

“Eschatology”
(Part 39: The Olivet Discourse, Part 6)

V. The Olivet Discourse.

F. Warnings to Be Ready, Part 2 (vv. 45-51).

1. Last week, we considered the first in a series of warnings (24:32-44).
 - a. Like the fig tree that puts out its leaves as summer approaches, so when they saw the signs of His coming in judgment, they were to know He was near (vv. 32-33).
 - b. He reminded them again that the generation then living would not die off before all the things He had told them would happen (v. 34).
 - c. He enforced this statement in the strongest possible way: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (v. 35).
 - d. He affirmed that it was not His Father’s will that they know the exact day or hour, so that they would be ready at all times (v. 36).
 - e. His coming against Jerusalem in 70 AD would take place unexpectedly; some would be ready and some would not (vv. 37-41).
 - f. Since His coming would be unexpected – like a thief – they were always to be on the alert (vv. 42-44).
2. The rest of the discourse consists in several warnings, each with a slightly different emphasis, all aimed at encouraging the disciples to be ready.
 - a. The first is a parable (Faithful Servant), in which He tells His disciples to be faithfully doing what He has given them to do while they’re waiting for His coming.
 - b. The second is a parable (Ten Virgins) in which He tells them to be in a constant state of watchfulness and readiness for His return.
 - c. The third is also a parable (Talents) in which He calls them to make good use of the gifts and resources He has entrusted to them to advance His kingdom in the light of His return.
 - d. The final warning is a glimpse at the future judgment to tell them in advance that what they do will be called into judgment and will show whether they are converted or unconverted. In other words, their actions in the end will prove to speak more loudly than their words.
3. One question we have yet to deal with is where the transition lies in these warnings between 70 AD and the Second Coming?
 - a. There are those who believe the Olivet Discourse is speaking of things entirely future (Dispensationalism) and those who believe it speaks of things entirely past (Radical Preterism).
 - b. Everyone else sees it referring to both, but differ as to where the transition lies.
 - (i) Some believe the transition comes in Matthew 24:34 where Jesus says that generation will not pass away until all these things take place. That which follows, however, is clearly connected to what He has been telling them.
 - (ii) Some say Jesus alternates between the two judgments throughout chapter 24, saying some things about one event and then some things about the other. However,

it's clear from verse 34 that everything He's said to that point was connected to that generation, and so can't refer to the future.

- (iii) Others say that since the two events are so closely related, what He says really applies to both. But again, verse 34 shows that what He's said to that point has reference only to 70 AD.
 - (iv) All would agree that Jesus begins speaking about 70 AD and yet by the time He's finished moves to the final judgment. Where does the transition take place?
- c. There are at least two possibilities.
- (i) The first is that He begins focusing on the Second Coming in Matthew 25:31, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne."
 - (a) Christ said He would come on the clouds with power and great glory in judgment against Israel in 70 AD (Matt. 24:30).
 - (b) But here He clearly comes in His glory, accompanied by the angels, to sit on His throne of judgment at the last day.
 - (c) There are at least two reasons why He moves forward to this event:
 - (1) To show His disciples that how they conduct themselves prior to, during, and following 70 AD will impact their eternal state.
 - (2) 70 AD is so similar to the Final Judgment, it's almost a picture or type of that judgment: the one flows logically forward to the other.
 - (ii) The second possibility is that He begins to shift towards the Second Coming from Matthew 24:45 on, but not entirely.
 - (a) What He says from that point is still clearly connected to 70 AD – He applies the parable of the Ten Virgins to His disciples in 25:13, "Be on the alert then, for *you* do not know the day nor the hour."
 - (b) But He also seems to begin looking forward to the Second Coming.
 - (1) The first thing that appears to signal a shift is that Jesus does not apply what He says as intensely to His disciples as what He said before.
 - (A) In the first 44 verses of chapter 24, He addressed them personally at least 19 times (*e.g.*, "See to it that no one misleads *you*," "*You* will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that *you* are not frightened," *etc.*; 24:2, 4, 6, 9, 15, 23, 25, 26, 32, 33, 34, 42, 44).
 - (B) But from verse 45 to the end of chapter 25, He applies what He says to them personally only once, and that at the end of the parable of the Ten Virgins, "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day or the hour" (25:13).
 - (C) Note that He still connects it to them – so it still applies to 70 AD.
 - (2) Jesus also seems to begin speaking of longer periods of time before He comes:
 - (A) "My master is not coming for a long time" (24:48), "While the bridegroom was delaying" (25:5), "After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them" (25:19), "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him" (v. 31).

