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THE PROPHECIES OF MATTHEW 24 PART 3

WHICH GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS?

COMMENT: This is the third and final article in a series of 3 articles, which examine all of Matthew chapter 24. There are a number of prophecies in this chapter, which have been largely misunderstood. This present article covers verses 29 - 51 of chapter 24.

In Part 2 we concluded with verse 28 of Matthew 24, with a somewhat cryptic clue for the location of the place of safety. So let's now start by taking a look at verse 29.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall **the sun** be darkened, and **the moon** shall not give her light, and **the stars** shall fall from heaven, and **the powers of the heavens** shall be shaken: (Matthew 24:29)

For a start, there is a difference between "after the tribulation" and "after the tribulation **of those days**". Can you recognize that difference?

If this statement only said: "immediately after the tribulation shall the sun ...", then we could take the words "the tribulation" to represent the name for a specific event.

But **since it actually says:** "immediately after the tribulation **of those days** shall the sun ...", **then** it implies that there are also a number of other "tribulations", which occurred "at different days". And the expression "the tribulation of those days" is a descriptive term intended to identify one specific tribulation amongst others. And in this case the words "the tribulation" are **not at all a name** for a specific occasion. They are only a descriptive term.

Next, Jesus Christ is referring to something that affects the sun, the moon, and the stars. This is intended to include **all the heavenly bodies**. None are excluded! And all the heavenly bodies are in some way affected by **the shaking of the powers of the heavens**.

What are "the powers of the heavens"? This is certainly **not a reference to any spirit beings**. All the powers in the heavens reside in God the Father and in Jesus Christ. And obviously, nobody can "shake" either God the Father or Jesus Christ.

The angels do not have any "powers of the heavens". And Satan and the demons most certainly do not have any powers of the heavens. If they did have such powers, then they would have smashed up this universe long ago. They did try that once, long before the creation of Adam. At that time the demons caused some damage to the universe, but they were defeated by God and the holy angels of God. And at that time God then stripped Satan and his demons of any powers to influence this universe in any way. Satan and the demons were cast down to this earth in defeat.

Anyway, "the powers of the heavens" is not a reference to any spirit beings, who would somehow "be shaken". And why would anyone want "to shake" any spirit beings? What could that possibly achieve?

The expression "the powers of the heavens" means exactly what it says. It refers to **the powers that**

hold this universe in its present configuration. It is the powers that keep our earth and all the planets in their circuits around the sun. It is the powers that hold our Milky Way together. It is the powers that hold galaxies together in their specific locations.

So what will happen when those powers "are shaken"?

Why, **any shaking of those powers will mess up the present configuration of our universe.** After those powers have been shaken, the layout of our universe will no longer be recognizable. In plain language:

After the powers of the heavens have been shaken, our night sky will be totally unrecognizable!

No longer will there be any signs of the zodiac in our sky. Now consider the expression "**the sun shall be darkened**". This expression means that the sun shall be covered with darkness, not permanently, but temporarily. How can that happen? What it means is that **God will move our sun to a new location in the universe.** The day/night cycle will be temporarily disturbed. That's somewhat like when you have a power outage at night and everything goes totally dark. Then it takes you 5 minutes or 10 minutes to switch on your emergency gas generator, before all the lights in your house are powered up again.

God places the sun in a new location, perhaps even in the center of our Milky Way, where it will then be the center for all the orbits of the planets around the sun. And **the orbits of all the planets will also be changed!** And our earth will be given a perfect 360-day cycle around the sun. That will constitute a **perfect year**, one worthy for the coming millennial rule of Jesus Christ.

Next, let's consider the expression "**the moon shall not give her light**". This expression means that the moon will temporarily not be visible from earth, because the light of the sun is not reaching the moon. The moon will also be moved to a new location, to fit in with the earth's new circuit around the sun. And the moon's new circuit will consist of lunar cycles of exactly 30 days each, with exactly 12 such perfect cycles for every 360-day year.

The expression "the stars shall fall from heaven" means that for an observer standing out in the open under a night sky, all the stars in the sky above will be dashing towards the horizon in every direction, and then they disappear below the horizon. In plain language: **all the stars will be moving to new locations in the universe.** And human beings will be able to observe that happening.

