



### ***Let's Agree to Disagree About Agreeing to Disagree***

*<sup>19</sup>So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup>But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup>for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pe. 1:19-21)*

It's something akin to when, as a new Christian, we search the scriptures to find the origin of "Christmas", only to discover that it's not something ever actually mentioned in the Bible, but entirely derived outside of God's Word. In spite of the possible good intentions which spawned it, we nonetheless must reconcile what exactly is or is not specified in God's Word in order to determine how we are going to handle what has been superimposed upon it. Many times, just like Christmas, it turns out to be something entirely exterior to Scripture which has a manmade connection to something in God's Word, but not actually found within it and is really more in the nature of a "tradition". But while it is difficult to find a Bible teacher at any level who is not up front and honest when it comes to the origins of "Christmas", such is a rare case when it comes to the issue of eschatology. While there are always those who are dogmatic and unyielding, the most common response to issues raised concerning the Second Coming is usually, "Let's not divide over what is a difference of opinion. Let's just agree to disagree." Is that Peter's meaning in making such a non-variable statement, "*We have the prophetic word made more sure*", something which is not "*a matter of one's own interpretation*" when the premise is actually manmade?

My state-of-the-art Bible software contains just about every current and past English Bible in history along with an exhaustive assortment in the original languages, and yet like the empty search for "Christmas", I just cannot find some of the most often used terms commonly employed the way they are presented when it comes to the End Times, and neither can I find the scriptural loophole to "agree to disagree" where God's Word is concerned. And it is especially puzzling because there is no other area of biblical doctrine

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or study which tolerates the accommodations experienced in this one area when it comes to the handling of God's Word.

It seems contradictory because no one would characterize alternate views of fundamental doctrines such as salvation, justification or sanctification as simply a "difference of opinion" combined with a "live and let live" attitude, especially when it involves mishandling the Word. When even minute deviations from Scripture come to light in these other areas there is no hesitation to correct the error or, when it comes to intractable holders of such error, ultimately taking a public stand against them. In such cases the effect on the Body of Christ and the undermining of God's Word is not just recognized as problematic, but warrants a response to what is often deemed a danger to our faith. Why is there a near-universal abandonment of this protocol when it comes to assertions made concerning the Second Coming? Why are *these* portions of Scripture considered "variable" and open to opinion? Every other instance of God's Word is defended as absolute truth, but all of the sudden He throws up a "jump ball"?

### ***Not the "Bad Guys", but the "Good Guys"***

Many will not believe that I am not raising this issue in order to promote my particular eschatology, but I see this as a teaching moment when it comes to how to handle Scripture. I am not really addressing outright false teachers who are "*deceiving and deceived*", (2 Ti. 3:13) holders of unorthodox theology who employ devices which are usually easy to refute because of the transparency of their real agendas. No, I'm talking about the "good guys" here, teachers with whom there is universal agreement on the fundamental doctrines of the faith, but when it comes to eschatology, a wide divergence all of the sudden takes place.

It does not take a great deal of investigation to discover that at the root of these variances is most commonly found to be a deviation from one's own rules of exegesis. Time and time again, the most common error witnessed by the "good guys" is that they employ a different set of rules for handling the prophetic portions of God's Word than the rest. It often extends into crossing their own line, so to speak, where they do things with eschatological passages which they would not only never do with any other section of God's Word, but would themselves decry if such practices by someone else were employed for other portions of Scripture or for any other topic. Sometimes this is

intentional, but more often they don't seem to be consciously aware of this contradiction in their own practices.

For instance, they normally would never allegorize or spiritualize the text, but in this instance stray from their normal practice of sticking first and foremost to the plain meaning of Scripture. Or they wouldn't normally allow a Greek or Hebrew word to take on a one-time meaning which contradicts either its general usage in the whole of Scripture or override the historical-grammatical context of the passage it is found in, but all of the sudden endorse such an exception. Nor would they abandon their normal practice of primarily relying on Scripture as the best interpreter of Scripture and yet, like "Christmas", allow an outside concept or structure to be superimposed and render an alternate interpretation. These few but critical examples are all too commonly found when it comes to the eschatological teachings of the "good guys", exceptions made only when they encounter something prophetic in Scripture.

