



As we continue our study through Matthew, we are coming upon one of the most controversial chapters in the New Testament. In Matthew 24, Jesus foretells the future and talks about the end of the world. As I have studied both Matthew 24-25, it has been a sobering look into our lives here on earth, the return of Christ, the judgment to come and eternity. Different emotions and feelings have been stirred up in my heart. My prayer is that as you read, listen, study and meditate over these chapters that you would not just get wrapped up in the intellect knowledge, but let these texts sink deep within your soul.

The talk of prophecy and end times definitely peaks the ears of people. Everyone wants to know about the future. When it has come to the study of such topics biblically, people can be on both ends of the spectrum. One of neglect and the other of overemphasizing. One does not touch the study of prophecy and of end times, while the other obsesses over different end time views and interpretations. I would argue for a balance, offering the following warnings and expressions of the heart behind this study.

- We will encounter different views about the second coming of Jesus. This should not be divisive and threaten our fellowship. In fact, amongst the elders there is anywhere from two to three different views, but yet our fellowship is sweet and strong. So, there is no room for controversy, but I pray this causes us to worship Jesus and as we wait for His return give us hope and an excitement for the ministry before us.
- Though there will be a small mention of different views my desire is for our future perspective to be *theological* not *chronological*. I want you to be stirred in your heart to know God more through this study instead of being stirred with speculation.
- There is great application in Matthew 24-25. There is a potential danger though in us getting caught up in trying to discern details that may or may not be answered in the text and in doing this we miss truths that effect our eternity. So, minor on the minors and major on the majors as we walk through this text.

Context

As we begin chapter 24 it is what is traditionally held as Passion Week. It seems to be Wednesday, so that means in two days Jesus will go to the cross. We must not forget what lies before this chapter. Jesus has just got done speaking to the crowds and His disciples about the great rejection of the religious leaders in Israel (Matthew 23). As a result of the Jewish leaders' and the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (the one David called *Lord*, ie. *the Son of God, the King and Priest* – Psalm 110.1-7), judgment will fall upon Jerusalem and the temple in the city (23.37-39). Jesus is specific to His disciples about the judgment which includes great destruction of the city including the temple being destroyed (24.1-2). One thing to note, is that the disciples think of Jerusalem's destruction and the end times as something that happens together (*a single complex web of events*¹).

Sermon Overview

Sunday, October 13 (Matthew 24.3-14)

Jesus' prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming are a call for His disciples to persevere in His power.

The disciples respond to what Jesus says about the judgment to come (24.1-2) by asking, *When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?* There seems to be two questions here (24.3) that set up the context for this chapter and chapter 25:

- First, *when will these things happen? Specifically, when will the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple happen?*
- Second, *what will be the sign of Your coming? And, the sign of the end of the age?* Both are asking the same thing, meaning the end of the age will occur when the second coming of Jesus occurs.

So, there are two main contextual points being addressed in chapters 24 and 25, *the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple* and *the end of the age when Jesus comes again*. It seems there are two sections. Matthew 24.4-35 deals historically with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and then Matthew 24.36-25.46 deals with the end of the age. A key verse that helps with the division of sections is Matthew 24.34, which says, *Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place* [The big question of this verse is, *what does Jesus mean by this generation?* I believe He is referring to the disciples' generation just as He does in 23.26.]. Therefore, Jesus seems to be speaking to his present audience and that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple will happen in the hearers' time. Then Matthew 24.36 has a transition statement with, *But of that day and hour no one knows...but the Father alone*, moves to the focus on the end of the age and the second coming [Note, I believe there are differing views on what 24.29-31 is referring to, but traditionally it is held as referring to the second coming of Christ.]. It is in these passages that Jesus answers the disciples' questions. It is important to note that Jesus, as Prophet, in chapter 24 is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the tribulation of that time, but seems to have a dual message about tribulation beyond that event as well.