Thus:

Before Jesus Christ starts His millennial rule here on earth, God will give this whole universe a **renovation**, in the same way as we might renovate a house that is getting old and looking somewhat rundown. In its present state, with its corrupted solar and lunar cycles, this earth is not in a fit state to be ruled over by the great Creator God. So in Matthew 24:29 God starts by renovating the heavens.

[COMMENT: **Renovating the earth** will start later, when the 7th plague is poured out in the presence of Jesus Christ, and when "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 6:14; 16:20). But that's getting ahead of the story.]

Now let's look at the sixth seal being opened in the Book of Revelation.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a **great earthquake**; and **the sun** became black as sackcloth of hair, and **the moon** became as blood; And **the stars** of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is **shaken** of a mighty wind. **And the heaven departed as a scroll** when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out

of their places. (Revelation 6:12-14)

In Matthew 24:29 we have the words of Jesus Christ. Here in Revelation 6:12-14 we have **a description in the words of the Apostle John** regarding what he saw in this vision. But John is clearly also speaking about the sun, the moon and the stars being shaken (the analogy to the fig tree being shaken).

The expression "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together" describes one consequence of the heavens being shaken. This expression also refers to all the heavenly bodies being moved into **new positions** within the present universe. God "rolls up" all the stars and planets over here, and then "unrolls" them in new locations over there.

Now we have in verse 12 a mistranslation which is seriously misleading. And that is this: The Greek text does **not** say "**there was a great earthquake**"! The Greek text simply says "**there was a great shaking**". But nowhere in this verse is "the earth" implied. This verse doesn't speak about the earth at all! It speaks about the sun, the moon, the stars and the heaven.

Only at the end of verse 14 does it refer to the earth (i.e. mountains and islands). And that reference to something here on earth refers to something that happens when the 7th plague is poured out, as per Revelation 16:20.

None of the translators understood that Revelation 6:12 is speaking about **a shaking of the heavens**, and as a consequence of that shaking the sun, moon and stars are affected. Any "quake on earth" has no effect on the sun, moon and stars. The heavens are the focus of these statements. This is in full agreement with Jesus Christ's words in Matthew 24:29.

Old Testament Scriptures that also refer to this shaking of the heavens include Isaiah 13:13; Joel 3:16 and Haggai 2:6, 21.

So Matthew 24:29 is a brief discussion of the sixth seal of Revelation 6. It is a preparation for Jesus Christ's return. Now because Revelation 6 identifies this with the 6th seal, therefore this is something that happens before Jesus Christ returns at the seventh trumpet. There are six trumpets that will be blown between the end of the sixth seal and Christ's return at the beginning of the seventh trumpet.

Those six trumpets take up some time, perhaps even as long as a full year? **This period of time is not considered in the account in Matthew 24.** So verse 30 says:

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)

From Revelation 11:15 we know that Christ returns at the seventh trumpet.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, **The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord**, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11:15)

The seventh trumpet is the last trumpet. That is the time of the first resurrection.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**: for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible**, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:52)

Jesus Christ also elaborated on this trumpet in the next verse in Matthew 24.

And He shall send **His angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, and they **shall gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:31)

So Jesus Christ Himself returns to the air above the area where the place of safety will be located (the "sela in the wilderness"). But His angels are sent to all the locations on earth where those who will be in the first resurrection have died. Apparently all the dead who will be in the first resurrection will be resurrected in the same geographic localities as where they died. Then there will be angels waiting for the people who will be resurrected, **to escort them to meet Jesus Christ in the air** above the place of safety. And then all 144,000 will be together with Jesus Christ.

So now the original question has been answered in full.

But Jesus Christ is not prepared to provide any specific timing for His second coming. Instead, He provides a parable that implies some flexibility for the timing.

THE FIG TREE PARABLE

As an additional clue Jesus Christ then gave a parable to apply to His second coming. Here is the start of the parable.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, **you know that summer is near**: (Matthew 24:32)

The expression "now learn a parable" means that God expects us to use our minds. Instead of giving us clear, unmistakable answers, God says: think about this and then figure it out for yourself.

When we see the first shoots of leaves, we can predict what is coming, but only in a general way.

