

c. An Internal tension built into the Discourse

If the first section of the Discourse traces the course of the present age with its recurrent characteristics; and if the second section tells of the unique nature and sign of the Great Tribulation; and if the third section alerts us to Christ's Coming in power and glory immediately after the Tribulation; then what is the force of the fourth section's exhortations to alertness and readiness in view of Christ's imminent coming? How can a posttribulation coming in power and glory be reconciled with an emphasis on imminency and implications of alertness and any-moment readiness? If Christ is not coming until after the Tribulation, then perhaps we need to be alert and ready, not for Christ's coming, but for the beginning of the Tribulation period. This is the tension that Christ Himself builds into the Olivet Discourse.

Some students of eschatology have stressed the posttribulation Coming taught by the Discourse to the exclusion of the Discourse's emphasis on imminency. And others have so stressed imminency that they have seemingly ignored or virtually lost the implications of the clear arrangement of the events of the second and third sections of the Discourse. Both emphases must be held if we are to be true to Christ's teaching, even if it means that we must hold them in some sort of creative tension. However, perhaps a resolution of this tension is possible.

2. Daniel's Vision of the Seventy weeks

a. Preliminary considerations

(1) Why is Daniel 9:24-27 important?

In Matthew 24:15 Jesus says, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) . . . then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall." (verse 21) The abomination of desolation is the sign marking the Great Tribulation; and Jesus says that this abomination was predicted by Daniel. The abomination of desolation links the Olivet Discourse with Daniel's prediction of the Seventy Weeks. The chronological importance of Daniel 9:24-27 to eschatology is great, for it gives us the chronological key or framework into which the eschatological statements of the Olivet Discourse and a large part of the book of Revelation fit.

(2) What historical events correlate with and form the background of this passage?

In 605 B.C. Jeremiah predicted that Judah (the southern kingdom remaining in Palestine after Israel's removal to captivity in Assyria in 722 B.C.) would go into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. In the same year (605) the first captives were deported, under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. In 587 B.C. God's Word came to Jeremiah promising that