



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Vol. 47 Issue 893

May 02, 2014

Worship Music

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[Kerrie Roberts](#)

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[Kerrie Roberts](#)

Prayer

Lord, I've been asking You for power and strength, not realizing that I have the source of Your power and strength sitting right in my house. Forgive me for not spending enough time in my Bible to tap into the power that is held within it. Starting today, I want to make Your Word a priority in my life. When I am tempted to be lazy and to put off reading my Bible, please help me say no to my flesh. Help me choose to pick up my Bible and read it whether I feel like it or not, taking it deep into my heart and letting the power inside the Word begin to work in me and in my situation, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Radio Stations

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Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Bible Study Sites

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"The Cross"

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Matthew 22:1-46 (AMP)

1 AND AGAIN Jesus spoke to them in parables (comparisons, stories used to illustrate and explain), saying, 2 The kingdom of heaven is like a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son 3 And sent his servants to summon those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they refused to come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have prepared my banquet; my bullocks and my fat calves are killed, and everything is prepared; come to the wedding feast. 5 But they were not concerned and paid no attention [they ignored and made light of the summons, treating it with contempt] and they went away—one to his farm, another to his business, 6 While the others seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and put them to death. 7 [Hearing this] the king was infuriated; and he sent his soldiers and put those murderers to death and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, The wedding [feast] is prepared, but those invited were not worthy. 9 So go to the thoroughfares where they leave the city [where the main roads and those from the country end] and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. 10 And those servants went out on the crossroads and got together as many as they found, both bad and good, so [the room in which] the wedding feast [was held] was filled with guests. 11 But when the king came in to view the guests, he looked intently at a man there who had on no wedding garment. 12 And he said, Friend, how did you come in here without putting on the [appropriate] wedding garment? And he was speechless (muzzled, gagged). 13 Then the king said to the attendants, Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into the darkness outside; there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. 14 For many are called (invited and summoned), but few are chosen. 15 Then the Pharisees went and consulted and plotted together how they might entangle Jesus in His talk. 16 And they sent their disciples to Him along with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that You are sincere and what You profess to be and that You teach the way of God truthfully, regardless of consequences and being afraid of no man; for You are impartial and do not regard either the person or the position of anyone. 17 Tell us then what You think about this: Is it lawful to pay tribute [levied on individuals and to be paid yearly] to Caesar or not? 18 But Jesus, aware of their malicious plot, asked, Why do you put Me to the test and try to entrap Me, you pretenders (hypocrites)? 19 Show me the money used for the tribute. And they brought Him a denarius. 20 And Jesus said to them, Whose likeness and title are these? 21 They said, Caesar's. Then He said to them, Pay therefore to Caesar the things that are due to Caesar, and pay to God the things that are due to God. 22 When they heard it they were amazed and marveled; and they left Him and departed. 23 The same day some Sadducees, who say that there is no resurrection [of the dead], came to Him and they asked Him a question, 24 Saying, Teacher, Moses said, If a man dies, leaving no children, his brother shall marry the widow and raise up a family for his brother. 25 Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married and died, and, having no children, left his wife to his brother. 26 The second also died childless, and the third, down to the seventh. 27 Last of all, the woman died also. 28 Now, in the resurrection, to which of the seven will she be wife? For they all had her. 29 But Jesus replied to them, You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor God's power. 30 For in the resurrected state neither do [men] marry nor are [women] given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven. 31 But as to the resurrection of the dead—have you never read what was said to you by God, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living! 33 And when the throng heard it, they were astonished and filled with [glad] amazement at His teaching. 34 Now when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced (muzzled) the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 And one of their number, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. 36 Teacher, which kind of commandment is great and important (the principal kind) in the Law? [Some commandments are light—which are heavy?] 37 And He replied to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect). 38 This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. 40 These two commandments sum up and upon them depend all the Law and the Prophets. 41 Now while the Pharisees were still assembled there, Jesus asked them a question, 42 Saying, What do you think of the Christ? Whose Son is He? They said to Him, The Son of David. 43 He said to them, How is it then that David, under the influence of the [Holy] Spirit, calls Him Lord, saying, 44 The Lord said to My Lord, Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet? 45 If then David thus calls Him Lord, how is He his Son? 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone venture or dare to question Him.

Chapter 22

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables (Mat 22:1),

Now He is still there, and He is laying on them these parables.

And He said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come (Mat 22:1-3).

There was first of all those who were bidden to the wedding. His son is getting married, and the servants were sent to those that were bidden. They would not come.

Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I've prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took the servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was angry: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So the servants went out in the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how is it that you came in not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. And then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are choice (Mat 22:4-14).

Now herein is a very descriptive parable, which is prophetic in its nature for the wedding feast of the son. First of all, the servants sent to those who were bidden, the guests, and they refused to come. The gospel was first brought by Jesus Christ to the Jews. They refused it. Now the wedding is all set. Everything is ready. The sacrifice has been made. Now the servants are to go out and to bid them, come, but they begin to go to their farm and to merchandise. And this is the preaching by the apostles to the Jews, after the death of Jesus, but still their refusal to come. Then the Lord commanded that they go.

And first of all, the king was angry at those bidden guests. And he sent his armies, and they destroyed them, and burned the city. This of course is what happened when Titus came and burned the city of Jerusalem, and destroyed the people because they refused to come; thus, the judgement of God through Titus. And Jesus is predicting that particular event, the burning of the city of Jerusalem.

When I was there I was taken on some archaeological digs, where this man has dug down under his house through several centuries, really of archaeological artifacts. And partway down, there is a layer of ash, about six inches thick, which is the ash from the burning of the city of Jerusalem in 70A. D. by Titus. And it's quite remarkable to look at that layer of ashes, and to realize what it does represent.

Now Jesus predicted that, the burning of the city and then sent them out to the highways and byways, out unto the Gentiles, bid them all, whoever to come in. And so the gospel coming to us.

Now even though we are bid on to come to the feast, it is necessary that we have on the wedding garments. It's necessary that we'll be clothed in the righteousness, which is of Christ, through faith. There are some who are trying to come without the proper clothing. There are some who have not put on that righteousness through faith of Christ, but are trying to come in their own righteousness, or by their own efforts, or by their own good works. They'll never make it, when the king makes the examinations of the guest. If you are not clothed in that robe of righteousness, through the faith of Christ, you will be cast out. But that's just a plain, straight warning of the Lord.

Then the Pharisees, took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out to him their disciples with the Herodians. They said unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, you teach the way of God in truth, neither do you care for any man, [that is, you're not a respecter of men] nor do you regard the person of men (Mat 22:15-16).

You don't bow and scrape to the rich and all, no respecter of people's persons. "We know that what you say is true. You are a man of truth. You are a straight shooter. Tell us therefore, What do you think? Is it lawful to give tribute or pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and he said, Why do you tempt me, you hypocrites? (Mat 22:18)

They figured that the question, and it was a very sharp and shrewd question, if Jesus said "yes, it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar", then all of the Jews would have hated Him. They would have turned from Him. They would have said, "He is a traitor. He is a collaborator with the Romans. And they would have turned against Him. You remember they had said to Jesus earlier, "We are not under bondage to any men." I mean they really didn't consider themselves the slaves of Rome. Even though they were subject to Rome, they didn't consider it and they hated paying those taxes.

If Jesus said, "No, it is not lawful," then they would have gone right on down and reported Him to the Roman officials and had Him arrested, and imprisoned for advocating a tax revolt. So Jesus recognizing that they were trying to trap Him, that it is a trick, He said, "Why are you trying to trap me, you hypocrites?" He said,

Give me a coin, one of your tribute money. And so they brought him a denarius. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? [And in no doubt held it up, and showed them that inscription of Caesar that was on the coin.] They said unto him, Caesar's; [He flipped it back,] and he said to them, Then render therefore to Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's. When they heard these words, they marvelled, and they left him, and went their way (Mat 22:19-22).

Hey, got out of that one.

Now the same day there came to him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection (Mat 22:23),

They do not believe in the resurrection, angels, spirits. They were the materialists, the rationalists of their day.

and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers: and the first, when he had married a wife, died, and did not have any children, and he left his wife to his brother: But likewise the second also, and the third, and all the way to the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her (Mat 22:23-28).

And of course they thought that they were making the idea of the resurrection seem ludicrous. As there are those even today, who not understanding the resurrection, erring, because they do not know the scripture and the power of God, and try to make the resurrection seem ludicrous.

For instance, if you've had a heart transplant, in the resurrection, you're both Christians, which body does the heart go with? Or there have been people buried on the prairies, whose bodies have returned to dust. The chemicals went back into the soil and the grassroots went down, and drew those chemicals out of the soil that were once a part of another person's body, and the cow ate the grass with these chemicals which were part of someone else's body. And you drank the milk that came from the cow, and assimilated some of those same chemicals, that were once a part from someone else's body. So in the resurrection which body do these chemicals go in?