¹ Carson, DA, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew 13-28*; p. 495

Readiness is the consistent call that Jesus is making throughout Matthew 24 and 25. First, that people would be ready by being saved, but for those already saved it is a call for them to be ready for the deception, tribulation, temptation and persecution that is coming and even upon us now. So, Jesus calls His disciples of the first century and the twenty first century to endure and persevere to Jesus returns as they faithfully proclaim the gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28.18-20). So, may we persevere by the power of Christ and faithfully and passionately share the gospel at school, work, in our neighborhoods and the different spheres of influence we have. This is not left as an option for disciples, so let this call to proclaim the gospel sink in and let's truly ask, *what keeps us from sharing our faith with others? Could it be that we don't face persecution because we are not faithfully sharing the gospel?* Let the Lord stir your heart and make you a faithful proclaimer of the gospel.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the context of Matthew 24-25? What has Jesus just said about Jerusalem and the temple (23.37-39; 24.1-2)? What are the two questions that the disciples are asking Jesus (24.3)? Why is Matthew 24-25 worthy of our attention?
2. What is one way that the deception of the enemy will look like? What are the beginning of birth pangs that Jesus mentions? We are promised to go through trials. How does Scripture speak of that (Matthew 5.11-12; John 16.33; Romans 8.17; 2 Timothy 3.12; James 1.2; 1 Peter 4.12-14)?
3. What does this text say about temptation? Explain how this passage points us away from sinful, short-term pleasures.
4. What kind of treatment should believers expect as they await Christ's return? Why does persecution inevitably come? What great part of the coming kingdom does Jesus say we have in ushering it in (24.14)? How should the second coming of Christ inform our witness in the world?

How will we know when all the nations have been reached with the gospel of the kingdom?

*God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who all the nations are, but I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms; our responsibility is to complete the task. **So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission.*** (Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 137)

Such a statement in light of the text bids us to ask, what are we doing to finish the task? Who are we faithfully praying for *by name* to come unto salvation? Share with the group those you are praying for to be saved? Then hold each accountable to praying and sharing with them the gospel.

5. What keeps us from sharing the gospel? Pride? Fear? In light of Jesus' second coming in judgment how should that impact our sharing of the gospel?
6. Discuss and share as a group how to share the gospel (1 Peter 3.15; Romans 3.23; 5.8; 6.23; 10.9)?
7. In light of the text, what does the statement *the one who endures to the end, he will be saved*, mean?

Sunday, October 20 (Matthew 24.15-34)

Jesus' prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming are a call for His disciples to trust in His authority. Jerusalem is going to be destroyed (and it has from where we

currently stand) and that Jesus is going to return. So, as Christ's disciples may we trust in the authority of Christ and His permanent Word.

Discussion Questions

1. In of reminder, what is the context of Matthew 24-25? What has Jesus just said about Jerusalem and the temple (23.37-39; 24.1-2)? What are the two questions that the disciples are asking Jesus (24.3)?
2. What are the two specific prophecies that we can definitely be sure of from Jesus' answer? What do we need to be careful about getting caught up in when looking at Matthew 24? Instead what truths should we be seeking most? How should we respond to others who have a different view than us about the end times and about the prophecies we read in Matthew 24? According to Luke 19.11, what do we learn about the disciples' view about the coming kingdom appearing immediately? What were they not aware of?
3. What do we learn about the destruction of Jerusalem in this text? Why does the destruction come upon Jerusalem? What does the *abomination of desolation* refer to (Daniel 8.13; 9.27; 11.31; and 12.11)? When did the horrifying destruction of Jerusalem occur? What was that time described as? What do we learn about the judgment of God with this event?
4. From this text, should we expect ease or suffering?
5. Explain how the authority and divinity of Jesus Christ is spoken of in Matthew 24.
6. According to Jesus, what *will pass away* and what *will not pass away* (24.35)? According to Revelation 21 what will replace the first heaven and first earth?
7. Are you ready for whatever may happen in your life this week or in the next year? Are you prepared from what may happen in the world in the next ten years? And are you absolutely certain of where your life will be in eternity?

