to be ripe for that particular kind of thing. The

chosen nation would carry on as it always had, looking, searching for, even setting up a messiah of political and military prowess. Unfortunately many had not taken the Scriptural words Messiah and Christ seriously. Unfortunately many would not care for John the Baptist's identification, nor the Holy Spirit's descent nor the Father's voice which appointed Jesus of Nazareth as the One to make peace between us and our God.

“Do not believe it:” Again blessed as we are to rub elbows with God's people as often as we do, blessed as we are to know and deal with the Word as we do we may fall “out of touch” with the reality of these thoughts. But then *Newsweek* hears of a mass cult suicide and runs its whole issue on cults etc. There we read a story of a Mr. Tim Stoen who got fed up with life as something empty. In his own words, “Fed up with racism and poverty in America, I was looking to create a utopian society” Jim Jones and his ideology became Stoen's designer savior. In the course of his following Jones Mr. Stoen lost his five year old son. As he tells his survivor's story in the latest *Newsweek*, Mr. Stoen makes a telling statement, “Anybody can get swept away” Tim Stoen, *Newsweek*, April 7, 1997, p.44).

Jesus says don't put your confidence in any other. He knows how tempting it may be.

Verse 24

(24) εγερθησονται γαρ ψευδοχριστοι και ψευδοπροφηται και δωσουσιν σημεια μεγαλα και τερατα ωστε πλανησαι, ει δυνατον, και τους εκλεκτους.

For false Christs and false prophets will rise up and will furnish great signs and wonders so as to deceive even the elect, if it were possible.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

εγερθησονται - Future Pass. Indic. from εγειρω cf. v. 7

γαρ - justification for the proceeding

ψευδοχριστοι - “a false Christ (or Messiah)”, (one who falsely lies claim to the name or the office) no article puts an emphasis on the quality

και - simple connective joining the two subjects.

ψευδοπροφηται - cf. v. 11

και - simple connective joining διδωμι with εγειρω

δωσουσιν - Future Act. Indic. of διδωμι

σημεια – from σημειον “sign, mark, portent”

μεγαλα – modifies σημεια

τερατα – from τερας – ατος “miracle, wonder, prodigy”

ωστε - “so that” used with the infinitive in telic force

πλανησαι - Aorist Act. Inf. used with ωστε “to deceive, lead into error, trick” cf. v. 5

και - used adverbially in climatic, fashion “even, also”

τους εκλεκτους - cf. 22

ει δυνατον - (εστι is inferred) “if possible, able”

Comments:

As justification for the proceeding verse Jesus warns of the dangers of false Christs and false prophets. Our Savior himself points out their amazing success rate. They will have an arsenal of “great signs” and “wonders.” Such will furnish their wares with the result (ωστε) of deceiving their audience.

To boil it all down, a false Christ may be anyone who would take our attention away from the one real issue: sin, and the one real solution: Christ Jesus. It happens down on Temple square in my hometown. It happens when our pop stars start blubbing nonsense about God being a slug, on a bus, trying to make his way home. It happens when a trusted friend makes us question the reliability of the Word. It happens when churches and their seminarians begin to define the Lord and spiritual matters based on their own new esoteric experiences.

Usually there is a success rate which plays on fears. Without Christ, the natural knowledge man possesses leaves a fear of death, judgment and the unknown. False prophets and Christs play upon those fears. Some will urge a denial of the judgment or eternity. Some will fill the fear induced void with a sense of “peace on earth” is paramount and attainable. Some offer a mixture of Bible passages, science and home-made brew to quell the deepest anxiety.

Even the names taken on by other sects in this country, some undoubtedly led by a false Christ or man who claims “his arrival was prophesied in the Bible, that the world’s end is near and that he offers the only path to salvation” bear eerie parallel to the word ψευδοχριστοι. This list of names and brief synopsis of each are also mentioned in the current Newsweek: “International Churches of Christ,” “Church Universal and Triumphant,” “House of Yahweh,” “The Way International,” and “Nation of Yahweh” (ibid, p.48)

We conclude with the words, “so as to deceive even the elect, if that were possible.” The doctrine of election is a doctrine of absolute comfort. Though we have no license to sit on election laurels and figure not a chance, not a chance I could ever be led into error or deceived (cf. Peter’s introverted confidence going into a time of denial) but also know, in the end, it is impossible for the elect to be plucked from His hand. Impossible not because of a power within the elect himself but impossible due to the power of his grace and the means of His grace.

I quote Chemnitz for a more mature explanation,

But God through His Spirit restrains the lies of the devil and directs our minds so that they do not give consent to his errors and lies. But when the good Spirit of God departs, then the error has the field to itself. For in Matt. 24:24 the Lord says. ‘So subtle will be their deceptions and so corroborated by signs and wonders, that they would deceive even the elect—if it were possible.’ Why is this not possible? Because the Spirit guards their hearts. But if that phrase, “if it were possible” were removed, the power of deception would immediately be present (Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, p. 197).

Thank the LORD He guards us along the way. Thank the LORD His final purpose in election is our certain salvation.

Verses 25-26

(25) ἰδοὺ προειρηκα ὑμῖν. (26) εἰάν οὖν εἰπῶσιν ὑμῖν, Ἴδοὺ ἐν τῇ ἐρημῷ ἐστὶν, μὴ ἐξέλθητε Ἴδοὺ ἐν τοῖς ταμείοις, μὴ πιστευσῆτε.

Behold, I have told you beforehand. If, therefore, they say to you, ‘Behold, he is in the desert, do not go out, Behold, he is in the inner (secret) rooms, do not believe it.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ιδου - cf. v: 23

προειρηκα - Perfect Act. Indic. from προλεγω “to say beforehand, to predict”

εαν - Again the intro to a FMV prodasis

ουν - “therefore” consequentially

ειπωσιν - Aorist Act. Subjunc.

εν τη ερημω - place where / from ερημος “solitary, uninhabited, desolate place, desert”

μη εξελθητε - Aorist Act. Subjunc. from εξερχομαι “to go or come out from, go or come forth”

εν τοις ταμειοις – from ταμειον-ου, “storehouse, storechamber, inner chamber, secret room”

supply the εστιν from above

μη πιστευσητε - Aorist Act. Subjunc.

Comments:

Forewarned ought to be forearmed. Once again, no one will be without excuse claiming Jesus was not sufficiently straight forward nor clear enough with us.