You don't bow and scrape to the rich and all, no respecter of people's persons. "We know that what you say is true. You are a man of truth. You are a straight shooter. Tell us therefore, What do you think? Is it lawful to give tribute or pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

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And they tried to make the idea of the resurrection seem ludicrous. That was the whole idea here, making the resurrection an event seemed to be a ludicrous thing.

And Jesus said, You err, because you don't know the scriptures (Mat 22:29),

And many people err, because they don't know the scriptures. And with them,

they did not know the power of God (Mat 22:29).

For in the resurrection, number one, as far as the cows and transplanted hearts and all, Paul said, "Some of you will say: how are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" And he said, "Don't you realize that when you plant a seed into the ground, all you plant is a bare grain, and God gives it a body that pleases Him?" (1Corinthians 15:35-37) Actually so that that which you plant is not that which comes out of the ground, because all you plant is the bare grain. God gives it a body as pleases Him.

We'll have new bodies. We know that when this earthly tent, or tabernacle, the body in which we live is dissolved, we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But people don't know the scriptures and so they make all kinds of hypothetical problems. Now they were doing the same things. Jesus said,

For in the resurrection they neither marry, or are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (Mat 22:30).

Now the purpose, of course, of marrying is to establish a good, secure environment in which to raise the children. That's God's purpose for marriage. To bring two lives together in love, in order that they might provide a good, healthy environment for the children to grow up in, an environment that is secure, an environment that is filled with love. Inasmuch as we will not be having children in heaven, we will be as the angels, who neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Just what we will be like, the Lord has left a few surprises for us. And we really don't know. Anything that we offer would be sheer speculation, and that's worthless.

But as touching the resurrection of the dead (Mat 22:31),

Now they didn't believe in that. Jesus said,

have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? (Mat 22:31-32)

God said this in Exodus 3:6, after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were physically dead, He said:

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Mat 22:32).

So they were still living. They were resurrected, living in their resurrected bodies. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine.

But when the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, [He really shut them up] they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master which is the great commandment in the law? And Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, This is the first and the great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Mat 22:34-40).

Paul said, "The law is fulfilled in love." And he that loveth has fulfilled the law. All of the law and the prophets basically comprehended the word "love", understood by the word, "love".

The law was set forth in negatives. Thou shalt have no other gods. Thou shalt not, thou shalt not. Jesus put it in a very positive way, just love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, love your neighbor as yourself. And this is the law. This is basically what the law is declaring, that we should have a loving relationship with God first; that is reflected in a loving relationship with fellow man. This is what the whole Old Testament was all about; the law and the prophets hang on these two.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of the Messiah, whose son is he? (Mat 22:41-42)

Now they did not except Jesus as the Messiah, so He is just talking to them, their opinion when the Messiah comes. What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?

And they said unto him, The son of David (Mat 22:42).

Now they were anticipating a man. They are still anticipating a man. They do not believe the Messiah is going to be the Son of God. They rejected Jesus because He said He was the Son of God. They were ready to stone Him one day. He said, "I've done a lot of good, for which of those works are you going to stone me?" (John 10:32). "Not for the good works you've done," they said, "but because you being a man, are continually making yourself God."

When He was brought before Pilate, Pilate said, "I will not crucify Him. I don't find any cause of death in Him" (Mark 15:14). And they said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He being a man is trying to make Himself the Son of God." Declaring that He is the Son of God, and this was the thing that offended them, and of course this is what provoked this question. "What is the greatest commandment?"

Their Schima is "The Lord our God is one Lord. And thy shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength". In the Schima, the Lord our God is one Lord. It is interesting that the word "achad" is used for one. The Lord our God is one Lord. The word "achad" is used. The word "achad" is an interesting word in Hebrew, because it is a word for compound unity.

Now there is another Hebrew word, "yachad" which is absolute unity. an absolute one. Achad is a compound unity. So, that we say that we are one congregation here tonight, but yet it is a compound unity. It is a compound one because there are many of us here, making up the one congregation. Now yachad, the absolute unity, is where it stands alone, complete by itself. Had in the great Schima of Exodus it declared, "The Lord our God is Yachad, one Lord", then there would be absolutely no basis for the teaching of the three persons of the one Godhead. But because the word "achad" is used of compound unity, it has within it the hint of the tri-unity of God, the compound unity, the more than one, and yet the unity within one, one God, manifested in three persons.

But this they could not accept, would not accept, and they were offended with Jesus because He was declaring to them His divinity. And they were ready to stone Him on more than one occasion, as He declared it to them. So the question, "What do you think of Christ, whose son is He?" "He is the son of David". That is, He is a man. He is not the Son of God. He is the son of David.

Now God promised to David that He would give to him a son to sit upon the throne forever. And so the son of David was a common title for the Messiah. You remember the blind men were saying, "Jesus thou son of David, have mercy on us." Common title for the Messiah. But though He was the son of David, He was much more, He was also the Son of God.

Paul the apostle, as he opens his epistle to the Romans, declares unto them, as he is writing verse three, "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3-4). Yes, coming from Mary, He was of the seed of David, but coming from God, He was the Son of God declared to be the Son of God, with power by His resurrection from the dead.

So they answered Him, "The son of David."

He said unto them, How then does David in the spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit down on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool (Mat 22:43-44).

Now in Psalm 110, one of those beautiful psalms prophesying the Messiah, recognized to be such, David opens that prophetic psalm with the statement, "The Lord", that is Jehovah or Yahweh, "said unto my Lord Adonai, sit down on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thou footstool"(Psalms 110:1). David is referring to the Messiah as his Lord.

Now if the Messiah is the son of David, then how is it that David calls Him, Lord? No father in that patriarchal society would ever call his son, "Lord". That was an absolute forbidden no, no. It was totally foreign to their whole culture and society where the father ruled until he died. Their authority and rule always went back to the father. That was as deeply engrained in their culture as anything, and never under any circumstance would a father call his son, "Lord". But that was the title by which the sons always addressed their fathers, for the father was the lord over his son, even after he was married, until the father died and the son would refer to his father as "lord".

Now, if Jesus is the son of David, then how is it that David by the spirit-- again notice that even Jesus recognizes that the writings of David were inspired by the Spirit of God? Peter when he was quoting one of David's psalms in Acts declared: "The Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake saying"(Acts 1:16), so recognized that David was a prophet of God; that the Spirit of God spoke through David. How is it then that David would refer to Him as his Lord?

If David then called him Lord, how could he be his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, and after that none of them dare to ask him any more questions (Mat 22:45-46).

Now Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power. Jesus said, "My Father bears witness of me". The word "bears witness of me", the Spirit bears witness of me, and my works bear witness of me. He said, "I don't bear witness of myself. If I bore witness of myself, then you would not believe me." But He said, "the Father, He bears witness of me." When Jesus was baptized, the voice of the Father spoke from heaven saying: "This is my beloved Son." Whose Son is He? God said: "He is my Son in whom I am well pleased." When Jesus was transfigured before His disciples on the mount of transfiguration, again, out of the cloud the voice of God said, "this is my beloved Son, hear ye Him"(Mat 17:5).

Now in the Old Testament God bore witness that He was His Son. In Psalm 2:7, there the Father bears witness that Jesus is the son. And I will declare the degree, "the Lord has said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." God's declaration of Him in the psalm, "thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee."

In 2 Samuel, 7:14, where God to David was promising the Messiah from His seed, the Lord said, "and I will be His Father, and He shall be my son." Isaiah 9:6, "for unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." That's looking at the birth of Christ from the two aspects; from the human aspect, "unto us a child is born: there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" a child is born. But from the divine side: "unto us a Son is given." God gave His only begotten Son. "And the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the prince of peace."

Definite messianic prophecy. And at the increase of His government and the peace, there shall be no end. But He is to be a Son that is given.

"Behold I give you sign," the Lord said to king Ahaz through Isaiah, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call His name, Immanuel"(Isaiah 7:14), which being interpreted, "God with us".

"What think ye of Christ, whose son is He?" And that's what it boils down to tonight. The question is still very relevant to each of us. What do you think of the Messiah? What do you think really now of Jesus Christ. Whose son was He? And He is either the son of some man from Nazareth, or He is the Son of God. The preponderance of evidence points to His being the Son of God. But it's so important your opinion to that question, or your answer to that question is so important, what you personally think of Jesus Christ. Whose Son is He? Now Jesus said, "the Father bears witness of me. The father bore witness in the Old Testament scriptures. The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke saying the Holy Spirit bore witness to Him. The Word bears witness to Him. His works bear witness to Him. Peter said, "we were eyewitnesses, we saw." But also more than that, we have the more sure Word of prophecy.