When a new set of rules is employed where God's prophetic Word is concerned, it eventually reveals itself when the affected eschatology is fully plotted to arrive at its final destination, and very often it contradicts one of those fundamental doctrines for which a compromise will not be accommodated. All of the sudden it is asserted that people will be saved in the Last Days in a manner contradictory to orthodoxy when it comes to salvation, or the Holy Spirit works in a new if not contrary manner, or the unambiguous statements of Christ and the New Testament writers are obviously contradicted. Bad eschatology seems to bring out related errors in other areas of theology because one contradiction of Scripture inevitably leads to another. It rarely limits itself to this one area, but like all bad teaching, leavens the rest of the theological loaf.

### ***The Rise of Contradictions***

Jesus specified we are to be looking for the signs of His return and be ready because "*of that day and hour no one knows*". (Mt. 24:36) And yet, at least fourteen times in the Olivet Discourse recorded in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus also states not to be deceived in combination with warnings to be watchful, ready and expectant. Yet some of the most prominent "good guy" professors, authors and teachers of our time are saying, "No, it will take place with such stealth and secrecy that no discernible signs will precede the Rapture of the Church". Making this the central feature of their eschatology, they are therefore further asserting that nothing we are currently witnessing in the Middle East or otherwise

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is of prophetic significance. Their extreme reach to justify a key point in their eschatology where the timing of the Rapture is concerned results in the collateral damage of fundamental doctrines of the faith to the point that it actually begins to contradict the plain meaning of Christ's instruction to the contrary. He says, "Look out!", they conclude, "There's nothing to look out for". Jesus says we can recognize the nearness of what is about to happen, but because we can't pinpoint the day or hour, they say it will come with no warning whatsoever.

We have "good guys", who in spite of the Apostles Paul and John and Christ Himself telling us that the Church will encounter the Antichrist prior to its removal, currently assert that the plain text of Scripture in this regard is wrong. They first began by insisting that most of Revelation, specifically chapters 4-19, do not apply to the Church because of their insistence the Bride of Christ will have been removed prior. And since this assertion was regularly refuted by Christ's teaching in the Olivet Discourse, over time moved on to make a complicated case that the Olivet Discourse does not apply to the Church either, that it is given solely for the benefit of Israel when it comes to faith in Christ after the Church's removal. The "conflict" inherent in their eschatology was removed in their view by nullifying even more of God's prophetic Word. They have now ultimately proceeded to not only reverse Paul's statement to the contrary in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 of the End Times sequence, but many are teaching that Paul's use of the word "*apostasy*" does not mean a "departing from the faith" by the unfaithful, but the *literal* "departing"—that is, the Rapture itself, of the faithful Church. One thing led to another until God's Word has been turned inside out. What they bring from the outside to the plain text of Scripture actually undermines Scripture itself and with each successive round inflames a greater scriptural error than the last.

These normally "good guys", in the pursuit of promoting their own idea, end up at a position which asserts that almost none of God's prophetic Word presented in the New Testament actually applies to New Testament believers. What began as a "difference of opinion" has led down a path which began by inserting something into Scripture which is not plainly resident, to then excluding portions of God's Word, to finally reaching down into the actual Greek text and changing it into something more palatable. Every single one of these proponents would argue to their death that God's Word is inerrant, unchanging, and cannot be treated this way in every other instance except when it comes

to this “special case”. And we’re supposed to “agree to disagree” because this isn’t something which Christians should divide over?

[For those who want to understand this in painful, exacting detail, I covered this in the previously published commentary, “[When Change Is Expressly Forbidden](#)”. It’s just been getting worse and more pervasive in the intervening years.]

