

1. **Second Semester Introduction:** Early in our study of Revelation we considered the Olivet Discourse and Jesus' prediction (40 years before it happened) about destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. We will begin this semester of our Revelation study thinking again about the Olivet Discourse and its context as given in Matthew 23-24.

- Most of Matthew 23 deals with the failure of the scribes and Pharisees to be obey Israel's covenant with God. Jesus calls them hypocrites.
- Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 list God's curses and other penalties for breaking the covenant.

2. **Penalties for Covenant Breaking:** God's penalties for covenant breaking are severe and include military defeat and famine. In essence, the penalties for breaking the covenant comprehensively reverse covenant blessings, thereby affecting every aspect of life, culminating in national collapse and exile. The Olivet Discourse concerns God dealing with Judah for breaking the covenant.

- The penalty for covenant breaking was manifested in a devastating war lasting 6 years during which in 70 AD the Roman army would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, kill a million people (many by starvation), enslave more than 100,000 people, and Rome would forbid Jews to be in Judah.
- The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple resulted in Israel's national collapse and exile of the remaining people. It eliminated the Temple, the Jews traditional place of worship.

3. **The Babylonians:** In 586 BC Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple. Most of Judah's population was exiled to Babylon. Some returned 70 years later. The 70 AD destruction of national Israel was not reversed until 1948.

- Both the 586 BC and 70 AD, destructive events were preceded by the departure of the "Glory of God" from the Temple in preparation for its destruction. The 70 AD destruction of national Israel was not reversed until 1948.
- The withdrawal of "God's Glory" preceding the 586 BC event is described in Ezekiel 10-11. That preceding the 70 AD event occurred in 30 AD when Jesus (the incarnate glory of God) left the Temple the last time as described in Mark 13..
- Jesus predicted the Temple and city would be destroyed within the then current generation (about 40-year period). His prophecy in 30 AD was that destruction would be so complete no stone would be left on another. This was realized through the Romans in 70 AD.

4. **Interesting Truths:** John was present at Jesus' Olivet Discourse. Three of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) include the Discourse but not John's Gospel. Why?

- The 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, killing at least a million Jews plus 100,000 sold into slavery. The Jews were forbidden to live in Judah. It was the most devastating event in the history of the Jews. Yet no place in the NT mentions anything about the tragedy as having happened. Does that mean it happened after the NT was completed?
- Forbidding most Jews to live in Judah meant they could not visit former sites of holy places.

5. **Comments on Interpreting Revelation:** John received the contents of Revelation through symbolic visions. He wrote a description of what he saw which became Revelation as we know it. Though the symbols used were familiar to 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians, they are not familiar today and have not been for hundreds of years. How is Revelation to be interpreted today? Jesus provided some insight when He explained that the seven lampstands in the visions represent seven churches in Asia Minor, and the seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches (likely the church leaders).

- That reminds us that the symbology of the visions in Revelation must be carefully interpreted utilizing similarities to OT prophecy in Daniel, Ezekiel and others.

6. **Literary Style:** The genre of Revelation is mixed - letter, history, and prophecy. The dominant style for the prophecy is religious-apocalyptic, a style of writing prominent and well-understood from about 200 BC to about 200 AD. It is a style foreign to modern Christians, a style that seems strange and hard to understand, making Revelation difficult.

- Revelation is written as a letter containing other letters, history, and prophecy. The “other letters” are from Jesus to the seven churches. Most of Revelation is John’s description in apocalyptic language of what he saw and heard in the series of visions.

7. **End-Times:** Revelation deals with “end-times” which began when the Son became incarnate as Jesus. We live in end times.

- Like God’s kingdom, end-times are “already but not yet.” They have begun but are not yet consummated. The actual end is referred to as “the last day.”

8. **Prophecy:** The time frame of Revelation’s prophecy sections varies from “***must soon take place***” to “***the time is near***” to the “***last day***.” The “near” and “soon” language is repeated.

- It seems that much content of the visions pertains to future events “near in time” to John.
- In Revelation 2:16, 3:11, 22.12, and 22:20, Jesus says He is coming soon. What does He mean? Is He coming as our risen Lord on the last day or in some other sense?

9. **Theophanies:** God is an infinite spirit normally invisible to human senses, but able to become “visible” in a variety of forms drawn from creation. Such manifestations are theophanies.

- Theophanies are used by God for direct communication with humans and/or to demonstrate His presence in a variety of ways – as a burning bush not consumed, a glory cloud, a pillar of cloud, a pillar of fire, a whirlwind, a person, or in dreams.

- In Eden, God appeared to Adam and Eve in human form, walking and talking with them.