As a consequence (ουν) of his words there ought be no credence given to a messiah that hides himself out in the desert or in a secret place. There is no excuse to be searching for a savior, a Christ outside the revealed Word He has given. For us and our day this waning needs to be taken most seriously. There appears to be a new thrill seeking, discovery of new spiritual knowledge that is slowly but surely steering many from the plain truth. Conversion experiences, power encounters, New Age gnosticism etc. are oozing out of their caves and seeping into the mainstream producing horrific results. Claiming secret or esoteric knowledge is quickly becoming the wave of the future, no, strike that, the wave of the present. One evidence I see is visible in these survey results of tomorrow’s pastors in Christian churches across our country: “Of evangelical seminarians, only 26 percent believe that long-standing doctrines are the surest guide for knowing ultimate religious truth and 64 percent reported feeling a strong need for new experiences” (David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland*, p. 195). Another evidence is our most recent tragedy in California. According to *Newsweek*, The cult members believed “he (Appelwhite) was the One, a modern-day Christ” (*Newsweek*, April 7, 1997, p. 32). Appelwhite himself is quoted as saying “I am in the same position in today’s society as was the One who was in Jesus then.” (ibid., p. 41)

Verse 27

(27) ωσπερ γαρ η αστραπη εξερχεται απο ανατολων και φαινεται εως δυσμων, ουτως εσται η παρουσια του υιου του ανθρωπου.

For just as the lightening comes from the east and shines even to the west, so will be the advent of the Son of man.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ωσπερ - “just as, even as, far as”

η αστραπη - “lightening”

εξέρχεται - Pres. Mid. Indic.

απο ανατολων – from ανατολη “a rising (of the sun and stars), the east”

φαινεται - Pres. Mid. Indic. from φαινω “bring forth light, shine, show”

εως - conjunction used to mark the limit (temporal or local) “unto, as far as, even to”

δυσμων – from δυσμη “the setting of the sun; the region of the sunset; the west”

ουτως - “in this manner, thus, so”

η παρουσια - cf. v. 3

ιου υιου - Subjective genitive

του ανθρωπου - Descriptive/Relation

Comments:

When Christ returns neither you nor I will have to go anywhere to see him. Luke 17:23-24 adds: “Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.” Revelation 1:7 states Christ will appear to the whole world at once: “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

Verse 28

(28) οπου εαν η το πτωμα, εκει συναχθησονται οι αετοι.

Wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather together.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

οπου - adverb “wherever”

η - Pres Act. Subjunc.

το πτωμα - “that which is fallen, body of one dead, a corpse, carcass”

συναχθησονται – Future Pass. Indic. from συναγω “to gather together, join together, be gathered, meet”

οι αετοι – from αετοις “an eagle, or vulture may fit best here since eagles are not known for questing for carcasses”

Comments:

To be sure there are as many interpretations of this verse as commentaries on my book shelf. The main task in figuring it out will be whether you wish to link this verse with verse 27 or verse 26.

Linking with verse twenty-seven could lend itself to understanding that the where of Christ’s coming will be clearly seen; in other words: “the returning Christ will be as easy to spot

as a flock of vultures circling over their next meal' (Albrecht, op. cit., p. 350). Or linking with verse 27 could lend itself the understanding espoused by Roehrs and Franzmann; "A carcass attracts vultures with uncanny certainty. With the same certainty the Son of Man will appear to deliver and judge" (Roehrs, Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, N.T. p. 37)

Linking with the thoughts of verse twenty-six would lend itself to understanding the false Christs and false prophets as the vultures who prey upon the stinking corpses of unbelief. It truly is noteworthy how dead and rotten our world is today. The ungodly filth riddling our television programs and rented movies—the drugs—the crime—the corruption—the Goth movement amongst our youth—all of it stinks.

There really isn't anything in the Greek which would demand with absolute certainty which way to go with this verse. That being, the case I would lean toward a linkup with verse twenty-seven.

Verse 29

(29) Ευθεως δε μετα την θλιψιν των ημερων εκεινων ο ηλιος σκοτισθησεται, και η σεληνη ου δωσει το φεγγος αυτης, και οι αστερες πεσουνται απο του ουρανου και αι δυναμεις των ουρανων σαλευθησονται.

Now immediately after the affliction of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not furnish its light and the stars will fall from the heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

Ευθεως - Emphatic position!

δε - parenthetic "now"

μετα - "after" with accusative [added to names of events of achievements]

την θλιψιν - cf. v. 9

των ηπερων εκεινων - "of those days"

ο ηλιος - "the sun"

σκοτισθησεται - Future Pass. Indic. from σκοτιζω "to cover with darkness, to darken"

και - simple connective

η σεληνη - "the moon"

δωσει - Future Act. Indic.

το φεγγος - "light of the moon"

οι αστερες - "star"

πεσουνται - Future Mid. Indic. from πιπτω "to fall, to fall from or down"

του ουρανου - from ουρανος "heaven, the heights above"

αι δυναμεις - from δυναμις "strength, power"

σαλευθησονται - Future Pass. Indic. from σλευτησονται "agitate, shake, cause to totter"

Comments:

To this point Jesus has answered his disciples' question with an extensive list of signposts. Verses 4-14 were signposts of a general nature that took us all the way to το τέλος. Verses 15-28 were signposts that predominantly dealt with the overthrown and destruction of Jerusalem. Those signposts also took us all the way to His παρουσία (v.27). As we approach the "third part" of Jesus' sermon we note just what the τέλος and the παρουσία will be for they will occur together.

How long and when the "tribulation of those days" will last we do not, nor can we know. Immediately after those days, we will realize the fulfillment of Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4: "The stars of the heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light."... "All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine like shriveled figs from the fig tree."

Gawrisch sums it up this way:

The forces of nature such as gravitation and inertia that keep the sun and moon, the planets and stars in their appointed places in the universe will be suspended. As a result, the whole universe will collapse in a cosmic cataclysm that staggers the imagination. (Gawrisch, op. cit., p. 28)

Verse 30

(30) και τοτε φανησεται το σημειον του υιου του ανθρωπου εν ουρανω, και τοτε κοψονται πασαι αι φυλαι της γης και οψονται τον υιον του ανθρωπου ερχομενον επι των νεφελων του ουρανου μετα δυναμεως και δοξης πολλης

And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will lament and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - connected to the events of verse 29

τοτε - "then" again as consequence of the foregoing, then...