- (B) This could have several applications:
 - (I) The forty years from the time He said these things until 70 AD is a long time, and they needed to guard themselves against backsliding and laziness.
 - (II) From that time to the end of their lives might be long, and so they needed to persevere.
 - (III) It's a long time from when Jesus spoke these things to the end of history, and so all of His people need to be ready for judgment at all times.
 - (3) He speaks of a punishment the wicked will receive that goes beyond what the Romans can inflict:
 - (A) "And [He] shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth" (24:51), "Truly I say to you, I do not know you" (25:12), "Cast the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 30), "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (v. 41).
 - (B) We should note that their conduct from 30 – 70 AD and beyond would also have a bearing on the outcome of their judgment.
 - (4) And He speaks of a reward the righteous will receive which is greater than anything they can have on earth:
 - (A) "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions" (24:46-47), "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master" (25:21, 23), "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (25:34, 46).
 - (B) Again, their conduct before, during and after 70 AD would have a bearing on their rewards in heaven.
 - (5) These things show that Jesus is now moving more towards His Second Coming in the Olivet Discourse, which He describes more fully in the Sheep and Goat Judgment.
 - (6) If we take it in this light, then what He speaks of from here has a much more direct bearing on our lives.
4. The parable of the faithful slave (vv. 45-51).
- a. In this first parable, Jesus begins by asking His disciples a question, **"Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?" (v. 45).**
 - (i) The right answer should be "them." This is what Jesus was calling them to be.

- (a) They were His servants, trained to carry on His work once His part on earth was complete.
 - (b) They were in charge of His household, to give His people their food at the proper time: They would preach, gather His people in, teach and disciple them, care for them and encourage them.
- (ii) If they did this faithfully, they could look forward to their Master's blessing – **“Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions” (vv. 46-47).** They would inherit His possessions – the eternal kingdom, the New Heavens and Earth, the glory and happiness that comes with it.
- (iii) If they were not faithful, if they used their position for their own gain, rather than Christ's, they would inherit a curse instead. **“But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (vv. 48-51).**
 - (a) Only an unbeliever could suffer these consequences – a hypocrite within the ranks of Christianity; a Judas; someone who appears to be a believer, but who isn't; one who has the exterior veneer of Christianity without the inward reality of the heart.
 - (b) He's not warning His disciples against failure of any kind. Even though the standard is perfection, He knows they won't reach it. But He is telling them to make sure they are not hypocrites by continuing to press forward in faithfulness.
- b. We too need to be faithful with what Christ has given us to do as we await His day.
 - (i) We are to be faithful according to our calling(s): Elders, deacons, members of the church; husbands, wives, parents, children; magistrates, citizens.
 - (ii) If we are faithful, we will show ourselves to be true believers and will inherit Christ's kingdom.
 - (iii) But if we are unfaithful, we will inherit the lake of fire – there are real warnings in the Bible directed towards Christians as a means to keep us going the right direction. He holds out both an encouragement and a warning: He knows we need both.
 - (iv) We are to do this not knowing when He will come for us, so we need to be ready at all times.
 - (v) The only way we can be faithful and inherit the promises is through the strength Christ provides.
 - (a) We might be able to deceive others – we can look good on the outside – but the only way we can please Christ is by being good on the inside through the power of His Spirit.
 - (b) Even with His help, we will fall short of perfection because of our sin; but if we are Christ's, His perfection covers our imperfections and makes us acceptable to God.
 - (c) Next week, we'll consider the parable of the Ten Virgins.