Sunday, October 27 (Matthew 24.36-51)

Jesus' prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming are a call for His disciples to long for His return.

Jesus is coming back, this is for sure, but *when*? Jesus says in laying aside His privileges (Philippians 2.6-7), *But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone* (24.36). We don't know when, but we do know that His coming will be delayed (2 Peter 3.8-9). Jesus also tells us that His coming will be sudden, imminent and visible. When He comes He will bring an irreversible judgment with Him. There are no second chances. This brings a sobering feeling to the seriousness of being ready spiritually for His coming. For His disciples, we should be moved to long for His coming, waiting in hope and sharing the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3.15).

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the parallels between Christ's second coming and the account of the flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 6-9). What does the phrases, *will be taken* and *will be left* mean in light of Jesus referring to the days of Noah? What feeling does this bring to you when you think about this?
2. What do we learn about the second coming of Jesus in this text? How does it compare to His first coming? What is the call to all people in light of such a coming?
3. Describe the difference between the faithful slave and the wicked slave in Matthew 24.45-51.

4. What does it look like for followers of Christ to be eagerly watching for Jesus and urgently working for His kingdom purposes? What does it mean to keep watch for Christ, and how is this mind-set different from inactivity?
5. As it concerns Jesus' return, which truths in the passage should discourage us from date-setting or from making rash judgments based on current events?
6. How would you reply to the thought that individuals will receive a chance to respond to the gospel either as Christ returns or after His return? How might this section of Scripture inform your reply?
7. What does Jesus say about hell in this text? Look at the notes below (section *Heaven and Hell*) and discuss the reality of hell. How should this effect us?

Sunday, November 3 (Matthew 25.1-13)

Jesus' delay in coming may be long to us, but His return in judgment will be sudden and irreversible, so we must be prepared by trusting Him now with a persevering faith that bears fruit. This first parable in chapter 25 deals with the specific call for genuine disciples to persevere to the end. The kingdom of heaven is not for those who simply respond to an invitation, make a confession or express some affection. The kingdom of heaven instead is for those who endure to the end. So, may we have watchful hearts and not presume we are prepared. May we examine our hearts and make sure we are trusting Christ for our salvation at this very moment.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a parable? What does Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven to in this parable? Who do the ten virgins represent? Their lamps and oil? The two different groups of five virgins? The bridegroom? What does the bridegroom's delay represent? The coming of the bridegroom? The wedding feast (Revelation 19.7-9)? The door being shut? What is another familiar text that parallels 25.11-12 (Matthew 7.21-23)?
2. Do you ever doubt that Christ's second coming will actually happen? What are some factors that lead you to question whether this promise will actually be fulfilled?
3. What does this text say about genuine faith versus dead faith? How are endurance and faithfulness – marks of true, saving faith – different from attempting to earn a right standing before God?
4. Look at Matthew 13.5-6; 20-21. What do we learn from this parable that we also see noted in the parable about the virgins/bridesmaids)?
5. So, if I say I have a past response to Jesus' invitation to salvation, yet today I am not following Him today what is the problem according to this text? So, what does this mean for us in light of *today* and *this very moment*?

Sunday, November 10 (Matthew 25.14-30)

Jesus continues to press the point that persevering faith must bear fruit. This parable causes us to ask, *With the faith that has been gifted to us (Ephesians 2.8-10) are we serving Christ with what He has given us?* Genuine disciples are servants of the Master. They are stewards responsible for that which has been entrusted to them. *So, are we joyfully working diligently, and therefore honoring our Master by maximizing His resources?* If we are not, then from the parable it seems that we have a lack of love and desire for our Master, Jesus. So, the call is to joyfully use what the Lord has given us to honor Him out of a love for Him, instead of being lazy and therefore be condemned at Jesus' coming.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the master entrust his servants with the care of his possessions? What did he expect the servants to do with them? Why were the servants given different amounts?
2. What will a servant who loves his master do when he is entrusted with his master's possessions? Does having only a little to be responsible for limit us to the results we can produce? Explain.
3. What kind of return did the servants with five talents and two talents receive on their master's money? What did the man with one talent do with the money? Was that unusual? Explain.
4. According to Matthew 25:19, what did the master do when he returned from his trip? What does that illustrate? What did the master do to the servants who received a return on his money (25:20-23)? Why was the master upset with the servant who buried his talent?
5. What warning is Christ communicating in the parable of the talents? In this text, what are some evidences that we are true followers of Christ? Do you see these evidences (even if not perfectly) in your own life?
6. How would you reply to someone who asked the following questions? *What does the Bible say about the destiny of those who are genuinely followers of Christ? What is the fate of those who persist in unbelief?*
7. How does the reality of eternal punishment affect how you live day to day?