φανησεται - Future Pass. Indic. from φαινω cf. v. 27

το σημειον - cf. v. 24

του υιου - Subjective genitive

του ανθρωπου - Descriptive/Relation genitive

εν ουρανω - no article with ουρανω puts stress on the quality/ location of this sign is clearly identified—it will be in the sky

και τοτε - time sequence is emphasized

κοψονται -Future Mid. Indic. from κοπτω "to cut, smite, *Middle*: lament, bewail, mourn"

πασαι - absolutely all, no exceptions

αι φυλαι – from φυλη “tribe, race, nation, people” article in place to be specific
οψονται - Future Mid. Indic. from οραω
ερχομενον - Pres. Mid. Part. cf. v. 5 / Attendant Circumstance
επι - location is stressed! “on”
των νεφελων – from νεφελη “a cloud”
του ουρανου - article used to stress specifics
μετα - + genitive after verb of motion indicates association or accompaniment “among, with”
δυναμεως - cf. v. 29
δοξης – from δοξα “praise, honor, glory”
πολλης – modifies δοξης

Comments:

“And then” indicates this is an event of immediate succession. Just what is this sign (σημειον) of the Son of man? You and I can be sure it is *not* a spacecraft hiding behind the tail of a comet. Jesus refers to His sign when he speaks to Nathaniel in John 1:51 “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” He also refers to it during His trial before the Sanhedrin in Matthew 26:64: “In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” This sign is the sign he will use to show His presence, visibly to us all.

All the tribes, a smaller yet equally inclusive term as all nations (v.9, 14), will display a revealing reaction: lament. Revelation 6:15,16 fills out the thought:

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks. ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.’

Indeed the righteous, glorious face of our Lord will convict the hearts of those had despised him and his return as a pipe dream. “He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth” declares Psalm 96:13. They will lament and beg for cover since they rejected His very own imputed righteousness. Now God’s judgment hour has come. The day of grace has ended.

“And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds.” Isaiah 19:2 says: “See the LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt.” Daniel 7:13-14 declares:

In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

The clouds are God’s swift chariot, “He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind” (.Psalm 104:3). Could we expect any less on His return? Not when we study this verse of Matthew along with Acts 1:9,11.

Here we note as Christ spoke these very words he was in his state of humiliation. The cross and its shame still await. But in the end, He will appear manifest in all His power. His omnipotence and His glory will be fully displayed for all to see.

That means the believers will see Him as well. Know then the believer's posture will not be scurrying for the nearest cave or mouse hole. Luke provides the believer's posture in his parallel account 21:28 "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" For those who remained in Christ Jesus that Great Day will be great. John gives us a booster shot along the way: "And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28).

Verse 31

(31) και αποστελει τους αγγελους αυτου μετα σαλπιγγος μεγαλης, και επισυναξουσιν τους εκλεκτους αυτου εκ των τεσσαρων ανεμων απ' ακρων ουρανων εως [των] ακρων αυτων.

And he will send his angels forth into action with a great trumpet call and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to their ends (to the other)

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - simple connective to foregoing

αποστελει - Future Act: Indic. from αποστελλω "to send off, send away, send forth, send forth into action"

τους αγγελους - from αγγελος "messenger, envoy, *in Scripture*: angel, messenger of God"

αυτου - referring to τον υιον of v. 30

μετα - sometimes used with Genitive case where an instrumental dative may have been employed

σαλπιγγος - genitive sing. of σαλπιγγξ "a trumpet, trumpet sound" no article stresses quality

και - consequential

επισυναξουσιν - Future Act. Indic. from επισυναγω "to gather together besides, to gather together in one place"

τους εκλεκτους - Accusative Direct Object / Specific

εκ των τεσσαρων - from τεσσαρες, -ων, "four"

ανεμων - from ανεμος, with τεσσαρα: the 4 quarters of the heavens (whence the cardinal winds blow)

ακρων - from ακρος, -α, -ον "extremity, extreme, farthest bounds, end...of the earth"

Comments:

Christ "will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (I Thessalonians 4:16). That trumpet call will sound the resurrection of all the dead. Paul makes it clear there shall be one resurrection for all. Hear him speak to Felix: "There will be a resurrection [singular!] of both the righteous and the wicked' (Acts 24:15). And He will then send out His holy angels to gather the elect from the four winds from one end of the heavens to the other. Our Dog notes use this verse as a proof passages

that “Christ will employ the accompanying heavenly hosts (αγγελους) as His ministers” and “the believers will be separated from the unbelievers...will welcome Christ at His return for the final judgment, and will then be with Him eternally.”

It’s a far cry from being the direct object of holy wrath Paul speaks of in Ephesians. On that last Day, at Christ’s command we will be the direct object of the angel gathering efforts. There are some beautiful, powerful direct objects in Scripture: “For God so loved *the world*” (John 3:16,) “The LORD appeared to us in the past saying, ‘I have loved *you* with an everlasting love: I have drawn you with loving kindness” (Jeremiah 31:3) The direct object we have in this verse ranks right up there!

Verse 32

(32) Απο δε της συκης μαθετε την παραβολην οταν ηδη ο κλαδος αυτης γενηται απαλος και τα φυλλα εκφυη, γινωσκετε οτι εγγυς το θερος

Now from the fig-tree learn the parable. When her branch now becomes tender and it produces leaves you know that summer is near.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

δε - Introduces a new subject

της συκης – from συκη-ης, “a fig tree” generic article

μαθετε - Aorist Act. Imperative from μαθετευω

την παραβολην – from παραβολη “a placing of side by side, a comparison, instructive saying”

οταν - cf. v. 15 “when”

ηδη - adverb “now, already”

ο κλαδος - “a young tender shoot, a branch”

γενηται - Aorist Mid. Subj. from γινομαι

απαλος – from απαλος “tender” (*of a branch of a tree when full of sap*) Predicate Adj.

τα φυλλα – from φυλλον “a leaf”

εκφυη - Present Act. Subj. from εκφυω “to produce, generate, grow out, put forth leaves”

γινωσκετε - Present Act. Indic. from γινωσκω

οτι - object clause of the verb γινωσκω

εγγυς - adverb of time, concerning things imminent and soon to come to pass “near, nigh”

το θερος – “summer”

Comments:

Jesus new topic with a lesson, an instructive comparison known as a παραβολην. Known to the Palestine area, the fig tree was a late bloomer. The fig tree would wait until the latest days of spring to send sap throughout her branches. These tender branches full of sap will then generate leaves. Had the *Farmer’s Almanac* and *Dear Heloise* been around at this time in history

they would have been quick to assimilate this information. Anyone with eyes would have nature's own sign that the summer season was nigh.

For his Jewish audience the key to summer was not tanning butter and water skiing, Rockie games and camp outs. For his audience Jesus' παραβολην led them to the time of year whose keynote was the harvest. Appropriately hearing this instructive comparison would jog the memory on such a passage as Matthew 13:30 "Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn." The apostle John aids us by sharing this portion of his God granted vision:

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like the son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested (Rev. 14:14-16).

