

# (Through the Bible) Matthew 23-24

by Chuck Smith

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*In this sermon, Chuck Smith explores Jesus' teachings on hypocrisy, servanthood, and the true nature of righteousness as He confronts the religious leaders of His time.*

**Duration:** 1:29:03

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:1-6, Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 23:1-12, Matthew 24:6-8, Matthew 24:32-33, Revelation 14:6-7

**Topics:** "Missionary Outreach", "End Time Prophecy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being watchful and ready for the return of Jesus. He mentions the parable of the faithful and wise servant who is entrusted with the responsibility of providing food at the right time. The primary focus of the sermon is on missionary outreach and spreading the gospel to all nations. The speaker refers to the book of Revelation, where angels are seen flying through the heavens, preaching the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, and language. The sermon also warns against worshiping the antichrist and receiving his mark, as it will lead to impending doom.

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## Transcript

Matthew's Gospel 23. Jesus has been at the temple, and he was challenged as to his authority by the priest, 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.

Just not done. So they couldn't answer him, and neither did they dare ask him any more questions after that. Now, still there in the temple, as we go into chapter 23, we are still there within the temple precinct.

Then Jesus turns from this 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 12 verses of chapter 23 are addressed to his disciples and to the assembled multitude. And then beginning with verse 13, 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. 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 in the, 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.

Now, Jesus had just given a parable that they had, that the scribes and Pharisees had recognized was against them. He asked them and they caught themselves, 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, he said, no, I won't go. And then later on, he repented and went. The second one said, yeah, I'll go, but 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. 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 they, 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 have it.

They felt that they were justified. It's just like so many people feel that they're 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're not doing it.

So follow what they say, but don't follow their works for they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born. And they lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move one of them with their little fingers. 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, of sticks and all walking down the road. I mean, all you can see are the feet underneath, but these guys are so laid in down.

They bound so many sticks and all together and put them on these guys' shoulders that 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.

It looks like sometimes you have four legs under the sticks walking or under this pile of, of sheaves or whatever. And they would, they would bind these heavy, heavy burdens. Jesus said, and then they lay them on men's 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, with loads that, I mean, you're just straining to try and carry it because they would lay so much on you.

And, uh, so Jesus is saying, this is what the scribes and Pharisees are doing. They lay these heavy, heavy burdens upon men yet. They would 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, uh, six 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. 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're 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 public. 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, you know, who go around these long faces and, and they, you know, they look so gaunt and all, but anoint your face and all that you don't appear unto men to fast. 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'll go up on my tip toes just in case, you know, and, uh, it, uh, it's the whole idea is to affect men with how spiritual and how righteous I am. Some fella 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, um, uh, 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're not here to be attracted to you. We're 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 is, you know, 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 that 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'm 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'm guilty of hypocrisy. I'm 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'm giving, I should never be doing it for the effect that I can create in the mind of man, 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. 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 to 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're not to bind or you're 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 of first of all, binding their arm and tying this little box on their arm.

Now in this little box on the wrist, there is, or on the hand, there is a one chamber in the little box and it has four passages of scripture from the old Testament and little scrolls in this little leather box on their hand. The one on their forehead and they bind another leather tongue around their forehead in this little black box, leather box on their forehead. And in that there are four compartments in 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, you know, man, I really, you know, heavy duty prayer because look, you know, at the big box that I've got here, you know, and so they would broaden their phylacteries. And of course the whole idea was people might observe them and see them. And then of course, they enlarge the borders of their garment 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. As 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'll 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 love the uppermost rooms at the feast and the chief seats in the synagogue. 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, uh, you know, prayers and all, and the whole congregation can see how righteous I am.

And they love those chief seats in the synagogue. They love the, the upper places in the, in the feast and all. And they love the greetings in the markets to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi, doctor, doctor, Reverend, but be not ye called Rabbi for one is your master, even Christ.

And notice all of you are brethren. Now he's talking to his disciples. He said, don't get into that spiritual, uh, hierarchy trip.

You're all brothers. There's not one above the other. You're all one together.

You are all brothers. Don't seek to promote yourself. Don't seek the best places when you're bidding to a 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 all says, Hey, what are you doing up here? You belong down the other 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 your brothers.

Don't try and develop a, 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. So the title of father was prohibited by Jesus in my associations.

I have become acquainted and friends of many ministers within the Episcopalian 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 you're usually introduced. This is, you know, father, so-and-so. And, I just, well, 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 called masters for one is your master, even Christ. In other words, Jesus is putting down the idea of titles.

These guys loved 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 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's a sort of a title.

Just Chuck is good enough. Jesus said, he, that is greatest among you shall be your servant, not to establish this spiritual hierarchy. And, oh, you know, he's and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased.

And he that humble it himself shall be exalted. Now, having declared that to his disciples, and these are the rules for his disciples. He now turns and addresses himself to the scribes and the Pharisees.