So likewise you, **when you shall see all these things**, know that it is near, *even at the doors*. (Matthew 24:33)

The expression "at the doors" means "it is **very** near". Now the statement "when you shall see all these things" raises the question: **what "things" are we looking for?**

The problem here is that people in different ages have believed that they actually did see "all these things". It is because of believing that we can "see all these things" that we convince ourselves that Christ's return must be very near. For example, back in the 1960's when I went to Ambassador College we thought we were surely very near to Jesus Christ's second coming, because we believed that we could "see all these things taking place". That's how we could talk ourselves into "1975 in Prophecy".

But that was about 50-60 years ago!

And the second coming of Jesus Christ is still not going to take place in our immediate future.

So I ask again: "what things" are we supposed to be looking for?

The tiny shoots of the first leaves on a fig tree are really unmistakable. **Every person who looks at that fig tree will reach the same conclusion**: yes, this tree is starting to produce some leaves.

Over the past almost 2,000 years all the people before us who reached the conclusion "this fig tree is

starting to produce some leaves" were clearly wrong. "The leaves" they could see were not the leaves that Jesus Christ was talking about. **They were looking at the wrong things.**

So what must we be looking for?

Let me start by pointing out what we must **not** be looking for. We are not supposed to be looking for anything that is long past history! **We are not to be looking for the four horsemen of Revelation 6!** Why not? Because they don't have any influence on the timing of Christ's second coming! They have been ongoing events for the past almost 2,000 years. So they can't possibly help us with more precise dating for the second coming. None of them represent any of the "new leaves" on the fig tree. All of them are "old leaves from last year".

Here are **five "things"** we need to be looking for.

The **first "thing"** we need to be looking for is **the abomination of desolation being set up in the spiritual temple of God!**

Any date or any time-line that precedes the abomination of desolation being set up in God's spiritual temple is of necessity false! Now **that abomination of desolation was only established after Mr. Armstrong had died in 1986.** It was "set up" over an almost 10-year period, until the leader after Mr. Armstrong died.

Anything and everything that occurred before that abomination was set up in God's Church (e.g. years like 1926, 1934, 1972, 1975, etc.) has no effect one way or the other on when Jesus Christ will return.

The **second "thing"** we need to be looking for is **fleeing from that abomination of desolation.**

Within months of Mr. Armstrong's death I personally "was fleeing" from the heresies that began to be introduced into God's Church. That is why a senior executive in Pasadena threatened in writing to fire and disfellowship me on the spot before the end of 1986! That threat was not carried out until about 8 years later, but I never at any time accepted any part of that perverse "abomination of desolation" ... and those over me in the ministry of Worldwide at that time knew that.

However, in general terms, it took about 10 years after Mr. Armstrong's death before the vast majority of people in God's Church realized that they needed "to flee" from Worldwide. **So about 10 years after Mr. Armstrong's death there was a major fleeing** from Worldwide. That takes us to around 1995/1996.

This means that any date or any time-line that precedes this time of general "fleeing" at around 1995 is also false! Watching for "these things" means that **we cannot possibly start looking for a time-line before 1995/1996.**

The **third "thing"** we need to be looking for is **a marked increase in false prophets targeting God's people with their "detestable teachings".**

It took **another decade to fifteen years** before a plethora of false teachers had established themselves pretty well amongst the people who had fled from the abomination of desolation in the spiritual temple of God. Each false teacher has his own pet teachings. And regrettably, for the people who left Worldwide and ended up in any one of these groups led by false teachers, it was a case of jumping "out of the frying pan into the fire".

Let's understand that **"all these things"** that Jesus Christ referenced in Matthew 24:33 **includes many**

false prophets deceiving many people who had been in God's Church. That must happen before the final countdown starts.

So that then takes us to around 2010.

Now just one caution:

Am I saying that all the groups that sprang up after Mr. Armstrong's death are "false prophets"? **Certainly not!** Through the Prophet Daniel God tells us quite clearly regarding our period of time in history that "**they** (plural!) **that understand** among the people shall instruct many" (Daniel 11:33). So there assuredly are "those that understand" amongst God's scattered people today. But when you have 50 or more different groups, each with their somewhat different teachings, then you can't possibly avoid the conclusion that **the majority of them must be led by false teachers.** They can't possibly all be right, not with the differences in teachings amongst them.

