

Being Watchful

The Waiting Room Parables Series Week Three

Did You Know?

While many go to the book of Revelation to learn about the end times, most teaching in the Bible on the end times is found in Matthew 24-25 and some of Paul's writings, as well as a smattering of teaching from the Old Testament prophets on the Day of the Lord. John uses the events of the end times as a background to give truths about how we must live an obedient life of worship no matter what the season of time is. We will be looking this week into the matter that theologians call Eschatology, the study of the last things. These are the events and expectations we can gather from teachings on what will soon take place in this world.

Monday, January 21, 2013

Read: Matthew 25:1-13

Discuss: Many are shocked at the straight-forwardness, almost rudeness, of the characters in this parable of Jesus. There is no direct repeating of this parable in other Gospel accounts. The closest is Luke 19:11-27, the parable of the ten minas, but that is different than this one. What is the chief emphasis, or moral of the parable? As you read through the parable, what behavior shocks you more, the bridegroom's rude response to the five foolish virgins at the feast, or the five wise virgins' sayings to them? Why do these seem rude to you, or do they?

Act: No one knows exactly when Jesus is coming back. First, if anyone tells you they have a date, that goes directly against the teachings of Scripture, so do not listen to them. It is good to observe the times and seasons, but not good to speak where Scripture is silent. What areas of your life are not prepared, ready and waiting, for Jesus to return? If He came back right now, how would He evaluate each part of your life? If you find something not ready, what can you do to get ready in that area?

Tuesday, January 22, 2013

Read: Matthew 24:3-14

Discuss: As you read through this passage, make a list of the warning signs that Jesus gives for the end drawing near. Pay special attention, breaking it into three categories (vv. 6, 8, 14).

End is not yet	Beginning of Birth Pangs	Then the End will come
False Teachers and prophets		

What do you think is the significance of this three-fold system of signs? Does the Gospel having to be proclaimed to the whole world keep Jesus from returning (v. 14)? Have all of these signs happened today? What are some current signs that we can observe in the news and world today? **Act:** How do you react to things like rumors of wars? What about earthquakes? Some people are very afraid in these times, but we who believe in Christ need not fear. God protects us even from the worst of these signs, such as persecution. He always gives us more grace. We can boldly put our trust in Him and not fear these times. God is still in control and on the throne!

Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Read: Matthew 24:15-28; Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11

Discuss: This passage has to do with a specific prophecy of Daniel about the abomination of desolation. This is believed to be a time in which the Antichrist will walk into the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem and take God's place, declare himself to be God. Paul alludes to this in his comments in 2 Thessalonians 2 as well. This was an easy sign for the Jews, because the temple was everything to them. Everyone would know it if a Gentile did this. In fact, throughout history, there have been several occurrences of this happening to the Temple, the closest being Antiochus Epiphanies IV. Some raise questions about there needing to be a Temple in Jerusalem for this to occur, since there is not one now. This is the signifying event of the end because it is the pinnacle of usurping God's place and Name. What are some ways Jesus uses to describe the turmoil of that time? What will mark that period?

Act: One of the most important principles about that time is that it will be a time of false religion. It will be a time of false teachers and false Christs. Many think the Antichrist will inaugurate his kingdom with this action. But Jesus says that we will know when Christ does come, and that it will be noticeable and public (v. 27). We must keep our eyes and focus on Jesus alone, not on things that claim to be Him or from Him. The best way to know counterfeits is to know the real deal. What would it take to fool you into believing the wrong things about Jesus?

Thursday, January 24, 2013

Read: Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Discuss: Things like “the sun will be darkened,” the moon and stars being affected, are called apocalyptic images. Use either a Bible concordance or the internet to find other places where these images are talked about in the same ways. What are some similarities? Differences? Many wonder about the timing of the end times, if tribulation refers to the Great Tribulation or just distress before the Great Tribulation. It’s important to be as informed as you can on your beliefs about this, but we will all soon know in the happening of these events! Compare the details of Jesus’ coming from Matthew and 1 Thessalonians. What is similar? What is different? Where in Revelation do we find the angels harvesting the earth (use a Bible search tool to find the answer)?

Act: The clear testimony of Scripture about the Second Coming, or Rapture, is that it will be observed by the whole world, that it will be a public event. It’s not as if you will not know that Jesus came back. Everyone will know. Everyone will be faced with it. We need not fear that the rapture will be some secret. If you are living a godly life and trusting in Jesus, you will be with Jesus in the rapture. While Scripture tells us a lot about the end times, it is not easy to piece all things together, and we can make mistakes, but the clear points are important for us to keep in the forefront as we study end times. Take a moment to thank Jesus that He will not do these things in secret and make us wonder and fear!

Friday, January 25, 2013

Read: Matthew 24:36-44

Discuss: In between the statement of verses 36 and 42, Jesus offers examples of what life will be like in the day that He returns. Things will be as they usually are, normal, mundane. People will be carrying on with the regular business of life, despite all these signs of the end. What are the examples given? What can we learn about the man of the house in verses 43-44?

Act: Write down the three key truths found in this paragraph about Jesus’ return. How do these statements give you faith and encouragement? How do these statements help you avoid false teaching about the end times? What is your action plan for waiting on Jesus to return? It is not uncommon to let down our guards as time wanes on or to even give up on His return. But we must endure and persevere and trust that since He has promised this blessed hope of His return for us that He will do it when God tells Him to come for us.

Saturday, January 26, 2013

Read: Matthew 24:45-51

Discuss: The final section before this week's parable outlines a positive and negative way to react to God's waiting on the proper time to send Jesus back. We could either take this as a time of testing to be faithful to God in all things in our lives, or we could take it as a time to waste and doubt that He will return at all. The rewards and punishments of our choices on which attitude to live by are staggering. In one, we earn a great inheritance. But in the other, we would receive death, dismemberment and Hell. The Bible does not mince words no the solemnity of our end times attitudes and lifestyles. They matter to God, and they must matter to us!

Act: What kind of servant are you? Have you ever been guilty of being the second servant? What kind of inheritance are we promised in the Bible for being faithful until Christ's return? Jesus will deal with us based on our whole being in these end times. Some people look like they are acting in Christlike ways, but they do not inwardly trust in Him or love Him. They do this out of fear or some other motive. Others say that they believe in Christ, but don't live it out. We must commit to being godly and doing godly things during this end times testing.

Sunday, January 27, 2013

Read: Luke 18:1-8; 11:5-13

Discuss: This is our text for Pastor's message this morning about persistence in prayer. As you read through the text, think of two questions that puzzle you concerning prayer and persistence.

Act: If Pastor does not answer these questions, ask him after service to help you understand better this parable.