So that's were it stands tonight, what do you think of Christ, whose Son is He? Next week we get into some very interesting, exciting chapters. First of all twenty-three, and I love twenty-three. I personally just love the way Jesus just laid it on those guys. Now some people say, "that's not very Christ-like. Well, wait a minute; I am loving what Christ is doing. What is so unchrist-like about what Jesus did? Man, I mean He really caught them down, like Romaine never thought of doing. Then chapter twenty-four becomes very fascinating, because the twenty-fourth chapter Jesus answers the question. "What will be the sign of your coming in the end of the age?" And as we deal with the signs of the coming again of Jesus Christ, in Matthew twenty-four, and as we look at the world around us, hey, we'll realize we're there. And then the events that will take place, when Jesus comes again, as we get into Matthew twenty-five, and the judgment of the nations and all. And so much, much good information in our next lesson.

So we encourage you, read it over carefully this week, get some commentaries; study it. And then let's gather together again next Sunday night for this very fascinating study through Matthew twenty-three through twenty-five. May the Lord be with you and bless and keep you in His love through the power of His Holy Spirit, as you are enriched in your walk with Jesus Christ day by day as He ministers to you His strength, His power. And may you begin to experience more and more in your own life that power of God's love transforming you and changing you and making you into His image, by His Spirit which dwells within you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Matthew 23:1-39 (AMP)

1 THEN JESUS said to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat [of authority]. 3 So observe and practice all they tell you; but do not do what they do, for they preach, but do not practice. 4 They tie up heavy loads, hard to bear, and place them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not lift a finger to help bear them. 5 They do all their works to be seen of men; for they make wide their phylacteries (small cases enclosing certain Scripture passages, worn during prayer on the left arm and forehead) and make long their fringes [worn by all male Israelites, according to the command]. 6 And they take pleasure in and [thus] love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 And to be greeted with honor in the marketplaces and to have people call them rabbi. 8 But you are not to be called rabbi (teacher), for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone [in the church] on earth father, for you have one Father, Who is in heaven. 10 And you must not be called masters (leaders), for you have one Master (Leader), the Christ. 11 He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself [with haughtiness and empty pride] shall be humbled (brought low), and whoever humbles himself [whoever has a modest opinion of himself and behaves accordingly] shall be raised to honor. 13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces; for you neither enter yourselves, nor do you allow those who are about to go in to do so. 14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you swallow up widows' houses and for a pretense to cover it up make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation and the heavier sentence. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes one [a proselyte], you make him doubly as much a child of hell (Gehenna) as you are. 16 Woe to you, blind guides, who say, If anyone swears by the sanctuary of the temple, it is nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the sanctuary, he is a debtor [bound by his oath]. 17 You blind fools! For which is greater: the gold, or the sanctuary of the temple that has made the gold sacred? 18 You say too, Whoever swears by the altar is not duty bound; but whoever swears by the offering on the altar, his oath is binding. 19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar which makes the gift sacred? 20 So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And he who swears by the sanctuary of the temple swears by it and by Him Who dwells in it. 22 And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him Who sits upon it. 23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you give a tenth of your mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected and omitted the weightier (more important) matters of the Law—right and justice and mercy and fidelity. These you ought [particularly] to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, filtering out a gnat and gulping down a camel! 25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but within they are full of extortion (prey, spoil, plunder) and grasping self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and of the plate, so that the outside may be clean also. 27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you are like tombs that have been whitewashed, which look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything impure. 28 Just so, you also outwardly seem to people to be just and upright but inside you are full of pretense and lawlessness and iniquity. 29 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, 30 Saying, If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have aided them in shedding the blood of the prophets. 31 Thus you are testifying against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' sins to the brim [so that nothing may be wanting to a full measure]. 33 You serpents! You spawn of vipers! How can you escape the penalty to be suffered in hell (Gehenna)? 34 Because of this, take notice: I am sending you prophets and wise men (interpreters and teachers) and scribes (men learned in the Mosaic Law and the Prophets); some of them you will kill, even crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue and persecute from town to town, 35 So that upon your heads may come all the blood of the righteous (those who correspond to the divine standard of right) shed on earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar [of burnt offering]. 36 Truly I declare to you, all these [evil, calamitous times] will come upon this generation. 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, murdering the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a mother fowl gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused! 38 Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate (abandoned and left destitute of God's help). 39 For I declare to you, you will not see Me again until you say, Blessed (magnified in worship, adored, and exalted) is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!

Matthew's gospel twenty-three. Jesus has been at the temple and He was challenged as to His authority by these priests, and then He was asked questions by the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees. And then Jesus finally asked them a question. "What do you think of Christ, whose son is He?" And when they said, "the son of David." He said, "How can He be the son of David, when David by the spirit called Him Lord?" And no father would ever call his son "lord". That's just so totally against the culture. It's just not done. So they couldn't answer Him. And neither did they dare ask Him anymore questions after that (Mat 22:42-46).

Now still there in the temple, as we go into chapter twenty-three, we are still there within the temple precinct. Then Jesus turns from these questions and counter questions with the scribes and Pharisees, and He turns to the multitude that is gathered around Him, and to His disciples that are there. And the first part, the first twelve verses of chapter twenty-three are addressed to His disciples and the assembled multitude. And then beginning with verse thirteen, He turns to the scribes and the Pharisees, and really begins to lay a heavy one on them.

But first of all notice,

Jesus then spake to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat [or in Moses' chair] (Mat 23:1-2):

The Greek word is "cathedra", which is sort of a school, and you hear of a person who chairs the department of philosophy and all, and so it is the sitting there as a teacher, as a lecturer, in the area of Moses.

All therefore whatsoever they bid you to observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not (Mat 23:3).

Now, Jesus had just given a parable that the scribes and Pharisees had recognized was against them. He asked them, and they caught them or He caught them, and they realized that they were trapped by it. He had said to them: "There was a certain father who had two

sons. And to the first he said, go out in the field and work for me. And the son said, okay, Dad, I'll be glad to go. But he didn't go. Or the first one said, no, I won't go, and then later on he repented and went. The second one said, yeah, I'll go, and he never went". Now Jesus said, "which one really did the will of his father?" And they said, "Well, the one that went out." And Jesus said, "That's right. (Mat 21:28-31)"

Now Jesus is, you see, saying here, "Look, they say, but they don't do. Now you observe to do the things that they tell you to do, but don't follow their works, because they say things, but yet they themselves don't do them." The New Testament is quite emphatic in the fact that we are to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves. Paul as he was writing his epistle to the Romans, spoke of how that the Jews so often felt that they were justified, just because they had the law. Not because they were doing it, but because they had it, they felt that they were justified. It's just like so many people feel that they are Christians, just because they live in the United States. Not because they are actively following Jesus Christ, but after all, "I live in a Christian nation". But Jesus said, "Look, these men are saying it, but they are not doing it. So follow what they say, but don't follow their works".

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and they lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move one of them with their little fingers (Mat 23:4).

Now it is interesting as you go over to the Holy land and see the laborers and the heavy burdens that they bind, and lay on these laborers' shoulders, it's unreal. We have some fascinating pictures that look like a big bundle of sticks and all, walking down the road. I mean, all you can see are the feet underneath, but these guys are so laden down. They bound so many sticks and altogether, and put them on these guys' shoulders; that's all you can see are the feet underneath. And it looks like sticks are walking.

And so it was a picture that was very common to the people over there. The little donkeys, they really load those little donkeys down. Looks like sometimes you have four legs under the sticks walking. Or under this pile of sheaves or whatever, and they would bind these heavy, heavy burdens, and Jesus said, "and then they lay them on men's shoulders, grievous to be born." Now He is, of course speaking, figuratively.

They could see the figure in their mind. They had seen these fellows just loaded down with loads, just straining to try and carry it because they would lay so much on you. And so Jesus is saying this is what the scribes and Pharisees are doing. They lay these heavy, heavy burdens upon men, yet they themselves won't even move with one of their fingers. They won't lift anything with one of their little fingers. "For all of the works that they do, they do to be seen of men."

Now, you remember the Sermon on the Mount in the sixth chapter, Jesus began by declaring, "Take heed to yourselves, that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of men, for verily I say unto you, you have your reward" (Mat 6:1).

And then He talked about how you gave: "Don't sound the trumpet before you like the Pharisees, who like to make a big to-do over what they give, so all men can see what they are giving. But when you give, do it in secret, don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. When you pray, don't be like the Pharisees and all who love to stand on the street corners, that they might be seen of men, but go in your closet, shut the door. When you fast, don't be like the Pharisees, who go around with these long faces, and they look so gaunt and all, but anoint your face and all, that you don't appear unto men to fast" (Mat 6:2-6).