This is the third "thing" we must be looking for. That's why Jesus Christ emphasized this particular point with "**behold, I have told you before**" (Matthew 24:25). Christ's statement here means: **look for this point!**

The **fourth** "thing" we need to be looking for is **the start of the ministry of the two witnesses.**

This is clearly still future. It is when those two men start their ministry, liberally punctuated with miracles performed by God, that we can know with certainty that **the final countdown** towards Jesus Christ's second coming **has started.**

This is one of the major "things" we must be looking for, if we are thinking about the timing of Jesus Christ's return. And then there is one more "thing" that we need to look for.

The **fifth** "thing" we need to look for is "**the powers of the heavens being shaken**".

This is also clearly still future. When that happens, then we can know that this is being done in preparation for Jesus Christ's imminent millennial rule over this planet earth. And that "shaking" will be an unmistakable event for all people on earth to witness.

So back to verse 33.

When we can see all five of these "things" being done, then we can know that Jesus Christ's return is very near.

Right now in the year 2020 we can see that **the first three** of these "things" **have already taken place.** Now we need to be looking for the fourth "thing" to happen. When, and not until, this fourth "thing" happens (i.e. ministry of the two witnesses), then a strict "countdown" to Jesus Christ's return will start. And when the fifth "thing" takes place, then we can know that Jesus Christ's return is imminent, "even at the doors".

That's the parable. Now let's look at Jesus Christ's next statement.

Verily I say unto you, **This generation shall not pass**, till all these things be fulfilled. (Matthew 24:34)

What did Jesus Christ mean by "**this** generation"? Which generation? We have guessed wrong in this regard for more than 50 years. Obviously the generation that saw the first atom bomb "has passed".

The fact is that we have never before correctly understood exactly what Jesus Christ meant by "this generation". And so we have always simply applied this to whatever generation seemed logical to us. And that has always turned out to be wrong.

So which generation was Jesus Christ referring to? I believe that "this generation" refers to the generation that would witness these five "things" that we are to look for.

In basic terms: **"This generation" refers to the generation that would see the abomination of desolation being set up in the spiritual temple of God!**

In general terms, it is **the generation that was alive when Mr. Armstrong died.**

Now here is a point to consider:

At any point in time there are always multiple generations that are contemporaneous. Let's take 1986, the year Mr. Armstrong died. Obviously, in 1986 there were people who were also in their 90s, like Mr. Armstrong. And there were also people in their 80s and 70s and 60s and 50s and 40s and 30s and 20s, and people younger than 20.

All were living simultaneously. They could be structured into at least four different generations: great-grandparents in their 80's and 90s, grandparents in their 60's and 70s, parents in their 30s, 40s and 50s, and the children below the age of 20.

So **which generation** is the one that "shall not pass" until Jesus Christ returns? I believe that we must make provision for that generation which allows for the longest possible period of time to pass before that generation has also died. That would be the generation that ranged in age from 1-20 years at the time when the abomination of desolation began to be set up.

So here is what I believe is the answer.

I believe that the generation that was up to 20 years old when Mr. Armstrong died, and when the abomination of desolation began to be set up, is the generation that will not pass away before Jesus Christ's second coming.

By **the year 2050** that group of people will be from around 65-85 years old. At that point that group of people will then be in the process of "passing away".

I personally expect Jesus Christ's second coming at any point before approximately the year 2050.

Sorry if that doesn't seem very encouraging for those of us who are already old, and who are hoping to live up to Christ's second coming. I am trying to understand the latest possible time for Christ's return, because the abomination of desolation has already been set up. Therefore Christ's return must be **before** that generation dies out.

Also, you might keep in mind that in the past 1,500+ years it has always been the false prophets who have told us: it's near, it's near, so give us your money now. Until today Jesus Christ's return has never at any time really "been near". And now in the year 2020 it seems to be **within +/- 30 years.**

Perhaps things are moving along at a faster pace now? I don't know. Only God knows. But what we can do is: we can start to look at "the right generation".

