



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

78 – This Generation

Announcements:

7/26 @7:30 -

Prayer

7/27 @6:30 -

Grace Group

7/30 @8:30 -

Sunday School

8/6 @6:00 -

FAMILY NIGHT

ICE BREAKER: What is your favorite type of Scripture to read/study? (stories, letters, prophecy, etc.)

READ: Matthew 24:32-35

Over the past four weeks going through the Olivet Discourse we have spent a lot of time evaluating the “when” of what Jesus was saying. We have noted the fulfillment in the destruction of the temple in AD 70 as a large portion of what Jesus was talking about, while seeing that the destruction of the temple wasn’t *all* that Jesus was talking about. In this I was taking a fairly specific point of view without telling you the name of it. Well, today we are going to start to put names to the different beliefs about how to time all of these things, to help us fully understand what is going on. Before you think I was dragging my feet on this just because I was scared (well, maybe that is a little true!) the reason that we waited is that one of the verses that we just read is one of, if not the, most important verses in understanding the disagreement. “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” (Matthew 24:34) So let’s dive in!

The first view we will start with is the one with the easiest name to understand: Futurist. It is the futurist view because it views all of the things happening in the Olivet Discourse as happening in the... you guessed it... future! For them this verse is a very difficult one. How can Jesus say that this generation will not pass away until these things take place if we are sitting here 2000 years later and these things have NOT taken place? If Jesus was wrong we have some huge problems, so that cannot be it. What responses might they give? There are two main ones. The first is that this is a phrase simply meaning something like “the time is near”. They would say that this would be like me saying “any day now”. The second argument is that the word that is translated “generation” can also be translated “race” and is referring to the Jewish people as a whole, not the disciples as a generation.

DISCUSS: What do you think of the futurist reading of this verse? What strengths and/or problems does it have?

The second view is called the Preterist view. For them, all the things happening in the Olivet Discourse happen in the ... preter?... Past! (in case you are wondering, preter- is a Latin prefix meaning “more than” or importantly here: “before”). They view this passage as proof of their point of view, and a surface level reading makes it seem like this is the case. If all the things spoken of in the Olivet Discourse happen before the generation of the disciples passes, then that was definitely a long time ago. The problem with this view, however, is that if they are right, then they have “proven” too much! Verse 27 speaks explicitly of the “coming of the son of Man” as does verse 30. The fundamental problem then is this: this means that either Jesus was wrong because these things didn’t take place, or Jesus has already returned and we all missed it.

DISCUSS: Why are these two problems so bad? What do you think is the solution?

The final view (and in my estimation the correct view) is what we call the partial-preterist view. As the name suggests, this view reads portions of what Jesus is saying as taking place in the past and portions of it taking place in the future. (Partial-futurism just doesn’t have the same alliteration I guess). So how does a partial-preterist handle this verse? By noting the same words used in the question of the disciples “these things”. Thus, Jesus can rightly say that this generation will not pass away, because it was less than 40 years between when Jesus said this and the destruction of the temple. On the other hand, because Jesus is concerned with “these things” here and not “the end of the age” we don’t have to wrestle with either Jesus being wrong or some sort of previous second coming. By taking the best of both of the other views, partial preterism allows us to see all that God is saying and doing in this passage.

DISCUSS: What are the strengths of reading the Olivet discourse in this way? What are some of the dangers?