



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 24:1–14

Gospel of Matthew

“Advent Questions”

TRANSCRIPT

This morning the Scripture reading is found in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. This is the beginning of our consideration of the Olivet Discourse, and we are reading this morning for the Scripture passage, verse 1 through verse 14. Matthew chapter 24 and beginning at verse 1.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, ‘See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ 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 age?’ And Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall

kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.’ (And notice incidentally through this section the great stress that rests upon deception, so that the age is characterized by the liability that all have for succumbing to deception. Now verse 12): And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his inspired Word.

We had a friend last week who brought another friend to Believers Chapel for the first time. The friend was a member of a church that, in my opinion, is not really a Christian church. But as you remember well, it was two weeks ago I think, as you remember, I was speaking on the woes of Matthew chapter 23, and when our friends got out of the building and turned to their friend whom they had brought and said, well, what do you think of it? The person replied, too many woes for me. [Laughter] So it is adventitious, I suppose, that this morning at least, perhaps for some, that we are turning to Matthew chapter 24 where we have our Lord’s discourse on prophecy.

Nominal Christians often question the validity of prophetic study, and generally they question it for two reasons. In the first place they say it leads to the bizarre. If you become too occupied with prophecy, you are interested in things that are very weird and strange, and so therefore we really ought to avoid stress upon the prophetic word. We still can remember that it was not too many years ago that some of the leading Bible teachers became enamored of the possibility that Mussolini might be really the Antichrist, and some of the teachers who were in other respects reliable Bible teachers, came to the view that Benito Mussolini, *Il Duce*, was really the Antichrist, and they, generally speaking, based their ideas upon a series of remarkable coincidences.

In the first place, the Bible teaches that the Antichrist will have a very close relationship to a revived Roman empire, and was not Mussolini the leader of the nation of Italy?—that seemed to fit. One of the other things that the Bible stresses concerning the Antichrist or the Beast is that he will have a mouth speaking great things, and those of you who were living in the Thirties will remember that that was one of the great characteristics of Benito Mussolini. He had a mouth speaking great things. So it's not surprising then that Bible teachers guessed that he might be really the Antichrist.

And then of course, when he came to his ignominious end, it seemed to cast question on the prophetic word itself. There were others who sought to identify the Antichrist with Hitler. That was a very natural thing, because it was very difficult for us to imagine a more wicked man than Adolf Hitler. Now since he was not a Roman, we could not approach him from the standpoint of being the head of a revived Roman empire except insofar as his conquests seemed to possibly lead to the headship of a vast empire, and in that since he might be able to fulfill the words of Scripture.

Many attempts however were made to identify his name, Adolf Hitler with 666 of Revelation chapter 13:18 with is the verse you remember in which the number of the Beast is given. Now this was done by means of gematria. Gematria was a Kabbalistic method of interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures by interchanging words whose letters have the same numerical value when added. Many of the ancient people such as the Hebrews, and the Greeks for that matter, did not use Arabic numerals, but rather used the letters of the alphabet for their numbers so that *aleph* in Hebrew was used for one as well as for *aleph*, and the *alpha* in Greek accordingly, so that names would also be equal to certain numbers.

And therefore there was a great deal of, of a great many attempts to identify Adolf Hitler with the number 666, and several worked out ways of identifying Adolf Hitler with 666. If you could not do it in the German language try French. Or if you couldn't do it in French, try English. Or if you couldn't do it in in any of these, try classical Greek or something like that. So it is true that many students of the prophetic word because of excesses have given men the impression that to study prophecy intently is to be occupied with the bizarre.

The other reason that nominal Christians question prophetic study is a reason that I think is rather prominent among us who are evangelicals. You often hear people say, well, prophecy is really such a—now they don’t use this adjective; I’m using this adjective because it’s a good Scottish and English word. It’s such a daunting study, after all. To study prophecy requires such a knowledge of the Word of God that it’s enough to deter us from investigation, because it might require a little bit of perspiration in the study of the Bible, and we don’t want to go into this thing too deeply, you know. After all are there not premillennialists, and postmillennialists and amillennialists?