Let's see the next statement.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **My words shall not pass away**. (Matthew 24:35)

Jesus Christ is saying: this rundown to My second coming that I have given you is correct and dependable. These things I have told you will come to pass just like I have said. And that takes us up to the time when Christ's return is "even at the doors".

Now once the second coming is "even at the doors", then we are talking about "days and hours". And that involves decisions of timing that God the Father Himself has not yet made. Therefore Jesus Christ then said:

But of **that day and hour** knows no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but **My Father only**. (Matthew 24:36)

The precise timing is totally at the discretion of God the Father. And then Jesus Christ gave another comparison regarding His second coming.

But **as the days of Noah** were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:37)

The Bible does not really tell us very much about the world before the flood. So Jesus Christ then provides some details with which He was obviously personally familiar.

For as in the days that were **before the flood** they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, **And knew not until the flood came**, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:38-39)

Why did Jesus Christ choose this particular comparison? Was He giving us some additional information, in addition to the five "things" we must look for? What has Christ told us in the Old Testament about the days of Noah?

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and **that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. (Genesis 6:5)

The most outstanding attribute of the world before the flood was the utter depravity and perversity of the human mind, something that disgusted God to the point where God just blotted out that whole pre-flood world. So one more thing that we should be looking for is: **a sharp increase in violence and immorality and perversion** around the world, approaching the way things had developed before the flood.

That too is being fulfilled all around us today. The 20 years since the start of the new millennium have seen an explosion in immorality and depravity and violence. And when we look back at the mid 1980's, a mere 35 years ago, then it seems like **we are today living in a totally different world**, one which has abandoned all standards of decency, honesty and morality, a world in which **those who are defiantly immoral demand to call the shots**. In fact, it is the people who are immoral and perverse who aggressively and defiantly demand to be given leadership positions in our world today.

So yes, in our world today conditions are indeed approaching the way things were before the flood. With this recognition in mind, what was Jesus Christ pointing out in verses 38-39?

Christ pointed out that **the flood caught all people by surprise**. People were unprepared for God's intervention (i.e. except for Noah). Now Noah had told the people of his day that God was bringing on a

flood, but those people never got it. They saw the ark being built for decade after decade, but that didn't mean anything to the people back then.

With the expression "**so shall also the coming of the Son of man be**" Christ was saying that His second coming will also catch the whole world by surprise. That will be because people will not listen to the warnings the two witnesses will be announcing. The only people that will not be caught by surprise will be the people in the place of safety. But that will only be a microscopic fraction of one percent of all people on earth.

Jesus Christ then followed this with something that applies to those people who will be going to the place of safety.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (Matthew 24:40-41)

The important questions here are: **where are they "taken" and why are they taken? And why is only one out of two taken?**

First let's look at **why only one out of two is taken.**

The two situations both show people working. There is no indication here that the outward work of one person was better than the work of the other person. So there must be something else that differentiates between two people who are working in the identical circumstances (i.e. both in the field or both grinding at a mill). There must be something that is not outwardly visible, something that is inside those people. The two people in each case must have **different ways of using their minds**, different ways of thinking.

The repeated point that one out of two is taken is to tell us that there will be **a selection process**. The implication in Christ's statements is that in each case **both people thought they would be taken**. In plain language: the reason why only one is taken in each case is because only one is truly repentant. The other one is not taken because that person is not repentant.

Now let's look at **why they are taken.**

They are taken because they are in danger. So they are taken to protect them from something. They are taken **to protect them** from "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

Now protection is not the same as salvation. Protection is for those who are still mortal human beings, and who continue to be mortal human beings. Once we have attained unto salvation, and God has changed us into spirit beings, then we will no longer need "protection".

Since Revelation 3:10 applies to people in the Philadelphian era, it means that **those who are not taken** must be the people of **the Laodicean era**.

This brings us to the third question: **where are they "taken"?**

The answer here is that they are "taken" **to the place of safety**. I have placed "taken" in quotation marks because in this context "taken" refers to the opportunity to go to the place of safety. It does not refer to actually getting there. **Getting there will be another test** for the people who end up in the place of safety.

