

LESSON TWELVE

THE PROMISE TO RETURN

A. JESUS PROMISED TO COME AGAIN:

Scriptural References:

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3).

"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you" (John 14:28).

"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" (John 16:16).

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice" (John 16:22).

"Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:22).

The above Scriptures are only a few of the places where Jesus spoke about His return. As we saw in another lesson there were a number of the parables that directly dealt with His return.

Jesus definitely and clearly promised a personal return. The promise was: (1) He would come again; (2) His disciples would see Him; (3) He would receive His disciples unto Himself; and (4) They would be with Him in a prepared place.

When Peter enquired of Jesus regarding the manner of John's death, Jesus answered, *"If I will tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"* His disciples understood exactly what He meant and a saying went around that John would not die.

B. JESUS TAUGHT THAT HE WOULD RETURN BODILY AND VISIBLY:

Scriptural References:

"For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27).

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

In these Scriptures we read where Jesus taught a physical and literal return. These Scriptures are referring to His Revelation and teach us that Jesus shall return visibly and with great publicity. At that time the nations of the world will mourn because of their previous rejection of Him.

C. JESUS ANSWERED THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

Scriptural Reference:

"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 24:3).

The 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew's gospel make up a very important passage of Scripture known as the "Olivet Discourse." This discourse followed the announcement of woes upon the Pharisees and the announcement of blindness of the nation of Israel (Matthew 23). Jesus prophesied concerning the destruction of the temple and said that there would not be left one stone upon another. Jesus then went and sat down upon the Mount of Olives. The disciples now presented to Him three important questions. The Olivet Discourse was given in reply. As we study these two chapters we should remember that this discourse was given just two days before His death (Matthew 26:1-2).

Here are the three questions that the disciples asked:

1. When shall these things be? (The destruction of the temple).
2. What shall be the sign of thy coming?
3. What shall be the sign of the end of the world? (The consummation of the age).

In studying this discourse we should remember that the facts outlined here by our Lord basically has to do with the nation of Israel. Another point to remember is that basically this discourse tells with events in chronological order.

Matthew records very little about the answer to the first question, but the answer is given in Luke 21:20-24. This had to do with the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in 70 AD. Jesus warned His disciples to flee in time. When the Roman armies began to encircle Jerusalem His disciples were to flee to the trans-Jordanic mountains. They were not even to come down from their roofs but to flee from roof to roof until they came to the city walls and escape. In 70 AD many Christians heeded the warning of Jesus and fled to Pella, seventeen miles south of the Sea of Galilee.

This discourse as recorded by Matthew deals mainly with the Great Tribulation period and the Coming of Jesus to set up His Kingdom at His revelation. Although there is a much difference of opinion among Bible students concerning the exact meaning of these statements, we might divide the chapter as follows:

1. Matthew 24:4-8 - Description of the present church age and the events that take place before the Great Tribulation. This is called the "beginning of sorrows."
2. Matthew 24:9-26 - Description of the Tribulation Period.
3. Matthew 24:27-35 - Description of the Coming of Jesus at His Revelation to establish His Kingdom. This is immediately after the Tribulation.
4. Matthew 24:36-51 - An exhortation to readiness and watchfulness both for the church and for Israel.

We shall comment briefly on a few of these statements of our Lord:

Verse 14: - We cannot be certain whether or not this prophecy has been fulfilled. If it has not been fulfilled, it is the only prophecy awaiting fulfillment before the Return of Jesus.

Verse 31: - The word "elect" in this verse refers to the nation of Israel. The Lord does not send His angels to gather the church. The church is caught away by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 34 - The word "generation" may be understood by referring to Luke 21:28-32. The generation that is meant is the generation that is living when these things begin to come to pass and are exhorted to lift up their heads and look up. There is no doubt in the mind of the writer but that it refers to the generation that is living at the present time.

The three parables as recorded in Matthew 25 refer to events in their proper chronological order:

1. Ten Virgins - Rapture of the Church;
2. Talents - Judgment Seat of Christ;
3. Judgment of the Nations - Revelation of Christ at Armageddon.

D. JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES TO BE READY:

Scriptural References:

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42).

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:33).

Jesus repeatedly exhorted His disciples to be watching, looking and ready for His return. The importance of this may be seen by the many times that Jesus exhorted His followers to be watchful. There are a few lessons taught here:

1. As far as we know Jesus may come at any moment for the church.
2. Jesus is not coming for a church getting ready, but a church that is ready.
3. These Scriptures reveal the seriousness of not being ready, and not being caught away with the church.

LESSON TWELVE

SELF HELP TEST

A. What is meant by the term: "Olivet Discourse," and when did Jesus give this discourse?

B. What three questions did the disciples ask the Lord in Matthew 24?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. Explain the meaning of the following words:

1. ELECT (Matthew 24:31):
2. GENERATION (Matthew 24:34):

D. Give the date of the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus.

E. Remembering our Lord's prophecy where did many Christians flee to at this time?

F. Give THREE Scriptures with references to show that Jesus promised to return:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____