And then if we should think that we should be premillennialists, are there not pre-tribulational premillennialists, and post-tribulational premillennialists, and even some mid-tribulational premillennialists? Why that’s enough to scare anybody away from the study of the Bible. So it does often lead to the bizarre, and it is a daunting subject if we want to master the prophetic word.

This past week, I’ve been reading through a volume written by two good friends of mine. Well, it’s not written by them; it’s edited by them. It’s entitled *Dreams, Visions, and Oracles*. I was attracted to this book because it is edited by two friends of mine who are recognized evangelical scholars. In the preface of the book they say that they are often asked what good book is there on prophecy that you can recommend for us? And my friends have said that they have had to say over and over and over again that there is no good book on prophecy that they can recommend. And so finally they decided, so they say, to write their own a book that they could recommend.

But they said in order to in order to avoid the obvious criticism that you’re recommending something that you wrote, they appealed to a number of other evangelical scholars to contribute chapters. And so the book is a collection of articles written by various evangelical scholars on the study of prophecy. Now you would think that a book which ostensibly is a book on prophecy that can be recommended would really be a kind of book that would set us straight on prophecy that would be the kind of thing, if we asked how can I learn something about prophecy. We could obtain this book and learn something about prophecy.

So I turned to the last chapter of the book which is written by one of the editors which was entitled “Of This We Can Be Sure,” thinking that they would perhaps at least give me a a scheme of the teaching of the prophetic word of which I could be sure. So of course I was disappointed. “Of This We Can Be Sure.”

Well, my good friend could only be sure of three things. As a matter of fact I didn't even none need to study the prophetic word very intensively to be sure of these three things, for the three things that we could be sure of are, number one, the resurrection of the body, number two, the final judgment and number three, the Lordship of Jesus Christ. These are the only things about which we can be sure when we turn to the future.

Now I would like to say that that was for me at least very very much of a disappointment. If that's all of which I can be sure by the study of prophecy, then of course, I can understand why people are not interested particularly in prophecy, because you don't really have to study prophecy to know that those three things are true. They are things that have to do with eschatology, it's true, but they are taught all through the Bible and there is no question about them. So the effect of this book on prophecy is really to tell us we can hardly be sure about anything other than those three cardinal truths.

Now these two chapters in Matthew chapter 24 and chapter 25 it seems to me should forever silence the notion that we should avoid prophecy, or that such study leads to weird and spooky views, because if the study of prophecy leads to weird and spooky views, then our Lord Jesus is responsible for a great deal of it, because the disciples asked him about the future in the light of his words from Matthew 23 verse 38.

He had said, behold your house is left unto you desolate, referring to the temple, and then he had said you shall not see me henceforth till you shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. That aroused within them the desire to know something about the future. And so they asked the Lord concerning the future. They asked about the tribulation, because they asked about the consummation of the age. They knew about that of this we can be sure, number four, there is to be a

tribulation that is to come. And they knew about the second coming of Jesus Christ—which my friends really didn’t say anything about, although I think they can be sure of that too—and they also knew about other events that had to do with the end of the age, because our Lord Jesus teaches them as if they know those things.

Now they asked him about the future, and the striking thing is that our Lord did not rebuke them. He did not say, now I don’t want you to be occupied with prophecy. I want you to be occupied with spiritual life-truth, because if you study prophecy you’ll be led astray into bizarre views. Or, on the other hand, you will find it a very daunting subject, and you cannot understand prophecy. He didn’t say that. He didn’t rebuke them. He didn’t chide them because they had the desire to peer in the future. In fact, he actually acceded to their desires by giving them the longest answer to any question that he ever gave, according to the New Testament. Two long chapters are given in answer to their questions, tell us when shall these things be and what is the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age. In fact, I would think, that looking at Matthew chapter 24 and 25 is complete justification for engaging intensively in the study of the prophetic word.

