

matthew experiencing the presence of the Kingdom

----> **connect...** Read Psalm 121 everyday this week. Use it to guide your prayers. Lay all your anxiety before Him and trust Him to keep His word.

----> **discover...** Today we will read a long text, but it's important to "hear" it all together. Take a few moments and read it slowly and out loud if you can. Read Matthew 23:1-39.

1. What instruction does Jesus give those listening in verses 2-4? _____

2. Why do the Pharisees and teachers of the law do what they do (v. 5)? What did they want? _____

3. What does Jesus say about this type of "self-promotion" in verses 8-12? _____

4. Jesus highlights seven major areas of hypocrisy that the Scribes and Pharisees were guilty of (seven "woes". What does He accuse them of?

① _____

② _____

③ _____

④ _____

⑤ _____

⑥ _____

⑦ _____

5. How does their hypocrisy affect others? _____

6. Where should cleansing begin (v. 26)? Why? _____

7. Read verses 33-36 again. Many have been martyred for the cause of Christ. Read verses 37-39 again.

a. Does Jesus have compassion on those who have mistreated His messengers? What does He long to do? _____

b. These are Jesus' last recorded public words to Israel. When will they see Him again? _____

----> **consider...** Throughout the book of Matthew, Jesus has been illuminating the heart issue. That's what our King focuses on—not outside behavior. All Christians are hypocritical at times, but we need to take a serious look at our hearts. Jesus addressed it straight forward. Do you practice what you preach (v. 3)? Ask Him!

----> **apply...** Begin memorizing Matthew 25:40.

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----> **connect...** Psalm 121.

----> **discover...** Matthew 24 is packed full of information and prophecy. Jesus is warning His disciples of what is to come in their lifetime (the Fall of Jerusalem) and also speaks about His return at the end of the age. These two prophecies intertwine in this passage.

1. Verses 1-24 of Matthew 24 specifically address the war that will be taking place in just a few years (66-70 AD). Jesus' followers would be forced to leave their homeland during the siege under Titus. Read these verses and answer the following questions.
 - a. Jesus' disciples were admiring the beautiful temple (1-2); what does Jesus say will happen to the temple?

 - b. What two things do the disciples ask Him privately (v. 3)? _____
 - c. What warning does Jesus begin His discourse with (vv. 4-5)? _____
 - d. What are some signs of "birth pains" that Jesus makes them aware of (vv. 4-11)? _____
 - e. What will test the love of those who say they love Jesus (v. 12)? Who will be saved (v. 13)? _____
 - f. Despite persecution the message of the gospel goes on! What does verse 14 say? _____
2. Verses 15-24 uncover the "sharp pain" of war. Listen to what D.A. Carson says about verse 21: *"For" introduces the reason for flight in verses 17-20 and unprecedented suffering. The savagery, slaughter, disease and famine (mothers eating their own children) were monstrous, "unequaled from the beginning of the world until now." And, according to Jesus, "never to be equaled again." There have been greater numbers of deaths—six million in Nazi death camps, mostly Jews, and an estimated 20,000 under Stalin—but never so high a percentage of a great city's population so thoroughly and painfully exterminated and enslaved as during the Fall of Jerusalem.* [The Expositor's Bible Commentary/F. Gaebelein]
 - a. Daniel (Old Testament prophecy) speaks of the abomination that leads to this desolation as being the erection of a pagan altar on the sacred altar in the temple of Jerusalem. What does Jesus say people should do when they see this sign (vv. 16-21)? _____
 - b. What warning does Jesus give in verses 23-24? _____
 - c. Jesus doesn't shield His children from the truth. Following Him can cause pain and grief. More Christians have been martyred in this century (1900's) than the previous 18 combined. What did you learn about your King today? _____
3. Why do you think Satan would want so desperately to destroy the early church? Will he ever succeed in quenching the gospel (v. 14)? _____

----> **consider...** Think about the power of the gospel. It is not contained in a building or temple and its message cannot be silenced. Take a few moments and reflect on those early martyrs and those throughout the centuries. Is God paying attention? (see 23:35). Thank Him for the safety you've enjoyed.

----> **apply...** Memorize Matthew 25:40.

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----> **connect**... Psalm 121.

----> **discover**... Jesus continues this long, powerful discourse. Read Matthew 24:26-31. Jesus does not want His followers to be misled by false prophets.

1. Will Jesus appear privately to a few when He returns? How will He return? _____

2. In verses 32-35, Jesus is referring back to verses 15-24. He wants them to watch for signs so they can flee. What does He say? _____

a. Can His words be trusted (v. 35)? _____

3. Matthew 24:36-44 is speaking again about Christ's second coming. Who knows when He'll show up? _____

a. What will it be like before He returns (vv. 37-41)? _____

b. How should we prepare (vv. 42-44)? _____

4. Read verses 45-51. In the meantime, what is Jesus looking for (our Master)? _____

a. What does this tell us about relationships now? _____

b. Is it wise to live as if Jesus is not returning for a long time? Why? _____

c. What will happen to hypocrites like that? _____

5. Read Paul's wise instructions concerning Christ's return from I Thessalonians 5:1-11.

a. When will the day of the Lord come? What will people be saying? _____

b. How are we to be different from others (vv. 7-8)? _____

c. In what ways do you think we could apply verse 11? _____

----> **consider**... Jesus is coming back. He promised and His Word is true and eternal. Does the knowledge of His return affect your days? Are you busy doing what He's given you to do? Slowly pray through 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11.

----> **apply**... In your journal, answer this question: If you knew Jesus were coming back at midnight tonight, how would your day be different?

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----> **connect...** Psalm 121.

----> **discover...** Jesus is still talking about His return and the importance of expectancy and preparedness.

1. Read the Parable of the Ten Virgins from Matthew 25:1-13. Describe the scene: _____

a. Why did they all fall asleep? _____

b. What happened at midnight? _____

c. What was the difference between the wise and foolish virgins? _____

d. What happened when the bridegroom came? _____

e. Did they have any excuse for being unprepared to meet the bridegroom? _____

f. What do you think are some ways we should watch and prepare for (our Bridegroom) Jesus' return? _____

2. Jesus describes the kingdom in another way in His next parable. Read verses 14-30. Belonging to this kingdom focuses our attention on the King resulting in service producing fruit. What does the man who is leaving, entrust to his three servants?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

a. What did the first and second servants do? _____

b. How did the master respond? _____

c. What did the third servant do? _____

d. Who does this servant blame for his lack of service (vv. 24-25)? _____

e. How does the master respond to him? _____

f. What "kingdom principle" do you derive from this parable (vv. 21, 23, 29)? _____

----> **consider...** God's grace saves us—period (Ephesians 2:8-9). As that grace begins to take hold in our minds and hearts, we begin to feel God-given responsibility to serve Him. We begin to take seriously Jesus' words of instruction and we start to see and live by the truth that all we have comes from Him. What will we do with what we've been given? Will He find us faithful? Talk to Him.

----> **apply...** In your journal, respond to this question: What has God given me? How am I using _____ to faithfully serve Him? Continue memorizing Matthew 25:40.

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----> **connect...** Psalm 121. Do you have faith in His Word?

----> **discover...** Following the King will not only alter what we do with what we've been given, but also how we spend our time and treat others. We will be transformed to the character of Jesus (Romans 12:1-2) and start seeing people with His eyes of compassion and reaching out to them with His arms of love.

1. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus addresses judgment based on how His brothers are treated.
 - a. What will the righteous receive (v. 34)? _____
 - b. How was their righteousness manifested (vv. 35-36)? _____
 - c. Did the righteous even realize what they were doing (v. 37-39)? _____
 - d. How does the King answer their questions? _____
 - e. What does Romans 8:29 say? _____
 - f. Who are Jesus' brothers? _____
 - g. Who should brothers of the King represent? _____
 - h. When the Lord confronted Paul about his involvement with persecuting Christians, what did He ask him (see Acts 9:4)? _____
 - i. What's the outcome for those who mistreat or ignore the needs of "the least of these?" _____
 - j. What's the bottom line according to verse 45? _____
 - k. What "kingdom-living principle" do you derive from this passage? (This is not a parable.) _____
2. This is "fruitful living." It's cooperating with the work of God in us. What does John 15:4-5 say? _____
 - a. How is this type of kingdom living made possible? _____

----> **consider...** God transforms us from the inside out as we remain in the Vine (Jesus); as we focus our lives on seeking His kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). Do you care about what's going on with the servants of God around the world? Ask God to give you His eyes of compassion and the strength to reach out to His children who are hurting. Ask Him, "What can I do to hear you say Matthew 25:40 to me?"

----> **apply...** Start with prayer. Record your prayer in your journal. Recite Matthew 25:40.

