



Articles and Sermons :: Egypt or Obedience

**Egypt or Obedience, on: 2012/12/31 15:03**

Matthew chapter 24 is often cited as a proof text for describing what is called "the end of the age". Moreover this same chapter is often linked with the term "the great apostasy".

Could I say something plainly. Unless we ourselves decide to have a mind to know the hour in which we live we will in no way understand this chapter of scripture nor the terms or names which may be contained therein. The "end of the age" and the "great apostasy" are not synonymous terms. The characteristic of apostasy and the end of the world are different and need to be comprehended differently. Moreover whilst these two events in finality coincide in time and space, they essentially apply to two very distinct peoples. Both peoples belong to God, but the one is Israel according to the promise and the other is the church according to faith in Christ Jesus.

As believers we love to speak about "true Israel" and thereby do we completely miss the most profound reality of that "day of Christ", preceded by the "man of sin", which is coming upon us. It is a wonder and a marvel that in Christ the dividing partition of the flesh, between Israel according to the flesh and the Gentiles according to the flesh, is broken down and a new creature is formed. If the scripture speaks of Christ Himself, the first man raised from the dead, and those who believe in Him, as the first fruits, we can say with no less certainty that we being in Him by faith are also the fruits as well. Yes we are of the true vine and yes we have the same life which Christ Himself possessed, and yes this life has tasted death, is raised from the dead and lives evermore. How wonderful and marvellous is this if we do in fact comprehend it. In saying this we need to see that the dividing partition which once separated Israel from the Gentiles, is Christ's own physical body. It is worked out through His virgin birth, obedient life, His death and resurrection from the dead. He who knew not sin, became sin. It is the removal of the offence of sin by the removal of Christ's own body through death. This removal is not figurative it is physical and literal. So that whilst Christ Himself was under the earth in the Spirit, bearing witness of Himself, His physical lifeless body laid in a tomb on the earth. The new creature which is spoken about is that which is born of the one whose lifeless body and everlasting spirit was once again brought together by the power of the Father so that Christ Himself physically was raised from the dead as He ascended from the regions of the dead and was physically made alive. It is only in this precise reality that the dividing partition of the flesh which made for a separation between Jew and Gentile can be understood to have been removed. It is at once an offence of sin and altogether a pleasing aroma unto the Father in heaven. It is the Jew and the Gentile reconciled in His body so that as it is written "one died for all, therefore all have died". It is the removal of the offence by the removal of His body which became sin for our sakes.

In view of this, Matthew Chapter 24 as well as those passages of scripture which speak about the "end of the age" and the "great apostasy" may be more easily understood. How is this true? It is true because the end of the age has more to do with Israel and the great apostasy has more to do with the church. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, nor male nor female; there is only a new creature. In the world, in time and space there is both Jew and Gentile and male and female as well. For Israel there is yet a veil of God seated in the very physical mind of all Jews, which can only be removed one at a time according to God's sovereign will and a repentant heart of faith in the Messiah. For the gentile there is no veil of God, there is only the fleshy mind and body of unbelief, which may be removed in an instant through seeking God and crying out for forgiveness of sin. On the face of it this may seem like a spurious distinction. Yet a simple looking into history itself will tell us how certain this reality is. The nations have increased upon increase and some nations above other nations have embraced the gospel of Christ to an historical good effect upon those nations. Israel has only become a nation again in the last 70 years. Israel was brought back into the land by those very same nations which form the basis for the "great apostasy" and was from its entry into the land a secular nation. Today Israel is no less secular and to this hour reject Christ their coming Messiah. The correspondence between the "end of the age" and the "great apostasy" can be measured in the same time frame of 1945 to the present day. So that today even those nations which once embraced the gospel, at every level of government, now increasingly reject the gospel to an ill effect. This merging of effects can be understood in our day and all visibility bears witness to it in our day. Having made this distinction it must be evident that the term "the end of the age" and "the great apostasy" can be clearly and easily explained and understood. If not then it is but a construction and a falsehood to speak in this way.