Now I do not hesitate to add it is a daunting subject. It requires a great deal of study. There is a whole lot about prophecy that I do not understand, and I will prove it by the next seven messages [laughter] which I give on these two chapters. But nevertheless it is important for us to investigate these chapters. So we come with a great deal of interest to the Olivet Discourse which is, in a very special way, our Lord’s prophetic discourse. The apostle Paul said in the rapture passage of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.” Well this is a peculiar word from the Lord and therefore it should have our greatest attention.

It is the third of the three great discourses of Matthew. We have been saying that Matthew contains five discourses of the Lord Jesus. These three, the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, and the message concerning the parables in chapter 13 are the three great discourses of the Gospel of Matthew.

In the Sermon on the Mount, he speaks about the past, laying out for the disciples some principles which are to govern their living during the interim period in which our Lord Jesus was here in the flesh. Now those principles that he gave have their application for today, but they were directed primarily to that period of time in which the Lord Jesus was ministering, and in which the disciples were ministering in the light of his coming cross work.

Then in the second discourse in chapter 13, which has to do with the parables, he sets forth principles that have to do with his present age, principles that concern the kingdom principles that are being carried out at the present time. For example, to give only one of them, the sowing of the seed of the Word of God which has been carried out throughout this age.

Now in this discourse we look to the future, so in the first of the discourses we look at the past, in the second we see principles that are operative in the present age, in this discourse we look into the future. In the first we have precepts, in the second we have parable, and in this one we have prophecy. In the first we have the period of time in which the kingdom was being offered, in the second we have the principles that shall govern while the kingdom, in its manifestation is in abeyance, and then in this one we have period of time in which we anticipate the soon coming of the kingdom, and the gospel of the kingdom is to be preached again. So these three discourses are then the most important, and this is the third it has to do with the future.

When you are studying the Bible of course we always need to take account of the context. And this chapter grows out of the immediately preceding context. The Lord Jesus had announced the doom upon the theocracy by saying in verse 38 of the preceding chapter, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” He referred to the temple. But he also referred to the worship that was carried on at the temple, and so when he said your house is left unto you desolate, he meant that the reality that existed in Israel and in Judaism, connected with the worship, divinely given, divinely revealed, divinely validated by Jehovah in heaven, when he said your house is left unto you desolate, he meant not only that the physical material kingdom uh temple would be destroyed, but he meant

also that validity for that worship was also to be denied from a point in the immediate future on. Your house is left unto you desolate, so that Judaism from the time of the cross on is only Judaism.

Now he also said, “You shall not see me henceforth until you shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” That little word, until, is a word that is important because it contains a gleam of hope. It’s true that your house shall be left unto you desolate, there will be a period of discipline upon the nation, they will be scattered to the four corners of the earth. They will be brought by means of Gentile salvation which will provoke them to jealousy, ultimately to the possession of their promises.

Now the hope that he refers to is their ultimate return to the center of the program of God and the possession of the promises and the reality that those promises contain. So he said you shall not see me henceforth until there is coming a time when the discipline is completed but God will work again, will bring the nation back to the possession of the promises, and then Israel shall cry out, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” as the friends of our Lord, and as the children did when he made his triumphal entry. Well that little word, till offered at least a gleam of hope.

This discourse, incidentally, is a discourse that has been interpreted basically in three different ways. Now I’m going to, for the sake of time, say only a few words about this now, and as we go through in the remaining six messages, a few other things I will say, I hope it will not be too repetitious for you.

There are those who have believed that this discourse is basically fulfilled in the past. They are generally postmillennial interpreters. Now postmillennial interpreters believe—and I’m going to speak about the Christian postmillennialists, not the non-Christian postmillennialists. There are non-Christian postmillennialists who are simply humanists. They believe that basically man is good and that as a result of a kind of evolution in society, man shall become finally so good that there will be something like a kingdom of God upon the earth like a millennial age.

Now we will dismiss them, because obviously they do not have any real claims for correctness in biblical interpretation since their basic view of man and God and the cross of Christ is



deficient. But let's think about the Christian postmillennialists, because there are Christians who believe that through the preaching of the gospel in the present age God is going to win a great victory, and we are actually by virtue of God's work in the believers to gain a victory of the world to such an extent that we will by the grace of God introduce a period of time of like a golden age upon the earth which will fulfill the prophecies concerning the millennial age. It will be done by the grace of God working through believers.