### **“The Day of the Lord”**

Much of this has come about because a generation ago an exegetical error was tolerated in the handling of God’s prophetic Word. Whatever “ism” one subscribes to, each major eschatology and its many variations depend on interpreting seven fundamental terms found within Scripture: the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel, “*the day of the Lord*”, “*tribulation*”, “*great tribulation*”, “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*”, “*the time of the Gentiles*”, and “*the fullness of the Gentiles*”. Other factors will inevitably come into it, but this is the fundamental starting point. The error I’m referring to is the accommodation of what began as an opinion and grew into an institutional “absolute” in mainstream teaching that the final seven years biblically referred to as Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is the exact, same thing in its entirety as “*the day of the Lord*”.

Of these seven terms, there are many more verses dedicated to the topic of “*the day of the Lord*”, far exceeding those referencing the other six terms combined. Both the Old and New Testaments dedicate a great deal more textual real estate to “*the day of the Lord*” than any other feature of the eschaton, and yet there is not a single connection, not even an implied one, which scripturally ties these two terms into a parallel reference as being the same thing. At best, it is an assumption superimposed upon the text, but at worst it’s a mis-assignment of Scripture.

Even the late Dr. Walvoord, the universally acknowledged “father” of this assertion had the integrity and wherewithal to admit that the eschatology basing itself on this was not plainly stated in Scripture but must be extrapolated from “between the lines”. At least he was honest enough to admit it is absent from the plain text. Nonetheless, in the hands of subsequent scholars, it has subsequently become a staple assumed by so many that such must be scripturally based that the recent rise of a whole opposing eschatology named itself “Pre-Wrath” to articulate from the outset its refutation of the premise. In that instance, they differentiate between “*the day of the Lord*” which only non-believers experience beginning with the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal of Revelation 8, and “judgment” experienced by

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everyone, the Church included, leading up to that point. In other words, the Church enters the 70<sup>th</sup> Week but is removed before judgment gives way to the wrath of God which is the exclusive domain of *“the day of the Lord”*. There is a point where the 70<sup>th</sup> Week becomes *“the day of the Lord”*, but not from the outset in its entirety.

This has led to the previously highlighted series of events where what began with a mis-association of biblical terms has led to throwing out most of Revelation, disqualifying the whole of the Olivet Discourse, and even to not just reversing Paul’s own words, but reaching down into the “immutable, inerrant Word of God” and changing the Greek text itself. The rules normally adhered to when connecting different passages of Scripture with each other or the categorization of different terms referring to different aspects of the same thing were abandoned, and instead of taking a firm stance against this practice, not simply tolerated it, but allowed it to become institutionalized in its usage.

To be sure, there are still many who hold to what I call “classic” Pre-Tribulationism who have not ventured down this path, but there has been incredible momentum down this avenue by far too many. A few, such as Dr. Randall Price, have taken a public stance against those taking their own chosen eschatology further and further away from its point of origin, but too few have joined the ranks to protest what is being done to God’s Word in the name of their particular “ism”. Unfortunately, it would appear that the “classic” position holders are becoming fewer and fewer.

### ***“Tribulation” & “Great Tribulation”***

In the whole history of the 2000 year-old Church, it has only been relatively recently within the past 70 or so years when this has become integrated into the fabric of the Western Church, but we are the ones having to deal with its full effect. But sadly, while this may be the point of common contention which is being experienced today, it is not the actual birthplace of the subsequent chain of events; something significant preceded this which continues to grow in its ability to undermine the truth of God’s Word, and ultimately, leading to material deception within the Body of Christ by those who are charged with maintaining the integrity of God’s Word where His house is concerned. (Mt. 24:42-51) And that is the term *“tribulation”*.

Unless you’re using a very strange variant of the Bible, nowhere within it are you going to find either the term as it is so often near universally employed, “The Tribulation” with capital T’s, but like its cousin *“the day of the Lord”*, neither can be found any textual

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connection to either the entirety of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, nor even to spanning one of its halves. It is commonly asserted that the final seven years of the eschaton is **The** Tribulation of the whole world, but astonishingly, that is not what is stated in Scripture. They began talking that way and we allowed ourselves to respond using the same uncorrected jargon, so we have to take some measure of responsibility for the way the misuse of such terms has become institutionalized.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes the beginning of the Last Days as a prolonged phase not constrained by an absolute time span of any kind, but rather as coming in the obstetric pattern of "birth pangs".

