

Sermons on Matthew

He Who Endures

Matthew 24:6-14

With Study Questions

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He Who Endures

Matthew 24:6-14

And you will hear of __wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for __all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁻⁷⁻ For __nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be __famines, __pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁻⁸⁻ All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

⁻⁹⁻ __“ Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ⁻¹⁰⁻ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ⁻¹¹⁻ Then __many false prophets will rise up and __deceive many. ⁻¹²⁻ And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow __cold. ⁻¹³⁻ __But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ⁻¹⁴⁻ And this __gospel of the kingdom __will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:6-14).

Introduction—Three Approaches

1. Unique History

I would like to continue to demonstrate that the Olivet Discourse is addressing a unique historical event and should not be viewed as the necessary future of humanity. It is unbiblical and unhealthy for the church to view their efforts as culminating in a worldwide spiritual and cultural failure.

2. Tribulation in General

Although it is not the necessary future of humanity, Jesus does address the kinds of tribulations and difficulties which are common to Christians, at some level, in every generation throughout the world. It would be foolish for Christians to think that the redemption of the world is without conflict. We will briefly examine nature of tribulation.

3. Counsel of Christ

Finally, to the extent that we are confronted with these types of events, the counsel of Christ is our food. We should to know it, and be committed to heed it.

___ And you will hear of __ wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for __ all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷- For _ nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be _ famines, __ pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:6,7).

1. Unique History

‘Moment’ is perhaps an appropriate word to describe the amount of time in human history when there wasn’t a major war taking place—‘twinkling of an eye’ perhaps better conveys the scarcity of peace. So to view the warning of hearing of wars and rumors of wars as a significant method of evaluating when “the end” will come is almost useless if we’re talking about “the end” of the world.

Not so if Jesus, as the context suggests, is speaking of the destruction of the temple, the fall of Jerusalem and end of the Old Covenant. They were in the midst of the Pax Romana (“Roman Peace,” usually considered to be between 27 BC and AD 180) so wars and rumors of wars were not so common.

As far as nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom, Calvin Comments:

He describes here those commotions only which arose in Judea...¹

Furthermore, Kenneth Wuest’s² *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament* states:

As to the political unrest of that time, Vincent notes that there were threats of war against the Jews by three Roman emperors, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. There were serious disturbances at Alexandria A.D. 38, in which the Jews were the special objects

¹Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Harmony of the Gospels : Calvin’s Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin’s Commentaries. Albany, OR: Ages Software.

² Wuest is a dispensationalist out of Moody Bible Institute.

of persecution, and at Seleucia, in which more than fifty thousand Jews were killed, and at Jamnia near Joppa.³

Of famines and earthquakes, Wuest continues:

Vincent also states that between this prophecy of Jesus (A.D. 30 or 29) and the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70, there was an earthquake in Crete (A.D. 46 or 47), at Rome (A.D. 51), at Apamia in Phrygia (A.D. 60), at Campania (A.D. 63). He also notes four famines during the reign of Claudius. One of these was in Judaea in A.D. 44 and is spoken of in Acts 11:28.⁴

2. Tribulation in General

These events were unique historical events which would trigger the beginning of the end of the Old Covenant. But there is great value in understanding what Jesus has to say regarding God's hand in tribulation in general.

Jesus informs us that these (what might be considered) terrifying events "**must come to pass.**" Literally it is understood as, "It is necessary" (*dei*) which generally implies inevitability, or it is "necessary in the nature of the case." We should never think of any event (even bad ones) as random. God's dealings with men are just and wise.

We do not have prophets today telling us the future, telling us what must come to pass. We only know these things in hindsight. But God graciously informs us that history is in His hands.

Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it (Isaiah 26:9-11).

³Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (Mk 13:7). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

⁴Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (Mk 13:7). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

3. Counsel of Christ

Jesus' proclamation of the necessity of the event is the basis of His word to His words of comfort—"See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass." It is the knowledge of God's sovereign hand in all events which is the source of Christian comfort. Jesus does not speak without substance when saying "be not troubled" (*throeisthe--*disturbed). Nothing trite or cliché ever proceeds from the mouth of Christ.

When Jesus says "be not troubled...fear not...be of good cheer" there is a simple yet profound reason He can say what no one else dare say: "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). This may not rescue the faithful from difficulty or even heartache...but it does rescue from despair.

Jesus continues:

All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

⁻⁹⁻ __ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ⁻¹⁰⁻ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ⁻¹¹⁻ Then __ many false prophets will rise up and __ deceive many. ⁻¹²⁻ And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow __ cold. ⁻¹³⁻ __ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ⁻¹⁴⁻ And this __ gospel of the kingdom __ will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:8-14).

1. Unique History

When Jesus mentions the beginning of sorrows, it is a term used to describe birth pains (*odinon*). He is speaking of an escalating series of events. Jesus is telling His followers that they will be delivered up for tribulation and be killed for His name's sake, for preaching Christ.

"They will...kill you" is a very specific prophecy which doesn't relate to every Christian who ever lived. If Jesus wasn't speaking to His own followers, this would be almost cruel. During the past few months our church has done door-to-door visitation, inviting people to visit our church. If Jack Harvey (who runs this ministry) told us as that we weren't going to come home alive (if such were not the case) it could be viewed as unnecessarily harsh.

Both Scripture and history gives ample testimony of the way the followers of Christ were treated at the birth of the New Covenant Church; they were killed (Acts 7:58; 12:2; 2 Peter 1:14). Jesus is speaking about something His audience would encounter.