Now these are postmillennialists, because they believe at the conclusion of that period of time, that golden age wrought by God through us, and through the preaching of the Word, the Lord Jesus will return to the earth. So it will be after the millennium that he returns.

Now such interpreters, such as Dr. Keck who has a book on this particular prophecy, believe that these prophecies of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25 have already been fulfilled, and so when we read, beginning at verse 4 and following, on through the remainder of this chapter, we are dealing with things that have come to pass in the past.

Now I know immediately you think, well what about verse 30, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Then shall the tribes of the earth mourn when they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” This, for such interpreters, means simply that Jesus Christ is reigning in heaven at the present time, and the other events are simply spiritual or allegorized statements of the providence of God in human history. Now that is one way to interpret these verses. I do not think that it is the correct way, and I believe that the best test of course is for us to read through the prophecy and seek to find its meaning.

There are some who interpret these chapters as having primary reference to the present. They give us general principles by which we should guide our lives. Basically, these interpret this in a non-literal sense too.

And then there are those who feel that this discourse is fulfilled in the future. I'm telling you ahead of time that I follow this last named principle of interpretation. I do believe that the Olivet Discourse is a discourse that has to do with the future. The test of the correctness of this view will

be, again, I say the study of the Word of God, but I want you to know ahead of time that is my opinion.

Let's come now to the verses themselves in the beginning of the discourse. The Lord Jesus had just left the temple, remember, and the long day's work was nearly done. He was on his way from the temple area—incidentally, never to return during his days in the flesh. He made his way out over the Kidron Valley, and then was on the way to Bethany, but as he reached the other side of the Mount of Olives, some things began to happen. I personally believe that what was happening in the minds of the disciples was something like this. Jesus has told us our house is going to be left unto us desolate. That is, the kingdom, the temple is to be destroyed.

Now anyone could look off and see that magnificent temple, and these words of our Lord Jesus would assume greater prominence if you could see the the temple, that beautiful temple and hear him utter these words. We cannot do that today, so we can only imagine what beauty that temple must have had for these simple Galilean farmers and fishermen.

It was a beautiful place. The Jews had cleared off the top of the plateau for about a thousand feet square. They had built there a giant edifice of white marble, overlaid with gold. It was so bright and so beautiful that often you could not even look at it because of the sun. Furthermore, they had great porches such as the great porch in Solomon's porch about it. It was a magnificent complex of buildings. In fact, the rabbis used to say, he that never saw the temple of Herod never saw a fine building. And after all it was the center of everything that made the difference between the Jewish nation and the nations of the earth. It was the thing that distinguished Israel from every other people, for it was the place that God had established for the worship of himself. No wonder that it was magnificent. And it was a magnificent place.

But Jesus had just said, your temple shall be left desolate. So they were disturbed about it, and I think they were a little afraid to say anything about it, and that's why the Lord Jesus broke the silence and said to them, do you see all of these things?—pointing to the temple complex. Truly I say to you, there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. So knowing the

implicit question in their minds, how can the temple area be destroyed in the light of the promises of God, he anticipated all of that, not only said that their temple would be left desolate but even went to into the details of saying that not a single stone would be left upon another. So there would be no question about the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Well, now that of course raised a question of the details, and I think that the disciples must have been taking some encouragement from the words that our Lord spoke, and so according to Mark and Luke, James and John and Peter and Andrew came to him privately as he was making his way over the Mount of Olives, and they asked him a question in full view of this fascinating temple. They said to him, “Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?” So evidently in their minds they had thought that there must be a connection between the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and the end of the age, because they remembered that when Solomon’s temple was destroyed that was the sign for the great and lengthy captivity.

Great things happened in the program of God when the Solomon when Solomon’s temple was destroyed. If this temple is going to be destroyed they couldn’t help but associate with it great events in world history, and in the light of what he had said, they associated the end of the present age with it. So they asked him, when shall these things be and what is the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age? If you put all three of these accounts together you will find different questions. I think if I may for the sake of time summarize what they say. They say essentially this. They ask a question about the destruction of the temple, and then they ask a question about the coming of our Lord and the consummation of the age.

