

Matthew 24c: (See also Mark 13 and Luke 21)

Reading #421 Jacob's trouble

We finished last week with the voice of God the Father announcing from heaven the day and the hour of the Son of man's arrival at the second advent. Because the movement of the cloud will be slow and majestic, and the rotation of the earth continues, there will be ample time for all on earth to see it during that period. Only as it comes near the earth will they discern His figure, but the Spirit will be convicting all that this is the time.

Then there will be a time of great silence: "And when He had opened the seventh seal [of the book of history], there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour [a short time]". Revelation 8:1.

It is described thus:

***** (Begin Quote)

Jeremiah 30:

² Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, "Write you all the words that I have spoken to you in a book. ³ For, lo, the days come", says the LORD, "that I will bring again [release] the captivity of My people Israel and Judah", says the LORD: "and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it".

⁴ And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah [at that time]. ⁵ For thus says the LORD; "We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. ⁶ Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child [Does a man give birth?]? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?"

⁷ Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. See note 1.

⁸ "For it shall come to pass in that day", says the LORD of hosts, "that I will break his [Satan's] yoke [the power of death, Hebrews 2:14] from off your neck [permanently], and will burst your bonds [resurrect you], and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: ⁹ but they shall serve the LORD their God, and [the Son of] David their King, whom I will raise up to them".

***** (End Quote)

Then, the silence will be shattered:

***** (Begin Quote)

Matthew 24:

³¹ And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet [the LAST trump, 1 Corinthians 15:52], and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other [this is the first resurrection].

***** (End Quote)

Christ is coming with clouds and great glory, with a multitude of angels and humans attending Him. (If you remember, the latter went to heaven with Him after the crucifixion.) The Son of God will come to raise the righteous dead, and to change the living saints from glory to glory. He will come to honour those who have loved Him, and kept His commandments, and to take them to Himself. He has not forgotten them, nor His promise. There will be a relinking of the family chain. When we look upon our dead, we may think of the morning when the trump of God shall sound, when “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”. 1 Corinthians 15:52. A little longer, and we shall see the King in His beauty. Isaiah 33:17. A little longer, and He will wipe all tears from our eyes. Revelation 7:17. A little longer, and He will present us “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”. Jude 24. Wherefore, when He gave the signs of His coming He said, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh”. Luke 21:28.

The “last” trump refers to the fact that one of the ceremonial feast days of the Jewish system was called the Feast of Trumpets. On that day (and tradition tells us for the nine days following it), trumpets were blown in a special tune to warn the people of the coming Day of Judgment (rather like reveille, or the last post). The first day was kept as a religious holiday, but the others were ordinary days.

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Leviticus 23:

²³ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ Speak to the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month [our September/October], in the first day of the month, shall you have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. ²⁵ You shall do no servile [ordinary] work therein: but you shall offer an offering made by fire [a special burnt offering of dedication] to the LORD.

²⁶ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁷ Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a Day of Atonement: it shall be an holy convocation to you; and you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD [another very special dedication].

***** (End Quote)

Those ceremonies were repeated each year in conjunction with the following instructions.

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Leviticus 25:

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses in mount Sinai, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When you come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath to the LORD. ³ Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; ⁴ but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest to the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall neither sow your field, nor prune your vineyard . . .

⁸ And you shall number seven sabbaths of years to you, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. ⁹ Then shall you cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the Day of Atonement shall you make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. [This was an EXTRA trumpet call, the last of a series which had spanned 49 years.]

¹⁰ And you shall hallow the fiftieth year [keeping it as another sabbath (non-work) year so that there would be two, one following the other], and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee to you; and you shall return every man to his possession, and you shall return every man to his family. [Indentured workers (bondmen and bondwomen) were to be released.]

¹¹ A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you: you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of your vine undressed [to make a profit]. ¹² For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat the increase thereof out of the field [but there was to be no harvest].

¹³ In the year of this jubilee you shall return every man to his possession.

***** (End Quote)

Because the land of Israel was a gift from God, the people were not allowed to sell it. All anyone could do was lease it for the maximum period of 49 years (Leviticus 25:15-16) and then it must be returned to the original family. It was this “returning” that the LAST trumpet heralded. When it shall sound at the second advent it will be telling the people of God that they are to rise from their graves, and begin to receive their inheritance back. “The meek shall inherit the earth [after a period in heaven as a holi-day]; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace”. Psalm 37:11.