With this in mind Matthew 24 and other passages can be looked into with a more singular purpose and direction of thought. Beginning with the nations we see from this passage that it is all nations which are against Israel in the end of the age. We see that Israel itself suffers a great tribulation. Finally we do not see the church except in one verse which speaks

about the gospel being preached unto all men and nations. In short the great commission is come to a conclusion, Israel is come to tribulation and the nations are Israel's enemies.

It would be foolish to neglect a little of what the "great apostasy" means. Firstly whilst it is true that the nations have benefited from Christ no nation can be legitimately called a christian nation. Nations cannot follow Christ. Only men can follow Christ. Secondly those nations which are against Israel at the end of the age are neither christian nor heathen, they are sheep or goats. Lastly, Israel became apostate during the days of Jeremiah. Although Ezra was used to rebuild the temple Israel remained apostate in all but the most central realities of the temple sacrifices. The passage in Matthew begins with the disciples drawing the temple buildings to the Lord's attention. The whole passage and all of its meaning is drawn out from that point on. Beginning with the Lord explaining that the building to which they paid such attention too, would be torn down stone by stone until not one stone would be left standing upon another. It is given to the disciples to see with their own eyes what the restoration of the temple buildings looked like. Yet the more important explanation of what was to follow right up until the end of the age was also given to them. Jesus did not offer an explanation to His prophetic utterance concerning the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the disciples sought out its meaning by asking. What they received was an explanation which included the very end of the age. It is a day when "the angels shall gather the elect from the four winds of heaven" and the "tribes of the earth shall mourn" as they see Him coming in visibility. It is an age of apostasy, not of Israel because Israel was in all but the temple sacrifices, apostate from the time when Jeremiah went into Egypt with the rulers of Israel who would not receive captivity as God's remedy for apostasy beginning with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar as the golden head. It is an apostasy of the church. An Israel which was already apostate at the time of Jeremiah cannot become less than in the time of the disciples. The restoration of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem was for a purpose and that purpose was the day of Christ come among men. Any reading of the gospels dispels the myth that Israel was faithful at the time of Christ. The only people on all the earth who are able to become apostate today are those who have received the truth. In short the great apostasy is a falling away of those who take the name of Christ. Having received the free gift of life many are then become as unbelievers in their conduct and lives. These are apostate, who have fallen away from the apostles teaching.

So if you desire to know what is the hour in which you live, you will have to ask the One who knows, even Christ. Just as the disciples had to seek Him out for an explanation so must we today. It cannot be written down like a scroll. It can only be comprehended in the spirit by faith and a willingness to be obedient. Today we are all come to captivity, even Babylon and the golden head. We have been drawn into captivity and like captives we will be made as servants and subjects to another. If we cannot bear it the alternative is to rebel even further and flee back to Egypt leaving all pretence of obedience behind. The profound distinction is this. In these last days one will arise who will take the name of Christ and will by reason of the false prophet cause men to worship him as though he were God. He will be given the power to change times and seasons and will speak blasphemies which will cause stumbling as at no other time on the whole earth. If anyone rejects servant hood this time it will be to the man of sin and hell fire, not Egypt.

#### Re: Egypt or Obedience, on: 2013/1/3 16:54

Quote:

-----The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say thou unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; that I may establish the oath which I swore unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then answered I, and said, Amen, O Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the stubbornness of their evil heart: therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did them not. And Jehovah said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words; and they are gone after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. Jeremiah 11:1-10

The portion of Jacob is not like these; for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance: Jehovah of hosts is his name. Gather up thy wares out of the land, O thou that abidest in the siege. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and will distress them, that they may feel it. Jeremiah 10:16-18

A straight forward reading of these two passages of scripture reveals several divisions. These are Jacob, Israel and Judah. In speaking of Jacob what is being spoken of is "Israel the tribe of His inheritance". In this Jacob speaks of unity b

because it speaks of the name given to a man in the first instance and Israel, a tribe in the second. When Israel is spoken of again it is after Judah is spoken of. In the passage from chapter ten it is Jacob and Israel. In the passage from chapter eleven it is Israel and Judah.

