

Sermon #69

Series: Matthew

Title: **Where the Carcase is Eagles Gather**
Text: Matthew 24:15-28
Reading: *Office: Mark Henson Auditorium: Bobbie Estes*
Subject: The destruction of Jerusalem
Date: January 6, 1996
Tape # S-12

Introduction:

I want us to read together Matthew 24:15-28. In these verses, our Lord is answering the questions his disciples asked about the destruction of the temple, his second coming, and the end of the world (v. 3). The verses that are now before us have specific application to the destruction of Jerusalem and our Lord's second coming. But we must not make the mistake of imagining that they contain no message for us. These things, too, are written for our learning and admonition.

The title of my message tonight is, **Where the Carcass is, Eagles Gather**. Obviously, you know me well enough to know that I have no intention of spending our time tonight talking about carcasses and eagles. But, if you are like I am, your curiosity is aroused more by verse 28 than any other in this passage. So I thought I might be able to get your attention by announcing that as the title of my message. And to keep your interest, I will save the explanation of the last verse of the text for the last two points of my message. But I promise you that when you leave here you will know the significance of the carcase and the eagles mentioned in that verse.

Proposition:

The Lord Jesus Christ so graciously cares for his own that he tenderly prepares them for the trials they must face in this world; and the means by which he does this is his Word.

There are seven things that we need to learn from these words of our Savior. Give me your attention, and pray that God the Holy Spirit will enable your pastor to feed you with knowledge and understanding as he opens the Scriptures to you.

I. When the Lord God destroyed Jerusalem, the temple, and the nation of Israel, he made a complete end of the old, Mosaic, legal system of worship (vv. 15-21).

The primary subject of these verses is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Romans. The horrors and miseries endured by the Jews

in that horrible time of destruction exceeded anything recorded in the history of the world. Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives a graphic, detailed account of the havoc inflicted upon the Jewish nation by Titus. Not including the ones that perished in the city itself, more than a million Jews were slaughtered. About 100,000 were carried into slavery. That truly was a time of *“great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world.”*

Those men and women who blasphemously cried, *“Let his blood be upon us and upon our children,”* had no idea what they were doing. But the Lord God heard their cry and answered it in the severity of his strict justice. And with the destruction of their city he destroyed their entire system of worship.

Jerusalem and the temple in it were the heart of Old Testament worship. When that was destroyed, the whole legal system was destroyed, destroyed because it had all been fulfilled by Christ. The daily sacrifices, the yearly feasts, the mercy-seat, the holy of holies, the priesthood, the altar, the table of showbread, all were essential parts of worship during the legal dispensation. But once Christ came, the legal system ceased to have any function. God destroyed it forever. *“Christ is the end of the law” (Rom. 10:4; Col. 2:8-23).*

- A. We have no earthly temple because Christ is our temple.
- B. We have no material altar because Christ is our altar.
- C. We have no earthly mercy-seat because Christ is our mercy-seat.
- D. We observe no sabbath days because Christ is our sabbath.
- E. In Christ we are totally free from the yoke of bondage.
 - Romans 6:14-14
 - Romans 7:4
 - Galatians 3:13-26

II. A second lesson to be learned in this passage is not so trite as it might at first appear: **Prudence is proper.**

Did you notice that our Lord plainly told his disciples to flee from certain death at the hands of persecuting tyrants? Many might think that would indicate cowardice. It does not. Without question, we are to confess Christ before men, and be willing to die for him should providence demand it in the path of duty. But there are times when more grace is required to be quiet than to act rashly. Let us never walk away from known duty. Let us never deny or even be willing to compromise the gospel of Christ. But it is altogether proper for us to exercise wisdom and use good, sound judgment in all matters.

Illustration: Scott Richardson and his Islamic Surgeon

III. God's elect are always the objects of his special love and tender care (vv. 22-24).

I told you last week that the world is but scaffold to the building of God's church and kingdom. The reprobate reap many of the benefits of providence. But the objects of providence are "*the elect.*" Those days of tribulation were shortened "*for the elect's sake.*"

Listen to me now. This will be of tremendous help to you if you can get hold of it. God's care is for his elect.

- A. He hears their prayers.
- B. He keeps them by his Spirit.
- C. He orders all the affairs of the world for their good.
- D. He allows neither men nor devils to harm them.
- E. He sacrifices men and nations for them (Isa. 43:5-7).
- F. Be wise and make your calling and election sure.

IV. There are many antichrists in this world (vv. 24-26).

Illustration: The Letter from George - "*How can you say that those people are lost who do not believe in election and limited atonement?*"

That is not the issue at all. It is not *what* a person believes that is important, but *who*. Do you understand that? Be sure you do. **Any religion, any doctrine, any gospel that turns you away from looking to Christ alone as your Savior is antichrist.**

- A. A Christ who loves but cannot save is a useless Christ, an antichrist.
- B. A Christ who redeems but does not save is a useless Christ, an antichrist.
- C. A Christ who calls but does not convert is a useless Christ, an antichrist.
- D. A Christ whose work depends upon the will or work of the sinner to make it effectual and complete is a useless Christ, an antichrist.
- E. A Christ who wills the salvation of any who are not actually saved by his power is a useless Christ, an antichrist.

- I John 4:1-4

V. Our Lord's second coming will be a sudden, climatic, glorious event (v. 27).

There is no such thing as a secret rapture. Oh, no! When our Lord appears, his coming will be as startling and sudden as a bolt of lightning. He will be seen by all men at once. His coming will terrify the wicked. But it

will be the delight of the believer! Let us live every moment in the hope and expectation of his glorious advent.

- Titus 2:14

VI. Now look at verse 28. There are two common interpretations given to this verse by sound, orthodox men. Frankly, I do not know which is strictly correct; but since both are theologically sound, I will give them both to you. **Foul, unclean birds feed upon a dead carcass.**

Most of the commentators teach that the carcass here refers to empty, dead Judaism and the eagles to the flocks of lost religious men and women who clung to it feverishly, even to the destruction of their lives and of the lives of their sons and daughters.

Even so it is today. Find a church that is utterly dead, void of the knowledge of God, his gospel, his Word, his grace, his Son, and his glory, and you will find a church full of lost religionists. Where there is no life, people cling to rituals, ceremonies, creeds, and emotionalism.

VII. But there is another interpretation, one that I think is better. Perhaps the carcass here refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain for our sins, and the eagles refer to sinners like you and me who flee to him for salvation and life. In that case the lesson is this: **Christ crucified is the great magnet by which God draws chosen sinners to himself.**

Whether that is the teaching of this verse or not, I know that is the teaching of Holy Scripture.

- John 12:32
- I Corinthians 1:21-23

We come together here three times every week to feed upon this blessed carcass - *the crucified Lamb of God!*

Application:

Tribulation and trouble are sure to attend our lives in this world. But in the midst of our earthly woes, here are three soft pillows for your aching head:

1. Electing Love
2. The Crucified Savior
3. Divine Providence - God does everything "*for the elect's sake.*"