The time of harvest, i.e. the time for the final judgment is a favored picture in our Lord's Word. Though fig trees may not be indigenous to the areas we live in, summer is tip toeing around the corner of 1997. You and I would do well to think of the inner workings of the fig tree and what our Lord adds to His parable in the ensuing verses.

Verse 33

(33) ουτως και υμεις, οταν ιδητε παντα ταυτα, γινωσκετε οτι εγγυς εστιν επι θυραις.

So also you whenever you see all these things know that it is near, at the doors.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ουτως - "thus, in this way," lays stress on manner, not time

ιδητε - Aorist Act. Subj.

παντα ταυτα - "all these things"...the heart of this verse

γινωσκετε - cf. verse 32

επι θυραις - from θυρα "door"

εστιν - "it is" obvious reference to the παρουσια

Comments:

The heart and soul of this verse are so-called little words παντα ταυτα best represents the signposts our Lord spoke of in verses four through twenty-eight. Obviously verses twenty-nine and thirty are the "it" the subject of the verb εστιν.

As an inhabitant of Paletine would see and react to the blooming of the fig tree, disciples, believers are to watch for the signs of this chapter and be ready for, yea, anticipate the end and Christ's παρουσια, the harvest. For those who have been watching, the words "it is at the door" means just that. Let your heart not be terrified. Rather allow your heart to rejoice. The harvest is a time of joy for you who trust in Him. Placement in the Savior's barn isn't like any other barn (no offense to the farmers here) you've ever been in.

Verse 34

(34) αμην λεγω υμιν οτι ου μη παρελθη η γενεα αυτη εως αν παντα ταυτα γηνηται.

Truly I say to you this generation won't pass away until all these things happen.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

αμην - “surely, truly, most assuredly”

ου μη - strongest negation

παρελθη - Aorist Act. Subj. from παρερχομαι “to go past, pass by, pass away”

η γενεα - “a begetting, a family, age, generation”

εως - “until”

αν...γενηται - Aorist Mid Subj.

Comments:

To the αμην—we are presented with our LORD God taking an oath. There can be no more reliable word than that of our God. To impress that upon us He puts His own existence and credibility on the line. In Ezekiel 33:11 we hear our LORD give these words to His prophet: “*As surely as I live*, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked...” In Matthew 24:34 we hear what amounts to “I, the Son of God, vouch for the truth of these words.” Beautifully reliable and certain these words are!

“This generation” is what most struggle with when they apply their “cataract infested eyes” to this verse. No doubt Jesus was speaking to the generation of Jews who had earlier that afternoon heard the haunting words, “Look, your house is left to you desolate.” Undoubtedly “this generation” applies to those who would reject and call for the crucifixion of God’s One and Only Son. Many of them would see the signposts indicated throughout verses fourteen through twenty-eight, including the destruction of Jerusalem. By the same token “this generation” and the attitude of rejection they wielded toward the Son of Man would, will, is indeed extant to this very day. Many of that generation continue to reject the Christ our heavenly Father sent and anointed by the Holy Spirit some 2,000 years ago.

At the risk of sounding frivolous (I don’t intend to) I liken it to Roger Daltry and the Who’s big hit: “*My Generation*.” I’m quite certain Roger and Pete and the boys figured they were singing an anthem to represent the independent spirit of their age group and era alone. A generation is generally viewed as the first “telephone pole” in a long line of poles. Believe it or not that punky little song still gets radio airtime to this day. Why? It still applies. The seeds of human independence and “why don’t you all just fade away” is alive and well in “this generation.”

It is tenable that Jesus was not merely looking at and speaking about his contemporaries but also the Jewish people and their “why don’t you just fade away Jesus” attitude up to the Last Day.

Verse 35

(35) ο ουρανος και η γη παρελευσεται, οι δε λογοι μου ου μη παρελθωσιν.

Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ο ουρανος - heaven, article - quality, stressing the very existence of such

και - simple connective

η γη - earth, article - quality, stressing the concrete, very real earth

παρελευσεται - Future Mid. Indic. from παρερχομαι cf. v. 34

δε – adversative

οι λογοι – from λογος “a word, what someone has said, instruction, doctrine, narrative”

ου μη - again, the strongest negation!!

παρελθωσιν -Aorist Active Subj.

Comments:

“My words” of course apply to the thirty five verses we have just digested. We have no reason to doubt a single word. However “my words” is not just “these words.” Jesus is making one of those statements only the divine should and can truthfully make. If you will, we have before us here another claim to be just who He claimed to be on numerous occasions: the True God. Isaiah 40:8 serves as a basis for the claim in this verse of Matthew: “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

Verse 36

(36) Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδείς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος.

Now about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven neither the Son, except the Father only.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

δε – parenthetical

περι της ημερας εκεινης - “concerning that day” / Specific

και - simple connective

ωρας - also object of περι / “hour”

ουδεις - indefinite “and not one, no one, none”

οιδεν - Perfect Active Indic. from οιδα

ουδε - adverb “nor, and not, neither”

οι αγγελοι - article used to make specific

των ουρανων - again article for specifics

ουδε - cf. above

ο υιος - article used...specific / The Son

ει μη - “unless, except”

ο πατηρ - article used...specific / The Father

Comments:

Having just asserted His divine nature Jesus now blows us away with His human nature. No one, absolutely no human, no angel knows “the day or the hour of that day, not even the Son.” Clearly the exact time of Christ’s return is not revealed to us, nor did Jesus Christ have that information according to His human nature. Schaller helps our very limited minds by stating:

Although the human nature of Jesus Christ was endowed with divine majesty by virtue of the personal union with the Logos, he voluntarily gave up full use of these prerogatives for a season, bearing and suffering in the form of a servant that which he could not have taken upon himself if he had exercised the communicated attributes to their full extent (Schaller, op. cit. p. 86-87).

At this time I will not attempt to condense the very capable work of Martin Chemnitz: *The Two Natures of Christ*. I will simply encourage a read of it during your summer vacation. Then when you’re done reading Chemnitz, finished reading Schaller and the confessions and dog notes and conference papers, you and I will conclude, not flippantly but honestly, we have but one Savior, one Immanuel, not two. And it is impossible for our human reason to understand how He could restrict himself in using His omniscience. We must simply believe His words which endure eternally.

