

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

FIFTH DAY: WAS JESUS MISTAKEN ABOUT THE FUTURE?

(Continued.)

1. The disciples could as little think of the present world without Jerusalem and the old nation of Jehovah's choice, as the world of the middle ages could have imagined it Romeless. What would be worth living for on earth after the destruction of Zion? That would be a chapter of God's government closed. Nothing more could be done with this world. It was the end of the old dispensation and the beginning of a new order with a new sphere for the final kingdom. The Day of the Lord would have come.

2. But Jesus did not teach thus. He deals it is true with the fortunes that are awaiting His Jewish disciples in the national reverses so soon to come, but He tells them also that the gospel has an earthly mission beyond Judaism (Mark 14:9). Of its career in that period He says little or nothing, except that from the day of His death on He will be coming in power to judge the hostile world and to encourage His own (Mark 8:38; 9:1; Matt. 28:18-20). He also teaches that this world will have a catastrophic ending, for when the earth will have made final trial of the gospel and its judgment is complete, He Himself will with majesty inaugurate the kingdom in a new sphere (Mark 13:24-27, 31; Matt. 25:31; 26:64). But when that will be not even the Son of Man knows (Mark 13:32).

3. Much of the imagery which Jesus employs is drawn from the Old Testament conception of the Day of the Lord (Mark 13:24-27; Isa. 13:9-13; 24:21-23; 34:4; Jer. 4:23ff.; Dan. 7:9, 10; Joel 2:10, 11), and it is a wrong method to interpret all His language literally. As He used parables and symbol to convey truths which were beyond the comprehension of His followers at the stage of their spiritual development in Galilee or Judæa, so He did in regard to the future of the kingdom. He took the old prophetic terms which conveyed a permanent truth and made them the vehicle of His deeper fulfillment of it. Only experience could teach them all that was wrapped up in them, and to-day we are still learning more of their import than previous generations knew. This was His method in applying to Himself the title, "Son of Man." It was also His pedagogical principle in foretelling the consummation of His kingdom in the "Day of the Lord." Jesus then was not mistaken about the future.