

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

Unholy Charade – YouTube Channel

The Gospel of Matthew

Keep Watching and be Ready

March 8, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 24

Scripture Reading: Matthew 24

Matthew 24:1-4 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

(3) As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “**Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?**” (4) And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.

We come now to the 24th and 25th

chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, known as the Olivet Discourse, due to it being spoken by Jesus on the Mount of Olives. He is addressing it privately to His disciples who had asked Him a question.

If we are to understand Jesus’ answer, we must understand the question. It is a two-fold question:

1. When will these things be?
2. What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

Listen to William Hendriksen:

The prophetic material found in this sixth discourse has reference not only to events near at hand [i.e., question #1] but also to those stretching far into the future [question #2].

By the process of prophetic foreshortening, by means of which before one’s eyes the widely separated mountain peaks of historic events merge and are seen as one...two momentous events are here intertwined, namely, *a.* the judgment upon

Jerusalem (its fall in the year A.D. 70), and *b.* the final judgment at the close of the world's history. Our Lord predicts the city's approaching catastrophe as a *type* [figurative picture] of the tribulation at the end of the dispensation. Or, putting it differently, in describing the brief period of great tribulation at the close of history, ending with the final judgment, *Jesus is painting in colors borrowed from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.*

We know from the context that the disciples were indeed asking about two events – listen again:

Matthew 24:1-2 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

So, Jesus' answer is going to address the timing of the destruction of the temple (and of Jerusalem). That is the context of the first part of the disciples' question. They add more to their question – *the sign of Jesus' coming and the end of the age.*

The disciples knew about the end of the age at Jesus' final coming because Jesus had taught them about it before. For example:

Matthew 13:37-43 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. (38) The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, (39) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. (40) Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. (41) The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, (42) and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

I think it is appropriate for us as we begin our examination of the Olivet Discourse (which is a major Scripture on the subject of eschatology, the Bible doctrine on last things), to remind ourselves to approach this study in humility. Here is Hendriksen once again:

It is not claimed, of course, that any exegete [student of Scripture] is able completely to untangle what is here intertwined, so as to indicate accurately for each individual passage just how much refers to Jerusalem's fall, and how much to the great tribulation and second coming.

As always, we must guard against getting so wrapped up in the individual trees that we fail to see the forest. In this case, that forest (the big picture, the primary lesson) is this:

Keep watching and be ready. Always be on the alert, diligently obeying and serving the Lord so that when He comes, He will find us faithful.

Professing Christians have so often become so focused on minute details of eschatology that they forget the main point, you see. Their system of interpretation becomes their test of whether someone is orthodox or not and they pride themselves in a claimed ability to do what Hendriksen wisely notes cannot be done: untangling perfectly every small detail here. And as they grow arrogant in this, they fail to remember the main point: that we as the Lord's people are to remain watchful and ready, and we do this by

faithfully serving Christ, loving Him and loving His people.

Let me show you that this watching and readiness is in fact the main point:

Matthew 24:33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

Matthew 24:42-46 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (43) But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. (44) Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (45) "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? (46) Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

Matthew 25:10-13 And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. (11) Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' (12) But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not

know you.’ (13) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Matthew 25:14 “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property....Matthew 25:19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

That is the forest. That is the big picture here. Everything in this discourse is pointed at this lesson – *keep watching and be ready*.

How to Watch

Now, we should also emphasize at the beginning of our study exactly *how we watch and be ready*. I think this is most clearly answered in Christ’s closing words:

Matthew 25:31-40 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

(34) Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed

by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

(37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ (40) And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

This is *faith*. It is *obedience*. Trusting Christ. Believing His Word. Obeying His commandments. Knowing Him, loving Him, and loving His people. That is how we watch and remain ready.

How do we fail to watch and be ready? Well, one way is to live as if this present world is all there is and that it is going to go on forever:

2 Peter 3:3-4 knowing this first of all,

that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Many people who claim to be Christians and who would never actually come right out and say these words – nevertheless live as if this is their philosophy. They are like the foolish 5 virgins and the wicked, lazy servant. Don't be one of them.

The Jerusalem Background

We need to refresh ourselves on some history now. Specifically, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. This Wikipedia excerpt is based primarily upon the Jewish historian Josephus' account. Josephus was present with the Romans in 70AD -

Josephus claims that 1.1 million people were killed during the siege, of which a majority were Jewish. Josephus attributes this to the celebration of Passover which he uses as rationale for the vast number of people present among the death toll. Armed rebels, as well

as the frail citizens, were put to death. All of Jerusalem's remaining citizens became Roman prisoners. After the Romans killed the armed and elder people, 97,000 were still enslaved, including Simon bar Giora and John of Giscala. Simon bar Giora was executed, and John of Giscala was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Of the 97,000, thousands were forced to become gladiators and eventually expired in the arena. Many others were forced to assist in the building of the Forum of Peace and the Colosseum. Those under 17 years of age were sold into servitude.

