

The Impetus of Eschatological Verities

by Bryan Anthony

The sermon emphasizes the importance of literal interpretation of prophetic passages, and the urgency of missionary work in light of the coming of God's theocratic Kingdom.

Scripture: Isaiah 13:10, Matthew 24:14, Matthew 24:29, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 1:7

Topics: "Eschatology", "Missional Living"

Description

Bryan Anthony preaches on the future fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 24, emphasizing that while some events were fulfilled in the first century, the cosmic signs and the return of Christ are yet to come. The symbolizing of these passages and denial of their literal future fulfillment stems from unbelief in God's theocratic Kingdom establishment. Believers are urged to live with missionary urgency, focusing on witnessing to the authentic Christ amidst the birth pangs of the end times.

Transcript

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." -Matt. 24.29-30

It is a real tragedy that many modern preachers have sought to apply the whole of Jesus' Olivet Discourse to the events in 70 AD. We need to realize that while much of what Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24 was fulfilled or touched in the first century, the larger part has yet to be fulfilled. Writing the chapter off as already fulfilled robs the believer of the promises and warnings that Jesus Himself issued. Hear Ben Witherington III on this:

Our author [Matthew], while he thinks some of the events recorded in this chapter were fulfilled in AD 65-70, also thinks that the cosmic signs and the return of Christ are still future. In other words, he has not given up on the future eschatology enunciated by Jesus.

.... This discourse involves a theocratic reading, not a zealot's reading of the climax of the Jewish war.

.... In verse 29 and following, the subject matter has turned to the real climax of human history.

.... The point of such language [the sun will be darkened, etc.] is clearly that creation reacts, all heaven breaks loose when God comes down.

.... The sign of the coming Son of Man does indeed indicate the end of world history as we know it, and so we are told the nations will mourn as they realize judgment is coming in the person of the Son of Man. His word is more permanent and lasting than the universe.

(Ben Witherington III, Matthew, Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2006)

The symbolizing of these kinds of passages, and the denial of their literal future fulfillment, really has its root in an unbelief that God will actually break into the earth to establish His theocratic Kingdom. Yet the prophets are filled with references to the coming reality, and we need to realize that such times are coming. These verses are intensely literal, and if we spiritualize them away and make of them mere spiritual rhetoric, we insulate ourselves from prophetic reality. God Himself is coming. The Son of Man will literally be seen upon His return, and unbelieving men, from arrogant kings down to self-centered civilians, will be gripped with mourning in that awful hour.

This ought to propel us into a great missionary urgency. In the words of David Baron, "If these things are upon us, who shall be up and doing?" These prophecies were not given so that we could write out end-times charts or hold blockbuster prophecy conferences.

During all these birth pangs the followers of Jesus are to keep their minds on the real task of witnessing to the authentic Christ.

(BW3, *ibid.*)

We are invited and commissioned to live under the influence of the power and light of the age to come, and to spread that light to those who are bound in the stranglehold of darkness. Onward, then! On to prayer and intercession! On to greater love! On to an authentic humility! On to deeper devotion! On to brighter holiness! On to the proclamation of the Gospel in the darkest parts of the earth! For the glory of Christ, and until the day of His return....

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