*<sup>8</sup>But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.  
— Matthew 24:8*

We are more than familiar with the particulars of these "birth pangs" specified as wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes and so forth, (Mt. 24:4-8) but seem to overlook that there is **no** accompanying starting point nor time span containing them; what begins gradually comes with greater and greater frequency and intensity. But when it comes to this text, we seem to overlook how Christ transitions from general events which will affect **everyone** on the planet, to something which **only believers** will experience.

*<sup>8</sup>But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.  
<sup>9</sup>Then **they will deliver you** to tribulation... — Matthew  
24:8–9a*

Jesus provides in detail a time which will come within those final years when the world will exclusively turn on Christians. Notice that in Christ's explanation of the nature of this period of "tribulation" that there is absolutely **nothing** experienced by the world in general, but lists only those things which are inflicted on believers alone.

*<sup>9</sup>Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. <sup>10</sup>At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup>Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. <sup>12</sup>Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. <sup>14</sup>This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. — Matthew 24:9–14*

- The world will kill believers. (v.9)
- The world will unite in its hatred of believers. (v.9)

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- The persecution, like all instances of persecution in the history of the Church, will cause many believers to abandon the faith. (v.10)
- These apostatizers will turn on their former brothers and sisters in the faith who remain faithful in spite of the circumstances. (v.10)
- The apostasy will be compounded with rampant deception by an explosion of false prophets within the ranks of the Church. (v.11)
- The Word will be abandoned—the meaning of “*lawlessness*”, so that Christians will no longer behave like Christians (“*love will grow cold*”). (v.12)
- And as persecution has always enabled, believers will preach the Gospel, finally fulfilling the last commandment of Christ in Acts 1:8. (v.14)

Nothing within the details Christ provides of the composition of “*tribulation*” relates to the whole world at large, but is exclusive to believers alone. Christ specifies that it is something believers will be required to endure. (v.13)

But it cannot possibly span the entire final seven years because its beginning transitions from the more prolonged “*birth pangs*” to give way to what we inarguably know from Scripture is the precise midpoint of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, (Dan. 9:27) the Abomination of Desolation:

*15“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)...<sup>21</sup>For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. <sup>22</sup>Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. — Matthew 24:15, 21-22*

The “*tribulation*”, which is the exclusive experience of the Church, gives way to “*a great tribulation*” for the whole world initiated by the public outing of the Antichrist. And Christ further designates that neither can the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week be called in its entirety “**The Great Tribulation**” as it is so popularly designated, but is itself a phase which comes immediately on the heels of the Abomination of Desolation and is itself “*cut short*”.

Terms which are indisputably found in Scripture—in this case “*tribulation*” and “*great tribulation*”, have been lifted from their context and assigned a meaning never inferred or intended. The whole of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is never designated as something the whole world experiences called “The Tribulation”, nor can its entire first half be called “The



Tribulation” or the whole second half “The Great Tribulation”. That has been brought about in order to whittle the proverbial square peg to fit in the round hole, a customization to suit a manmade assumption where the dogmatic enforcement of one milestone of the End Times serves to obscure everything else.

### ***It's Not Just Theoretical***

How does this transcend just being an academic issue of interpretation so that it results in material harm? Think about what has taken hold in the mainstream of Christianity in our day.

The most popular eschatology taught by most seminary-trained pastors and held by the majority of their sheep maintains that the Church will be removed **before** The Tribulation, **before** the entire final seven years. How can the Church leave and be exempted from something which Christ Himself says can **only** be experienced by the Church? The eschatological term “Pre-Tribulation” is an oxymoron according to the plain text of Scripture. It is not a belief which can be categorized as a difference of opinion or one of many possible interpretations, but is a fundamental mishandling of Scripture by attempting to make a case that the Church won't be here to experience what Christ directly said will only be experienced by the Church!

By reassigning “*tribulation*” as applying to the whole world, the error is compounded by further designating that since the Church is exempted, it is also the same thing as “*the day of the Lord*”, something which all holders of the various eschatologies agree scripturally only applies to the world. Now something which Christ says applies **only** to the **Church** is turned inside out to be presented as something only the **world** will experience. This does not simply have to do with the overall sequence of the eschaton, but is more importantly the greater issue of turning God's inerrant Word inside out to result in something completely opposite of its original, plain meaning.