These three distinctions may be as important to us today as they were real in the day in which they were spoken. At the time of Jeremiah both Israel and Judah were apostate. Even though Judah was more willing to obedience, nevertheless both Israel and Judah were included in Jeremiah's rebukes and warnings. Yet in terms of the physical location in which Jeremiah spoke these words it is both implicitly directed to and is physically in Jerusalem and to Judah in the first instance and then in finality to Israel as well. Geographically Israel is in the north in what was Samaria during the captivity and Judah is in the south in Judea where the city of Jerusalem and therefore the temple is physically located.

Both Israel and Judah variously go into captivity. Yet only Judah returns from captivity. In reality Israel ceases to exist in its original intention of God as "Jacob" and only a remnant Judah, continues on. After the captivity ends Israel the ten tribes are irreconcilably intermarried with heathen and gentile peoples and Judah in contrast is given the opportunity to give up the women and children of intermarriage in order to become a people separated to God once more. It is worth realising that those who were taken into captivity were not brought back. Just as the generation who were brought out of Egypt in the day of Moses fell in the wilderness so the generation which went into captivity did not come back. Today we see clearly that the church in many places is also fallen away from the apostles teaching. One would have to ask how this will end. Some rightly point to the hope and promises of God to do a latter work upon the earth for His Name sake. Others such as myself speak of the consequence arising out of God's choosing and men choosing.

God preserves for Himself a remnant in every day and He also sets before all men of His house the power of choice whether to enter into agreement with Him in their day or else to choose their day instead by choosing themselves. Such a choice is no less set before us today as it has been in every day of the Lord. Today is the day of salvation and today is always the day of choosing. Whilst this is true insofar as men are concerned in reality of God's sovereignty no such choice exists. Obedience is a matter of obedience. It is only a choice in the sense that all men everywhere have the power to choose in their lives. Yet God gives no such choice in His perfect will. No one can say I chose myself because God willed it to be so. In the end we will have to acknowledge that we chose ourselves because we willed it to be so and foolishly exercised the power of choosing on our own behalf. Obedience is a compulsion of God if it is comprehended according to God. It cannot and must not be a scheme of ideas by which to snare ourselves into self justification and boastings. If it is we will have outwardly run well enough, but in the scales of judgement our works will be consumed and we will be saved yet as through fire.

In speaking of the Great Apostasy therefore and by reason of its outworking and visibility, even the end of the age, we would have to say that there is coming a momentary opportunity to lay hold of a faithful and fruitful walk or else we will become as Israel and find that we are so co-mingled with the world that a separation will no longer be possible. This will not be something which is easily believed today. Yet if God Himself does that end time work as we hope and believe the reality will become crystal clear shortly thereafter. Such a work will no doubt be centred on evangelism and a great harvest, but when it is passed there will come a time when many will fall away once again. Having been delivered from worldly affection and having had the centrality of knowing the saving power of Christ in others lives, they will act foolishly and neglect their calling once again. Then will the Great Apostasy be upon us in full measure and then it will be too late to turn back to a preparation as the bride of Christ.

Apostasy led Judah and Israel into exile and the obedience of a few led the descendants of Judah including a descendant of David back to Jerusalem and back to the temple worship. By the time the Lord walked the streets of Jerusalem it was as money changers and commerce in the House of God. The many are called but the few are chosen. It has always been this way with God because of the unrighteousness of His people and the unwillingness of the many to remain faithful. What follows thereafter will be preparation by trial and persecution. Yet even this is the mercy of God unto salvation.