Now in the discourse that follows there is an answer to both of these questions. In fact, I think they also ask a question about the sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. When shall these things be? Well, the Lord Jesus said simply, the age to be characterized by certain things, and he did not answer that specifically.

We know from history that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and Luke gives us the sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. He said, it’s not in the Matthean account, when you see Jerusalem

surrounded by armies, that’s the sign for the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. In 70 A.D., the Romans surrounded the city. The city was destroyed. One stone was not left upon another. Our Lord Jesus Christ’s prophecy was fulfilled completely.

But you see the destruction of Jerusalem is also a typical event, just like the prophecies of the Old Testament in which the local merges into the distant future. So in our Lord’s prophetic discourse—incidentally he was prophesying out of the old covenant period of time; the cross had not taken place yet—so the local event merges into the future, final destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple, just preceding the second advent, the consummation of the age.

North Carolina, which happens to be our summer home, or was for many many years, very frequently on top of the Smoky Mountains when you get on them you can look out—and you of course this is true of all mountain ranges—you can look out and see many many mountains lying about. But when you look from the top, you only see the tops of the mountains, you cannot see the gorges, the valleys, the canyons that exist between the tops. And what happens is that the distances, or the things that appear between the mountains, are foreshortened by the distances. So that you see everything at a certain point as being very very closely situated together.

So in the prophetic word, when you look at the prophetic word, you often see things that are actually distant from one another, foreshortened by the means or the way in which you look at them. So here, the Lord Jesus will give us something that is a view into the future, and we’ll see many mountain peaks. We will not see the distinctions between them. We shall look at them uh generally together, and we will see also then the local things merge into the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now let me say one other thing. These verses, verse 4 through verse 14, are a kind of summary of the future week, just preceding our Lord’s Second Advent. The week of years, characterized by a time of affliction, characterized by a time of great tribulation that shall just precede the Second Advent. Then I think after these verses, verses 4 through 14, which are a summary of that period of time, beginning at verse 15 and following, we look at some details that are singled out for special attention.

Just as if you were to say to me, Dr. Johnson, are you going to take a vacation this summer? Well I might say—this is purely for the sake of illustration, it’s not true—I might say, well I think I will take a trip to Alabama. And you would know immediately that I might go on Interstate 20, so I might say, I’ll take Interstate 20 and go to Alabama. But then I also might say, if you didn’t know anything about that, well I’m going to pass through Monroe, I’m going to pass through Vicksburg, I’m going to pass through Jackson and so on, but I would give you first a general view and then fill in details. Well here is the general view of the age beginning at the 4th verse.

Now there are I think three things that the Lord singles out for attention. He talks about false messiahs; he talks about the beginning of the birth pangs that shall bring in the millennial age; and he talks about persecution and apostasy and evangelization in the last section. But let me just read through and make a few comments because these are all general things. He states first of all I don’t want you to be deceived so you must be on your guard about the progress of the present age.

Now I commented in reading the Scripture that he will say that over and over again, so it is very easy for people to be deceived, evidently, in the prophetic word. In fact, I do read, I do believe that this should have been a warning to many of the cults that have arisen through haphazard study of the prophetic word. Jehovah’s Witnesses come immediately to mind. Adventists come immediately to mind, and there are many others who have almost made a livelihood from deception concerning the prophetic word. We do need to be careful. It is a daunting subject, but nevertheless, we are to study it.

After he warns them about deception, he says, Many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many. The history of the present age has been a history of people in the Western world particularly making claims that they are the Messiah.

Now, it’s not entirely, it’s not limited to the Western age, because one of the first was a Jewish man, Bar-Kokhba who in the year 131 or 132 A.D.—incidentally, that name means son of a star, star-son—he appeared in the Holy Land, and he professed to be the star that was seen by Balaam the Prophet, related to the nation Israel, and he raised the banner of revolt once more against

the Romans, promising to the Jews at that time who were under the Roman yoke and looking for a deliverer that if they followed him, he would give them deliverance from heaven. Unfortunately, many did follow him, and the result was a most melancholy butchery of his followers, and they learned through the sad experience of that revolt that it was possible to be deceived about the coming of the Messiah.