I did start out my research hoping to include massive amounts of comparative theology with various millennialist teachings. As I got into Lent, Easter and the fifty one verses of Greek text I quickly dismissed that goal as unobtainable. However I do recall reading somewhere that an “out” often taken by millennialists is: “Jesus said, we wouldn’t know the day or the hour but He didn’t say we couldn’t come close to figuring it out.” Perhaps not in so many words, but what has been the thrust of this entire chapter? Are we to point ahead to April 15 as the windshield message harbingers are doing in Salt Lake City? Are we to look ahead at the man made conclusion to a millenium Dec. 31, 1999 as being more viable for our Lord’s return than this very morning? I would submit (as the sainted Augustine did before me) our Lord has kept the day, the hour, yea the week or the era from us so that we will always be ready and alert. The signs have been readable for centuries. The fig tree is in full bloom. There is fear in my heart for the man or woman who thinks between today, April 8, 1997, and next Tuesday April 15, 1997, the τελος and the LORD’s παρουσία are not viable realities. Any date setting is bound to promote laxity, false security, perhaps *unbelief* of our Savior’s enduring words.

Be continually watching. Be alert.

Verses 37-38

(37) ωσπερ γαρ αι ημεραι του Νωε, ουτως εσται η παρουσία του υιου του ανθρωπου. (38) ως γαρ ησαν εν ταις ημεραις [εκειναις] ταις προ του κατακλυσμου τρωγοντες και πινοντες, γαμουντες και γαμιζοντες, αχρι ης ημερας εισηλθεν Νωε εις την κιβωτον,

For just as the days of Noah, likewise will be the advent of the Son of man. For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, right up to the day Noah entered the ark

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ωσπερ - cf. v. 27 / “for as, just as”

γαρ – explanatory

του Νωε – from Νωεος defective form / “Noah”

ουτως - “likewise”

εσται - Future Mid. Indic.

η παρουσια - cf. v. 27

του υιου - Subjective Gen.

του ανθρωπου - Genitive of relation

ως - “as, just as”

γαρ - continues thought by way of explanation

ησαν - 3rd pl. Imperfect Act. Indic.

του κατακλυσμου - from κατακλυσμος “inundation, deluge”

τρωγοντες - Present Act. Part. nom. masc. pl. from τρωγω “to gnaw, chew raw veggies or fruits, eat, mess”

και - simple connective, continues the list

πινοντες - Present Act. Part, from πινω / “to drink”

γαμουντες - Present Act. Part. from γαμεω / “to get married, marry”

και - the list goes on

γαμιζοντες - Present Act. Part. from γαμιζω “to give (a daughter) in marriage”

αχρι - used as a preposition with genitive indicating time “until, to the time that”

ης ημερας - genitive following αχρι

εισηλθεν - Aorist Act. Indic. with preposition εις “enter, go into”

την κιβωτον – from κιβωτος “a wooden chest box, built in the form of an ark” / article used to make specific

Comments:

“Just as in the days of Noah” has a frightening ring to it. As you may recall a frightening majority of earth’s inhabitants were stubbornly rejecting the Lord’s call to grace as judgment bore down upon them. “Likewise” it shall be in the Last Days.

Especially with the current events you may hear such terms as “Doomsday” and “Fatalism”. Those terms do not wash here. Our Lord’s prediction of such events and attitudes must not be taken to mean He wills them this way. Chemnitz proposes helpful material here,

Let no one think that we teach that because certain things are foreseen and predicted in Scripture that therefore all things happen out of fatalistic necessity. Therefore God predicts certain sins...Matt. 24:37, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man.” ... But (1) that they should not be offended when they see such offenses even under the Gospel; (2) that such things should not be attributed to the

doctrine of the Gospel; (3) that we should not be secure but watchful and be careful about ourselves; ...For this reason Jesus predicted the betrayal of Judas. And Christ at the Last Supper washed the feet of Judas: ...He lovingly tried to dissuade Him; He warned him severely. But I would not say Christ wished to toy with Judas in order to bind him to his crime by His prediction in a fatalistic and necessary way. ...it is my opinion that this is a clear refutation of the Stoic notion of consequences, and it explains how the *foreknowledge does not impose necessity* (Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, p. 210).

Yes, Jesus predicts that there will be wide scale unpreparedness at His second coming. He does so not in order to—as captain Piccard would say “Make it so” but to warn, alert, wake up the stoicism which suffocates our world. In our most recent *Northwestern Lutheran*, Gary Baumler brushes up against the days and times that resemble Noah’s days in striking fashion when he writes:

The world by all accounts is a sealed tomb, and the stench of death is everywhere. Before you declare me guilty of unwarranted hyperbole, think about it. If your phone rings after you’ve gone to sleep at night, what’s the first thing you think of, and why? Is there a news headline that can shock you anymore, short of a comet striking earth? Even that? Is there a behavior so bizarre that you are surprised to witness it? Does a day, even an hour, pass that someone doesn’t murder someone else somewhere? (Baumler, April 1997 *NWL*, p.34)

Baumler’s timely questions correspond to the observations found in Gawrisch’s Quarterly article:

Despite the clear warning of these many signs; the vast majority of people will close their eyes and stop their ears. As it was in the days of Noah and as it was in the days of Lot, so it will be when the world comes to an end. People will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building, buying and selling, until all these activities are brought to a crashing halt by the trumpet blast that signals the end (Gawrisch, op. cit. p. 23)

Again, our LORD nowhere wills that the majority not “seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness,” but He does predict it. Be continually watching. Be alert!

Verse 39

(39) και ουκ εγνωσαν εως ηλθεν ο κατακλυσμος και ηρεν απαντας, ουτως εσται [και] η παρουσια του υιου του ανθρωπου.

And they did not realize until the flood came and took them all away, so will be the advent of the Son of man.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - simple connective

εγνωσαν -Aorist Active Indic. from γινωσκω

εως - “until”

ο κατακλυσμος - cf. v. 38

ηρεν - Aorist Act. Indic. from αιρω

απαντας - “all, all together” used absolutely here

ουτως - “thus, so” stress do manner

Comments:

Verse thirty nine is a continuation of much the same thoughts as the preceding verses. Yet we ought to make an important addition at this point. The cataclysmic event that befell them did not come without graceful warning. God did grant 120 years between His announcement and the deluge. He even provided a preacher of righteousness to share His message. Also a luxury liner for the animal kingdom and its caretakers was constructed on dry land far far away from the nearest body of water.

As Albrecht states in his commentary: “It is typical of God to warn people before he pours out his wrath upon them. *It is typical of us* to ignore the warning and be caught by surprise when his judgment descends” (Albrecht, op. cit., p. 356).

Verse 40-41

(40) τότε δυο εσονται εν τω αγρω, εις παραλαμβανεται και εις αφιεται (41) δυο αληθουσαι εν τω μυλω, μια παραλαμβανεται και μια αφιεται.

Then there will be two men in the field, the one is taken, and one is left behind. Two women grinding at the mill, one is taken, and one is left behind.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

τοτε - “then” - consequence of the παρουσία in verse 39

δυο - “two” indeclinable

εσονται - Future Mid. Indic.