Jesus says we will experience this; many “good guys” are saying we will not. Jesus implores us to endure to the end; many “good guys” say there is no need to endure what they say we will not have to live through. This is going to have a devastating effect on the very sheep entrusted to legitimate shepherds when that time finally arrives. Unfortunately for them, it will be the words of the Good Shepherd which will prevail regardless when He comes again, just as it was the first time.

How can we “agree to disagree” over this? How can we characterize this as simply being a difference of opinion? If this were done to any other portion of Scripture pertaining to a fundamental doctrine of the faith, would it be overlooked for the sake of “love and unity”?

The underlying Greek word for “tribulation”—“*thlipsis*” (Strong’s #2347), is used approximately 45 times in 43 verses throughout the New Testament. At most only two of those instances refer to something which happens to unbelievers with the exception of when it is found accompanied by “*megale*”—that is, “**great tribulation**”. *Thlipsis* in its overwhelming common usage describes something applying exclusively to Christians except when it is extended to everyone, believer and non-believer alike, in that narrow accelerated phase specifically identified as “*great tribulation*”. For Christians alone it will be cut short when the Rapture removes us, but what immediately follows for those remaining is the wrath of God prolifically described in Scripture as “*the day of the Lord*” from that point on.

But the issue has grown worse because instead of reconciling this obvious conflict of the plain text of Scripture, a great many holding to this view take the additional step of asserting that the Olivet Discourse does not apply to the Church, but to Israel alone in “The Tribulation” after the Church’s removal. The very teaching of Christ given exclusively to believers alone for just this time is not merely diluted, but dismissed outright. It is the critical guide by which the Early Church lived and died in expectation of Christ’s Return, but now when it is needed most, declared irrelevant. Each successive error is greater than the last.

### ***The Historical Context***

Consider the historical context of the Book of Revelation to the Olivet Discourse where the Early Church is concerned.

Even within the ranks of those holding to the notion that the Olivet Discourse does not apply to the Church, it would be rare to find an adherent who does not also dogmatically hold to the belief that Revelation was authored by the Apostle John around 95 A.D. (Yes, although us normal folk accept this as inarguably axiomatic, it is much debated in the suffocating environs of academia.) In fact, when opponents to this dating and authorship of Revelation raise their weak and manufactured arguments in an attempt to undermine this fact, the holders of Pre-Tribulationism are universally united in identifying this as

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something egregious which must be refuted at all costs. And yet they also seem to universally ignore how the dogma of adhering to this position serves to fundamentally dissolve the assertion of an ever-increasing number among their ranks that the Olivet Discourse has no application whatsoever to the Church.

If Revelation was not even given through John until 95 A.D. (which I, too, unquestioningly believe as well), what did the Early Church believe concerning the Second Coming for those first 60 years of its existence without it? All the Apostles save one, and statistically speaking at least 95+% of the very first generation of believers, were all allowed to live and die with no knowledge of Revelation whatsoever. All the books of the New Testament, even John's own Gospel and Epistles, were all written *without* the vaguest awareness of Revelation because it did not exist at the time. For those six decades before Patmos, as with all future generations of believers, they lived in the fervent belief of Christ's imminent Second Coming. But *their* primary guide was the Olivet Discourse, the primary teaching of Christ Himself concerning His return.

Do you really think there was even one, single Christian from the first 60 years of the Church's existence who thought the Olivet Discourse did not apply to the Church? That it was given for future Israel alone after the Church's removal? And is it reasonable to assume that when Revelation was finally available, that a collective sigh of relief rose with a parallel acknowledgment that only the opening and closing chapters applied to the Church? When the authors of the first 26 books of the New Testament referenced something pertaining to the Second Coming, it is testament to the authority of the Holy Spirit that it would not later conflict with Revelation, but at the time of each writing the guiding teaching was the Olivet Discourse. This was the primary influence on everything they wrote concerning the Second Coming.

