

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (ORGANIZED BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

Part VIII: Eschatology (Doctrine Of The End Times)

B. Prophecies Of The Present Age

I. Introduction

- A. In view of recent world events, we may wonder just what will happen next and how to live in view of it.
- B. Scripture predicts our current era, supplying insight on these things as follows:

II. Prophecies Of The Present Age

- A. Jesus predicted the **world's** future in Matthew 12:24, 29 with Matthew 13:1-50.
 1. Parable of the Sower and the Soils, Mtt. 13:3-9, 18-23 - God's Word and the Gospel will be sown in the world with varying spiritual responses from the world's people groups and individuals.
 2. Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Mtt. 13:24-30, 36-43 - Satan will counter this work by planting unbelievers who pretend to be believers in organized Christendom. God will judge these in eternity.
 3. Parable of the Mustard Seed, Mtt. 13:31-32 - What begins as a simple Christian community will grow into a monstrous form of Christendom where even **demons** will find comfortable room to dwell.
 4. Parable of the Leaven in the Meal, Mtt. 13:33 - False doctrine will eventually permeate all of organized Christendom, weakening its spiritual fervency and power.
 5. Parable of the Hidden Treasure, Mtt. 13:44 - Though it will be revealed and saved in the future, Christ will make redemption for Israel (at the cross, Isa. 53:12).
 6. Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, Mtt. 13:45-46 - The Church will be saved through Christ's redemption out of the slave market of the world's system of sin in this current Church era!
 7. Parable of the Dragnet, Mtt. 13:47-50 - Only at the final spiritual judgment of the world will God openly separate those who will enter the Millennial Kingdom of Christ and those who will not do so.
- B. Jesus also predicted the **Church's** future in Revelation 2-3 as follows:
 1. The messages to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3 are directed to churches in seven eras of time:
 - a. The Greek enclitic, *Tade* introduces each message, and it means "To **this** church as **opposed** to the others," UBS Grk. N.T., p. 839-844; Denniston, The Greek Particles, p. 513.
 - b. Yet, each message applies to churches, Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.
 - c. We know these churches were located in towns in Asia as mail distribution centers for smaller towns around them, Moody Monthly, "Return to Ephesus," John McRay, Oct. 1992, p. 40.
 - d. The "He that hath ears" phrase in each message indicates a fulfillment of prophecy, cf. Mtt. 11:13ff.
 - e. Summary: Each message is to churches in a specific era of prophetic fulfillment characterized by the symbols presented by each of the respected seven named churches of Asia.
 2. We find a direct match which specific ages in Church History to these Seven Churches as follows:
 - a. Ephesus - meaning "Desired," it represents the Apostolic Church Era which is beloved throughout Church History; the battle then was an over-zealousness for false apostles at the cost of love.
 - b. Smyrna - coming from the word, "Myrrh" which was used in embalming, it represented the Persecuted Church (Nero to 300 A. D.) where the struggle was faithfulness to Christ unto death.
 - c. Pergamos - meaning "Thoroughly Married," represented Constantine's Church Era where Church and State were united (300 to 800 A. D.). The battle was over doctrinal compromise with paganism.
 - d. Thyatira - meaning "Perpetual Sacrifice" pictures Roman Catholicism (800 to present) deals with abnormalities of mother-child worship and Neo-platonic views infiltrating Christianity.
 - e. Sardis - meaning "Those escaping" presents the Reformation Church (1517 to present) where the battle was to avoid dead creedalism and finish the withdrawal from pagan doctrines in Romanism.
 - f. Philadelphia - meaning "Brotherly Love" pictures Protestant Pietism (world missions, Bible Institutes) where the battle was against Liberal Theology as formed by German rationalism.
 - g. Laodicea - meaning "The People Rule" is our Evangelical Church movement where people assert themselves in withdrawing from mainline denominations. The battle is over leadership roles as the congregations disrespect leaders due to problems in past errant churches, & tend to rule themselves!
 3. (Note: The Revelation 2-3 text **seems** to imply Catholic, Reformation, Pietistic and Evangelical Churches will coexist until the **end** of the Church Age at the Rapture [I can explain this in class]).
 4. (Note: 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 6-13 warns men will increase in abusive activity in the latter days of the Church, so believers should be wary and withdraw from them, focusing on heeding Scripture, 3:14-17.)