***Genesis 1:8-9: And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?***

10. **When Sin came to Eden:** God came “in judgment,” punishing the serpent, Adam, Eve, and even cursing the earth on which sinners were to live. ***Genesis 1:17-19: And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and***

*you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

- When wickedness had spread throughout the world, God came to Noah in a theophany warning of judgment. Then He came in judgment through a fatal flood. Only Noah’s family was saved.
- God appeared to Moses as a burning bush not consumed by the fire. God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to set the Hebrews free.
- In judgment, God dramatically intervened with ten plagues. Pharaoh freed the Hebrews.
- By theophanies of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, God led them to the Promised Land.

11. **A Sample of Judgment Theophanies:** God has and does come in judgment: (1.) Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, (2.) Lot’s wife turned into a pillar of salt for disobedience, (3.) Achan executed for taking forbidden spoils from the conquest of Jericho, (4.) Uzzah was struck down for touching the Ark of the Covenant to steady it, violating divine Law, (5.) Nadab and Abihu (Aaron’s sons) were incinerated for offering unauthorized fire before the Lord; (6.) Eli’s sons, Hophni & Phinehas died for wickedness and disrespect for God’s offerings; (7.) A plague killed 24,000 Israelites in Moab for immorality and idol worship. (8.) In 586 BC Jerusalem was destroyed including Soloman’s Temple by the army of Babylon plus and most of Judah’s people were exiled to Babylon. (9.) God sent no prophets to Israel for 400 years preceding Jesus’ advent, (10.) Ananias and Sapphira died immediately for lying to the Holy Spirit, (11.) The 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem including Herod’s Temple by the Roman army in 70 AD resulting in the death of more than a million Jews, also more than 100 thousand taken to Rome as slaves, and the Jews were banished from Judah. (12.) The destruction of the Temple ended the era of covenant sacrificial worship. Judaism shifted to worship through prayer and study of the Torah, the Prophets and Writings, etc.

12. **Ultimate Theophany:** Jesus’ incarnation is the ultimate (and permanent) theophany. God is pure Spirit undetectable by the 5 human senses. God can and does assume created forms (angel, human, fire, storm, etc.) to communicate directly with His human creatures. He communicates blessing, instruction, judgment, correction, celebration. etc. Theophanies have occurred throughout history.

- In the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity took to Himself a human nature, becoming the God-Man, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man, both natures controlled by His divine “I.” Jesus is the sublime example of a theophany, being permanently fully divine and fully human. He kept His human nature (including human body) when He returned to the Father.
- Is it possible Jesus came as a theophany to Jerusalem “in judgment” in 70 AD using the Roman Army to destroy the city and Temple as was done by the Babylonians in 586 BC?

13. **Purpose of the Visions John Received:** The purpose of the visions, as stated in Rev 1:1-3, is to show God’s servants “*what must soon take place because the time is near.*” In verse 22:6 the

sense of that statement is repeated when the angel says, “*These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.*”

- The time indicators “*the time is near*” and “*what must soon take place*” appear both before and after the symbolic visions but not appear in the sections devoted to the symbolic visions.
- If the time indicators appeared in the symbolic sections, one might anticipate a need for special interpretative rules. But the statements about “near” and “must soon take place” are in clear, straightforward sections and must mean precisely what they say.

14. **Comparing Daniel and Revelation:** Daniel, who lived several hundred years before John, is a major source of John’s imagery and thought. An angel told Daniel to seal up his prophetic book: **Daniel 12:4: But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”**

- In contrast, an angel told John to not seal up the words of prophecy in Revelation. **Revelation 22:10b: “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.**

15. **Original Recipients of Revelation:** At Jesus’ instruction, John wrote Revelation to the people of seven churches in the Province of Asia. As a letter, Revelation had to be understood by the first recipients. The congregations were people suffering real persecution. It is estimated there were about 7,000 Christians in the world out of a total population of maybe 250 million.

- The whole of Revelation was sent as a circular letter to be read aloud to the seven churches, i.e., people familiar to John. A letter from Jesus to each church giving pros and cons about that church was included in John’s document. Each church received the entire document.
- The letters are each addressed to the angel (probably the leader) of that church.

16. **John’s Connection to the Recipients of the Letter:** John says he is their brother in Christ and fellow-sufferer in their tribulation. John’s specific tribulation was being exiled and confined to Patmos. He and each of them must patiently endure what they cannot control. **Revelation 1:9: I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.**

17. **What Shall We Do:** Rejoice! Let God do what He must do to bring His plan to completion.

- Participate in God’s work by being obedient. Though consistent obedience is not simple, it is possible with God’s help. God’s planned end-state His for creation is “a holy people to live forever with Him.” His creation will be made new (Rev. 21).
- God told Adam and Eve they must not eat the fruit of forbidden knowledge. Likewise, He tells us to not speculate about the day of Jesus’ return or the timing of end-times’ events.
- We are to always be prepared (by being obedient) for Jesus’ unexpected coming. He will come “like a thief in the night.” Only the Father knows the day.
- Nothing and no one can harm the soul of a person “in Christ.” Jesus’ life and death provided a shield from all harm for their souls. Their mortal body and mind may be tortured/killed, but their soul is safe and secure “in Christ.