Though I cannot say it as though it were true the only way I am able to think about the time in which we live, as a measure of time, is to think in terms of a week of years. If Israel went into captivity for seventy years it was not all of Israel, but variously Israel and Judah in their own time and their own way according to the hand of God. The beginning of it to the end of it was seventy years by a measure of God through Jeremiah the prophet. By the time this period was nearing its completion God raised up Ezra who in secret of his brethren went up to view the state of Jerusalem and the gates thereof. His response was that of a priest of God's house and he wept over what he saw. The return which followed was also measured according to God. The most important element of this return as well as the timing of it could be said to be a "week of days." Then completion was made and the restoration was both spectacular and quick. It was mocked by those who knew of it and it led directly to those who had previously given permission for the return according to God, to curse t

he Jews as a little people. Yet it was accomplished and its effect in its central purposes of God were brought into visibility. By Judah the remnant was Israel once again in the heart of the land. Yet it was not all Israel. Some of those who returned will have spent less time in captivity than others. None today could be said to have been born in true freedom unless they are very elderly. For some it is only just become clear that they are in captivity at all. Regardless the time left it seems to my own conscience is a week of days. Then the latter week of days will begin and the fruits will be gathered in.

As this period of time corresponding to the end times is what has consumed me the most for more than 25 years I can say with a truth that it is the most difficult thing to write about. On the one hand it is clear in my own conscience yet to my mind it is like a shifting stream constantly passing in the light and then back into the shadow. I ask myself and the Lord continuously what to think and how to think about this difficult subject. It is quite simple to know for oneself how to think, but to know how to think for others is much more difficult. If I were to share what I know to be true for my own life, that would not in any way prove to be accurate or true for another's life. Similarly if I ask for others I am immediately mindful that this is a matter for each man and woman to work out for themselves. The reason it is this way is because it is at once a matter of God's calling in each person's life, and yet it is also settled by virtue of the heart and not the mind at all. The distinction I believe lies in the "many are called, but few are chosen". Who are the called and who are the chosen. To be called I believe is settled by faith, to be chosen is settled by faith and faithfulness. Put another way to be called is eternal life but to be chosen is eternal life and the coming kingdom and the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Whilst this may not be clear at all, it ought to be held in context of the time in which we live and not the time of our fathers. We have to do with this day and those days which follow if it please God. We are not able to walk in the days of our fathers. Just as Judah remembered through a few good men the City of their fathers, yet only when the time came as appointed by God was it possible to go and look at the thing which was grievously remembered and therefore proved to be a provocation of tears and a calling out to God. In the end they too failed to walk as they ought to have walked. I believe that we are in the days of a restoration at least in the sense that Judah was restored to Jerusalem and the temple. Perhaps this restoration will be more characterised by gathering in and not separating. It is not necessary to put away the foreign wife or our children by them, they too can now be brought in thanks to the sacrifice of Christ. There is no need to repair stone walls or wooden gates or clean up a temple made with stone. The temple is now our bodies, the building which is being built is a living temple and the wooden gates are become the door to our hearts.

In the end apostasy and its full effect will come despite the mercies of God. It must be this way because it is written. In view of this how can we neglect to prepare ourselves for the Lord's return and all that which precedes His return. Preparation will mean nothing more than that which is reasonable. Setting aside our inclinations towards ourselves, loving not this world and believing not in it and depending not on it. It will mean in simplicity to cast ourselves upon God and Christ, repent of that which we know and understand to be false and sinful, and determine to have fellowship with God the Father and His beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do this it will prove to be sufficient.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 3:20-22

Edit: I note that in part I have mistakenly referred to Ezra when I should have made reference to Nehemiah. My apologies.

#### **Re: Egypt or Obedience, on: 2013/1/5 7:19**

The inevitability of apostasy and the end of the age is something which many saints resist and perhaps this is reasonable in view of the fact that love hopes and believes all things. In short knowing the love of God would no doubt make for a godly desire to see both God Himself honoured by saving and healing his people. At the same time by desiring to see those same people saved and healed ourselves, we honour God.