We remember the pretensions of Swedenborg and Swedenborgianism that arose. Emmanuel Swedenborg said that the second coming of Jesus Christ was to be effected by a man in whom the Holy Spirit would manifest himself and through whom would be taught the doctrines of the new Christ. And of course, he set himself forth as that person, and people followed him to their dismay, later.

Joanna Southcote, not too many years ago gave herself out to be the woman of Revelation chapter 12, who would give birth to the male son who would be the Messiah, and it is said that she had as many as 1000,000 followers at one time. But of course, the Messiah was not born of Joanna Southcote, and men only learned through that experience that they had been deceived.

Even in modern times there are people who arise and say they are Jesus Christ. Twenty years ago in Dallas we had the occasion to be told that Jesus Christ had come to town. I have the material that he sent out right before me now. I saved it. I have his personal calling card. It says, Jesus Christ, Reincarnated, Omnipotent up at the top of the calling card, underneath the Latin expression, *omnia vincet amor*, which means, love conquers all things. And then several pages, including his picture. This is how Jesus Christ looks. [Laughter] You’ll notice, you’ll notice that he’s balding [more laughter] and that he wears glasses. I wouldn’t be a very bad representation myself if I pulled out my glasses and put them on. It’s dated September 1, 1956. It has underneath it, Reincarnate, Omnipotent, and I don’t have to tell you this, that he gave us instructions about how all the problems of life might be solved if we follow a simple formula that he had devised.

But of course, his formula, does not come without cost. So he suggested that we send him ten dollars and also a stamped addressed envelope at a certain address, and then he would be glad to

send us the three pages which would enable us to solve all of our problems. I am very much interested in the fact that he wanted money, because that is a characteristic of deceivers: they want money. If there is one thing that characterized our Lord, it was that he did not want money. But yet the deceivers love to send out information and say, if you send us a gift, send us a gift, then of course we will send you this spiritual material that will solve all of your problems. That's one thing you have to learn right in the beginning is a source of deception. The truth of the Word of God should come free to us; it is never dependent upon payment. That is one thing that the Bible makes so plain.

Now we've had others, like Father Divine, who died about eleven years ago, and I think his followers are still expecting him to come back, not however in a resurrection body, but as he was before in a non-resurrection body. That would be a disappointment to me, but nevertheless that is their doctrine. And then there was Bishop Homer Tomlinson who pronounced himself the king of the world. So don't be surprised then that we have individuals who make claims that they are the Messiah.

The Lord Jesus also said, “You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled.” Now you know if our Lord Jesus was not a divine person this would be the most fruitless kind of encouragement. If there are going to be wars and rumors of wars, why should we pay any attention to someone saying to us we should not be troubled. You see, the very fact that our Lord Jesus said see that ye be not troubled, and expected his followers to pay attention to it, is evidence of the fact that he regarded himself has a divine being. This could only be true of a person who is God, and only if God has spoken these words should we pay any attention to them. See that ye be not troubled. He speaks out of authority. For all these things must come to pass, he says, but the end is not yet. So we can expect all of these things down through the age and we have seen them.

He goes on to speak about more universal disturbances that hap shall happen in our society. Nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in various places. I think that's very interesting, because of course the age has been characterized by earthquakes, but we are seeing perhaps through our greater scientific methods for detection, we are

seeing that earthquakes are occurring in various places and occasionally on the same morning in our newspapers—I have one clipping right here before me—earthquakes are reported sometimes on three continents at the same time. Now these are simply signs. We should not be deceived by them. I have one here before me that says earthquakes were reported in Africa, Asia and Europe, Sunday a few years back. So earthquakes in various places they grow in intensity, evidently.