Now Jesus is here declaring again the very same thing, that the Pharisees and the scribes, their whole religion was an external, and their whole purpose and motive was that men might see them and look up to them as spiritual leaders. And so the very clothes they wore, the very affectations that they developed were to impress people with how spiritual, and how righteous they were, but it was all an outward show, but inwardly there was nothing there.

Be careful that you don't get caught in a religious sham, where it is just an all outward demonstration, and in your mind you're thinking; "I hope everybody sees me, how righteous I am. I go up on my tiptoes just in case, you know". The whole idea is to affect men with how spiritual and how righteous I am.

Some fellow came up to me Thursday night after service and said, "I stood up tonight while they were singing, and I was worshiping the Lord, and someone came up and told me to sit down, and I was just there worshiping the Lord." I said, "Well, whoever told you to sit down, told you right." I said, "If everybody else is sitting down, and you are standing, then all you are doing is drawing attention to you. We are not here to be attracted to you; we are here to be attracted to Jesus Christ."

Now you've got to be careful that in your worship of the Lord, that in your service to the Lord, that you don't get caught in the trap of doing things so as to draw attention to yourself. Whatever you do in your worship, or in your service, if the net effect is drawing attention to you, and this what's there within your heart, you're in the same category as the scribes and Pharisees. We've got to be very careful of this.

You see, my old nature is totally corrupt. So much so, that even when I am engaged in my spiritual activities, my old flesh would still like to do things in such a way that everybody will know how spiritual I am. I would like people to know just how deeply committed my life is to God. How much time I devote myself into just seeking the Lord and His Word. In fact, in reality I want people to think that I do more than I really do. And so often, I try to give an impression that I am more spiritual than I really am, that I am more deeply committed than I really am, that I have a greater prayer life than I really do. But whenever I try to give that impression to people, I am a hypocrite. I am guilty of hypocrisy. I am seeking to impress people. I should be interested only in impressing God with my righteous living, and I know that God can't be impressed. But I should only be thinking of God when I am in worship, when I am in prayer, when I am giving. I should never be doing it for the effect that I can create in the mind of men, but I should always just be doing as unto the Lord, in that secret place of fellowship and communion.

Now, Jesus said,

For all of their works they do to be seen of men: and they make broad their phylacteries (Mat 23:5),

Now the phylactery was the little box that they would bind on their wrist and bind on their forehead. And they were told under the law that they were to take and bind the law of God to the frontlets and their hands and so forth, and so there are these little leather boxes. And every day when they go to pray, except the Sabbath day, because on the Sabbath day you are not to bear any burdens and so forth, so they don't do it on the Sabbath day; but every day as they go to prayer, they go through this ritual. First of all, binding their arm, and tying this little box on their arm.

Now in this little box on the hand there is one chamber in the little box and it has four passages of scripture from the Old Testament, in little scrolls in this little leather box on their hand. The one on their forehead, and they bind another leather thong around their forehead in this little leather box on their forehead, and in that there are four compartments, and these same four passages on little scrolls, only one little scroll in each four compartments. Now, these Pharisees, they would get big boxes, broaden their phylacteries, so everybody can see, "I am really heavy-duty prayer, because, look the big box that I got here". And they would broaden their phylacteries, and of course the whole idea was people might observe them and see them.

And then of course they enlarged the borders of their garment (Mat 23:5),

Or these little tassels that they would put on their garments, and again they were to be more or less symbols. There was that law in the Old Testament of these fringes on their garments that they were to make, and so they would enlarge these fringes.

Now today they still have the fringes, but they put them on the prayer shawls that they wear. And of course, going to the Western Wall of the temple is always an interesting experience that you see them come up, and they start binding the phylacteries, and they take their prayer shawls with the fringes, even to the present day, and wrap them around in a traditional way, and then they go up and begin to read their prayers before the Wall. And it's quite a fascinating scene to watch.

And so Jesus is saying though, that with them they were doing it in such a way as to draw attention to themselves, that they might appear before men to be holy, or righteous.

Now,

They loved the uppermost rooms at the feast, and the chief seats in the synagogue (Mat 23:6),

The chief seats were down in the front, but they were facing the congregation, so that the whole congregation can see me going through my little prayers and all, and the whole congregation can see how righteous I am. And they loved those chief seats in the Synagogue. They loved the upper places in the feast and all. And they loved,

The greetings in the markets, to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi (Mat 23:7).

Doctor, Doctor. Reverend.

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your master, even Christ; [and notice,] all of you are brethren (Mat 23:8).

Now He is talking to His disciples. He said don't get into that spiritual hierarchy trip. You're all brothers. There is not one above the other. You are all one together. You are all brothers. Don't seek to promote yourself. Don't seek the best places. When you bid onto the feast, He said take the lower place. And if the host says, "oh come, sit up here," He said then you're in good shape. But if you take the upper seat and the host says, "Hey, what are you doing up here? You belong down here at the end of the table" then it's a very embarrassing thing. So better that you take a lower seat, and let them bid you higher, than to take the higher seat, and let them direct you lower. You're brothers. Don't try and develop a hierarchy where oh, you know, Reverend, Rabbi, or whatever.

And then He said,

And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven (Mat 23:9).

So the title of father was prohibited by Jesus. In my associations I have become acquainted and friends of many ministers within the Episcopal Church and also within the Catholic Church. And I have extreme difficulty in knowing how to address them, because for the life of me I cannot call them father so-and-so, because Jesus said not to. And so to me it creates a difficult thing as to how to address them, because they are usually introduced, "This is father so-and-so" and I just have a hang-up with this, but I just can't address a man "father" in a spiritual sense. I don't know. Do what you want, but I just have problems.

Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ (Mat 23:10).

In other words, Jesus is putting down the idea of titles. These guys love their titles, but you know a title really has an effect, a separation of people, and the elevation. And Jesus is really coming against this idea of the elevating of one man over another by some kind of a title. And that is why I personally disdain titles. I don't want a title. And it's interesting the letters that I get as people are trying to tack titles onto my name. And I always know that they don't know me very well. If they knew me better, they wouldn't tack a title on my name. So Jesus is saying, "Hey, you're all brothers." So "hey, brother Chuck", but even that is sort of a title. Just Chuck is good enough.

Jesus said,

He that is greatest among you shall be your servant (Mat 23:11).

Not to establish this spiritual hierarchy and oh, oh.

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that humble himself shall be exalted (Mat 23:12).

Now having declared that to His disciples, these are the rules for His disciples. He now turns and addresses Himself to these scribes and the Pharisee. And He has an eightfold denunciation against them, pronouncing an eightfold woe. To my disciples, don't follow their example. They say, but they don't do. They exalt themselves. They draw attention to themselves. They love to be exalted and elevated above people, but you are brothers. If you're going to be the chief; be the servant. Humble yourself and God will exalt you. But exalt yourself and God will abase you.

Now woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! (Mat 23:13)

We sang "Jesus what a wonder you are. You are so gentle, so pure and so kind." And for the most part Jesus was a very gentle person, so that when He gets to the place of the strong denunciation, you really take note. Now if some guy has a high temper, and he is going around blowing off all the time, you soon get to where you don't pay attention anymore. "Oh, he is always blowing off steam, don't worry about it". But if a fellow is generally very meek and mild temperament, but suddenly he begins to really let off the steam, then you say; "Wow, what's going on here? He's really heavy." And so Jesus really came down on them.

Now I am interested in the attitude of Jesus towards out-and-out acknowledged sinners, and contrast that with His attitude towards those spiritual leaders. To the woman who was taken in adultery and brought to Him by the Pharisees, and said, "We caught this woman in the very act of adultery, and our law says, stone her. What do you say?" If she was caught in the very act, where was the man? Surely he must have been caught too. But the poor woman didn't have much rights in those days. So they brought the woman to Jesus, and He said, "Well, I say unto you, let him that is without sin throw the first stone"(John 8:7). And then He knelt down and began to draw in the dust or write in the dust, and probably wrote out the sins of these various guys were guilty of committing, and one by one, they began to leave the crowd until there was no one left, but the woman. And Jesus finally stood up and He said, "Where are your accusers?" And she said, "well, I guess they've all gone." And He said, "Neither do I condemn you, go your way and sin no more"(John 8:11). Very gentle, very forgiving, very loving, very kind.

To the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands, and now had just moved in with a man without the benefit of marriage, Jesus talked to her about the glorious water of life that would satisfy that inner need in her life, where she wouldn't be thirsty again. And He spoke with her so gently of eternal life, and the things of God. She was really a very wicked person. Always gentle with the sinners, who were acknowledged sinners. He never turned away one who came repenting. His arms were always open to receive, His words were always kind, and forgiving, and loving. But to those who had this pretense of being so spiritual, those who had the pretense of being so righteous and were trying to foster themselves off on the common people as spiritually superior, I mean Jesus really got heavy.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for neither go ye in yourselves, but you will not allow those who are entering to go in (Mat 23:13).