Sunday, November 17 (Matthew 25.31-46)

With the judgment of Jesus coming at His return still in mind, He continues to hit on the importance of having persevering faith that bears fruit. The focus here is serving the church (24.40). We are to serve the Christians whom God has put around us because we have been changed by Christ. This is a true mark of disciples (John 13.34-35; 15.12; 1 John 4.7-8, 19-21). Such sacrifice that Jesus mentions in the parable is necessary evidence of salvation.

Discussion Questions

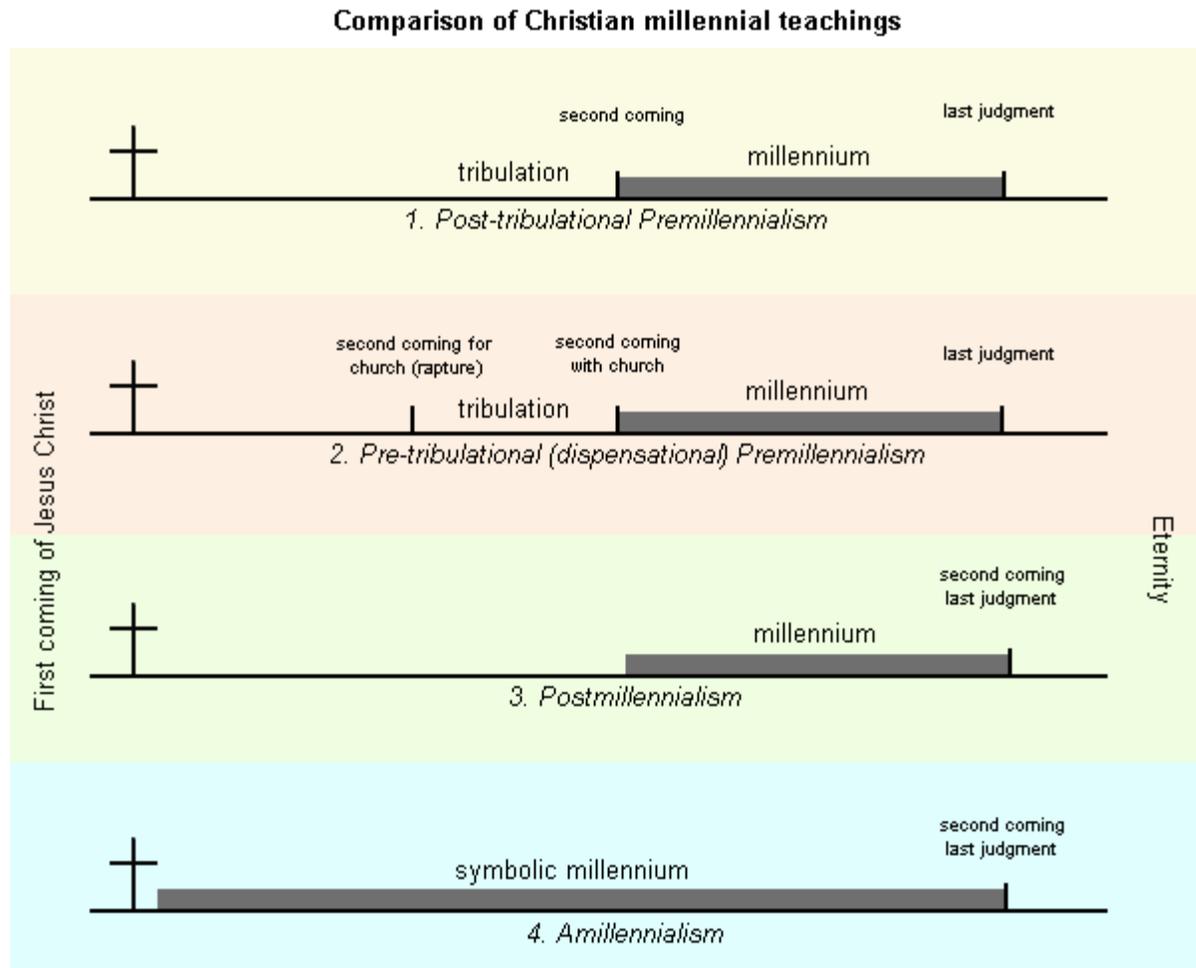
1. In this text what is pictured in parable? What is the gathering? Who are the goats and the sheep? Who is the King?
2. According to 1 John 2:28 and 4:17, in what way will faithful servants be able to face judgment?
3. Significant in this text is 25.40. Who is Jesus saying we are to specifically serve? Who is Jesus identifying Himself with here? Look at Acts 9.4. Who does Jesus identify Himself with here? What's the point Jesus is making in 25.40?
4. Take caution here, for this is the point of this text, but who does Jesus call us to even love in other texts (Matthew 5.43-48; Luke 10.25-37)?
5. What does the specific ministry to other believers look like according to Jesus here in this text?
6. In this text, what are some evidences that we are true followers of Christ? Do you see these evidences (even if not perfectly) in your own life?
7. Jesus, again refers to hell and also eternal life. Who goes where according to this text? What does He say about hell and specifically about who is there with us (25.41-46, especially 25.41)? Be sure to look at the notes below on *Heaven and Hell*.