εν τω αγρω - article generic “in the field”

εις – from εις, μια, εν

παραλαμβανεται - Present Pass. Indic. from παραλαμβανω “to take to one’s self, to join to one’s self”

και - the other half of the couplet

εις - (εις...εις) “the one...the other”

αφιεται - Present Passive Indic. from αφιημι “to send away from one’s self, send away, to leave (*especially in contrast to παρα-λαμβανω*)”

αληθουσαι - Present Act. Part. nom. pl. Feminine from αληθω “grind” [it was custom to send the gals and female slaves to the mill-houses cf. Exodus 11:5]

εν τω μυλω – from μυλος “a mill, mill-stone”

και μια - just like the prior example of v. 40

αφιεται - cf. v. 40

Comments:

In response to the disciples' questions "what will be the sign of your, return and of the completion of the age?" Jesus has nowhere indicated the two events would be separated in time. I make the point now because, these two verses are used by some to produce a rapture doctrine chronologically out of sync with the rapture Christ speaks of here. To be sure some will be alive, even working their proverbial 9 to 5 (don't get too literal on my 9 to 5) when the LORD (τοτε referring to the παρουσία του οίου του ανθρωπου of v. 39) and His angels arrive to gather the elect. After the dead are raised Paul says, "we who are still left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Our Dog notes again get into the action here. They use this passage of Scripture as proof "of the Last Day and not sometime before judgment day." The living who are received by Christ and those left is not understood as a "one for me, one for you", or 50-50 proposition. Jesus' words can only be understood in line with the rest of Holy Writ. He who believes will have eternal life, he who does not believe stands condemned already and will on that very day bear his/her actual separation from the LORD.

Verse 42

(42) γρηγορειτε ουν, οτι ουκ οιδατε ποια ημερα ο κυριος υμων ερχεται.

Therefore, be continually watching, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

γρηγορειτε - Present Act. Imperative from γρηγορεω "to watch, give strict attention to, be cautious or active"

ουν - "therefore" as a consequence of the stated scenario

οτι - "because"

ποια - interrogative pronoun ποιος / "of what sort"

ημερα - "day" / no article stresses indefinite

ο κυριος - article (with υμων) makes specific

ερχεται - Present Mid. Indic.

Comments:

With the words of Luke 11:28 close to our hearts "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." I would urge you to apply those words to this verse. It is the cornerstone of a Last Days and Christ's second advent mindset.

Take the present tense imperative of γρηγορειτε and you have the heart and soul of Christian understanding. Werner Franzmann hits it on the head:

Let us say: "My Savior said that at that time he did not know the time of his return. Then it must be so." That being the case, we won't cudgel our brains trying to figure out "the day of the hour," and we won't listen to those who assert they have it all figured out. Instead, we will accept the fact that no man knows or can know when the world will end, and we will with cheerful obedience do what our Savior bids us: "Therefore keep watch!" (Franzmann, *Bible History Commentary*, N.T. vol. 1, p. 679)

Constant, everyday readiness is our Lord's will on the matter. As one who has been called to equip the saints and help them reach maturity in Him I constantly struggle with my use of "trite" or "canned" expressions. Until I savored this verse exegetically I wondered if it were not canned to say "today could be the day...five minutes from now...a trumpet may be blasting." I figure I struggled with my use of such phrases because I have been called upon to use them so often. What I'm trying to say is, my struggle has ceased. It is not canned nor is it trite to daily, continually remind ourselves this could be His glorious arrival day.

Verse 43

(43) *εκεινο δε γινωσκετε οτι ει ηδει ο οικοδεσποτης ποια φυλακη ο κλεπτης ερχεται, εγρηγορησεν αν και ουκ αν ειασεν διορυχθηναι την οικιαν αυτου.*

Realize this also that if the houseowner had known in what watch the thief comes, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be dug through.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

εκεινο - demonstrative pronoun / neut. accusative sing. / emphasized, by position

δε - "also" in addition

γινωσκετε - Present Act. Indic.

οτι - introduces the object clause of *γινωσκω*

ηδει - Pluperfect Act. Indic. from *οιδα* "he had known" / intros a Past CTF condition

ο οικοδεσποτης - "master of a house, householder" / generic use of article

φυλακη – from *φυλακη* "guard, watch...of night"

ο κλεπτης - "thief"

εγρηγορησεν - Aorist Act. Indic. from *γρηγορευω* cf. v. 42

ουκ αν ειασεν - Aorist Act. Indic. from *εαω* "to allow, permit, let" followed by infinitive

διορυχθηςαι - Aorist Act. Infinitive from *διορυσσω* "to dig through...a house"

Comments:

This verse is a wonderfully crafted display of our Lord's ability to preach and teach. Who would have dared compare His advent to a thief digging through (*διορυσσω*) the roof or wall of a typical Israelite abode? To be sure the comparison is not that our Savior is a klepto who will steal away the possession of saving faith. The comparison is to the suddenness of His return.

I also love the Lord's use of the verb *εαω*. One of the sure signs of sinful hearts and thinking is that the LORD God might need our permission to enter our lives, let alone come again whenever He wishes to judge us all. Too often even we Christian men, Christian pastors, get caught up in our fleshly security and forget that the hour of death or His return may come sooner than we think. Bottom line: He doesn't need our permission. Thus our LORD pleads with us again. Listen to the Savior's voice in verse forty-four.

Verse 44

(44) δια τουτο και υμεις γινεσθε ετοιμοι, οτι η ου δοκειτε ωρα ο υιος του ανθρωπου ερχεται.

For this reason you be ready also; because in what hour you do not think, the Son of man comes.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

δια τουτο - Because of this; causal

γινεσθε - Present Mid. Imperative from γινομαι

ετοιμοι – from ετοιμος –η –ον, “prepared, ready, (to receive one’s arrival)”

η ωρα - “what hour”

ου δοκειτε - Present Act. Indic. from δοκεω

ερχεται - Present Mid. Indic.

Comments:

Because (δια τουτο) His return will be as sudden and unexpected as a thief, you should be continually ready. The use of υμεις puts emphasis on Jesus’ hearers. Gentlemen, regardless of what others do, regardless of the trash theologies that take trusting hearts and teleport them to events well into the future (a future which may never be realized), regardless of any number of facts, *you* who listen to the enduring Word of God, be continually (present tense imperative) ready.

Another gem from this verse, you might as well set it in concrete, is: Christ will *not* come when many do expect Him. Despite the clear words of the preceding verse many wanna be prophets keep on setting dates for the advent of Jesus. This very fact proves they are false prophets teaching doctrines at variance with passages such as these.