Not only have you not really entered in, but you would hinder those who would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Unfortunately this is also true today in many areas of the church, where the ministers of those churches have been caught up into liberalism and modernism. And they do not really enter into the kingdom of heaven, but also they prohibit people; they stand in the way, they make fun of the scriptures. They make light of the scriptures or they seek to declare that the scriptures really aren't the scriptures.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence you make a long prayer [but your prayers are only pretensions]: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is guilty. You fools, blind: what is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And you say, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it's nothing; but whosoever swears by the gift that is upon the altar, he is guilty. You fools and blind: whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, swears by it, and all of the things that are on it. And whoso swears by the temple, swears by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and him that sits thereon. Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! (Mat 23:14-23)

I mean, He is really getting down on them for their traditional teachings. You know if you swear, you are making an oath now, "I swear by the temple, I'll do it." You swore by the temple. Oh well, that's all right. He doesn't have to keep it, it's not a binding oath. "I swear by the gold in the temple." Ho, ho, ho, look out now, that's binding. I mean stupid, ridiculous, traditional things that had been developed and had become a part of their actual belief systems, dogmas that had turned into doctrines, traditions, that were being taught for doctrine. Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! because you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin (Mat 23:23), Now these are little spices. And everybody had their own spice garden and they would raise their own anise, their own cummin and mint, and they would be careful. Now how much cummin do you use when you're cooking? But they would take out of the spice garden, and they take and give ten percent to God. Very careful to measure out their spices, the mint, the anise, and their cummin to give God His ten percent.

So careful, yet, Jesus said,

you have omitted the way to your matters of the law, you've past over completely, judgement, and mercy, and faith (Mat 23:23):

Now concerning the tithe, notice, Jesus said,

you ought to have done that [you ought to pay your tithes], but you are not to leave the other undone (Mat 23:23).

Now Jesus does confirm that. They were correct in paying tithes. But they were very incorrect in not really seeking justices, and mercy, and faith.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat [or strain out a gnat], and swallow a camel (Mat 23:24).

Now when they would drink their wine, they would pour it through a cloth, in case a little gnat may have flown into the wine, for if they would drink the wine with a gnat in it, the gnat wasn't kosher. The gnat had blood in it, and they were not to eat anything with the blood; therefore, they would strain their wine, so they would be careful not to drink any gnats. "But they in turn," Jesus said, "you are swallowing camels." Now a camel is also an unclean beast. But it's interesting that when you get into the fine points of picking in religious systems, how picky people can get in small little things, and yet they omit the more important things. And Jesus, of course, goes along with your paying tithes of your spices, but you're not really seeking judgment, or mercy, or faith. You're straining out the gnats, but you are swallowing camels.

You blind guides,

Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within you're full of extortion and excess (Mat 23:25).

Now picture this, of a filthy cup inside. Outside your looking, "Oh, I am so thirsty", get a drink of water. You see this beautiful, clean, sparkling cup, and you pick it up, and you look inside, and all this filth and vermin in there, yuck. The outside looks so good, but the inside is so filthy. And Jesus said, "that's the way you guys are. You look so good on the outside, but the inside there is extortion, there is greed, there is all of these excesses.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also (Mat 23:26).

More important that the inside be clean than the outside. Men will start on the outward appearance; God is looking on the heart. And in the New Testament Jesus, and of course through the epistles is also emphasized, that more important than the outward actions or the inner attitudes of a man's heart. It's what's within that the Lord is really counting and looking at. People can have an outward observance of righteousness, of religious rituals, of worship and all, but within it isn't there. The Lord said, "Look, it's got to be inside, that's where you got to start. And from what is inside we'll work out, but the attitude is more important than the actions".

There are a lot of people doing the right things in the wrong ways. What they are doing may be right, but the attitude in which they are doing it is completely wrong. I would rather do the wrong thing and have a right attitude, than do the right thing and have a wrong attitude, because God can change my activities in a hurry. But many times it takes an entire lifetime to change the attitude of a man's heart. What's in your heart is what the Lord says counts.

Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful on the outside (Mat 23:27),

They would go and whitewash the sepulchres, but within-- on the outside they looked so pretty, so clean, but inside they are full of [just skeletons] dead men's bones, and all of the putrefying rotten flesh. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you're full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! because you've build the tombs of the prophets, and you garnish, [decorate] the sepulchres of the righteous (Mat 23:27-29),

When you go over to Israel today, you can see in the Kidron Valley, some of the tombs of the prophets that had been build. In fact, they call them the "tombs of the prophets". Also, you can see how they garnish the sepulchres. You can go to what they call "the tomb of David". And there is a big silver casket there in which David's remains supposedly are lying, and all of the garnishing, all of the trappings and all that they have around this. And they come there and sit and pray, there by David's tomb. But oh, they really still garnish so much this tomb of David.

"You honor your fathers," is actually what He is saying. You give honor to your fathers, and you say;

if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets (Mat 23:30).

Oh, had we've been there, we would have been righteous, and we would have been pure.

Wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves, for you are the children of those who killed the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? (Mat 23:31-33)

Hey, He sounds like a hellfire and brimstone preacher.

Wherefore, behold, I sent to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you're going to kill and crucify: and some of them you're going to scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed from upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom you killed between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation (Mat 23:34-36).

Actually in the crucifying of Christ, they became guilty of the worst of the heinous sins that man has ever committed. Their fathers had killed the prophets, Isaiah, and so many of the prophets were slain by the people in their days. But Jesus said, "you are going to kill the One of whom all the prophets spoke of." Stephen laid on the charge, "you killed the One of whom all the prophets spoke" (Acts 7:52).

Now Jesus turns after this heavy denunciation and He reveals His heart.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and have stoned those that have been sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not! (Mat 23:37)

In spite of all that they had done Jesus said, "Look, I'd still love to gather your children together". The love that God had, had not diminished. He still loved them. But it was they who refused. It wasn't that the opportunity wasn't there, it wasn't that God was not merciful and forgiving, it wasn't that God wouldn't do it still for them, but they would not. And thus as the result,

your house is left unto you desolate (Mat 23:38).

It has come to an end. It's been left desolate. It's all over. You've received the opportunity of the grace of God, you have refused it, and thus the nation Israel will no longer be the light through which God will shine forth to a dark world. Your house is left desolate.

For I say unto you, You will not see me again, until you are saying, Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord (Mat 23:39).

You won't see me until the persecution is so heavy, the tribulation so great that you'll be saying, " Oh, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." And they'll be crying out and praying for Him before He returns.

Recently in one of my trips to Israel I was speaking at a congress in Jerusalem, which was called "the Peace of Jerusalem Congress". It was a congress in which the churches of the world were expressing towards the people of Israel our love for them and our support for them. And when I arrived at my hotel room, I had a letter there from one of the rabbis from Measheream. And he was saying: "What are you doing here, speaking of support for Israel? Israel has no right to exist as a nation." And he went on and was really taking me to task for speaking at this congress in support of the nation of Israel.

And so I took the letter to some of my Jewish friends there in Jerusalem, and I said: "Look at this greeting that I got from one of your rabbis." And of course these friends had help set up this whole meeting, and we're all gung-ho, because they realized the value of the support of the Christian Church for the nation of Israel. And I said, "Look what one of your rabbis has sent to me." And they read it, and they said, "Oh, don't pay any attention to it. Those guys are fanatics. They're just radical, they're fanatics, don't pay any attention to it." I said, "but he is a rabbi." "Yeah, but rabbis can be fanatics too."

I said, "Oh, really, then you mean that he is no doubt wrong in his idea that Israel shouldn't be a nation, because he is just a fanatic? He's made a mistake in this? "Oh, yeah, yeah." I said, "Do you realize that some rabbis made a serious mistake two thousand years ago? And that unfortunately you're still following their serious mistake." I said, "How do you know?" But they weren't just a bunch of radicals, just like this rabbi that wrote me, who made a tragic mistake. "And here, though two thousand years later, you're still following the advice of those rabbis who rejected Jesus as the Messiah." I said, "They were fanatics. They were radicals." The guys were silent.

