

I. JESUS' PRIMARY TEACHING ON THE END TIMES (MT. 24-25)

- A. The best teaching on the end-times in the Bible was given by Jesus in “one teaching” that is recorded in four chapters—Matthew 24-25, Mk. 13, Lk. 21—which are to be studied together. These four chapters plus Jesus’ teaching in Luke 17 give us a foundation for His end-time teaching. The most complete record is in Matthew 24-25— while Mk. 13 and Lk. 21 give a shorter version of it.
- B. By reviewing the signs that Jesus identified as signals of his approaching return, we can have confidence regarding the timing of his return, and dial down fear that would assume that he has “left us in the dark” regarding this important subject. Knowing these signs gives us direction in times trouble and fills us with hope.

C. Outline of Matthew 24

- 24:1-3** The disciples’ questions about the temple and Jesus’ return
24:4-31 Metaphor #1 – Woman in Labor: Timeline of Signs (trends and events) indicating Jesus’ return (*Labor pains increase in frequency, intensify in severity*)
24:32-36 Parable #1 – The parable of the fig tree (*All signs in one generation, global in scope*)
24:37-42 Days of Noah: The command to watch – (*Urgency*)
24:43-44 Parable #2 – The parable of the thief – (*Urgency*)
24:45-51 Parable #3 – The parable of the faithful and wise servants – (*Response*)

D. Matthew 24-25 is called the *Olivet Discourse* (because Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives when giving this prophecy). Matthew 24-25 highlights various signs of the times (24:5-14), important warnings (24:15-28), the responses He wants from His people as seen in five parables (24:32-25:30), His response to them (25:21), and then He concludes by describing Himself as a King sitting on His earthly throne, judging the responses of each person and nation (25:31-46).

E. Jesus revealed Himself as *Bridegroom* (Mt. 25:1), *King* (Mt. 25:31), and *Judge* (Mt. 25:32-46). He is a King with power, a Bridegroom with desire for deep relationship, and a Judge with zeal to remove everything that hinders love. In the end times, the Spirit will emphasize these three aspects of Jesus’ personality and ministry (Mt. 25; cf. Ps. 45; Isa. 61-63; Rev. 19). The Church is best prepared to thrive spiritually in pressure by encountering Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge.

II. HOW CAN I STUDY THE END-TIMES?

- A. There are various ways of studying the end-times passages in the Bible. Every believer needs to follow three basic invitations for the study of eschatology (study of end-times).

³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. Rev. 1: 3

1. In the Book of Revelation we are told to:

- a. **Read** – We begin by digesting God’s word regarding end-times. Simply reading brings a blessing to our lives. We demonstrate value for what we give time to.
 - b. **Hear** – This is a call to active hearing, not passive. It means we hear and respond in some practical application of what we are told.
 - c. **Keep** – We keep the words of God by setting our hearts to follow and obey because of our love for God. One of the ways you demonstrate your love for God is to obey and freely follow his ways.
- B. **Believe, Obey, Do.** Remember for the most part the Scriptures call us to believe, obey and/or do. This is all within a wholehearted love relationship with God.
- C. **Prayer and fasting.** All of the men in the Bible who recorded end-times prophecies were men of fasting and prayer. We cannot assume that we will receive revelation and understanding in another way.
- D. **Word studies.** Using various bible helps (concordance, lexicon, commentaries, etc.) review and research the meaning of words from their original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
1. You don’t need to be a scholar but you do need to be honest with what you find not overstating what your research uncovers.
 - a. For example, the word “**taken**” in Matthew 24: 40-41 can have three meanings in this context cross-referenced from other scriptures in both Old and New Testament.
 - (1) Taken – as like Enoch or Elijah, “taken up to God” not experiencing death.
 - (2) Taken – as like “taken captive into prison or exile”
 - (3) Taken – as in “to die” physically
 - b. So in Matthew 24:40-41 – to make “taken” in this context solely about the Rapture of the church is to overstate the interpretation. All three meanings can be seen in end-times passages.
- E. **Look for questions, prayers and songs.** As you read the passages of scripture, look for questions, prayers and/or songs.
1. Questions are keys to focus.
 - a. For example, Matthew 24: 4-31 is Jesus answering the questions in Matthew 4: 1-3.
 2. Prayers provide interpretive keys for focus.

- a. Write down the prayers and pray them. Holy Spirit will open up the passages as you pray the prayers in the passages.
 3. Songs focus on the glory, majesty and worth of God. Often songs express gratitude for God, and agreement with God.
- F. ***Cross-reference.*** A very large portion of New Testament prophecy have Old Testament connections. Search for those connections as the Old Testament was the Bible for believers in Jesus' day.
1. For example, about 65% of Matthew 24 has cross-references to Old Testament scriptures. This tells us that there are many passages in the Old Testament that will find their fulfillment in the Father's end-time narrative.
- G. ***Interpretation comes from scripture.*** Do your best to always let scripture be interpreted by other scripture. Interpretation can sometimes be tricky so finding our answers in other Biblical locations is what we strive for.
- H. ***Start simply, stay connected.*** Begin with what your heart and soul can digest. Stay in a group.