

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW – THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH – Fall 2022

“...whoever reads, let him understand” Matt. 24:15b

Week 1 – Set My Heart To Understand

September 13, 2022

BLURB

"The Gospel of Matthew; The Olivet Discourse." This semester we are going to dig into the backstory from Scripture itself regarding end times. What has God revealed to us in His unfolding of the big picture of Scripture that will give us an understanding concerning the WHY of end times?

Basic Consideration:

“End times,” “end of time,” “time of the end,” etc. – those labels regarding a specific timeframe are in the Bible! (Dan. 8:13-17; Dan. 12:4; Dan. 12:1-2, 9, 13; II Tim. 3:1-7; I Pet. 1:20....) We should most definitely know about “end times.” WHY? II Tim. 3:16 - *All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

All Scripture is GOD-BREATHED – these are God’s VERY WORDS! Profitable – beneficial, having much of an advantage. For doctrine – learning/teaching. Reproof – to prove – what we are learning; to test – what is being said - which leads to conviction. Correction – toward RESTORATION – to be placed in a right relationship with God (righteousness). Instruction (full scope of training/education) in righteousness – speaking of being placed in a right relationship with God – for all eternity!

Heb. 1:1-2 – tells us *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers* (ancestors; forefathers; fathers who came before) *by the prophets* (who spoke of the promise of the Messiah), *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.*

Do we desire to understand prophecy? WHY?

Do we desire to understand eternity? Ecccl. 3:11 - *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts,*

Could this mean that while man longs for eternity, end times prophecy is yet-to-be fulfilled! And so, we continue to yearn – to understand

Because there is “yet-to-be-fulfilled” prophecy, we are very aware of “stage setting.” God is setting the stage. Aren’t we aware of “foreshadows” that point to Jesus’ Second Coming? What has been occurring in the past (decades/centuries) that is preparing for the fulfillment of the Second Coming of Jesus? The stage has been set with: the rise of globalism; the trend toward a one-world government; the desire on the part of some to build a United European Empire; the spread of all-invasive technology and surveillance; the progression to a one-world economy; the decent into moral and spiritual corruption; growing deception; increasing assault on the truth; the increase of Christian persecution;

the ever-increasing explosion and hostilities toward Israel and the Jewish people; the preparations for a third temple in Jerusalem; the forming of a coalition to destroy Israel.

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However, we must base our view of the last days on Scripture. We must base our view of the first part of Jesus' Second Coming...the rapture for the Church, Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus...on the literal understanding of Scripture.

Jesus' coming for us in the rapture is IMMINENT.

Rev. 1:7 - *Behold, He is coming with clouds* – Jesus' coming for believers since Pentecost is “in the process.” Jesus' coming for us in the rapture is imminent...it's at any moment. The word “rapture” is not found in Scripture. The rapture is described in Scripture by the Gk. word, *harpazo* – a catching up. *Harpazo* means to seize, to carry off by force! (I Thess. 4:15-18)

We need to think through the Bible! And, we need to ask the question WHY for the various events which equate to end times. WHY? Because we haven't asked that one-word questions when we've studied end times? WHY?!!

If you were asked to explain end times, what would you say? More importantly, perhaps, where in Scripture would you begin? What has God revealed to us in His unfolding of the big picture of Scripture that will give us an understanding concerning the WHY of end times?

HOW DO WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND?

“Set my heart to understand” - this was Daniel's prayer to God... asking God to cause him to set his heart to understand what God was revealing to Him through visions and also from the scroll of Jeremiah – Jeremiah chapter 25.

Daniel was older while reading Jeremiah 25, having lived in exile for most of his life. He was hit with the words in Jer. 25:11 – that Israel would be a desolation and an astonishment and would serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Dan. 9:2 - Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years *specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He/GOD would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Dan. 9:3 - *Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.* This revelation in the scroll of Jeremiah was heavy on Daniel's heart.

As Daniel read the scroll about the 70 years, he knew that those 70 years would be accomplished soon...perhaps in two years. In the Hebrew Scriptures God told the nation of Israel with whom He has a covenant that, as a nation, they needed to repent before they would be blessed and possess the land God had already given them. (Deut. 30:1-6). And, in thinking of God's promise of restoration upon the repentance of Israel, Daniel cried out to God in confession on behalf of his people and on behalf of himself.

Dan. 9:20-21 - Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering (the time that the evening offering would have been offered to God if the temple was still standing in Jerusalem)

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Dan. 9:22-23 - And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision....

GOD WANTS US TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE HAS UNFOLDED FOR US IN HIS WORD REGARDING HIS PLAN!

Is understanding end times prophecy critical? God sent the angel Gabriel, while Daniel was praying, to give Daniel skill to understand the 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel which is the backbone of end times prophecy! The backbone/spinal column serves to keep the body balanced and upright.

Firstly, Daniel's 70-week prophecy concerns Israel, the Messiah, and the Antichrist...it addresses "end times."

This prophecy is the foundation of end times prophecy. Therefore, all end times prophecy taught in Scripture MUST align with Daniel's 70-week prophecy.

