

MATTHEW CHAPTER 24 - Part 2

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND ETERNAL TRUTHS

The teachings of Jesus during the final week before His arrest, crucifixion and resurrection make up some of the best known accounts and parables of his earthly ministry. One of the most discussed accounts was related to the discourse Jesus gave in response to some questions the disciples asked Him as they left the Temple area. This account is found in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 24. Much of what we can find on this chapter is typically related to eschatological teachings about the end time. While some of the ideas may apply to future events, most (if not all) of what Jesus talked about can be shown to have occurred in the period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in about A.D. 70.

In Part 2 of this discourse on Matthew 24, the emphasis will be on "eternal truths" that apply to life regardless of the historical setting or the eschatological implications.

1 ¶ And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

Having pronounced "desolation" on the house of Israel and having left the Temple, we have a dramatization of the presence of God departing the Temple - never to return. The disciples were very impressed with the Temple and how stately and grand it was. They were impressed with its beauty and they wanted Jesus to look at it and perhaps change the outcome so that it would not be subjected to the desolation that was pronounced.

We have a tendency to do the same thing with regard to the material world in which we live. We know that, eventually, the world will be destroyed. We look around and see the majestic mountains, the stately buildings, beautiful gardens and we want to say, "Jesus, just look at all this beauty. It would be a shame to destroy this."

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

What do you think Jesus meant when He asked, "Do you not see these things?" Of course they could "see" them. But did they see them in relationship to the importance of eternal things. I think he was asking, "Don't you see these things for what they really are?" This is the same Jesus who had asked, "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Without the presence of God in whatever we do, it is nothing more than a pile of rocks and it will go the way of all material things - it will tend toward disorder. The same thing can be said about people's lives. Without the presence of God, then lives tend toward disorder - not one stone left upon another.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

When we have questions about what's going to happen and how we should respond to things in life, then we need to be consulting with the Lord of the word and the word of the Lord. Many times we turn to anything and everything else but the Lord and that can lead to the consequences that Jesus brought up in the next verse.

4 ¶ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

The risk we run when we turn to other sources for direction is that we will be deceived. The doctrine of humanism is that man will save himself - we all have "the christ" in us. Anytime

we follow the “council of the world” it is deceptive and disastrous. (Psalms 1:1)

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

There have been very few periods in history that were without war. We could make a list places of major conflicts ongoing in the world today and it would be troubling to us if we did not have confidence that the God of Creation is also God of History and God of the Future. God is in control and these things (even the terrorist acts) do not surprise Him.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The list of “bad things” that can happen around us are warning signs for people to repent and turn to God. The problems we hear about in the natural world and in the political world should cause us to turn to God who is Sovereign over all.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Many organization are apparently vehemently opposed to the interjection of anything religious into public life. So, why do organizations such as the ACLU not oppose the teaching of yoga and transcendental meditation in our schools and the military and yet, they go ballistic when the name of Jesus is mentioned? Why is it, people can talk about religion in social gatherings but when Christianity is mentioned, someone gets offended? The lesson to be learned is that there really is a spirit of anti-Christ.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

We can see evidence of many cults today that are able to attract huge followings. This happens in spite of the clear evidence that what they teach is contrary to the Word of God. The lesson for us is to be very careful and hold all teaching up to the light of the Scriptures. Don't just take of some popular teaching and believe without examining it and comparing it to the word of God.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

One possible application for us today is that we become de-sensitized to sin. There is so much violence that is depicted in the media, there is so much sexual innuendo in popular TV programing that we may lose our sense of compassion and not be able to recognize what true love is about.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Is this telling us that “we can lose our salvation” if we do not endure? Or could we say that the evidence of our salvation is that we do endure to the end?

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

A practical application and truth is that God want to give all people a chance to hear His plan of salvation. The responsibility for making this happen has been commissioned to the church.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

15-18 The practical application for us in an application of eternal truths is that we must always be alert to what is going on around us. If we stop paying attention then things can creep in and we may find that it is too late to do anything about it. The other truth that we can take away from this group of verses is that there are not many material things that are worth risking your life for. There is a time to take a stand and a time to leave.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

19-22 Being a Christian does not exempt us from having difficult times. We need to be wary of a gospel message that promises a life of ease and no problems. We should not be surprised nor discouraged when we go through hard times.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

One caution for us is to be careful of “religious groups” that have secret rituals or doctrines that you would not be allowed to share with the uninitiated. The LDS group do not tell new converts all their beliefs. There are other pseudo-religious organization that have temples where secret rituals are carried out. Such organization are not of Christ. Things of the Kingdom of God will be as bold and as manifest as the lightening in the sky. It is not hidden – it is not secretive – it is not just for the initiated.

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Dead and dying churches become targets for false teachers. If a church has weak spiritual leaders, then they will not be careful in their selection of a pastor and they may wind up with a liberal preacher in the pulpit. Liberals tend to beget liberals. In other words, if you let one in, others will follow.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

29-30 When an individual, church, city, state, nation or the world turns it back on God and invites Him to “leave them alone,” then their spiritual light will go out and they will be left in darkness. They will not realize that God’s judgement has come upon until it is too late.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

31 The eternal truth for us is to know that God’s people will be called out from the world system and that the church will triumph in the end.

32 ¶ Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these

things, know that it is near, even at the doors. 34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

32-35 The things we can learn from these verses are (1) if we are observant, then we can see events coming together that point toward the fulfillment of prophecy and (2) whatever God has said will happen, *will happen*. We can count on the reliability of the word of God more than we can trust the sun to rise tomorrow.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36-41 The truth of the message can be applied to any situation where preparedness is important. We must not be like the world and just go on with business as usual when we have been “called out” to be involved in God’s plan of salvation. What if Noah had ignored God’s commission to build the boat? Would it not be as if we ignored Jesus’ command to “go into all the world and make disciples, etc.”?

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. 45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

42-51 The truth for us to take away in application to life, is that God will hold us accountable for what He has called us to do. There are blessing when we are obedient and there are negative consequences if we are neglectful of what we have been assigned to do. We have been saved for a purpose. (Eph 2:10)