



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion
27 – ... Before The Son of Man Comes

Announcements:

5/3 @6:30 -

Womens Bible
Study

5/4 @7:00 -

Corporate
Prayer

5/5 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/1 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: Finish this sentence: Procrastination is _____.

READ: Matthew 10:16-23

Right in the middle of the discourse is a phrase that is what translators call a *crux interpretum*. What does this fancy latin phrase mean? It means that there is a phrase that is the “torment or trouble of interpreters”. This phrase often refers to either obscure phrases that the words are unknown, or, as is the case here, a phrase that is so packed with meaning the actual definition is hard to understand. In Matthew this is the phrase “Before the Son of Man comes.” There are a few different ways that this is interpreted, but today we will be looking at two. The easiest way to think through this is that it has either a close and local meaning, or a prophetic and end-times meaning. We will look at these in turn.

First, what we have called the close and local meaning. Some read this and remember a point that I made LAST week, that this discourse must be first read as a direct communication to the twelve that we have been given the privilege to be able to “eavesdrop” on. So, some say, it is best to understand that Jesus would send out the twelve on this job (going to all the towns of Israel, see verse 6), but eventually he would catch up with them. In terms of timeframe, think of this as occurring BEFORE the death and resurrection of Jesus. Instead of some grandiose prophecy, he is saying: “don’t worry, I know this seems like a big job, but I will join you soon.” In this way it is a promise of closeness to the disciples to understand that they go with the authority of Jesus, and he will be with them before long. So keep up the good work.

DISCUSS: What problems do you see with such a close reading of this text? (hint, think of promises, and the COMPLETED work of Christ that might be in mind)

So, others say, it is best to read this with a view to the end-times. The “Son of Man coming” is (usually) a direct reference, not to anything that happens in the first coming of Christ, but is instead looking forward to the second coming. There is reason in the text to look that far forward as well. In particular the thought: “the one who endures to the end will be saved” (verse 22). Also, they argue, much of what Jesus said (brought before synagogues and governors, and even being martyred) does not happen on this missionary journey, and is seen more clearly in the book of Acts. So instead of a promise of closeness in THIS missionary journey, some want us to see that this is a promise of both his return (and thus his eternal closeness) but also a statement of the “long standing waywardness of the people of God”.

DISCUSS: What benefits do you see with this reading, are there any problems?

The best way to avoid the “torment” of this phrase is to understand that when reading prophecy there are often multiple epochs of fulfillment. So it is completely acceptable (and I would argue, correct) to see BOTH of these thoughts as ringing true. There would come a time in the lives of the disciples that as they wandered to all the lost sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus would call them back and they would continue the journey towards Jerusalem and ultimately the cross. And it is also true to see that the promise is that we will a) be working on mission all the way up to the return of Christ but that b) we can anticipate the return of Christ. In reading prophetic works this way we get a more rich understanding of the hope and promises of Scripture!

DISCUSS: Can you think of other prophecies that it is critical we understand the principle of “multiple epochs of fulfillment”?