

The Gospel According to Matthew

By

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CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

MATTHEW 24:1-44

NOTE: We at Baptist Bible Believers website do not accept the teaching of replacement theology; that is, that the Church is God's choice nation now that Israel has been set aside. We do believe that this is a temporary condition that will be dealt with during the Tribulation period when Israel will be born in a day and accept Jesus Christ as their long-awaited Messiah and King.

SOME preliminary words are necessary before we attempt a brief survey of the long passage before us. This is a difficult part of our Gospel, where interpretation should be reverent, and where there should be a perpetual recognition of the fact that interpreters have differed, and still are differing. If that is recognized we may go forward.

Our attitude toward this prophecy of Christ must be largely determined by our attitude toward the prophecies of the Old Testament. That may be a somewhat startling thing to say, and yet our conception of the prophecies of the Old Testament, naturally, even though subconsciously, will affect our attitude toward this prophecy of Christ.

The standpoint from which we approach all the ancient prophecies, and consequently this prophecy of our Lord, is that all the things which the ancient prophets said concerning Israel which have not yet been fulfilled, will be fulfilled. This being so, it is also of supreme importance that we should clearly recognize that our Lord did finally reject the earthly people, and clearly declared that their responsibility for bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom of God should be transferred to another nation.

Therefore we are to look for fulfillment, not in the rejected nation, but in the newly appointed nation, in which all of God's essential purposes are to be fulfilled, and through which His program is to be carried out.

The present section is in some senses not of immediate interest to us, as it has a very small application to ourselves. Yet a clearer apprehension of it is of value in appreciating the next section, which reveals our present position and responsibility.

In the forty-fifth verse we read, "**Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?**" and that question takes us a good way back in our Gospel in order to explanation.

At the close of chapter thirteen, when our Lord had been uttering the parables of the Kingdom, His last parable was the parable of the householder, and the householder's responsibility concerning the truths of the Kingdom which He had committed to His disciples.

He spoke there of the disciples' new position as scribes instructed to the Kingdom, as that of the householder who brings **"forth from his treasure things new and old."** Now, in the midst of this great prophecy on Olivet, our Lord asked the question, **"Who then is the faithful and wise servant?"** and from that moment the prophecy which had been dealing with the earthly people passed to a revelation of the present responsibility of His own disciples and of the Christian Church, the spiritual Israel. From that question, at verse forty-five, through chapter twenty-five, to verse thirty, we have a section of the prophecy which deals with the Church's responsibility - the parable of the virgins and the parable of the talents. At verse thirty-one, we begin a third and final section of the great prophecy, **"When the Son of man shall come."**

Our Lord first distinctly and carefully warned these men who asked the question with a warning that is of perpetual application and value.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."

The fact that Jesus uttered this warning is in itself most significant. They had asked Him a question in a realm full of mystery, full of difficulty, in which it was very difficult indeed for them to follow His teaching, and He knew it; and He knew full well how in this very realm of the method of the interpretation of the ways of God in the future, there would be room for false Christs and false teaching; and so He first solemnly warned men.

Then He commenced to utter His prophecy as to the earthly people, Israel.

He first spoke of things immediately at hand.

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

Nothing can be clearer than that He distinctly told these men standing round about Him, that they were on the eve of consternation and difficulty, but they were not to be troubled because, said He, **"the end is not yet."** Read that in the light of their question, **"When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"**

Through the discourses which followed, He was very careful to show that the end lay far away. But He clearly outlined the course of events then close at hand, that is happening within a generation.

Everything predicted from verse six to verse twenty-two was fulfilled to the letter in connection with the Fall of Jerusalem within a generation.

Having revealed these things, and shown that the destruction of the Temple was imminent, but that the “**end**” was not then, He told them what would be the manner of His coming. From beginning to end of the prophecy He emphasized the fact that none knew, nor could know, when, that coming would be, but the fact of it was certain.

Thus we come to those final words in verse forty-four, “**Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.**”

The day of vengeance for the world at large is yet to come, and toward that day our Lord was looking when in the final discourses on Olivet He talked of days yet to come, when the Son of man shall be manifested.

To-day He is still the Servant Who does not cry, or lift up His voice. But He has another method, illustrated in the figure of the smoking flax and the bruised reed.

- Smoking flax is that which has the element of destruction within itself;
- The bruised reed is weakness weakened;

and if we take the ancient prophecy, and look at that passage, we find it is a description, not of a penitent soul seeking mercy, but of a rebellious soul as it appears in the sight of God.

Beyond the method of the gentle Servant Who does not cry or lift up His voice, is the method of the King Who quenches the smoking flax and breaks the bruised reed, and proceeds by judgment to ultimate victory. Our Lord here in quiet calmness on Olivet’s slopes, with His own disciples and none other about Him, was looking on to the final movements. Beyond the method of His patience is the method of His power. Beyond these quiet years in which He suffers men and bears with them, and woos them and stands patiently waiting to deal with them in mercy, lies another day in which with fire and flame and flashing glory, by vengeance He will cast out all evil.

The day will come when He will exercise the powers which are to-day restrained, held in check in the economy of infinite grace. As to the earthly people, the day of vengeance came with the destruction of Jerusalem. As to the world at large, it is yet to come.

~ end of chapter 64 ~

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