What is not reasonable however, is to press one reality of God and deny another reality of God in the process. The establishing of doctrines whether by scripture and by the apostles or else by those who have followed after them in writing books or else theologies demands prayerful and thoughtful consideration to the end of working it out for ourselves. If we simply follow the leading of a man we will almost certainly find that the man, whosoever he is, will reasonably emphasise a wonderful truth, but may do it so well that he falls short of his responsibility to present the balance of truth and not just the one thing which is presented so well.

Salvation very much falls into this category of understanding. It would genuinely be a simple matter of reading the script

ures to come to an understanding of what salvation really means in its fullness. Yet believers persists in neglecting to read the scriptures and even allow themselves to question the integrity of scriptures to the point that it then becomes impossible to know what to believe. Therein lies the endless desire to read what others have said and the hope that they are trustworthy in their explanations.

Why do we always go after men when we could go after Christ Himself? Today it is reasonable and even necessary to go after Christ Himself and if necessary, to reject all men out of hand until the Lord reveals to us personally what is trustworthy and what is unbalanced. Some things which are said can be rejected simply because the fruit of their effect is self evident. Prosperity doctrines fall into this category easily enough. But to know this for certain you would have to know what the fruit of these doctrines really is. Personally I rejected all men out of hand and did so the moment I believed the Father concerning the Son. After that it was a simple matter of testing what I read and in so doing it was easy to know what to reject and what to receive. As a matter of wisdom it is necessary to be of a mind that is brought to a crisis in our own thinking by God Himself provoking us to examine what we hear and what we read with such honesty that we have no choice in the end than to trust God for our understanding, even though this will certainly mean trusting those the Lord has set over us in the body. This could be a crisis provoked by a single teaching, such as whether a believer does in fact receive eternal life the moment they believe or whether they can lose eternal life the day they fall away to a hardening of their hearts. Both these things are claimed to be true and have been said in this forum in just the past two days.

Can both of these things be true? Can a believer be both in possession of eternal life and at some later date lose this possession? No doubt some will say this is not two things but a progression of falling away. I have never seen more hardened and loveless men of God than those who take this view. Some even present a plea which goes along the lines of adjuring the fallen to turn back with a stern warning that if they do not, the end of it will be eternal hell fire. Yet even though this may be understandable and even necessary the fullness of truth is not properly demonstrated to those who are faithful. So that many who otherwise would labour more effectually find themselves unable to resist justifying themselves before God because they have not been taught or else have not uncovered the treasure of knowledge which can be found in the scriptures. Doctrines and presentations are made from the scriptures which amount to issues of life which in truth are not issues of eternal life and so many saints simply cannot fathom how to serve God without fear of rejection. The complete opposite is also true and makes for an even more difficult reality.

The perplexity of ways in which the truth can be twisted and turned against men and ultimately against God Himself is probably almost endless. It would be endless were it not for the fact that God Himself has established Truth through Christ Jesus to its fullest measure. In understanding the Lord Jesus there could be no more twisting of the truth. In the same way in the end there will be no possibility of turning away from the truth when we have to do with Him who is able to judge all things. It is true that God has given gifts of men to the church for the building up of the body of Christ to a fullness, to the full stature of Christ. It is also true that these men ought to teach and serve others faithfully to that end. It is also true that there are those who have been faithful in this way of serving and it is true that even today there are those who are faithful in this way. Sadly it is also true that many who have been called to a true service to the body of Christ have themselves become false and teach and preach according to their own ambitions and the demand of the brethren who are themselves become fleshy and worldly minded.

All of this speaks about a church that is without the substance of hope or the conviction of things not seen. It is in short a faithless church if measured by the many and a faithless remnant if measured by the few. The remnant is by God's doing and so cannot be boasted in, yet that same remnant is also to be the seeds of preparation for the many. If the few who are chosen are willing to set aside their own interest fully and reasonably then the many who are called will be saved as well. This does not mean that the few who are chosen will in any way receive a greater reward for their calling. It simply means that in that calling they too can also choose the cross and thereby realise an increase in their labours thirty, sixty or an hundred fold, just according to God who gathers in. In the end whether we are called or chosen we will have to take up a cross of obedience if we are to be part of reigning with Christ in His kingdom. If there is any distinction in this day then this is the most profound one to realise.