Matthew 24:1-51 (AMP)

1 JESUS DEPARTED from the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to Him to call His attention to the buildings of the temple and point them out to Him. **2** But He answered them, Do you see all these? Truly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. **3** While He was seated on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately and said, Tell us, when will this take place, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end (the completion, the consummation) of the age? **4** Jesus answered them, Be careful that no one misleads you [deceiving you and leading you into error]. **5** For many will come in (on the strength of) My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying, I am the Christ (the Messiah), and they will lead many astray. **6** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened or troubled, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. **7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in place after place; **8** All this is but the beginning [the early pains] of the birth pangs [of the intolerable anguish]. **9** Then they will hand you over to suffer affliction and tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. **10** And then many will be offended and repelled and will begin to distrust and desert [Him Whom they ought to trust and obey] and will stumble and fall away and betray one another and pursue one another with hatred. **11** And many false prophets will rise up and deceive and lead many into error. **12** And the love of the great body of people will grow cold because of the multiplied lawlessness and iniquity, **13** But he who endures to the end will be saved. **14** And this good news of the kingdom (the Gospel) will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then will come the end. **15** So when you see the appalling sacrilege [the abomination that astonishes and makes desolate], spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place—let the reader take notice and ponder and consider and heed [this]— **16** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; **17** Let him who is on the housetop not come down and go into the house to take anything; **18** And let him who is in the field not turn back to get his overcoat. **19** And alas for the women who are pregnant and for those who have nursing babies in those days! **20** Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. **21** For then there will be great tribulation (affliction, distress, and oppression) such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now—no, and never will be [again]. **22** And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would endure and survive, but for the sake of the elect (God's chosen ones) those days will be shortened. **23** If anyone says to you then, Behold, here is the Christ (the Messiah)! or, There He is!—do not believe it. **24** For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and they will show great signs and wonders so as to deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect (God's chosen ones). **25** See, I have warned you beforehand. **26** So if they say to you, Behold, He is in the wilderness (desert)—do not go out there; if they tell you, Behold, He is in the secret places or inner rooms—do not believe it. **27** For just as the lightning flashes from the east and shines and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. **28** Wherever there is a fallen body (a corpse), there the vultures (or eagles) will flock together. **29** Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **30** Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and beat their breasts and lament in anguish, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [in brilliancy and splendor]. **31** And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect (His chosen ones) from the four winds, [even] from one end of the universe to the other. **32** From the fig tree learn this lesson: as soon as its young shoots become soft and tender and it puts out its leaves, you know of a surety that summer is near. **33** So also when you see these signs, all taken together, coming to pass, you may know of a surety that He is near, at the very doors. **34** Truly I tell you, this generation (the whole multitude of people living at the same time, in a definite, given period) will not pass away till all these things taken together take place. **35** Sky and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. **36** But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **37** As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **38** For just as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, [men] marrying and [women] being given in marriage, until the [very] day when Noah went into the ark, **39** And they did not know or understand until the flood came and swept them all away—so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **40** At that time two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. **41** Two women will be grinding at the hand mill; one will be taken and one will be left. **42** Watch therefore [give strict attention, be cautious and active], for you do not know in what kind of a day [whether a near or remote one] your Lord is coming. **43** But understand this: had the householder known in what [part of the night, whether in a night or a morning] watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be undermined and broken into. **44** You also must be ready therefore, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him. **45** Who then is the faithful, thoughtful, and wise servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household to give to the others the food and supplies at the proper time? **46** Blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied) is that servant whom, when his master comes, he will find so doing. **47** I solemnly declare to you, he will set him over all his possessions. **48** But if that servant is wicked and says to himself, My master is delayed and is going to be gone a long time, **49** And begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken, **50** The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour of which he is not aware, **51** And will punish him [cut him up by scourging] and put him with the pretenders (hypocrites); there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

Chapter 24

Now Jesus went out (Mat 24:1),

Left the house desolate. He is rejected now. They've rejected Him, now He has rejected them. Leave the house desolate; you're not going to see me again until you are saying, "blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord."

And so they are not going to see Him, until He comes, until He comes again.

So as Jesus was going out,

and departing from the temple: his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple (Mat 24:1).

They were remarking really on the stones, one of the gospels tells us. And according to Josephus they were huge stones. Many of them weighing up to one hundred ten to one hundred and twenty tons, all carved out so perfectly that they fit together so smoothly, that you cannot even to the present day, insert a knife blade between them. How in the world they ever carved these so perfectly, and lifted them into position, is still a mystery today. The engineering, by which Herod built the Western Retaining Wall using many of these same huge stones, is still an engineering marvel today; however, they did it. It was really a marvel of engineering.

So they were showing Jesus the buildings, this fabulous building that was built up there on the temple mount by Herod.

And Jesus said unto them, You see all of these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Mat 24:2).

This prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled some forty years later, when Titus came into Jerusalem with the Roman troops set fire to the temple, which was the last stronghold in Citadel, in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem were holding out. And so they set fire to the temple, actually against Titus' order. He wanted to preserve the temple, but some drunken soldier shot a flaming arrow, the temple caught fire, the people inside were cremated. The gold in the dome melted and came down in these crevasses. And so they threw down the temple stone by stone, to get the gold, until finally not one stone was left standing upon the other.

Today in Jerusalem near the Western Wall just east of the entrance into the temple mount by which you go up to Al-Aqsa mosque, as you look down on the right hand side to the old Roman road, which is down at the bottom of the valley there that has now been excavated, you can see some stones lying just as they fell, just as they were pushed by the Roman soldiers in 70 A.D. when they sacked Jerusalem. And they believe that some of these stones were actually from that temple of which Jesus spake. And you can see the rubble down there in the bottom of the valley, as these stones were just pushed over, and cracked, and broken, and are still lying in disarray in the bottom there on the street, broke these great pavement stones of the street as they fell. But the prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled, so that not one stone of Solomon's temple was left standing upon another. They have all been thrown down.

Now He left then the temple area and He went over to the Mount of Olives, and

He sat down there on the Mount of Olives (Mat 24:3),

And the disciples passing through the Kidron, and of course, you who have been there can picture this in your mind now, going out from the temple area, probably passing through the East gate and over on the Mount of Olives, and sitting there probably under some of those olive trees.

the disciples came unto him privately, and they said, Tell us, when are these things going to be? [that is, the destruction of the temple] and what will be the sign of your coming, in the end of the age? (Mat 24:3)

Not the end of the world, as the material world is going to dissolve and be gone, but the end of this age, the age of man's rebellion against God, the end of the age of man's iniquity and sinfulness; before you usher in the new age of God's glorious kingdom. What are going to be the signs?

And so Jesus answered and said, Take heed that no men deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah; and they shall deceive many (Mat 24:4-5).

It is true that through the ages many men have come, claiming to be the Savior of the world. And it is true that these men have deceived many. There are even those today who have large followings, who claim to be the Messiah. This claim has been made by many leaders of cultic groups.

David Berg leading "the children of God", Sunyut Moon leading the Monies, and so many laying claim to being the Messiah. Jesus said, "Don't let any men deceive you."

Now He said,

You're going to hear of wars and rumors of wars: don't be troubled: for all of these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (Mat 24:6).

Wars and rumors of wars. Since the time of Christ there have been thirteen years of war to every one year of peace. So the fact that there is going to be a war, the fact that there is a war going on in Iran and Iraq is no sign.

But Jesus said,

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom [in the Greek, this speaks of world wars and this is a sign]: there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places (Mat 24:7).

These all constitute signs of His return, world wars. We've had two of them, beginning in 1914. Famines; the earth today is plagued with famines. It is estimated fifteen million people annually die of causes related to malnutrition. Pestilences, viruses, and earthquakes in divers places.

All of these are just the beginning of the sorrows (Mat 24:8). This is starting it.

Now they are going to deliver you up to be afflicted, they will kill you: you will be hated of all nations for my name's sake (Mat 24:9).

And surely the disciples, all of them were martyred, with the exception of John the beloved. In Foxes Book of Martyrs, he lists the death, and the manner of deaths of all of the disciples, and it's a book that will really give you an appreciation of the heritage that we have and the price that was paid to bring it to us.

Then many shall be offended, they'll betray one another, they'll hate one another. Many false prophets shall arise, and deceive many (Mat 24:10-11).

There will be the false messiahs and there will also be false prophets, arising and deceiving many people. And my wife told me not to get on that tonight, so I won't.

And because the iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Mat 24:12).

Today we are living in a time when iniquity abounds. And the result of the abounding iniquity is the love of many people has really grown cold for the things of the Lord.

But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved (Mat 24:13).

"Hang in there," He is saying.

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 (Mat 24:14).

Now there are those who see a problem with the coming of Jesus Christ in the near future, because they say there are many tribes that have not yet heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul the apostle when he wrote to the Colossians, some thirty years after the birth of the church said, "and the gospel as it is come to you, as it is in all the world"(Colossians 1:23). And as far as Paul was concerned, the gospel in his day had gone into all the world. It is true that there are still areas of the world that are yet basically unreached, but not any major national group. The gospel has gone to every major national group. The gospel has been rejected. It's been outlawed in some areas; but nonetheless, it has gone. However, Jesus is just declaring; "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness, and then shall the end come." He does not say that the church will be the instrument necessarily that is preaching this gospel.