Heaven and Hell

In these two chapters Jesus speaks of two eternal destinations that await all people. One is heaven and the other is hell. Jesus speaks about heaven in different way throughout this section of Matthew (24.45-46; 25.10, 21-23, 46). He also speaks of hell (24.51; 25.30, 41, 51), speaking of a total separation from

the Father's love, and that this will be in a place prepared for the devil and demons. *Hell is not a place where the Devil torments sinners; hell is a place where he is tormented alongside sinners. One writer, said, "What a destiny! To spend eternity shoulder to shoulder with an evil being whose one goal has been to defy God and bring others to share in suffering forever"* (Platt, David, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*; p. 337). What great hope disciples have in heaven that awaits them, but we must also feel the sobering effect of what Jesus says about hell in these chapters.

Different *End Times* Views



Terms

Millennium

This term comes from the references in Revelation 20 that speaks of a period of 1,000 years during which Satan will be bound. There are three main schools of thought, with variations in each position: *Premillennialists* believe that Christ's return will precede the millennium, *Postmillennialists* believe that Jesus' return will happen after the millennium, and *Amillennialists* believe that the millennium is a

reference to the present age, which began following Christ's resurrection and ascension. There is also considerable debate about whether the millennium is a reference to a literal 1,000 years.²

Rapture

The term refers to Christ's coming in the air to rescue His church prior to the millennium and the final judgment mentioned in Revelation 20.11-15. Only believers will meet the Lord in the air and be raptured. In support of this view, commentators point to passages such as 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18. Pre-tribulationists believe this rapture will occur prior to a period of great tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24.21-31 and elsewhere, while post-tribulationists believe the rapture will occur after the tribulation. Mid-tribulationists believe the rapture will occur at the midpoint of the tribulation (after 3 ½ years).³ This doctrine (along with pre-tribulationism) was asserted at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when through an "utterance" it was thought to come from the Spirit in a Plymouth Brethren meeting (cf. S. P. Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*, 1864). It has found amazing acceptance in America and England largely because of the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

²² Platt, David, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*; p. 314

³ Platt, David, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*; p. 314