But what of this idea of being **“hated by all nations”**? One could reasonably ask how that was fulfilled in the first century. Add that to what we see in verse 14 regarding the gospel being **“preached in all the world to all the nations.”**

The answer to this apparent difficulty is simple if one allows their terms to be defined by the Scriptures themselves. Below are a few of the many examples of how the Bible speaks of the “Mediterranean area” as an area “which...most Greek-speakers would have understood [as] *the whole world* at that time.”⁵

At Pentecost we read:

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, __devout men, from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5).

To the Roman church, Paul wrote:

First, __I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that __your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world (Romans 1:8).

In Paul’s benediction to Rome he writes:

- __Now __to Him who is able to establish you __according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, __according to the revelation of the mystery __kept secret since the world began⁻²⁶⁻ but __now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for __obedience to the faith (Romans 16:25, 26).

We read of the census during the birth of Christ:

⁵Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Mt 24:3). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered (Luke 2:1).

And the prophecy of the famine when read of earlier:

—
And in these days __prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. ⁻²⁸⁻ Then one of them, named __Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of __Claudius Caesar. ⁻²⁹⁻ Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send __relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. ⁻³⁰⁻ __This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:27-30).

The disciple's immediate determination to send relief clearly indicates a famine that was in their near geographical and chronological proximity.

Of Paul we read:

_For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5).

Paul writes that the gospel had come to **“all the world”** (Colossians 1:6). He continues to state that the gospel had been **“preached to every creature under heaven”** (Colossians 1:23).

In short, one need not depart from the context of Jesus' prophecy regarding the temple and Jerusalem due to the references to the nations or the world. It is not necessarily the destiny of every Christian to die nor is it the fate of the Great Commission to end in failure—which is popularly taught today.

This time of tribulation was a time of intense fear and pressure. Many were offended by the gospel. Peter teaches that to the Jews, Jesus was a **“rock of offense”** (1 Peter 2:8). Jesus informs us that this tribulation will bring about betrayal and hatred of one another. Man's enemies will be in his own household (Matthew 10:21-23). All of this would take place prior to the end of their evangelistic efforts in Israel.

False prophets and teachers were already surfacing in the early church (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:26). There would be those in the persecuted church who would present a lesser offending Christ and gain many followers. And of course, with the false prophets comes a false Christianity where the law of God is rejected which results in love waxing cold.

These are all events which would precede the fall of Jerusalem, the end of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New.

2. Tribulation in General

At the same time, it would be wrong to suggest that, in general, the kingdom of God will grow without tribulation. It should be expected that the first wave of missionaries in any darkened, un-evangelized culture will be met by the end of the spear.

There is a natural condition of hostility between man and God.

Because __the __carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, __nor indeed can be. ⁻⁸⁻ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:7, 8).

Men will either serve God, or he will serve the flesh, the devil or the world. God will not share His throne with this triple threat of evil and they will not suffer a true presentation of Christ to upset their apple cart carnality and licentiousness. The acerbic dialogue hammered against Christians in today church/state controversy unveils man's natural desire to cut the cords of anything more absolute than himself.

We pray for our brothers and sisters in China who have been imprisoned, but we're not shocked. We grieve over today's false teachers in our apostate culture but it should not surprise us. Today's attempts at steamrolling the Ten Commandments out of family, state and church will result, as Jesus teaches, in the love of many growing cold.

3. Counsel of Christ

So what is the counsel of Christ? Whether it is the danger of seeking to reach the un-evangelized, or the discouragement of functioning within a culture similar to first century Jerusalem, where the truth has been presented and slowly rejected, the counsel of Christ is the same: **"He who endures to the end shall be saved"** (verse 13). Christians are called to

“**endure**” (*hypomeinas*). We are to stand firm, to hold our ground, to remain instead of fleeing.

There is a call to be courageous in the face of danger. There is a call to be uncompromising in the tide of theological and doctrinal accommodations. There is a call to continual repentance of sin and continual trust in Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have no statistical analysis to offer in comparing our age with others regarding those who have called upon the Name of Christ and then later abandon His Name and His church. But I tend to think the effeminate nature of today’s capricious Christian has to do with the way the faith is billed in its presentation.

When the faith is presented as an analgesic for your current abysmal state of self-esteem, when evangelism is about your best life or your abundant life (as its common understood) or your circumstantial or psychological serenity or tranquility, then it is a short voyage to a shipwrecked faith (1 Timothy 1:19).

So far from persecution, sword and peril, such a spongy presentation of the gospel requires merely a cute guy / girl or a tempting business deal and we’re all left saying “whatever happened to...?”

Jesus calls His followers to “**count the cost**” (Luke 14:28). Sometimes the Christian life is easy, and other times it’s not. But we always need to be prepared to fight the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12). It’s a fight, not a dance. Christians are called to have resolve and conviction. In all of the Apostle Paul’s self-deprecating comments (of which there are many) his one boast (a boast he would not doubt attribute to the grace of God) is that he “**fought the good fight**”, he “**finished the race**”, he “**kept the faith**” (2 Timothy 4:7).

“**He**”, Jesus taught, “**who endures to the end shall be saved.**”

Questions for Study

1. What are some good reasons to understand that Jesus was speaking of unique historical events (pages 3, 4)?
2. Should Christians not expect tribulation (pages 4, 5)?
3. How should Christians respond to tribulation? Why (page 5)?
4. How do we explain terms like “all nations” or “all the world” in the New Testament (pages 5-8)?
5. What should be expected when the Christian faith is presented for the first time to the un-evangelized? Why (pages 8, 9)?
6. What is the counsel of Christ when the Christian is met with opposition and tribulation (pages 9, 10)?
7. Why do you think so many people do not endure to the end (page 10)?