

Matt.24:3-14-Looking Over the Horizon (pt 4.5) Ecclesiastical

Intro – The past few weeks we have been LOTH as an encouragement to prepare for what could be headed our way – Matt. 16:3 – the sky is red. We have noted predicted trends that are Societal and forecasted changes that are Environmental...Lord willing next time will anticipate some Governmental... Today we consider Ecclesiastical changes to expect. Ecclesiastical is a \$10 word for church – Churchical.

The scripture is clear about what the church will experience and should expect and prepare for. Our Lord has told us beforehand – it is prewritten by the Apostles and the Holy Spirit has expressly warned us. Today's sermon in a sentence is that we should expect: Great Deception within the church; a Great Desertion from the church; a Great Persecution of the church; and a Great Mission for the church.

A GREAT DECEPTION WITHIN THE CHURCH

1. The first sign Jesus warned about, when asked about the end, was deception - Matthew 24:3-4
 - a. We noted that lies will be the language of the last days in society in general
 - b. Deception in religion is what is particularly warned about. Focus on false teaching
 - i. Always been a problem but will get exponentially worse
 - c. Not a small problem with only limited impact- Matt. 24:5, 11 - MANY -(5x's)
2. BEWARE OF THE PREACHERS 24:5 - "many will come in My name..."
 - a. The deceivers will be the preachers 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15
 - b. They will claim a special position/understanding/anointing 24:5 – Christ = anointed
 - i. All believers have an "anointing"- the Spirit of truth (1 John 2:20, 26-27)
 - ii. We must test the spirits and test the preachers (test me)
3. Great deception about the 2nd coming
 - a. False appearances - Matt. 24:23 claiming "christ" sightings – 24:26 (wont miss it – 27)
 - b. false hope & disappointment about HIS return that leads to mockery - 2 Peter 3:3-4
4. Great miracles, signs and wonders Matt. 24:24-25 the last days will be supernatural days
 - a. 2 Thess. 2:9-11-God tests our love with false prophets & miracle workers Deut. 13:1-3
 - b. The deception will be so great even the elect would succumb – if possible (we are kept!)
 - i. Phony faith healers are easy to detect but there is coming a great deception
5. Great doctrinal deception (or doctrinal exclusion)
 - a. 2 Tim. 4:3-4 people pleasing preachers leave truth for myths/made up stories
 - b. Isaiah 30:9-11 a deceived church is a diabetic church – too many sweets

A GREAT DESERTION FROM THE CHURCH

- We should expect a great exodus from the church Matt. 24:10 - "...many will fall away..."
- 1 Tim. 4:1 The Spirit is clear – in the last days many fall away and are deceived
- 2 Thess. 2:1-3 Paul clears up some confusion about 2 coming and rapture (missed it?)
 - 2nd Coming & Rapture won't happen until after the Apostasy and a known anti-christ

- 1 John 2:19 – we should expect a great exodus from the church and the truth (1 Tim. 3:15b)
- Our society boasts a large % that claim faith but only a small % that live faith (6%)
 - The visible church is a mile wide and an inch deep and it will disappear in the heat

A GREAT PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

1. Today is the international day of prayer for the persecuted church (stats graphic for 2020)
 - a. 1470+ Christians were murdered in Nigeria in the first four months of 2021
2. Persecution is promised to the believer. Suffering is part of the package & should be expected
 - a. 2 Tim. 3:12 Acts 14:22 1 Thess. 3:3 John 16:33 Rev. 1:9; 6:9-11; 13:7
 - b. Matt. 24:9 our Lord tells us plainly that we will be persecuted (be aware & prepare)
3. The popular notion is that the church will escape tribulation
 - a. The idea that somehow the church has a “get out of tribulation card” (I hear it often)
“the world descends into chaos after all the Christians disappear and planes/train/autos crash causing chaos. That is found in many books and movies just not in the Bible
 - b. The blessed hope is not getting raptured out before it gets bad out. (John. 17:14-15)
 - c. As a pastor this really concerns me for this fiction foments delusion and makes us ripe for disillusionment when difficult times come – “...where is the coming He promised?”
 - d. Please consider that the popular notion may be wrong. (test all things – 1 Thess. 5:21)
 - i. We are to pray to escape (Luke 21:36) but not presume that we will escape
4. The persecution will come from all directions
 - a. Hated by all nations – Matt. 24:9 betrayed by family – Mark 13:12-13
 - i. Religion will rage against us - John 16:2 (Rev. 13:15; 20:4)
 - b. Map highlights where threat of physical persecution exists in some countries but pressure of assimilation in present in all countries (conform/compromise or count costs)
5. Christians are called to persevere under persecution
 - a. Matt. 24:13 Luke 21:16-19 Rom. 12:12 Rev. 6:10-11 Rev. 13:10 Rev. 14:12
 - b. MLK “the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” (Prov.24:10)
 - c. A prayer request from a persecuted believer to a missionary – “Don’t pray for our persecution to end. Pray that we will be obedient through our suffering.”

A GREAT MISSION FOR THE CHURCH

- Matt. 24:14 the gospel is to go, and will go, into all the world. We must take it and tell it!
- Luke 21:12-15 persecution/opposition is an opportunity for testimony. (Mark 13:9-11)
 - God will equip us (21:13-14) and protect us (21:18)
- Rev. 6:9 “slain for word of God and because of their testimony”
- Rev. 12:11 “overcame by the blood of the Lamb...word of their testimony...no love their life
- This is the testimony that God has given us eternal life and that life is in His Son, he who has the Son has life and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:10-11
 - This is the message and this is the mission. Are you on mission...horizon?
- Sermon in a sentence about some “churchical changes” that are on horizon (message same)