Really our task as His body is to remain in a sober state of expectation. Our duty is readiness and watchfulness. Our duty to remain patient and waiting is quantified by the oft repeated refrain “you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (I Thessalonians 5:2), “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief (II Peter 3:10), “But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you” (Revelation 3:3), “Behold, I come like a thief” Blessed is he who stays awake...” (Revelation 16:15).

Verse 45

(45) Τις αρα εστιν ο πιστος δουλос και φρονιμος ον κατεστησεν ο κυριος επι της οικετειας αυτου του δουναι αυτοις την τροφην εν καιρω;

Who then is the faithful and prudent servant whom the master placed in charge of his household servants to give them food in due season;

Vocabulary and Grammar:

Τις - indefinite interrogative

αρα - interrogative particle “then”

ο δουλος - “slave, servant, one who gives himself wholly to another’s will” / generic article

πιστος – from πιστος, -η -ον “trustworthy, faithful” in discharge of duties

φρονιμος - “intelligent, prudent, wise” / adjective describing δουλος

ον - Acc. D.O. of κατεστησεν / “whom” /

ο κυριος - generic use of article

κατεστησεν - Aorist Act. Indic. from καθιστημι “to set, put, place over (in charge of)”

της οικετιας – from οικετια “household, i.e. the body or group of servants”

αυτου - refers to κυριος

του δουναι - Aorist Act. Infinitive from διδωμι

αυτοις - referring to those of the οικετια / Indirect Object

την τροφην – from τροφη “food, nourishment” direct object of δουναι

εν καιρω - in “due measure, due time, certain or appointed season”

Comments:

Servants of Christ Jesus, you who sing “take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to thee,” “take my will and make it thine; It shall be no longer mine,” you who pray as we do on the bottom of page 42 in Christian Worship: “Take all that we have, our bodies and minds, our time and skills, our ministries and offerings, and use them to your glory...we give ourselves to you that we may serve you in whatever way is pleasing in your sight,” you are His δουλοι.

Many see these next verses as having special import for the apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers of His body. Undoubtedly that special emphasis maybe placed here. Jesus’ charge to Peter, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17) makes its point when applied to the words of this verse.

Yet, just as we would not deprive the people of God, the οικετια, the opportunity to sing and pray the words above, we must not deprive them of the shared joys found in faithful and wise servanthood. Peter writes, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, *faithfully* administering God’s grace in its various forms” (I Peter 4:10). We have our children and families to feed physically and spiritually. We have each other to feed, physically if the need is there, spiritually as the need is always there. Prudence dictates we serve one another faithfully and “all the more as we see the Day approaching.”

Verse 46

(46) μακαριος ο δουλος εκεινος ον ελθεν ο κυριος αυτου ευρησει ουτως ποιουντα

Blessed is that servant whom when his master comes he will find doing thus.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

μακαριος - word order emphasis! “blessed, happy”

εκεινος - highlights “that” πιστος, φρονιμος δουλος

ον – referring to the δουλος / direct object of ευρησει

ελθων - Aorist Act. Part.

ευρησει - Future Act. Indic. from ευρισκω

ουτως - “so, thus”

ποιουντα - Present Act. Part. acc. sing. masc. from ποιειω / Attendant Circumstance

Comments:

This verse is Jesus’ own answer to the question posed in verse forty-five. Just about every time I see those words “Blessed is...” my jaw drops when I couple it with my own ignorance. I miss seeing or appreciating so many blessings. Allow me to share just one example (there are umpteen others). Looking back to the last Christian man I walked to death’s door I now see dozens of these blessings the Lord speaks of. Blessed was he (and me) to sing hymns of Christian victory from memory (his broken body simply would not allow him to read a hymnal). Blessed was he (and me as I watched his witness) to grin at the panic stricken face of his grown son and assure him he was going to live even as Job knew he would. Blessed was he (and me) when he and I prayed the Lord’s prayer just two hours before he went to be with the Savior in His paradise. Blessed was this man to live and die in grace!

Blessed are we all when we join in any aspect of body ministry. No one can take away the joys (hidden or apparent) when we are about His business. Blessed are we all when we join with Paul in saying “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge, will award me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (II Timothy 4:7).

Verse 47

(47) αμην λεγω υμιν οτι επι πασιν τοις υπαρχουσιν αυτου καταστησει αυτον.

Truly I tell you that over all his property he will put him in charge.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

αμην - cf. v. 34

πασιν - “all” nothing excluded

τοις υπαρχουσιν - Present Act. Part. dat. pl. neut. from υπαρχω “to begin, be at hand; *then*: one’s substance, one’s property”

αυτου - “his” ο κυριος of v. 46

καταστησει - Future Act. Indic. from καθιστημι cf. v. 45 “put in charge”

αυτον - referring to the πιστος φρονιμος δουλος

Comments:

Besides the personal blessings we enjoy as His servants here, our Lord promises greater reward. We have His word on it again, αμην.

Since the return of the Lord is to be equated with the second advent, this reward to higher and more responsible position will take place in eternity. Just what Jesus has in mind is barely

known now but we may look at hints in Matthew 19:28 “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Matthew 25:21, “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”

Verse 48-49

(48) εαν δε ειπη ο κακος δουλος εκεινος εν τη καρδια αυτου, Χρονηζει μου ο κυριος, (49) και αρξεται τυπτειν τους συνδουλος αυτου, εσθιη δε και πινη μετα των μεθυοντων,

But, if that wicked servant says in his heart my master is delaying, And he begins to beat his fellowservants and also eats and drinks with those who are drunks,

Vocabulary and Grammar:

εαν - “if”

δε - adversative “but”

ειπη - Aorist Act. Subj. from ειπον

κακος - “base, wrong, wicked” (usually of persons)

εν τη καρδια αυτου - “in his heart”

χρονηζει - Present Act. Indic. from χρονηζω

και - consequently

αρξεται - Aorist Mid. Subj. from αρχω

τυπτειν - Present Act. Infin. from τυπτω “to strike, beat”

τους συνδουλος - Accus. Direct Object of τυπτειν / “fellow (συν) servants (δουλος)”

εσθιη - Present Act. Subj. from εσθιω “to eat”

πινη - Present Act. Subj. from πινω

των μεθυοντων - Present Act. Part. gen. sg. masc. from μεθυω “to be drunken”

Comments:

Though the conditional nature of the sentence sets it up as a hypothetical case one must understand the objective possibility of what our Savior says in verses forty-eight through fifty. To say in the heart “He delays” may indeed be the kiss of death.

The consequential (και) actions of hammering on the fellow servants and carousing with friends in low places is not necessitated absolutely, *but* it is possible. The attitude “Jesus isn’t coming for awhile, for a week, at all...” can lead to worse than false security. Unfaithfulness is lying at the door.