Common sense and Pre-Tribulationists' own timeline of the New Testament soundly refute this notion as to the purpose and limited audience of the Olivet Discourse. But it was not the initial link in a chain of unfortunate events; it could only be arrived at through a combination of previous smaller errors compounding one upon another into this colossal one.

### ***The Greater Issue***

So is this merely an issue of the timing of the Rapture? That is but one milestone in the eschaton which certainly must be revisited in light of the plain text of Scripture, but it is

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certainly not what is sure to be among the more devastating results this mishandling of Scripture will have on believers when it is most critical to their faith. Ultimately this has led to what may be an even more serious misinterpretation than the timing of the Rapture, and this a misinterpretation of the timing of the Antichrist.

Having discounted the Olivet Discourse, they couldn't abide the contradiction of Paul's plainly stated parallel timing of the overall eschaton which, like Christ's, included the appearance of the Antichrist.

*<sup>3</sup>Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. — 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4*

Since like Jesus, Paul states that apostasy will precede the Antichrist when he commits the Abomination of Desolation—expressed here as when “*the man of lawless is revealed...he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*”, they have to turn this inside out as well.

What first assaulted my ears 10 or so years ago, which at the time was so radical that I initially believed I must have been experiencing a brain aneurism and heard it wrong, has grown from not just being embraced by a large academic representation of the “good guys”, but in recent years has begun to be taught from pulpits and featured on Christian radio shows and prophecy conferences. In a complicated switch-a-roo effected on the actual underlying Greek text of God's inerrant Word, they redefine “*apostasy*” to mean the actual Rapture itself. Instead of accepting that Paul states, “the spiritual departing from the faith must come first”, they insist this is actually saying, “the literal departing of the Church must come first”. This disturbing aberration is the basis for their follow-on declaration, “Therefore the Church will never actually encounter the Antichrist”.

That which began as a reinterpretation of the plain text of Scripture has evolved into actually reaching down into and changing the very Word of God. And there are still those who would have us “agree to disagree” and avoid making an unnecessary fuss.

### **What Will Christ Find?**

It was difficult to not give in to my fleshly inclination to name this article, tongue in cheek, “The Emperor's New Clothes”. From a purely expository point of view this sequence of

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error compounding further error is indefensible when relying solely on Scripture and cannot survive the forum of reasoned academic debate, much less basic common sense. However, the outraged respondents I'm sure to experience by publishing this commentary will bring all manner of outside arguments and devices to bear which will not endure even the most casual scrutiny of the plain text of God's Word. But this is not about winning a debate; this is a morality tale concerning the critical importance of handling God's Word. This is not about doing battle with the shepherds, but more importantly the tangible effect on the sheep in their care.

When Jesus concluded that portion of the Olivet Discourse detailing the milestones and sequence of His Return, He specified what He expects to find within the Church at that time it is transacted.

*<sup>45</sup>“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? — Matthew 24:45*

In the first application Jesus addresses the role of leadership. (Mt. 24:45-51) He will reward those properly feeding the Church—feeding being the recurrent metaphor for properly providing the Word, and unceremoniously removing and punishing those teachers who fail to do so. This is not speaking of false teachers, but the “good guys” who are “*put in charge of his household*”. The right handling of the Word by leadership is the very first caveat Christ personally directs at Christians, and Christians alone. Christ Himself will not “agree to disagree” with the “good guys” left in charge.

*<sup>1</sup>“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. — Matthew 25:1*

In the very next application, (Mt. 25:1-13) Jesus warns the individual believer where their own **personal** handling of God's Word is concerned as represented by the lamps. Again, this is not a parable featuring “virgins” and “non-virgins”, which could be interpreted as the difference between a believer and non-believer, but is limited to just “*virgins*”—that is, referencing just the Church alone. The dual consequences of reward and punishment for individuals' handling of God's Word in the End Times is replayed in parallel to the requirements just established for leadership of same. There is no provision to “agree to disagree” and pass through the foolish virgins regardless.