Now I do know that many missions' groups take this as their real challenge and impetus for foreign missionary work, but I do not feel that it is a necessary requirement that the Lord cannot come for the church, until we have taken the gospel into all the world; and thus, our primary emphasis should be missionary outreach getting the gospel into all the world so Jesus can come again.

In the fourteenth chapter in the book of Revelation, there John saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel. "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them to dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred and tongue and people"(Revelation 14:6). Notice, the gospel is being preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. "Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgement is come: worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters"(Revelation 14:7). So the gospel will be preached. And of course this is right at the end of the great tribulation period, but the proclaimers of the gospel at that time, really are not the church, but the angels flying through the midst of heaven.

Now whether or not this is satellite telecommunications, I don't know, but surely they fly through the midst of heaven, and they have the capacity of beaming the gospel on to all the nations. And whether or not the Lord will use that for the fulfillment of this, I don't know, but I do know that God has intended, and God plans to give every man a chance. And every man will be warned. Another angel in chapter fourteen flies through the midst of heaven, warning people not to worship the antichrist, not to take his mark, and warning them of the impending doom, of anybody who dares to worship him, or to receive his mark (Revelation 14:9,11). So that is not really a requirement that the church spread the gospel unto all the world so that Jesus can return.

Jesus then said,

When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) Then let him which be in Judaea flee to the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. But woe unto them that are with child, and to those that are nursing in those days! (Mat 24:15-19) Now Jesus makes reference to the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about. And then He said, "whoso reads, let him understand." Now do you understand the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about? If you do not then you should study it so that you can understand what the abomination of desolation is, that was spoke by Daniel the prophet.

We find that this first appears in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, where the angel declares unto Daniel, that there are "seventy sevens determined upon the nation of Israel, to finish the transgressions, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in the everlasting kingdom, to finish the prophecies, and to anoint the most holy place. Now therefore no one understand, that from the time the commandment goes forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, to the coming of the Messiah the Prince, will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens. And the walls will be built again in troublous times"(Daniel 9:24-25).

So the prophecy to Daniel concerning the nation of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, is that there are seventy sevens that have been determined upon the nation of Israel. And sixty-nine sevens would transpire between the time that the commandment would go forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, which did go forth in 445 BC by Artaxerxes. And from that time it be four hundred and eighty-three years; seven sevens, forty-nine years and threescore and two sevens, or four hundred and sixty-two years, four hundred and eighty-three years altogether, and that from this time to the Messiah. So Christ came four hundred and eighty-three years after the commandment went forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

But then the angel said to Daniel, "but the Messiah will be cut off, with nothing for Himself or the Messiah actually will be cut off, and not receive the kingdom. And the people will be dispersed. There would be a flood, or dispersion (Daniel 9:26). And so the prediction of the Jewish nation being dispersed after the sixty-ninth sevens.

Now in the beginning he said, "seventy sevens are determined upon the nation Israel". So there is a one missing seven-year cycle that God is determined upon the nation of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem. The Messiah came after the four hundred and eighty-three years. The Messiah was cut off. He did not receive the kingdom. The Roman troops came, the Jews were dispersed. So you still have a seven-year period that is not yet fulfilled. Now the Lord does not leave us in total darkness concerning these seven years.

He then went on to say, now the prince of the people that shall come, that would be the leader of this final world empire the ten nation federation in Europe, who is called the son of perdition, the man of sin, the beast, or several different names in the scriptures, commonly called the antichrist; he will make a covenant with the nation of Israel. Through his covenant he will be hailed as the Messiah; and thus the covenant no doubt will entail somewhat the rebuilding of the temple, because they say today, that they will recognize the Messiah because he will help them to build their temple and restore the worship. And that's how they plan to recognize the Messiah.

So he makes a covenant with the nation of Israel, but in the midst of that seven-year period, or after three and a half years, he will break the covenant, as he establishes, or sets up the abomination, which causes desolation. Now the abomination which causes desolation is when he, after three and a half years returns to Jerusalem, and comes into the holy temple, that has been rebuilt and stands in the holy place, defiling it, by declaring or showing that he himself is God.

Paul tells us in second Thessalonians, chapter two, that he will stand in the temple of God, showing that he himself is God, and demand to be worshiped as God. And Jesus said when you see this, the abomination of desolation, that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, then flee to the wilderness and pray that your flight will not be in the winter nor on the Sabbath day. He is talking definitely Jewish language, to Jewish people.

Now according to the book of Revelation the antichrist, which is the beast, the man of sin, is going to make war against Israel. And God, he said, is going to give them wings of an angel to bear them to a wilderness place, where they will be nourished for three and a half years. And when the dragon sees that they have been escaped from him, he will send out an army after them, and the earth will open up and swallow the army. But they will be preserved of God in this wilderness place for three and a half years (Revelation 12:14).

In Isaiah sixteen, God said to Jordan, actually to Petra; open up your gates and receive my people, bear them safely to Petra, that they might be there until the indignation, which is the Old Testament word for the great tribulation, until the indignation be overpassed.

So Jesus is saying, "Look, when you see this abomination of desolation, for three and a half years into this final seven year period, when you see this abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about standing in the holy place, that's the sign for you to get out of there, and get out of there fast. Don't bother going to your house to get anything, just get out. The Lord will preserve you when you get down to Petra, but get out of there as fast as you can.

And so that is what the abomination of desolation is. It is when the antichrist stands in the temple, showing that he is God, and demands to be worshiped as God. This is the final straw of man's rebellion, and this is what precipitates the Great Tribulation period. It is at this point that God's fury, the cup of the indignation of His wrath will overflow, and God's judgement will come down upon this Christ-rejecting world, and you will have the period known in the Bible as the Great Tribulation period, which will last one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

And it is given in great detail in the book of Revelation, beginning with chapter six and going through chapter eighteen. So if you want to know the things that will be transpiring during that three and a half-year period of time, God has spelled it out in great detail for you. All I can say is you don't want to be here. And thank God you don't have to be here, because God has not appointed us unto wrath. That's His Word to us.

Now, Jesus said,

Pray that your flight will not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Mat 24:20-21).

The time of the greatest tribulation that the world has ever seen. Now there are some who say that this took place, the abomination of desolation took place when Titus came in and destroyed the temple. No, because the Great Tribulation had not taken place; it did not follow Titus' destruction of the temple. And John writing the book of Revelation wrote long after the temple was destroyed by Titus, and details the Great Tribulation as a yet future event, that will take place after the church things.

show you things are going to be after these church things. And immediately I was caught up by the Spirit, I saw the throne of God." And he describes it, chapter five, he describes the scroll in the right hand of Him, who is sitting upon the throne, and the worship and glory that is given to Christ, when He takes the scroll, and assumes the authority and power that is His. Chapter six He begins to break the seals of this scroll, and as He does, first of all the white horse with his rider, the antichrist coming over, taking over the earth, followed by the wars, and the famines, and the death. And then we proceed on into the Great Tribulation period, yet future.

Now Jesus said, concerning these days,

Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be save: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened (Mat 24:22).

The elect's, God's people the Jews. So the tribulation will be so horrible, the war and all that will break out. The great battle of Armageddon, so fierce, so great, that unless God would shorten those days, no flesh would remain. And so for the elect's sake, God will shorten those days.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; don't believe it. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets (Mat 24:23-24),

Now there will be the false Christ, the Antichrist, and he will have the false Prophet, who will come to cause the world to worship him. In Revelation chapter thirteen, it tells you about the false Messiah, and the false Prophet, who will lead the world to worship the false Messiah. And we are told in Revelation that they will come with great signs, and wonders, and miracles. And of course in second Thessalonians chapter two, as Paul was talking about this man of sin, he talks how he deceives the world with the signs and the miracles and the wonders that he is able to perform.

Now a person, who has premised his faith and belief upon signs and miracles and wonders, is really in sort of a dangerous position. If you don't premise your faith in the Word of God, but you are looking for signs, miracles, and wonders, hey, you haven't seen anything yet. When the Antichrist comes he is going to be able to do all kinds of supernatural things. And because of that power he will deceive many.

Jesus is warning over and over, don't be deceived. If possible,

the signs and wonders are so great; if possible, even the very elect would be deceived. Behold, [He said] I've told you now before it happens. Wherefore, if they say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: or if they say, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not (Mat 24:24-26).

Jehovah witnesses say that Christ came in 1917 into a secret chamber, where He now rules the world. We've entered into the millennial age. Isn't this glorious, friends? The Bible says that Satan will be bound during this period of time. If Satan is bound, with his great chain, all I can say is the leash is too long.

