

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 25, Number 33

August 23, 2009



Abomination and Desolation

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

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.... (Matthew 24:15-16)

We find language similar to Jesus' reference in four passages from Daniel. (Daniel 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11) The Olivet Discourse, as this message from Jesus is termed, is one of the three longest "sermons" or messages recorded in the gospels from Jesus' lips. The three are the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, and Jesus' words to the disciples following His last Passover with them in John's gospel, chapters fourteen through sixteen. Jesus spoke the Olivet Discourse during the week in Jerusalem prior to His arrest and crucifixion. Interestingly, just as we should logically view John chapters fourteen through sixteen as Jesus' final word to the disciples prior to His crucifixion, we should view the Olivet Discourse as His last word to the unbelieving Jewish leaders prior to His crucifixion.

In our study of Gabriel's seventy week prophecy we have necessarily examined the popular and errant interpretation of the dispensational school of theology regarding this prophecy. Once advocates of this school choose to arbitrarily interrupt Gabriel's prophecy by dissecting the seventieth week from the first sixty-nine, they demonstrate a similar inclination to arbitrary injection of time throughout the Bible. The typical dispensational interpretation of the Olivet Discourse is that Jesus was predicting the horrors of the seventieth week, or as they refer to it, the Great Tribulation, that they believe shall occur between their "secret rapture" and the Second Coming and general resurrection.

By Jesus reference to Daniel's "abomination of desolation" prophecies, there is no doubt that a prophetic corollary exists between those prophecies and the subject matter that Jesus addressed in the Olivet Discourse. The first question to be addressed is fundamental to our understanding of both these Bible lessons and of the events relating to the end of time and the

Second Coming. Do the actual events that Jesus described in the Olivet Discourse accurately—or even reasonably for that matter—describe any sensible scenario of the Second Coming? Let's examine a few specific events that Jesus addressed in this discourse to see if they logically match what we might expect to accompany the Second Coming—or even the dispensational view of a "secret rapture."

1. *Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.... (Matthew 24:16)* Whether we view this verse in reference to the Second Coming or the hypothetical secret rapture, does anything in Scripture describe the event as so geographically localized that it would matter whether believers were in the mountains, the valleys, or the middle of a thriving metropolis? Nothing, absolutely nothing in Scripture indicates that the Second Coming shall be restricted to a certain geographic location, much less that it shall exclude people who reside in mountains at the time.
2. *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house.... (Matthew 24:17)* The localization question becomes even more absurd with this verse. Who can make a sensible case that anyone's participation in the Second Coming—or even the hypothetical secret rapture—will be jeopardized if you happen to be repairing your roof when the time occurs?
3. *Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. (Matthew 24:18)* Can any Bible teacher make a credible case that a farmer in the field will miss out on the event if he chooses to go to his home to pack a suitcase before

departing? For that matter, who can make any kind of case that we'll need a suitcase or our earthly wardrobe? If advocates of the dispensational view try to avoid these questions by simply saying there will not be enough time for people to do these things, it should be noted that Jesus specifically puts the choice onto the individual, "Let them..." "Let him..." or "Neither let him..." Jesus is not merely describing the immediacy of the event; He is clearly warning us about what to do and what not to do when the actual events He had in mind occur—or occurred.

4. *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!* (Matthew 24:19) The absurdity intensifies. Who is willing to defend the idea that pregnant women and nursing mothers will either go to hell at the Second Coming or miss out on their participation in the "secret rapture"?
5. *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day...* (Matthew 24:20) Jesus clearly indicates in this verse—as if He hadn't already done so—that He is describing a specific local event, not the Second Coming or the dispensationalist's "secret rapture." Travel, earth travel from Point A to Point B is involved, and at that time those who knew Jesus warnings would need to travel a distance far greater than they might need to travel during winter weather or the Mosaic distance described as a "Sabbath day's journey," a distances just short of a mile.
6. *Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* (Matthew 24:26-27) Here Jesus confronts and refutes any notion of a "secret" event relative either to the immediate events that He prophesied or of the Second Coming. In effect Jesus confronted and rejected any notion of a "secret rapture." Rather than a rapture occurring privately or secretly so that some people mysteriously disappear while others standing by remain, Jesus announces that His actual coming shall be as public and as gripping of human attention as a bright flash of lightning.

A thorough examination of the Olivet Discourse begins with the fact that the disciples asked Jesus three questions, not just one.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?
(Matthew 24:1-3)

Notice the three questions.

1. ...when shall these things be?
2. ...what shall be the sign of thy coming?
3. ...what shall be the sign of the end of the world?

No doubt the disciples were confused by Jesus' answer to their observation of the magnificence of the temple, as well as likely confused by much of the prevailing Jewish beliefs of the day regarding the coming of Messiah. It appears that a dominant belief among first century Jews was that shortly, if not immediately, after Messiah came, the end of the world, the Second Coming as we term the event, would occur. This errant Jewish belief could well explain the Thessalonian error regarding the immediacy of the Second Coming. Through the Olivet Discourse, among several other objectives, Jesus addresses and refutes this errant belief. From the time the fig tree begins to shoot out buds in the spring till harvest season involves significant time, just as He indicated to the disciples a significant time would lapse from His coming and death till the Second Coming.

As we study the Olivet Discourse, do we focus our minds on one event, be it the Second Coming or the likely local, geo-political event of the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., or be it the Second Coming? I offer that Jesus actually addressed both questions and events in this discourse and clearly separated them by both time and necessary gospel or "kingdom" events that He indicated would occur between His First Coming and His Second.

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Worship service each Sunday
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10:30 A. M.
Pastor