

DON'T MISS THE POINT!

The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 is a prophetic “seedplot” for the rest of the New Testament. Here in conjunction with sections in the other gospels Jesus introduces new end time realities related to His Second Coming.

First, He revealed there are two phases to His Second Coming. That was new revelation. Second, He revealed that the first phase is imminent – meaning it could happen at any time. Third, He revealed that His imminent coming and that of the Day of the Lord that follows amounts to what is called a “dual imminence”.

Dual Imminence

“The dual-imminence teaching results from exegetical evidence found in a number of NT passages. ...The teaching of imminence pervades the NT in connection **both** with Christ’s return for the church and with His return to initiate the wrathful phase of the day of the Lord. Jesus Himself initiated the NT teaching on imminence with such parabolic figures as the coming of a thief and the master at the door. Various NT writers picked up on these figures and used them to teach imminence also.” – ***Dr. Robert L. Thomas***

BOTH the coming of Lord as seen in Matthew 24:43-44 and the coming of the Day of the Lord as seen in 1 Thess. 5:2 are BOTH shown to come as a thief in the night.

We in the Church Age do see the Day of Christ’s coming approaching generally in terms of the trend growing apostasy (2 Tim. 3-4), but there are no specific dates or signposts for the Church (cf. Heb. 10:25). The best we can say is what Paul said in Romans 13.

Romans 13:11 (NKJV)

11 And do this, **knowing the time**, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is **nearer** than when we first believed.

All we can say is that it is getting closer and closer all the time, but we cannot set any dates or timelines. Christ’s coming for the Church has been imminently “at hand” since the writing of the NT Scriptures (cf. Phil. 4:5; Ja. 5:8). The Rapture of the Church is preceded by no specific definitive signs

while the Second Coming of Christ to the earth is preceded by MANY specific signs.

All good students of eschatology (last things) in my view are dispensationalists. Dispensationalists seek to apply a normal (or literal) hermeneutic to the whole of Scripture and consequently see a distinction between God's program for Israel and His program for the Church. This is the major tenant of dispensationalism (see Dr. Michael J. Vlach's book "Dispensational Hermeneutics").

With this in mind, realize that the Bible makes a distinction between what is termed the "***last days***" of the Church Age and the "***last days***" related to Israel. We are living in the last days of the Church Age, but not the last days related to Israel.

"We are currently living in the last days because we are in the church age, which is called the 'last days,' 'last times,' and 'last time.' However, in no way shape or form are we in the last days, as the Old Testament says of Israel. Those terms, 'latter days,' 'last days,' 'latter years,' 'end of time,' and 'end of the age' all refer to a time when Israel is in her time of tribulation." – ***Dr. Thomas Ice***

Realize that dates and signs are applied to Israel in regard to the last days, but that no such signs or dates are given to the Church. The first phase of Christ's second coming is the rapture and that applies to the Church and not to Israel. The second stage (Christ's coming to the earth) applies essentially to Israel in terms of focus.

The Church began suddenly and signlessly and it will be completed in the same fashion. The rapture was a mystery not seen in the Old Testament but was introduced by Christ in the New Testament and then developed by Paul and other NT writers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-58).

Let me expand on this a bit...

In Daniel 9:24-27 God showed Daniel that there were to be exactly 70 units of 7 years (490 years) of special prophetic dealings with Israel in terms of pre-kingdom history. From the time of the command to rebuild Jerusalem

UNTIL Christ was officially presented to Israel as her King at the time of His triumphal entry was to be exactly 69 weeks or 483 years. That was fulfilled to the letter – all in relation to ISRAEL. That timing had to do with Israel, not the Church.

But then note that following the completion of the 69 weeks (483 years) Daniel 9:26 presents an extended gap period of an undefined amount of time. We are not told how long the gap period will be. ***Do you know why?*** Because the Church Age essentially relates to the GAP PERIOD and that is undefined! What will bring the Church Age to a close is the coming of Christ at the Rapture which will also usher in the Day of the Lord – the 70th week of Daniel.

So note that the 1st stage of Christ's second coming (the rapture) is imminent. The second stage (Christ's coming to the earth) will not be imminent, but rather will be preceded by all manner of definitive signs.

After introducing the first phase of His second coming which comes unexpectedly, Christ then used 4 parables to further illustrate and emphasize the importance of being ready in light of His imminent return.

Matt. 24:43-44 – Parable of a Thief Coming in the Night

Matt. 24:45-51 – Parable of two Servants

Matt. 25:1-13 – Parable of Ten Virgins

Matt. 25:14-30 – Parable of the Talents

The common denominator in all these parables is the idea of imminence – that the Lord may come at any time and that He will come at a time when He is not expected. Thus, all four of these parables relate to the first phase of Christ's second coming that we call the rapture.

As we get into the parables of Matthew 25 note that this chapter serves as a parabolic supplement to the prophetic teaching found in Matthew 24. Both of these parables in Matthew 25 serve to illustrate the prophetic truth introduced in the previous chapter. A contrast is drawn between those who are prepared and those who are unprepared – between those who are ready and those who are not.

Often with parables the tendency of some is to make too much of the details when the point of parables is that generally they have one main point. And the point of the parables in the Olivet Discourse is that we need to LIVE READY because Christ could come at any time!

Don't miss THE POINT!

Live Ready!
Perhaps Today!