A principle we need to understand here is this:

God doesn't do things for us if there is any way that we could do them ourselves. After the Israelites had walked from Egypt all the way to Mount Sinai, God told them that He had brought them out of Egypt "on eagles' wings" (see Exodus 19:4). God had protected them all the way, including opening up the Red Sea, but they themselves had to do the walking. So likewise, when we read that people "are taken" to the place of safety, then we should think of that as God will guide us there, rather than as God transporting us there. It will require our active participation to get us to the place of safety.

"Eagles' wings" refers to protection, not to a mode of transport.

Then Christ presented an admonition.

Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come. (Matthew 24:42)

This is not an instruction to "watch the world". This is really an instruction to watch for the five "things" we have already examined. The first four of those five "things" are:

- 1) Watch for the abomination of desolation being set up in God's Church.
- 2) Watch for people fleeing from that abomination of desolation.
- 3) Watch for an increase in false prophets targeting God's scattered people.
- 4) Watch for the start of the ministry of the two witnesses.

The first three "things" have taken place already. So now we need to watch for when God will send His two witnesses. **They hold the key regarding us being "taken" to the place of safety.** The fifth "thing" we need to watch for will only occur after we have been at the place of safety for some time. So watching for the power of the heavens to be shaken is too late for still being able to go to the place of safety.

Right now we need to watch for number four, the start of the ministry of the two witnesses. That's the stage where we are right now!

Now that ministry could theoretically start within the next few years, or it could only start around 25-30 years from now. Nobody knows, because God the Father has not yet made that decision. And **it is extremely foolish for any of us to try to preempt God the Father with this decision.**

That is why we have to watch!

Jesus Christ continued to say:

But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, **he would have watched**, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. (Matthew 24:43)

Now the reason for watching is **so that we are prepared to respond to God** when that time arrives. And we can only watch if we know what we are looking for. People who don't know what they are looking for are going to be distracted by looking at the wrong things.

For example, if we think that we are supposed to "watch the world", then we will be misled by numerous "false positives". That is, we'll see violence and immorality and evils increasing and increasing ... and we might draw the false conclusion that **this increase in evil** must surely signal that the end is very near. Surely this can't go on much longer, is how we might feel.

The problem with this focus on evils increasing is that we have no way of knowing just how bad God will allow things to become, before God steps in and intervenes. And without knowing how bad God will allow things to become, we apply our own standards. We feel that the world has become so bad that God must surely step in. But that's our personal evaluation. And what we need to do in that situation is "sigh and cry for all the abominations" that are committed in our world today (see Ezekiel 9:4).

But we should not conclude that therefore God must now intervene. We have to wait for God to reveal "His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

Now by contrast, the start of the ministry of the two witnesses is a far more objective thing to watch for. God has spelled out exactly how long their ministry is to last. And the way they will conduct their ministry will likewise make it easy for us to identify them. This is an objective standard to watch for in our age.

Let's continue.

Therefore be you also ready: for **in such an hour as you think not** the Son of man comes. (Matthew 24:44)

There is only one way to be ready. And that is to **always be ready**. What will come upon **us** unexpectedly is the start of **the ministry of the two witnesses**. Recall that all ten virgins "slumbered and slept". Once we are able to identify the two witnesses correctly, and that will not be until they actually start their ministry, then we can know that we will have "1,260 days" until they are killed (see Revelation 11:3, 7). And that will be just three and one half days before Jesus Christ's return. But for the world as a whole, the second coming of Jesus Christ will come totally unexpectedly.

Since we have spent quite a bit of time talking about the place of safety, I might add one other thing here, which is not related to Matthew 24. And that is the indication that the leaders at the place of safety will call for two fasts. These fasts are mentioned in the Book of Joel.

Joel 1:14 seems to imply a fast and a church service for those at the place of safety **when everyone has first arrived**. That's Joel 1:14.

Sanctify you a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, (Joel 1:14)

And Joel 2:15 seems to imply a fast and a church service for those at the place of safety **when the two witnesses are killed**, mere days before the seventh trumpet is blown. The people at the place of safety will be fasting while awaiting Christ's coming.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, **sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly**. (Joel 2:15)

My point is that at the seventh trumpet **the only ones** who could possibly be fasting are the people in the place of safety. The rest of the world is not about to fast, at least not until some time after Jesus Christ has established His rule over this earth (i.e. for those who live through into the millennium).