By the way, the reason that there are disturbances in the natural world is because this is God’s way of showing us that there is disturbance in the spiritual and moral world, so that these signs reflect heaven’s view of the rebellion of men against God. So we shall expect to see greater and greater natural disturbances as the age continues, to reach their climax in that future day just preceding the Lord’s Second Advent.

In the final few verses he speaks of persecutions, false prophets, apostasy, and strikingly, of world-wide evangelization. He writes in the 9th verse, then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my namesake. Characteristic of these, of course, is their universal nature.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another, and many false prophets shall re arise and again deceive many. The reason that people are easily deceived is because they will not study the Bible, and it is my own feeling that this idea that we shouldn’t study the prophetic word because it’s a daunting subject or it leads to the bizarre is the very kind of mentality that will lead to the deception of the people of God in the days of the fulfillment of the prophetic word. They will not be equipped to handle what shall come to pass, but shall be easy prey for those who would deceive. That’s why it is important that we study, one of the reasons, why it’s important we should study the prophetic word.

He states also, because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall grow cold, which I understand to mean, that there shall be because of the fact that iniquity shall be abounding in our society, the love of the saints shall grow cold. There will be a tendency among the true believers to lose the fire of their personal relationship to the Lord Jesus.



Now that’s a very serious thing, and therefore, all of us who are true believers should give the utmost effort to cleaving to the Lord through the study of the Word of God and through fellowship with the saints of God, studying the theology of the Word of God, to protect ourselves when the times of difficulty do perhaps come upon us. He says he that shall endure to the end the same shall be saved.

Now that’s a very difficult text. It is my opinion that what this means is that the person who endures finally—incidentally, if I may just for a moment make a point from the Greek text, when he says, he that shall endure unto the end, there is no article in the Greek text. The little expression, *eis telos*, which means, which is translated “unto the end” may also simply be translated, “finally,” or “as long as endurance is needed” in the light of this context.

Now in verse 3, when he talks, when they mention well verse 6 I should say, but the end is not yet, the article is found there. And in verse 14, at the end of verse 14, then shall the end come, the article is found there. He’s speaking about the end of the age. But when he says, he that shall endure unto the end, the article is not there, and I take this to be an adverbial phrase meaning, simply, enduring, finally. That is enduring as long as endurance is needed in the particular situation. So the person who endures to the end, that is, the person who is faithful, that person shall be saved. Now that doesn’t mean spiritual salvation in the sense of deliverance from the judgment due to us because we are sinners, but it has to do with physical deliverance, deliverance from the time of trial.

And that’s evident, I think, because the word saved is used in verse 22 again and in that sense. “Except those days should be shortened,” he says “there shall no flesh be saved,” and he means by that saved from the tribulation period those judgments. So when he writes, but he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved, he means simply this: the faithful Christian who abides unto the disciplines of divine judgment as they appear in that period of time, that person shall be saved.

Now I want to say one other thing too. I’m not trying to deny the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. I do believe very strongly in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

I believe that there are a lot of people who say that they are Christians who are really not Christians. Not everybody who professes faith in the Lord Jesus is genuine. Fake Christians abound in Christendom today. Profession of faith is not necessarily possession. Religion is not the same as regeneration, and church membership is not the same as membership in the body of Christ. And I think it is also true to say that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, truly you will persevere in the faith.

People say about worldly professors of faith in Christ they are not truly committed to Christ. The chances are much stronger that they are not truly converted to Christ if they do not continue in the faith. No one knows who is a Christian, but the Bible makes it very plain that true Christian believers who have the new life within them persevere in the faith. They do not apostasize. Their lives are not characterized by a bent to unholiness. That is important for us to remember.

Well I must stop for our time is up. I began by suggesting that nominal Christians often question the validity of prophecy. Careful reflection will indicate, however, that prophetic study is not only valid it is a vital and a vitalizing kind of study. C. I. Scofield, who edited the famous Scofield Reference Bible, said that for many years or some years after he became a Christian, he did not study prophecy. He said he, when the subject was brought up, thought to himself why should I study about Israel. I'm not an Israelite. Why should I be concerned about the those things that have to do with the future? I'm interested in the things of the present the things that will help me to live a Christian life now these are the important things. But then he said, “After I began to think it over and to study the Word of God, I realized that by avoiding the study of the prophetic word, I was refusing the most intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

George Gill was a Bible teacher of the last generation who often came to Dallas Seminary many, many years ago. He was one of the most effective teachers of the Word of God back in the Twenties and Thirties. He used to come here to Dallas, and he would preach in the First Presbyterian Church. The First Presbyterian Church had a pastor by the name of Will Anderson, a very beloved pastor-teacher in the community of Dallas.