Now Jesus is talking of His coming and He says,

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west; so shall the coming of the Son of man be (Mat 24:27).

Now does that sound to you like a secret coming in a private chamber someplace? I tell you there is nothing secret about lightening that lights up the whole sky.

For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together (Mat 24:28).

Now there is a lot of problem on the interpretation of what Jesus meant, by "wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together", and the interpretations fight each other and are indirect opposition to each other. The one interpretation is that the carcass refers to all of the dead bodies that will be in the Valley of Megiddo after that great slaughter in the war there. And where God invites, in Revelation chapter seventeen, the birds of the air to come feast upon the kings, and the chief captains, and men and so forth. And that it will be the vultures that will come into the Valley of Megiddo to devour all of these slain bodies that are there.

And someone even had a rumor that vultures were multiplying very rapidly in Israel, and that all the vultures were laying four and five eggs, instead of the usual two and all, which is all a bunch of poppycock. But people get those stories going, and then they have a way of embellishing them and enlarging them. Now that's one interpretation.

The other interpretation --and let me say the word is "eagle", not vulture. And the other interpretation is so different from the first, and they say the carcass is really the body of Christ, and the eagles are the saints. So you see how diverse the interpretations of this particular verse actually are.

Now I for one am not willing to get into the dispute of which interpretation is right. There are many things that I have filed in my file up here in my brain that says wait for further information before you make a solid decision or commitment. This is one of those areas. I really don't know which interpretation is right, and I am really open. I don't know, and I confess, I don't know. I can see the problems with either interpretation. I can see the validity for both interpretations, and I personally do not know which interpretation is correct, and thus you're free. I've given you both interpretations to choose whichever one fits your schema best, and you can go with it.

Now immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened (Mat 24:29); This will be the final aspect of the tribulation, the great cataclysmic signs in the heavens. The sun darkened, the moon will not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear (Mat 24:29-30) When? Immediately after the tribulations of those days, 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 (Mat 24:30). Now the Jehovah Witnesses really have a time when they get to this verse of scripture, double-talking. And they'll throw you off with this one immediately. They don't like this scripture at all, because Jesus already came, but He is in a secret chamber. Nobody saw Him, except their leaders who are now getting their instructions from Him, see, setting up His theocracy through them upon the earth. But here it says, "and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." All of the tribes of the earth. 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 (Mat 24:31). Now those who take the post-tribulation theory, that Jesus is not going to take the church out until after the Great Tribulation, use this as one of their chief verses to defend their position. For He shall then, after He returns, after the Great Tribulation, He will then send His angels with the sound of a trumpet. The trumpet of God shall sound, "and they shall gather together, His elect from the four winds from one end of the heavens to the other."

Now one thing that they always disregard is that the Bible speaks of that trump by which the church will be caught up to glory, as the trump of God always shall sound; whereas, they confuse that with the seventh trumpet of the book of Revelation, because the trump of God is called the last trump. And so they say, the seventh trump is the last trumpet in the book of Revelation. But again in the book of Revelation there, the trumpets of the seven angels, and the seven angels prepared to sound their seven trumpets. And there is a vast difference between the seventh trumpet, which is declared to be a woe, and that trump of God whereby the church should be called to her reward.

Now this particular verse is one of those compilations where Jesus put together three verses out of the Old Testament; whereby, God has promised that when the return of Christ takes place, and the kingdom is established, that God is again going to take back the Jews as His people, as a nation, and He is going to bring them back in the land, and honor them once more.

And in Deuteronomy chapter thirty, three and four, in that particular promise as the Lord is talking about returning them from their captivity, He said, "and if any of you are driven out to the uttermost parts of heaven, from there will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from there He will fetch you. Notice He will gather together from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other, but that heaven if you be scattered, He will gather you from there. Deuteronomy thirty-four.

In Isaiah 27, twelve and thirteen, there the Lord said, again as He is predicting the regathering of the people "oh ye children of Israel", the end of verse twelve, "it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish, in the land of Assyria, the outcast from the land of Egypt, and they shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." And so the trumpet, the great trumpet sounding, Jesus makes reference to that.

And then once more in Isaiah chapter eleven, verse twelve. Here they are told to be gathered from the four corners of the earth, or from the four winds, as Jesus makes reference here. "An ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

So it is not at all damaging to the scripture, but only in harmony with the other prophecies, that this be understood to be the elect Jews, not the church.

Now Jesus said another parable of the fig tree. When its branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: So likewise, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door (Mat 24:32-33). So when you see these things that He has been speaking about; the world wars, the pestilences, the earthquakes, the false Christ, the tribulation, you'll know that His coming is at the door. The fig tree is used symbolically in the scripture to represent the nation Israel. "And when you see the branches yet tender, it puts forth it leaves, you know that summer is nigh". To say that Jesus is really predicting the rebirth of the nation Israel as the final sign is stretching a little bit the actual text itself. Basically, Jesus is just saying that when you see the trees budding forth, you know that summer is getting close. Therefore when you see these signs that He has been predicting, you'll know that His coming is close.

In fact He said,

This generation shall not pass, until all these things be fulfilled (Mat 24:34).

And that would be the generation that sees these signs that He has been referring to.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour (Mat 24:35-36),

And this is the emphasis now, through the remaining part of this chapter: that day and the hour no man knows, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only (Mat 24:36).

So Jesus is saying that no man knows the day, or the hour, only the Father. So that anyone who presumes to know the day or the hour is making an unbiblical presumption. But there are many people who try to explain away this, "no man knows the day or the hour," and try to proclaim that they do know the day or the hour, but they fall in that category of false prophets.

But as it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days of Noah that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of man be (Mat 24:37-39).

And so again Noah. He is just saying, it's going to be like it was in the days of Noah, that is, they were going on with business as usual, right up until the time of God's judgment. They didn't know until the flood came, and took them away, so it will be, people will be oblivious. The world will be oblivious of the return of Christ, right until that moment when He comes. And so that is what He is saying. Actually there are those, and you can say, well in the days of Noah there was the population explosion, in the days of Noah there was the wickedness and so forth. But in reality the illustration to be just strictly within its context and holding strictly to the context, it was just liking it to the surprise that the people had when God's judgment finally came. They did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.

Then two shall be in the field; one shall be taken, the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, the other left (Mat 24:40-41).

Now, again two divergent interpretations. One says: they are taken away to judgment, and those who are taken away are the unfortunate ones because they are taken away for judgment. And those that are left are the fortunate ones. The other is that this is a reference to the rapture of the church. Those that are taken away are blessed, and those that remain stay for the judgment. And there are arguments on both sides. Whichever fits your scheme.

Watch therefore: [and this is what applies to all of us, watch] for you know not what hour your Lord does come (Mat 24:42).

Now He said, no man knows the day or the hour. Because you don't, watch. You don't know the hour is coming. He is going to catch a lot of people by surprise. They are not going to know, until the Lord actually comes and all.

Now if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh (Mat 24:43-44).

So the twofold, watch, and therefore, be ye ready.

Who is a faithful and wise servant, whom when his lord made him ruler over his household, to give meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing (Mat 24:45-46).

Doing what? Giving to the household their meat in due season. Ministering unto the needs of others. Blessed is that servant, who is doing this when the Lord comes.

Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him the ruler over all of his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming; and he shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he is not looking for him, and in an hour in which he is not aware, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat 24:47-51).

The danger of saying "the Lord is delaying His coming." Now, I feel that any time that a person declares the necessity of some event before the Lord comes for His church, is in essence saying the Lord is going to delay His coming until the Antichrist is revealed, or the Lord is going to delay His coming until after we have gone through the tribulation. And it is in essence saying the Lord is delaying His coming.

Jesus said, "look you don't know the day or the hour; therefore watch, therefore be ready." And the idea that the Lord is going to delay His coming, until after some particular event, does not really create a real impetus towards diligence in serving the Lord, but usually has as its effect, a slothfulness, according to the words of Christ. And that is a dangerous position to be in when the Lord returns, to be in a slothful state.

May the Lord be with you and watch over you, as you go forth in the name of Jesus to bear witness of God's love and God's truth to an indifferent world. May the love of Christ so flow forth from your life that people in your neighborhood, around your work, would just be touched by God's love as you become His instrument bearing His truth and His love to them. May your week be filled with God's blessings as the Lord guides you step by step in the fulfilling of His purpose and His plan that He has for you this week, that which He wants you to accomplish for His glory. So God be with you and keep you in the love of Jesus Christ.

(Through The Bible c 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible commentaries,1979-1986)

The Lord bless you and watch, guard, and keep you;

The Lord make His face to shine upon and enlighten you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His {approving} countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 1399-1402)

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