Jesus continued:

***** (Begin Quote)

Matthew 24:

³² Now learn a parable of the fig tree;

When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: ³³ so likewise you, WHEN YOU SHALL SEE ALL THESE

THINGS, know that it is near, even at the doors. ³⁴ Verily I say to you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. ³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

³⁶ But of that day and hour knows [makes known] no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

***** (End Quote)

”But of that day and that hour knows [makes known] no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father [only]”. Mark 13:32. This is the moment that the voice of God the Father will be heard from heaven telling everyone of the day and the hour of the second coming, and pronouncing the Ten Commandments as at Mt. Sinai.

***** (Begin Quote)

Matthew 24:

³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹ and knew not until the flood came [seven days later, Genesis 7:10], and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

⁴⁰ Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken [he/she will be on God’s side, in the “ark” of His protection], and the other left [when the “door” of probation is shut, NOT when the “flood” of the second advent comes].

⁴¹ Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your LORD does come [to shut the “door”:]. ⁴³ But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

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

***** (End Quote)

Christ here is speaking of two different “hours”. There was one in 1844 when He began His new ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and many missed that. Right up to today the majority of professed Christians have no idea what the Son of God is doing or where. There will be another “hour” when He ceases His work of cleansing, and prepares to redeem His people. That also will be missed by the majority of those who claim that they are following Him, but who actually worship the god of force!

“If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you”. [This is both the expansion of ministry and the close of human probation “hour”] Revelation 3:3. The advent of Christ will surprise the false teachers. They will say, “Peace and safety” right up to the last moment. Like the priests and teachers before the fall of Jerusalem, they will look for the church to enjoy earthly prosperity and glory. The signs of the times they will interpret as foreshadowing this. But what says the word of Inspiration? “Sudden destruction comes upon them”. 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth, upon all who make this world their home, the day of God will come as a snare. It will come to them as a prowling thief.

(Begin Quote)

Matthew 24:

⁴⁵ Who then [from 1844 onwards] is a faithful and wise servant, whom his LORD has made ruler [guide] over His household, to give them meat [spiritual food] in due season [to enable them to live at that time]? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his LORD when He comes shall find so doing. ⁴⁷ Verily I say to you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods.

⁴⁸ But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, “My LORD delays His coming [it’ll be a while]”; ⁴⁹ and shall begin to smite [criticise and persecute] his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the [spiritually] drunken [Revelation 17:2]; ⁵⁰ the LORD of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth [when he finds out].

(End Quote)

The “evil” servant [the tare] says in his heart, “My LORD delays His coming”. He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming, in fact, he claims to be a believer in the advent. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the LORD's coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the LORD is coming quickly. His influence leads men and women to presumptuous,

careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the spiritually drunk (the counterfeit churches), and unites with the world in pleasure seeking. He smites his fellow servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master. He mingles with the world. Like grows with like in transgression. It is a fearful assimilation. With the world he is taken in the snare. “The LORD of that servant shall come [in the first judgment] . . . in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder [separate him from the flock], and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites”.

We should note that Jesus does not mention the “fools” here, (they are not hypocrites) but He tells us of them in the next chapter.

Solemnly there come to us down through the centuries the warning words of our LORD from the Mount of Olives: “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting [over-eating], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares”. Luke 21:34. “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man”. Luke 21:36.

In the description of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, “Because iniquity [in the church] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And [at that time] this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come”. Matthew 24:12-14.

This prophecy will again be fulfilled.

The terrible iniquity in the church of that day finds its counterpart in this generation. So with the prediction in regard to the preaching of the gospel.

Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declared that the gospel was preached to “every creature which is under heaven”. Colossians 1:23. So now, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting gospel is to be preached “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” as well as the message that the Creator God “has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world”. Revelation 14:6, 14; Acts 17:31.

Christ told us when that day was to be ushered in. He did not say that all the world will be converted, but that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be

preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come”. Matthew 24:14. By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our LORD's return. We are not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the day of God. 2 Peter 3:12, margin. Had the people of God done their appointed work as the LORD ordained, the whole world would have been warned before this, and the LORD Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.