Dr. Anderson’s father had been pastor of that church before him, and his nephew is the pastor today. Will Anderson was also the Vice-President of Dallas Seminary, and it was because of Will Anderson that Dallas Seminary came to Dallas. He persuaded Dr. Chafer to bring Dallas Seminary down here to this, forsaken place in Texas and Dr. Chafer was persuaded. Now it took a little persuasion, because in those days, Texas was not the center of the universe [laughter], and to come to Dallas, Texas was to come out of the way, but he persuaded Dr. Chafer to come, and he was a very beloved man; an outstandingly fine Christian preacher. Dr. Anderson did not believe in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus in the early days of his ministry. He went to a particular seminary. He was instructed there in the things of their particular denomination, and the result was that in his ministry he didn’t know anything about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus other than that it would come.

Well Mr. Gill came to preach and gave a series of meetings at the church and in the course of them, one night he turned to Will Anderson and he said, “Will, do you love the appearing of the Lord Jesus?” And Will Anderson said, “He replied to him, yes, he did believe in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, and he occasionally preached on it.” He said, “Will, I didn’t ask you whether you believed in it. I said, do you love the appearing of the Lord Jesus?”

And Will Anderson said, “Later that night, I got home and I realized that I didn’t really love the appearing of the Lord Jesus.” He said, “I took out my Bible and I began to study, and I studied the prophetic word.” He said, “As a matter of fact, the first night, I stayed up all night. The next morning I sat down at the breakfast table with my wife and I spoke across the table to her and said, “I’ve been studying the Word of God all night, and I’ve come to the conviction that our Lord Jesus is to come imminently,” and that led on to a belief in a premillennial doctrine for Will Anderson. But that posed a problem to him, because you see he had come to the church under the idea that uh he did not accept these things. So he called a meeting of the elders, and he said he had something serious to say to them. He wanted to say to them that as a result of the study of the Word of God, he

had come to the conviction that the Lord Jesus was going to return imminently, and that his doctrine concerning the second coming had changed.

And he wanted them to know that since he knew that this was not altogether in harmony with the doctrines of the church, and furthermore was contrary to that which they thought he believed, that he was willing to resign at that moment. And one of the elders is reported to have said to him, “Well, Will, is it in the Bible?” And he said, “Well of course, I think it’s in the Bible. I’ve been studying the Bible now for a lengthy period of time, and I’ve become convinced that it’s in the Word of God.”

Now there are two versions of what happened. One version is that one of the elders said, “Why Will, if you’ve really come to this, it’s the answer to our prayers. We’ve been praying that you would come to this view for a long time. The other version, which perhaps we should accept, is simply that the elders said, “Will if it’s in the Bible we want you to preach it, because we want to hear the Word of God.”

Well let me ask you a question this morning. Do you really love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is it something that really makes a difference in your own personal life? If you’re here without Jesus Christ, then of course you don’t love his appearing, and we invite you to put your trust in him who came and offered an atonement for sinners. We urge you to renounce trust in yourself or any other of human good works and to cling to the cross of the Lord Jesus provided for sinners.

And then if you’re a Christian, we urge you to study the prophetic word and study the Second Advent teaching and the other great doctrines that have to do with the prophetic word, until you can honestly say by the grace of God, I do look forward to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. I love his appearing. May God help us to reach that state through our study of the Word. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of opening the Word of God, and particularly for hearing words from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning the future. Deliver us from deception, and give us, Lord, a love for his appearing.

“Advent Questions” by S. Lewis Johnson  
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Now may grace mercy and peace go with us as we part.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.