In this it has to be said that the present determination to include every man or woman in ministry is a foolish deception. It is foolish insofar as it is unwise to say to every man or woman that they have a ministry in Christ. No doubt every one has a calling if they are in Christ and no doubt this calling is measured by fruits of repentance and good works. Equally there is no doubt that every believer regardless can bring a song or an encouragement or exercise a gift of the spirit, or else exercise their measure of faith to the benefit of others. This is ministry but it is not the ministry of the word according to Ephesians chapter four. It is precious and included in this number of the many there is also a remnant. Those who are given as a gift of ministry to the body according to the Ephesian four calling though fewer in number will not all by any means prove faithful or obedient simply because they are called. Yet amongst this number there will also be a remnant. In short

the remnant will be from all the church regardless of their measure of faith or calling in regard to God's intention in their lives to others, in service of God and Christ.

Whilst all believers cannot be but visible to one another in ministering to one another; and whilst those who are given as ministry gifts to the church according to Ephesians four cannot be but visible, the remnant must be and always will be hidden. Just as Ezra kept from his brethren his intentions, yet sought favour from a heathen king, so those who labour in this way must keep from their brethren all boasting and intention as they serve God and are led of the Spirit of God. When Ezra wept as he saw the broken city and the rubble which was piled so high that he was unable to find passage through it, he wept alone. When he fell down in grief of his soul to God he was grieved alone and when he cried out to God he did so alone. Such a calling is not a thing to make a show off. It is to be worked out in the sight of God for the glory of God alone. What it means to be of the remnant in this way in the end I really do not comprehend. The only thing which I am certain of is that such a choosing of God is real and it is despite the man or the women to whom it is appointed.

It is also clear to me that these brothers and sisters will be the ones who are most likely to be able to show mercy and kindness. They are also most likely to be able to show the strong righteousness of God in season. They will also be most likely to know with a certainty that they are nothing in themselves so far as true righteousness is concerned and that they owe everything to God and Christ without doubting it. What they have is given to them and it cannot be laboured for, it must be given. Finally all of this presentation has to do with the end of this age. It has to do with a time of apostasy. It is about God's jealousy and His own Name. It is about God's own righteousness. It is nothing whatsoever to do with men. It is not the mercy of God it is the righteous activity of God for His own names sake. It is not the bride of Christ made ready and it is not the bearing of a cross for the sake of the kingdom. It is a remnant who cannot be deceived and will not in any circumstance fall away. Yet neither is it for boasting nor for a show. It may in the end be without imputation or reward to the man or the women so chosen and even then it may be that these few will be found lacking in some part of their lives, yet despite themselves they will serve God according to God. How it is that God chooses such as these must be a matter for God as well.

In writing this I believe that it is to the sharing of hope and to a confidence in comprehending that the Father has been pleased to set all things in their place and that nothing is beyond Him. All the elements of the universe both visible and invisible are set in their place whether principalities or powers, governments or peoples, they are all measured and ordained by God. Even though an exceptional time of wickedness lies ahead we have nothing to be afraid of. It is all within the hand of God and it is all comprehended by Him. Those who are called according to His name are of all people to be the most confident in Him. If we lay hold of Him we will be the most confident and will in the end be found to have been faithful according to the calling of God in our own lives. His foreknowledge is the certain mind by which He has pressed all things to a conclusion in Christ Jesus. Nothing can separate us from Him if we love Him because nothing can separate us from His love.

Still the end will come and before the end the great falling away will also come.

Edit: Again I have wrongly made reference to Ezra when I should have spoke of Nehemiah. The passage of Scripture which speaks of Ezra weeping is in Ezra and the finding no passage through the rubble is in Nehemiah. This is a confusion of my part writing in the early hours of the morning. Again my apologies.