More next week, but bye for now,
Ron

Some of the comments in these readings are adapted from books in my library. No recognition is given because they are not intended as authorities, but are used because they express my understanding clearly. All the ideas expressed in these readings, right or wrong, are my own.

Note 1.

***** (Begin Quote)

Genesis 32:

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone [at midnight]; and there wrestled a Man [the Son of God] with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh [to indicate he had failed in his walk with Him]; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with Him. [He was in pain but would not give up.]

²⁶ And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks”. And he said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me” [I can’t live without You].

²⁷ And He said to him, “What is your name [character]?” And he said, “Jacob [thief, sinner]”. ²⁸ And He said, “Your name shall be called no more Jacob [sinner], but Israel [overcomer]: for as a prince [a strong person] have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed”.

²⁹ And Jacob asked Him, and said, “Tell me, I pray You, Your name [character]”. And He said, “Why is it that you do ask after My name [why do you want to know? Do you want to be like Me?]?” And He blessed him there.

³⁰ And Jacob called the name of the place “Peniel”: [meaning] “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved”.

***** (End Quote)

When the Son of God shall cease His work as mediator in man's behalf the restraining Spirit of God will be withdrawn from the earth, and then this time of trouble will begin,. The case of every soul will have been decided (Revelation 22:11), and there will be no more atoning blood to cleanse from sin. At that time Satan will plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble, the seven last plagues. The people of God will then go through

those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble. What does this mean?

As Jacob was threatened with death by his angry brother, so the people of God will be in peril from the wicked who are seeking to destroy them. And as the patriarch wrestled all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau, so the righteous will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the enemies that surround them. See Luke 18: 1-8.

However, when in his distress Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and made supplication with tears, the heavenly Messenger, in order to try his faith, reminded him of his sin in stealing his brother's birthright twenty-one years before, and suggested that He leave him so he could die. (Like Moses, who eventually accepted the offer; Deuteronomy 31:14). But Jacob would not be turned away. He had learned that God is merciful, and he cast himself upon His mercy. He pointed back to his repentance for his sin soon after its committal, and pleaded for deliverance from death, knowing that this was what God really wanted. (John 3:14-17.) As he reviewed his life, he was driven almost to despair; but he held fast the Angel, and with earnest, agonizing cries urged his petition until he prevailed.

(Begin Quote)

Hosea 12:

² The LORD has also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will He recompense him. ³ He took his brother by the heel in the womb [with physical strength], and [but] by his [spiritual] strength he had power with God. ⁴ Yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication to Him: he found Him in Bethel [where the ladder touches the earth, Genesis 28:12], and there He spoke with us [not just Jacob]; ⁵ even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is His memorial.

⁶ Therefore turn you to your God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on your God continually.

(End Quote)

Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil, for the last enemy to be overcome is death. 1 Corinthians 15:26.

God will test our faith, our perseverance, our confidence in His power to keep us from dying. (Like Christ, who was sinless but under constant threat of death. Hebrews 5:6-8.) Satan will endeavour to terrify us with the thought

that our cases are hopeless; that our sins have been too great to receive such a gift. We will have a deep sense of our shortcomings, and as we review our lives our hopes will sink. But remembering the greatness of God's mercy, and our own sincere repentance, we will plead His promises made through Christ to helpless, repenting sinners. Our faith will not fail because our prayers are not immediately answered. We will lay hold of the Strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and the language of our souls will be, "I will not let You go, except You bless me". We will know that it is the honour of His word that is at stake, not our works. We need to be saved alive so that we may "endure until the end" and prove Him right. We need to be "sealed" so that we cannot be moved.

He says, "Why will you die, O house of Israel? . . . I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies!" Ezekiel 18:32-32.

He also said:

***** (Begin Quote)

John 11:

²⁵ "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live [in the resurrection]. ²⁶ And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall NEVER die. Believe you THIS?"

***** (End Quote)

Only those who have clean hands and pure hearts will be able to stand in that trying time (Psalm 24:4), and we must prepare for that, for NOW is the time for the law of God to be in our minds, foreheads, and written in our hearts. Jeremiah 31:33. What leisure time we have should be spent in searching the Bible, which is to judge (lead) us in the last day. John 12:48.

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