

Called to Watch for Christ's Return, by Martyn McGeown. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2016. Pp. 286. [Reviewed by Rev. Ryan Barnhill]

Called to Watch for Christ's Return began as a series of sermons preached by the author on the Olivet Discourse, a speech in which “Jesus proclaims his second coming, an event with which history will come to a dramatic and sudden close” (ix). These sermons covered Matthew 24:1-31, dealing with the signs of Christ's coming—deceivers, the preaching of the gospel, the great tribulation, and more. These sermons also dealt with Matthew 24:32-25:46, treating the subject of watching for Christ's return—the unknown time of his return, Christ's coming as in the days of Noah, parables associated with his coming, and more. These sermons comprise the content of the book. We are thankful that these fine sermons have reached a wider audience through their publication in book form.

McGeown's work is a needed and timely contribution to the study of eschatology (the end times), for two reasons. First, there are so many today teaching unbiblical ideas about the end of the world. *Called to Watch for Christ's Return* interacts with these systems of thought, dismantles them, and plainly sets forth the biblical, Reformed, amillennial position. Second, we live in the last days, and that alone makes this book important. We must know what to expect in these last and evil days, we must be admonished to watch for the coming of our Lord, and we must be comforted.

The main strength of *Called to Watch for Christ's Return* is its exegetical precision and richness. The material is always mined from the text. Concepts are carefully defined and developed, and difficult passages are lucidly explained. Especially does this clarity of exegesis become important in passages that deal with such matters as the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15-20) and the unknown time of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36). Such passages are often misinterpreted, leading to a host of errors. Thus, proper, sober interpretation is critical in these kinds of difficult passages.

McGeown's work is necessarily polemical. That is, it is a work which exposes and refutes the errors. Advocates of both postmillennialism and premillennial dispensationalism seek to find evidence for their views in Matthew 24 and 25. Postmillennialism teaches that the Olivet Discourse—at least *some* of it, if not *all* of it—is a reference exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This interpretation is fundamental to the postmillennial position, lest the events of which Jesus speaks interfere with postmillennialism's future golden age. In contrast, premillennial dispensationalists claim that the Olivet Discourse refers exclusively to the future—not to AD 70, but to a future Jerusalem and a future temple. Negatively, the author exposes these errors, and demonstrates how a sober interpretation of Jesus' teaching pulls the rug out from under these millennial systems. Positively, McGeown sees Matthew 24 and 25 as a *blending* of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, on the one hand, and Jesus' second coming, on the other hand. The destruction of Jerusalem is a *type* or *picture* of Jesus' second coming. This view, the amillennial view, and this view alone, does justice to Jesus' words.

In a book on watching for Christ's return, one would expect not only polemics, but also pointed instruction and warning for believers. After all, we are all prone to spiritual slumber instead of watching for Christ's return. The command of scripture to watch for our Lord's coming is a weighty command, and the author conveys it well: “Watch! Christ is coming. Let us not be found sleeping when he returns, but looking for his return. Let that watchfulness begin

today if it has not been our habit before, so whether he comes on the clouds or calls us in death, we will be ready to meet him" (214). *Called to Watch for Christ's Return* is a stirring call to stay vigilant in these last and evil days.

The book is also comforting and warm, an approach that arises from the author's pastoral heart for God's people who live in the perilous days prior to Jesus' coming. This warm tone characterizes the entirety of the book, and climaxes in the last chapter; any reader's heart will *thrill* in reading this last chapter, which explains, in part, the glories of the new heavens and the new earth. Read and meditate upon this breathtaking description of heaven: "Death, sin, and the curse will be absent—forever banished from the new creation. We will enjoy spiritual joy and satisfaction in abundance, for we will enter into the fullness of our inheritance. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit! That is life, eternal life, life that lasts forever and has no end. Life with Christ. Life in the presence of God, fellowshiping with him. That is blessedness and joy! That is worth waiting for! Do not fear the judgment day. Do not be weary with watching and waiting. But pray, even for that great day" (280).

Our Lord is coming. Watch. Watch—by *reading*. *Called to Watch for Christ's Return*, as a faithful exposition of Jesus' words, will instruct you, arm you against the errors, comfort you, and quicken your hope. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly.