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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Jesus Teaches on the End of the World

Matthew 24-25 Overview

Introduction

Fascination with the future is common to man

All over the world, people strain to guess at what cannot truly be known apart from direct revelation from God... the future

False religions are replete with techniques for trying to discern the future

Ancient Greek and Roman polytheism utilized priests who would seek to read the future by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals, the liver being of special importance for that purpose. They would observe lighting and interpret its meanings. And they would try and put meaning to any unusual phenomena which occurred

The renowned Roman orator, Cicero (106-43 B.C.), wrote "De Divinatione". He belonged to Rome's College of Augurs. An augur evaluated the presence or absence of divine blessing; augurs were the official interpreters of omens. No election could be held, no war could be initiated and no law could be passed without consulting the omens.

The Oracles in Greece (like the Oracle of Delphi) were prophets and prophetesses supposedly in direct connection with the gods, whose ability to foretell the future was coveted

In ancient Babylon, the Chaldeans were experts at reading the stars and interpreting dreams for one main purpose: discerning the future

So also in the British Isles, the druid priests studied black arts, necromancy, divination and sorcery to seek knowledge about the future; Merlin the sorcerer was one such figure, making predictions about King Arthur that guided his ascent to the throne

The ability to predict the future accurately was of immense worth to people of ancient times... we can see this in the account in Acts 16 of Paul and Silas in Philippi:

Acts 16:16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

When Paul and Silas cast out the demon, the girl's owners were enraged. They had Paul and Silas beaten publicly and thrown into prison.

The long-standing yearning to know the future continues to this day!!

People today have a true fascination with the Prophecies of Nostradamus, as well as with fortune-telling

Even in Christian circles, the fascination with the future is powerful

The *Left Behind* series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins has sold over 65 million copies worldwide, despite its low quality of writing and its questionable theology

The ability to foretell the future is uniquely God's alone... God alone knows the future:

Isaiah 42:8-9 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. ⁹ See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

Isaiah 41:22-24 "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, ²³ tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. ²⁴ But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable."

Isaiah 45:21-22 Declare what is to be, present it-- let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. ²² "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

And the central focus of prophecy has always been the same: the person and work of Jesus Christ

Revelation 19:10 the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Here in Matthew 24-25, we come to the two most important chapters in the Gospel of Matthew on eschatology... the study of the end times

It is sometimes called the "Little Apocalypse", or the "Olivet Discourse"

Some years ago, I heard John MacArthur: Jet Tour through the Book of Revelation

Similar goal now... an overview of two amazing chapters of Scripture

The Olivet Discourse:

Context:

Seven Woes: *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites!!!*

Jesus concludes with these words:

Matthew 23:37-39 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

This is the immediate context of the awesome chapters that follow... Jesus privately instructing His disciples about the end of the world

I. The Three-Fold Question (24:1-3)

Matthew 24:1-3 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." ³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

A. Jesus' Devastating Prediction

1. The disciples did not understand that Jesus was to die
2. They certainly were not ready for the destruction of Jerusalem or the end of the animal sacrificial system
3. They expected a triumphant reign of Christ from Jerusalem, beginning immediately

B. The Disciples' Private Three-Fold Question

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

C. Perhaps All the Same in the Disciples' Mind

D. Three Issues in the Olivet Discourse

1. The Destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem

2. The Second Coming of Christ

3. The End of the World

II. Life Between the Advents (24:4-14)

Matthew 24:4-14 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹ ¶ "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

A. Initial Teaching: Life Between the First and Second Comings of Christ

1. This is general teaching not specific to the three questions they ask
2. These verses cover all of life, all of church history between the first and second advents
3. The things described here are so general as to be of no help at all in identifying the exact time of Christ's return to earth

B. The Danger of Deception (vs. 4-5)

1. Many will come in Christ's name claiming His authority
2. This is the danger of false teaching concerning the end of the world

C. The Uncertain Signs: Trouble in Every Generation (vs. 6-8)

D. Special Problems Facing the Church: Persecution, Apostasy, False Doctrine (vs. 9-11)

E. The General Wickedness of the Times (vs. 12)

F. One Central Calling: Stand Firm to the End (vs. 13)

G. The Progress of the Gospel (vs. 14)

III. The Horrors Connected with the Destruction of the Temple (24:15-25)

Matthew 24:15-25 *"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-- let the reader understand-- ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now-- and never to be equaled again. ²² If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.*

- A. The Destruction of the Temple the Horrors of that Time (vs. 15-22)
- B. The Warning Against False Christs (vs. 23-24)
- C. The Protection of the Elect: Forewarned is Forearmed (vs. 24-25)

IV. The Second Coming of Christ and Its Signs (24:26-33)

Matthew 24:26-33 *"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ ¶ "Immediately after the distress of those days "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' ³⁰ "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. ³² ¶ "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.*

- A. The Second Coming of Christ Will Be Visible to Everyone (vs. 26-28)
- B. Signs in the Heavens (vs. 29)
- C. The Second Coming of Christ (vs. 30)
- D. The Gathering of the Elect Worldwide (vs. 31)

E. The Lesson of the Fig Tree (vs. 32-33)

V. Mysterious Timing (24:34-36)

Matthew 24:34-36 *I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. ³⁶ "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

A. The Biggest Question is Always About Timing: WHEN???

B. The Most Troublesome Statement in the Chapter... Perhaps in the Bible: (vs. 34)

C. Christ's Words are Eternal (vs. 35)

D. The Day and Hour Unknown... Even to Christ (Then) (vs. 36)

VI. The Need for Constant Vigilance (24:37-44)

Matthew 24:37-44 *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

A. Key Concept: "As It Was, So It Will Be..."

B. Normalcy of Life Will Continue Right Up to the End (vs. 37-41)

C. You Don't Know When... Therefore, Keep Watch! (vs. 42-44)

VII. The Command for Constant Faithfulness (24:45-51)

Matthew 24:45-51 *"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.*

⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth

- A. Are You a “Faithful and Wise Servant”? (vs. 45)
- B. Stewardship Work Until the Very End (vs. 45-46)
- C. Blessings for Faithfulness (vs. 46-47)
- D. Curses for Faithlessness (vs. 48-51)

VIII. The Parable of the Ten Virgins: Be Constantly Ready (25:1-13)

Matthew 25:1-13 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' ⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' ⁹ "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' ¹³ "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

- A. The Ten Virgins Waiting for the Bridegroom (vs. 1-2)
- B. The Foolish and Wise Differentiated: No Oil vs. Oil (vs. 3-4)
- C. The Long Delay of the Bridegroom (vs. 5)
- D. The Bridegroom Returns at Midnight (vs. 6)
- E. The Wise Virgins Ready, the Foolish Virgins Not (vs. 7-9)
- F. The Foolish Ones Miss the Arrival, Excluded from the Feast (vs. 10-12)
- G. The Lesson Clearly Stated (vs. 13)

IX. The Parable of the Talents: Be Constantly Faithful (25:14-30)

Matthew 25:14-30 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his

ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' ²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²² "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' ²³ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²⁴ "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' ²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

A. Stewardship Again

B. Basic Concepts

1. Master going on a journey entrusts his property to his servants
2. Five talents, two talents, one talent
3. Two of them are faithful... and work hard with their master's money
4. GROWTH, interest, profit, multiplication... this is the goal
5. One servant hides the talent in the ground

C. Judgment Day: Accountability... "Settling Accounts"

D. The Good Stewards Rewarded

1. The one with the five talents produces his profits
2. The Master's famous response: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

3. The one with the two talents produces his profits
4. The Master's famous response AGAIN: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

E. The Faithless Steward Punished

1. His sins: hatred of the master, fear, laziness, fruitlessness
2. His shame: The additional reward of the most faithful stewards
3. His judgment: weeping and gnashing of teeth

X. The Final Judgment Described: The Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46)

Matthew 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' ⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' ⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' ⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

A. Not a Parable... a Prophecy

B. The Final Judgment Described

1. The Son of Man Title: The Right of Christ to Judge
2. The Glorious Throne of the Son of Man

3. The Angels Surrounding
 4. The Nations Gathered
 5. The People Separated, “As a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats...”
- C. The Righteous Praised for their Acts of Love to Him
1. Christ’s solidarity with His people on earth key to this passage
 2. The sentence of reward spoken
 3. The lifestyle of loving service depicted
 4. The sheep genuinely humble and surprised
 5. The principle established: how you treat Christ’s people = how you treat Christ Himself
- D. The Wicked Cursed for their Failure to Act Lovingly to Him
1. The sentence of judgment spoken
 2. The lifestyle of selfishness depicted
 3. The goats genuinely shocked
 4. The principle re-established: how you treat Christ’s people = how you treat Christ Himself
- E. Eternity Ensues: A Fitting Conclusion to Matthew 24-25

XI. General Lessons from Matthew 24-25

- A.
- B.
- C.