Josephus' death toll assumptions were rejected as impossible by Seth Schwartz (1984), as according to his estimates at that time about a million people lived in Palestine, about half of whom were Jews, and sizable Jewish populations remained in the area after the war was over, even in the hard-hit region of Judea.

Titus and his soldiers celebrated victory upon their return to Rome by parading the Menorah and Table of the Bread of God's Presence through the streets. Up until this parading, these items had only ever been seen by the high priest of the Temple. This event was memorialized in the Arch of Titus.

Many fled to areas around the Mediterranean. According to Philostratus, writing in the early years of the 3rd century, Titus reportedly refused to accept a wreath of victory, saying that the victory did not come through his own efforts but that he had merely served as an instrument of divine wrath.

After the Fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the city and its Temple, there were still a few Judean strongholds in which the rebels continued holding out, at Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada. Both Herodium and Machaerus fell to the Roman army within the next two years, with Masada remaining as the final

stronghold of the Judean rebels. In 73 CE, the Romans breached the walls of Masada and captured the fortress, with Josephus claiming that nearly all of the Jewish defenders had committed mass suicide prior to the entry of the Romans. With the fall of Masada, the First Jewish–Roman War came to an end.

This Roman conquest and destruction then is what Jesus foretells in Matthew 24-25, along with His promises of His second coming. There is a kind of sharing of images back and forth between the two:

1. The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD is a picture of the great tribulation to come at the end of the age when Christ returns, and
2. The end of the age judgments may well use some of the 70AD event images to describe what will happen then.

As a result, you can see then that the two judgments are indeed intertwined and this must be kept in mind if we are to properly understand Jesus' words.

A Note on Preterism

Preterist means that which is *past*. Full-blown preterist students of Scripture claim that all the prophecies of the Bible are actually *history*. Here is a definition I found in an article on the web:

According to preterism, all prophecy in the Bible is really history. The preterist interpretation of Scripture regards the book of Revelation as a symbolic picture of first-century conflicts, not a description of what will occur in the end times. The term *preterism* comes from the Latin *praeter*, meaning “past.” Thus, preterism is the view that the biblical prophecies concerning the “end times” have already been fulfilled—in the past.

In a sense (and I think this was R.C. Sproul’s view), the judgement of AD 70 was an “already but not yet” kind of event in which Christ came in judgment in part, but not in fullness. Certainly you cannot properly understand the Bible’s teachings on eschatology (last days, end of the age, Second Coming, etc.) without realizing that Christ’s

kingdom is “already here but not yet in its fullness.” And so some Bible students conclude that in the destruction of Jerusalem, we have Christ’s second coming in part, but not in its fullness. This view is what I believe might be called “partial preterism.”

Now, I bring this preterist subject up because that is how some people interpret the Olivet Discourse here. They attribute everything in Jesus’ words to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. I am not sure how they explain everything He says in that way, but I am sure they have some kind of intricate arguments to twist and distort. Full preterism as you can see morphs the Bible into a mere history book with, in the end, no value for us today.

Listen to G.K. Beale on this:

The word “preterist” refers to the past. This view holds that Revelation is a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 and that everything in the book has already been fulfilled – and hence is “past.” But we have seen, it is unlikely that the book of Revelation was even

written until some years later than the fall of Jerusalem. On the preterist view, “Babylon” [in Revelation] represents rebellious Israel, which persecutes the church. “Babylon” however, is never used in ancient Jewish or Christian literature to refer to unbelieving or disobedient Israel, but rather to Rome....Finally, the book becomes irrelevant for anyone who lives after those first days of the church. Why would God include it in the Bible at all? [Revelation, A Shorter Commentary, Eerdmans]

the end of this age. And the lesson for us all is this:

Keep watching and be ready, for you do not know neither the day nor the hour when He is coming. Be faithful and obedient, diligently serving Him, so that when He comes you will hear Him say, “well done.”

Of course, we must reject this full-blown preterism as pure unbelief and false teaching. We will approach the Olivet Discourse as containing two threads of prophecy – one which applies to and was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the other which speaks of the yet future second coming of Christ.

There then is our introduction. Jesus, in answer to the disciples’ two-fold question, is going to teach us about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the His second coming and judgment at