*14“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. — Matthew 25:14*

Finally, the responsibility of what Christ's own do with the Word is expanded from first and foremost being the litmus test of faithfulness in the course of carrying out the work **within** His house, to faithfulness in the course of effecting His mission to the outside world at large. (Mt. 25:14-30) In this sequence we see the clear implication is not just the requirement for Christians to rightly handle and put into practice God's Word in the course of both their roles within the Church proper or the whole world at large, but to be held accountable for this entire spectrum. When it comes to the Last Days, Jesus' stated standard for Christians is how they are found to have handled His Word upon His return.

It is very difficult to extract from these teachings a case to be made for the proposition we can all “agree to disagree”, or that God's Word is flexible enough to handle multiple, and yet conflicting, interpretations. Jesus reinforces His expectation of finding Christians in compliance with His Word and ways, not offering exemptions to it. But consider when it comes to God's prophetic Word, which the Apostle Peter asserts has attained the status of having been “made sure”, the hundreds of examples which can be documented of biblical prophecies which have already been fulfilled.

### **No Break in the Pattern**

Depending on the list, an accounting of all the prophecies Christ fulfilled in the course of His First Coming will hover in the neighborhood of approximately 325 or so. If we were to conduct an Old Testament survey of all the prophecies originating within those pages, which we know have also since been fulfilled, we are provided with an exhaustive sampling of the nature of prophetic resolution. In all these examples, in this incredibly extensive list of real-world fulfillments, is there a single case where a fulfillment had alternatives which man's opinions or own interpretations could even influence, much less alter the outcome? Every single one has been plainly and literally fulfilled, often to the chagrin of those superimposing their outside assumptions on God's prophetic Word.

It is precisely this manmade conundrum which caused the most damage in the course of Christ's First Coming. The expectations, especially among the academic community of the time, were so skewed in their contradictions to the plain text of God's Word that there was actual mainstream **rejection** of the Messiah! There was no room to “agree to

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disagree”, but a catastrophic consequence because of the deception of opinion and the injection of manmade devices over the plain literalness of God’s Word.

*<sup>41</sup>When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, <sup>42</sup>saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, <sup>44</sup>and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because **you did not recognize the time of your visitation.**” — Luke 19:41–44*

A serious mistake incurred by God’s people in the course of the First Coming is being replayed in the shadow of the Second. That which is being characterized as a mere “difference of opinion”, something which is being discounted as not being an essential matter of the Christian faith, is going to produce a second time exactly the same result as it did the first time around: “...you did not recognize the time of your visitation”.

At the risk of piling on, do you really think that Christ or any of the authors of the New Testament, if today’s “good guys” had the opportunity to present these positions to them personally, would be able to end such a meeting with **any** New Testament figure consenting to “agree to disagree” with them? The main reason Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in the first place was to correct the errors which were introduced by others who came along after him and confused those believers. And just like Peter’s warning that we must recognize that others do this, undermine Paul’s teachings, shouldn’t we recognize how it is taking place yet again, and in the shadow of the Second Coming, even more seriously than ever?

## **Conclusion**

*<sup>24</sup>The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup>**with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.** <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. — 2 Timothy 2:24–26*

I do not believe this is a license to demean, abuse or mistreat those needing correction, and civility in the course of our attempted correction is certainly the stated scriptural goal. But silent tolerance? Avoiding a response altogether? Recasting the mishandling of God’s Word as simply a disagreement of opinion? These are not actually acceptable biblical

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actions on our part either. Unfortunately, in the present environment, just attempting to offer correction is often denounced as unloving, judgmental, and deemed inappropriate.

The consequences are just as real this time around as they were incurred by those failing to do so the last time. It is most difficult at this juncture because we failed to act in the most timely manner possible and have allowed ever deepening error to take firm root. It has taken such firm hold that it will be difficult at best to deal with. We confused the issue further by talking like them in the same redefined terms without pausing to make the necessary corrections. But having recognized it for what it is, we now have the responsibility to change our own behavior going forward, not just for the sake of our self personally, but even more so for everyone else involved. We have to follow through on *“the prophetic word made more sure”*, not leave it up for grabs. There is too much at stake.

In Him,

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