Isaiah may have more than a κακος δουλος in mind when he writes, “Now then, listen you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me...’” (Isaiah 47:8) but those words may include a bad servant. Complacency is not just something “our people” need to be keenly aware of. We the preachers need to check up on our

Amos and Isaiah. And then, when we are done being filled...know it is only by His grace that we do not go bad.

Verse 50

(50) ηξει ο κυριος του δουλου εκεινου εν ημερα η ου προσδοκα και εν ωρα η ου γινωσκει,

The master of that servant will come on a day on which he does not expect and in an hour in which he does not realize,

Vocabulary and Grammar:

ηξει - Future Act. Indic. from ηκω cf. v. 14

εν ημερα - “on a day” no article...indefinite

η - “on which”

ου προσδοκα - Present Act. Indic. from προσδοκαω “expect, look for, wait for” (used when preceding context shows who or what is to be expected)

και – connective

εν ωρα - “in an hour” again, no article...indefinite

ου γινωσκει - Present Act. Indic.

Comments:

Growing accustomed to the Lord’s absence is not the least bit dangerous for a servant. It is dangerous because the servant forgets, he does not look for, does not wait for his Master. He imagines things will go on just as they have been.

To us Albrecht speaks very applicable words:

We who have the benefit of nearly 2,000 years of hindsight can see a hint in the words, “My Master is staying a way a long time.” Is Jesus here (v. 48) implying a lengthy interval between his first and second comings? (Similar expressions occur in Matthew 25:5, 19). Perhaps the hint was subtle enough that the disciples missed it and thus maintained a healthy sense of urgency. We who can see the implication dare not permit it to lull us into complacency. Sufficient time has elapsed to fulfill the prophecy of this parable (Albrecht, op. cit., p.356).

A healthy sense of urgency would be the point. Have one. Be continually watching. Be alert.

Verse 51

(51) και διχοτομησει αυτον και το μερος αυτου μετα των υποκριτων θησει εκει εσται ο κλαυθμος και ο βρυγμος των οδοντων.

And he will cut him in two and assign his portion with the hypocrites, there will be lamenting and gnashing of teeth.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

και - simple connective with the foregoing

διχοτομησει - Future Act. Indic. from διχοτομew “to cut into two parts”

αυτον - “him”—the κακος δουλος

και - simple connective of the verbs

το μερος - “part, portion, lot”

θησει - Future Act. Indic. from τιθημι “put, place”

μεται των υποκριτων – from υποκριτος “actor, pretender, hypocrite”

εκει - “there”

εσται - Future Mid. Indic. “there will be”

ο κλαυθμος - “weeping, lamentation”

και - simple connective

ο βρυγμος - “a gnashing (of teeth), snarling, growling” Thayer states: “a phrase denoting the extreme anguish and utter despair of men consigned to eternal condemnation”

των οδοντων - genitive plural of οδους “a tooth”

Comments:

What a verse to end on. Had I more time I would have enjoyed plowing right on into chapter twenty-five, but here we shall call it quits. Our Lord leaves no room for the ridiculous, idle speculations regarding hell and its punishments set forth by many in our day. Listen to His Word: “Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God” (Job 20:29) “On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot” (Psalm 11:6) “their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). My prompt for listing those passages is not a perverted thrill juiced by the thought some of my fellowmen may spend their eternity in such a place. My prompt is this statement from Gawrisch:

One of the doctrines in eschatology that is most vehemently attacked today is the doctrine of hell. By no stretch of the imagination can these attacks be the result of a misinterpretation of biblical prophecy, however. They are nothing less than an outright refusal to accept what the Bible clearly teaches (Gawrisch, op. cit., p. 31)

Jesus Himself alerts us all to its very existence (εκει). Jesus Himself alerts us all that it will be the place for the hypocrites and unbelievers. It will not just be a place where the damned are deprived of the blessedness enjoyed by those in God’s merciful presence. There will be torment weeping and gnashing of teeth as a result of the agony.

Presuming Christ will not come the way He has clearly demonstrated in Matthew chapter twenty-four opens one to the risk that he or she could be found not ready, not believing and thus assigned this rightful lot. Though we have never seen it, never smelled its hellish stench we know it is a που so as Gawrisch quotes Chrysostom in his work we do well to heed, “Let us not strive to find out where it is, but how we can escape it” (ibid, p. 31).

How and why and who can anyone escape it? I do appreciate the following words as a fitting conclusion to this verse of Matthew chapter 24:

...our Savior Christ has redeemed us from hell and protects us from it forever through lasting faith in Himself. In front of the yawning gates of hell there stands the Cross of the

world's Christ, the way of escape provided by Him who said of Himself. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). You and I, as we have studied this doctrine of the Bible concerning the everlasting punishment in hell for the damned, have perhaps shaken off a chill or a shudder and sighed a prayer of thanksgiving for our own saving faith in our Savior. Is it necessary, in addition, to remind ourselves that the naked truth of the doctrine of hell should move us to make more haste and to work for the spreading of the Gospel to all men everywhere lest any should die without the knowledge of the truth?

Brothers in Christ, the time is short. We live in the very last times. Let us not fritter away the time that God allots to us as individual Christians and His Church Militant, but rather let us hasten on with faith-filled hearts, with minds clear of purpose, and with busy hands thus to meet our Judge at the end time of all things. May He, the Righteous Judge of all, enable us, the faithful by His means of grace to turn many to righteousness in Him, away from the gates of everlasting hell, and into the heavenly portals of joy with Him (W.F. Wolbrecht, *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 1, p. 560).

Conclusion

Such powerful imagery, such powerful prophecy, such powerful Truth! How can we who are so often reminded of our gross and petty, hidden and public weaknesses and shortcomings in this our life of service to Him, endeavor not only to escape punishment but share in His eternal joys? The answer can only be "in Him!"

The only answer can be "By his grace and through faith in Jesus Christ our Savior," who so powerfully taught these truths mere days before the whips and nails tore His flesh in and without the holy city. "In Him" we can escape the horrors of hell and discover joys, supernal because he willingly rendered up His life as the all sufficient sacrifice for sin. As the ever faithful one He taught such valuable lessons as this (in Matthew chapter twenty-four) in spite of the proximity of the agonies (both of body and soul) that would soon be His own on the cross. What a beautiful Savior we have in Jesus Christ our Lord!

As we continually watch for His return, as we continually feed ourselves and our people with the Word by which the Spirit guards and protects the elect, let us close with the wish expressed by the faithful saints who sing:

When he shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Glory be to Jesus.

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