



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“IS THE WORLD COMING TO AN END?”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Matthew 24: 3-6, 36-44
Date: 1947 Unknown

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on an unspecified date in 1947.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Matthew 24: 3-6, 36-44).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

I. Introduction

A. Predictions of the end

1. A year or so ago in California
2. Disciples asked Jesus -- when?
3. 1000 A.D.
4. 1847

B. The Sects

1. One's "Christian Faith" and "Salvation" based upon the imminent coming of Christ
2. Jehovah's Witnesses

II. The World is Coming to an End

A. God created the world, created it with a purpose -- not as a child who out of a whim created a mud pie.

1. The purpose of God is the pattern which all history is working out.

B. What is the purpose of God?

1. Historians are unable to answer the basic question of history. What is progress?
2. Historians link movements of history, but few have grasped the overall pattern
3. Man is here to stay
 - a) *Some would make him another phase of the world's pointless existence*
 - b) *Man is distinctly different from his predecessors*
 - c) *Man was created with a mission to fulfill*
4. The Kingdom of God -- the consummation of all "progress."

- a) *"Thy kingdom come . . . "*
- b) *Kingdom of God -- the summation of all utopias -- heaven on earth -- the reign of God in the lives of all men -- in all society*
- c) *A far cry today from His Kingdom*
- d) *Work as though it all depends upon you*
 - (1) We know we must work
 - (2) There is an extent beyond which, humanly, we cannot go
- e) *Pray as though it all depends upon God*

III. When?

- A. We do not know
- B. Some say world will get worse and worse till God intercedes
- C. Some say world will get better and better till Kingdom of God emerges
- D. World will not end till God's purpose is fulfilled

IV. Conclusion

Professor asked students, "Will world come to an end this year?" "We think not" "In such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh."

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Matthew 24: 3-6, 36-44

Matthew 24: 3 says: "As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'"

- How have you always envisioned "the end of the age?"

Matthew 24: 4-6 say: "Jesus answered: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.'"

- Some have claimed that each war signals the end of the age. Yet Jesus says these things must happen. Why do you think God's design allows for wars?

Matthew 24: 36 says: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

- Why do you think Jesus is so clear that even He doesn't know the day or hour of what is to come? For you, does that strengthen your connection to the human side of Jesus?

Matthew 24: 37 says: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."

- Of all of the stories about early days, why do you think Jesus spoke of Noah?

Matthew 24: 38-41 say: "For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left."

- What is your interpretation of this passage? Do you take it at its literal meaning?

Matthew 24: 42 says: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

- If God came right now, would you be ready? If you *did* know about a specific day and time of His coming, what would you want to achieve before that time?

Matthew 24: 43 says: "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into."

- This is an obvious example of doing something if we knew what to expect. What do you know you need to be doing that you haven't been doing?

Matthew 24: 44 says: "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

- What can you do, starting today, to be more ready?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

I.A. Dr. Galbreath lists some of the predictions for the end of time. Are there others you would add to his list? If you search the internet you can see long lists of predictions. Knowing what Jesus said about no one knowing except God, do you place any credence in specific predictions?

I.B. How do you feel about sects that place timetables on the end of the age?

II.B. Before you considered Dr. Galbreath's thoughts, how would you have described the purpose of God? Has his thinking changed your description?

II.B.1. How would you define progress? How do you think God would define it?

II.B. 3.c What do you believe to be man's mission? To what degree do you think you are playing your role in fulfilling that mission?

II.B.4.a When you pray "Thy kingdom come" what pictures does that evoke in your mind? Do you think it will come on earth or only after the earth ceases to exist?

II.B.4.c Do you think we are closer to the kingdom than we were when this sermon was preached in 1947? In what ways are we closer? In what ways are we more distant?

II.B.4.d. Dr. Galbreath challenges listeners to work as though it all depends on "you." What have you been doing to work toward the kingdom? What can you do starting today to play your part?

II.B.4.d.2 There is an acknowledgment that there is an extent beyond which, humanly, we cannot go. What do you believe that extent to be? Knowing there is much we cannot do, how do we stay committed to doing what we *can* do?

III. This section is simply about the question of when. Look at points B and C. Which is closer to your own view?

III.D. Look back at your description of God's purpose. How near do you think it is to fulfillment?

The Conclusion was originally included as I.C. Why do you think Dr. Galbreath used it as the conclusion instead?

Placed with the sermon notes is a news bulletin from the Buhl Planetarium about their new, at the time, theater of the stars show: The End of the World! Also included is the Shadyside Pulpit newsletter from May of 1947 with a sermon entitled "Why Stand Ye Gazing?", which was preached at Shadyside Presbyterian Church on May 4, 1947 by Dr. Howard C. Scharfe.