Dan. 10:10-14 – re: prophecies concerning the empires of Persia and Greece -
¹⁰ Suddenly, a hand touched me ("me" being Daniel), which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. ¹¹ And he said to me, 'O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you. ... ¹² Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words...¹⁴ Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.'

Daniel 10:12 – Daniel had set his heart to understand, and to humble himself before God,

The world is changing exponentially rapidly. We need to understand what GOD is doing – what He has already revealed! GOD WANTS US TO UNDERSTAND!

What God **reveals** in His word is massive and we need to bow before Him, worship Him, and ask Him to grant us understanding in what He has revealed – realizing that 27-33% of what He has revealed in His word is prophecy!

PROPHECY IS BASED ON WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS ALREADY REVEALED IN HIS WORD!

The world is changing exponentially rapidly. We need to understand WHO GOD IS – His faithfulness, love, mercy, and grace...we need to understand what GOD has already revealed!

Some people struggle with understanding WHY GOD has chosen Israel.
Deut. 7:6-8 - *For you are a holy people (a set apart people) to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*
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Because God is God – He is sovereign – Almighty God - the ruler of the universe – we need to UNDERSTAND that we are to bow before Him and thank Him for His plan!

What does it mean to have your heart set on something? It means you want it – that something – more than anything else!

Are we setting our hearts on understanding God's word?

WHY am I focusing on UNDERSTANDING God's word in the first lesson of our semester on Matthew 24? Jesus warned of deception at the outset of His instructions to the disciples. How do we guard against deception? By UNDERSTANDING God's word!

We need to understand Who God is – all that He is – His attributes.... We need to understand God's perspective as we read His word! CONSIDER:

- God called Jesus to what seemed to be disaster – from the human perspective.
- Jesus called His disciples to see Him suffer and be put to death. He led them to the place where their hearts were broken.
- Ten of the disciples were martyred. John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos. Judas, we know, betrayed Jesus.
- From every standpoint but God's, Jesus life was an absolute failure.
- BUT, what seemed to be failure from man's standpoint was a TREMENDOUS TRIUMPH from God's perspective, because God's purpose is never man's purpose.

○ Have we come to that conclusion in our walk with the LORD?

ARE WE READY TO ASK GOD TO SET OUR HEARTS TO UNDERSTAND?

Prophecy is such a graphic warning for those who are not born again, not saved, not redeemed, for those who do NOT have a personal relationship with God through JESUS THE MESSIAH – forgiveness for sins through Jesus' shed blood on the cross!

Understanding prophecy is such an everlasting hope for those who are born again, redeemed, saved, forgiven of our sins through Jesus! Watching and waiting for Jesus' return for us brings us such peace and joy!

Prophecy - at its most basic definition is "a message from God."

To Prophesy – (verb) an action - to proclaim a "message from God."

"Biblical prophecy" – is a message from God which can include passages about God's plan, His decrees concerning the future and His plan of redemption and restoration for those who are born again, and His plan of judgment for those who do not have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus the Messiah, God the Son!

UNDERSTANDING "Biblical prophecy" speaks to the truth that God is fully in control!

In Rev. 19:10 we are told, *worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*. Prophecy always bears witness to Jesus from the truth that God has already revealed to us in His word. (Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:4-11, 28). Prophecy is proclaiming the truth of God.

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AND...we must focus on the truth that **GOD IS NOT giving new revelation to people today (Rev. 22:18).** **GOD HAS SPOKEN** through His word and our job is to "contend" (athletic/wrestling mat analogy; root word – "to agonize"!!)... "to contend earnestly" (with all effort) for the faith/the truth that was once delivered/entrusted to the saints (Jude v. 3) through Scripture. Believers have been entrusted with the word of God – to know it and to share it.

We are NOT to seek further revelations from God. We are not to seek revelations outside of Scripture that people tell us that they've been given!

Messianic prophecy – spoken by God and the OT prophets looking forward to Jesus' first coming

- Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecy that spoke of His first coming.
 - And we understand Messianic prophecy concerning Jesus' first coming literally. They were fulfilled in history!
 - Jesus has yet to fulfill the Messianic prophecies about His physical Second Coming.
 - AND, we need to remember that just as Jesus LITERALLY fulfilled the prophecy pointing to His first coming, He will LITERALLY fulfill the prophecy pointing to His second coming.

Biblical prophecy speaks to God's goal: His loving desire for mankind and the earth, the UNIVERSE to be RESTORED.

In understanding God's goal, specifically as it relates to our study this semester, we need to UNDERSTAND "WHY"!

WHY there will be a rapture, WHY there will be a tribulation, WHY there will be judgment, WHY there will be a Millennial Kingdom, WHY the heavens and the earth will pass away and MELT, and WHY there will be an Eternal State/the New Jerusalem...

ARE WE READY TO SET OUR HEARTS TO UNDERSTAND?

QUESTIONS

What does setting our hearts to understand God's word mean?

WHY is it significant?

What do you desire to learn from this class?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Reread Week 1's handout with references.

In researching end times in Scripture, where in Scripture would you begin?

Begin to read Matthew 24

Read Week 2's handout when you receive it.