And the fasting in Joel 2:15 in turn indicates to me that the people in the place of safety will be the only ones **anticipating** the return of Jesus Christ.

THE TWO SERVANTS

Now in Matthew 24 Jesus Christ has already spent some time elaborating on the last two eras of His Church, with "one taken" and "one left". Now at the end of this chapter Jesus Christ refers to **the two leaders of those last two eras**. First Jesus Christ comments about the leader of the Philadelphian era, and then He talks about the leader of the Laodicean era. And so we see verses 45-47 devoted to the leader of the Philadelphian era, and verses 48-51 are devoted to the leader of the Laodicean era.

Here are the verses that apply to **the leader of the Philadelphian era**.

Who then is a **faithful and wise servant**, whom his Lord has made **ruler** over His **household**, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his Lord when He comes shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods. (Matthew 24:45-47)

The implication of the above translation is that this verse is speaking about a ruler over a household. But that is not the case. We are here dealing with **two mistranslations** in verse 45.

I have explained these mistranslations at length in several articles in the past. For example, my April 2009 article "**80 Mistranslations in the Bible**" explains this verse under "Mistranslation #57". Also, my April 1995 article "**But if that Evil Servant Shall Begin to Smite His Fellow Servants**" explains Matthew 24:45. And this verse is also explained in my August 1995 article "**Some Principles About the Subject of Healing**". So detailed explanations are already available on my website.

Briefly:

The Greek word here translated as "household" is "**therapeia**". This word really means "**healing**", and it is correctly translated as "healing" in Luke 9:11 and in Revelation 22:2. By extension it also means "**well being**". But it does **not** mean "**household**".

The three words "**has made ruler**" are a translation of the one Greek verb "**kathistemi**", which means "**to appoint, to set, to place**", etc. While it may refer to "ruling", a translation of this verb does not really require the word "ruler" to be used. This verb "kathistemi" is translated as "**ordain**" in Titus 1:5, Hebrews 5:1 and in Hebrews 8:3. It is translated simply as "**make**" in Hebrews 7:28 and in 2 Peter 1:8. It is translated simply as "**is**" in James 4:4 ("... friend of the world **is** the enemy of God").

The translators were trying to make sense out of the Greek text, and the translation they provided is primarily an expression of how they **interpreted** this verse, how they tried to find a possible meaning. But that is not the same as providing an accurate and faithful translation of the Greek text.

We should note that **the only reason** various dictionaries of biblical Greek state that "household" is supposedly one of the meanings of the word "therapeia" is because it is used in Matthew 24:45 and in the parallel verse in Luke 12:42. Without the word "therapeia" in these two verses nobody would ever have suggested that "therapeia" supposedly means "household", since all Greek scholars know that "oikiakos" is really the Greek word for "household".

A correct translation for Matthew 24:45 is:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord **has appointed over His healing**, to give them meat in due season?"

A correct translation of this verse didn't make any sense to the translators. After all, **what is the expression "appointed over His healing" supposed to mean?** The difficulty in understanding this text lies at the root of our wrong translations.

Shortly before Christ's second coming there would be two different "servants" in the Church of God who would have **control over the doctrine regarding divine healing**. Those two "servants" would be in similar positions of authority within God's Church. The first one is "faithful and wise", while the second one is "evil". Note that the second servant is not simply the opposite of "wise", which would be "foolish". **The second servant is in fact "evil"**, in addition to being foolish and unfaithful.

That is the sequence (1st = wise, 2nd = evil) which Jesus Christ has presented for these two leaders.

The implication is that both of these servants would have control over "therapeia" within God's Church. In other words, both of these men would have control over what the Church would teach and believe about the doctrine of healing. Notice that of all the **"meat in due season"** which these servants are to provide for God's people, **God has here singled out a focus on the teaching regarding divine healing**.

It is **a matter of record** that there was a vastly different approach to the Church's teaching regarding "therapeia" (i.e. healing) between what Mr. Armstrong taught the Church, and what his successor taught the Church.

In the last few years of his life Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote a major booklet about "Healing". He wrote that booklet in response to an attempt by certain men to change the Church's established teaching regarding "healing". That booklet by Mr. Armstrong reflected the Church's official teaching on this subject up to the time of his death.

But very shortly after Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986 the new leadership of the Church challenged Mr. Armstrong's booklet on this subject, and subsequently withdrew it from publication. And that was the point in time when I was threatened with being "fired and disfellowshipped on the spot".

That was still **long before all the other booklets were withdrawn**. Mr. Armstrong's "Therapeia" booklet (i.e. "Healing" booklet) was then replaced with a booklet that presented a completely different approach to this subject, one that marginalized God's part in the healing process.

So to get back to Matthew 24:

Do we understand what God means when He says that He has **"appointed"** "the Pastor General of the Philadelphian era" **over His healing**? It may not make sense to the world, but it should be a powerful statement to us, who have God's spirit guiding and directing our minds, and who have lived through the recent history of God's Church.

This statement is telling us that God put the truth about His healing back into His Church through Mr. Armstrong. God did this very deliberately. You might recall the account when a young Mrs. Loma Armstrong was "sick unto death"? That was the event that God Almighty used to have the "faithful servant" restore "the plain truth about healing" to the Church of God.

Matthew 24:45 reveals that "the doctrine of healing" would be **the first doctrine to be attacked** by the Laodicean leadership. Jesus Christ knew this 2000 years ago. And that is one reason why He used the word "therapeia" in Matthew 24:45, instead of a word for "household".

Now can we understand **why** "healing" is the first thing that Satan wants to see Laodicea remove from the teachings of God's Church? "Healing" requires faith! According to your faith be it unto you. **When "healing" goes out the window, so does faith**. And then we are left with people who are not "full of faith" any more. They don't have faith.

It was specifically in reference to the Laodiceans at the end time that Jesus Christ asked:

I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, **shall He find faith on the earth?** (Luke 18:8)

The changing of the healing doctrine has had a **profound** effect and impact on the spiritual health of the members of God's Church. It is difficult to overstate this effect. Here in Matthew chapter 24 Jesus Christ chose to focus in on this one teaching (over which the leaders of the last two eras have been appointed to have authority) to show up **the difference between Philadelphians and Laodiceans.**

I believe that the faithful and wise servant was Mr. Herbert Armstrong.

Now here are the verses that are addressed to **the leader of the Laodicean era.**

But and if **that evil servant** shall say in his heart, My lord delays His coming; And shall begin to **smite his fellow-servants**, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for *Him*, and **in an hour that he is not aware of**, And shall **cut him asunder**, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth.** (Matthew 24:48-51)

Let's first explain some of the expressions in these verses.

- 1) "**That evil servant**" is a reference to the leader of the Laodicean era.
- 2) "**Smite his fellow-servants**" is a reference to him attacking true ministers of God, those who oppose the abomination of desolation he has introduced.
- 3) "**Cut him asunder**" refers to that leader dying well before his time.
- 4) "**Weeping and gnashing of teeth**" is always a reference to people who will be permanently destroyed by the second death in the lake of fire.

Okay, so now we understand the terminology.

"That evil servant", the leader of the Laodicean era, would methodically attack and force out of God's Church those fellow-ministers who would oppose the heresies he was determined to introduce. **That has happened!**

"Eating and drinking with the drunken" means that this evil servant would lead God's people back into the world and its ways. **That has also happened!**

"Cutting this evil servant asunder" means taking his life, having him die. **That has also happened!**

The hypocrites are the ones who will end up "weeping and gnashing their teeth".

The leader of the Laodicean era is amongst those hypocrites. This tells us that his character was hypocritical. The expression "his portion with the hypocrites" refers to the hypocrites being all the people who will end up in the lake of fire. That includes the leader of the Laodicean era. **This will still happen in the future.**

And that brings us to the end of chapter 24. This subject regarding the leaders of the last two eras of God's Church is immediately followed with the parable about the five wise virgins (the people of the

Philadelphian era) and the five foolish virgins (the people of the Laodicean era). But that is covered in other articles.

So here in Matthew 24 Jesus Christ has answered the questions about His second coming. Now it is up to us to hold fast to the calling God has set before us. And now we should understand what we are to watch for.

Frank W Nelte