And he has an eightfold denunciation against them, pronouncing an eightfold woe. To you, 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. We saying, Jesus, what a wonderful, 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 these strong denunciations, you really take note. Now, some guy has a high temper and is going around blowing off all the time.

You soon get to where you don't pay any attention to it. Oh, he's always, you know, blown off steam. Don't worry about it, you know.

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? You know, something he really heavy. And so Jesus really came down. And now I'm 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, Stoner, what do you say if she was caught in the very act? Where was the man? Surely he must've been caught too, but the poor women didn't have much right in those days. And 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. And then he knelt down and began to draw on the dust or write in the dust and probably wrote out the sins that 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 says, well, I guess they've all gone. And he said, well, neither do I condemn you go your way and sin no more. 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 is 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.

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, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make a long prayer, but your prayers are only pretensions.

Therefore, you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you come past 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's 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's 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.

I mean, he's really getting down on them for their traditional teachings. You know, if you swear you're making an oath now, I swear by the temple, I'll do it. He swore by the temple.

Oh, well, that's all right. He doesn't have to keep it. You know, it's not a binding oath.

I swear by the gold in the temple. Oh, look out now. That's binding.

I mean, stupid, ridiculous, traditional things that had been developed and then 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 tithe of mint and anise and cumin. Now, these are little spices and everybody had their own spice garden.

They would raise their own anise, their own cumin and mint, and they would be careful. Of course, you know, cumin, how much cumin do you use in your cooking? But they would take out of the spice garden and they'd take, you know, and give 10% to God. Very careful to measure out their spices, their mint, their anise, and their cumin.

Give God his 10%. So careful. Yet, Jesus said, you have omitted the weightier matters of the law.

You've passed over completely judgment and mercy and faith. 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.

Now, Jesus does confirm that they were correct in paying tithes, but they were very incorrect in not really seeking justice and mercy and faith. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, he said, which strain at a gnat or strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. 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 would, in turn, Jesus said, you're swallowing camels. Now a camel was 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, it all 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're 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 excesses.

Now, the picture is of a filthy cup inside. Outside you look at it, oh, I'm so thirsty, get a drink of water, you know, and 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, you know.

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's extortion, there's greed, there's 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. More important that the inside be clean than the outside. Man looks 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 are 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've got to start. And from what is inside will work out.

But the attitude is more important than the action. 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. They would go and whitewash the sepulchres. But within, on the outside, they look so pretty, so clean, but inside 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 build the tombs of the prophets and you garnish, decorate the sepulchres of the righteous. If you go over to Israel today, you can see in the Kidron Valley some of the tombs of the prophets that have been built.

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, you know, 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 have been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Oh, have we 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 manger of your fathers, ye serpents, ye generation of vipers. How can you escape the damnation of hell? Hey, he sounds like a hellfire and brimstone preacher.

Wherefore behold, I send 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 able to the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barakas, whom you killed between the temple and the altar.

Verily, I send you all these things shall come upon this generation. You're guilty. 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 or Stephen laid on the charge. You killed the one of whom all the prophets spake.

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.

In spite of all that they had done, Jesus said, look, I would 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.

Thus, as the result, your house is left unto you desolate. It's 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 the Lord.

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 Mia Shareem. 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 helped set up this whole meeting and were all gung ho because they realized the value of the support of the 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's a rabbi. Yeah, but rabbis can be fanatics too.

I said, oh, really? Then you mean that he's no doubt wrong in his idea that Israel shouldn't be a nation because he's 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 2,000 years ago and that unfortunately you're still following their serious mistake? I said, how do you know? But what they weren't a bunch of radicals, just like this rabbi that wrote me, who made a tragic mistake. And here though, 2,000 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.

Now, Jesus went out, left the house desolate. He's rejected. Now they rejected him.

Now he has rejected them. Leave the house desolate. You're not going to see me again until you're saying, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And so they're 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. 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 110, 120 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.

And they, 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.

This prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled some 40 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's 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 crevices.

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 in just as they fell, just as they were pushed by the Roman soldiers in 70 AD when they sacked Jerusalem.

And they believe that some of these stones were actually from that temple of which Jesus spoke. 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 Jesus, the prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled so that not one stone of Solomon's temple was left standing upon another. They've 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 and the disciples passing through the Kidron.

And of course, you that 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? 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 man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying, I am the Messiah and they shall deceive many. 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, Sunyat Moon leading the Moonies and so many laying claim to being the Messiah. Jesus said, don't let any man 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. Wars and rumors of war. Since the time of Christ, there have been 13 years of war to every one year of peace.

So the fact that there's going to be a war, the fact there's a war going on in Iran and Iraq is no sign. But Jesus said, for nations 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 diverse places. 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 15 million people annually die of causes related to malnutrition, pestilences, viruses, and earthquakes in diverse places. All of these are just the beginning of the sorrows.

This is starting it. Now they're going to deliver you up to be afflicted. They will kill you.

You will be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And surely the disciples, all of them were martyred with the exception of John, the beloved in Fox's book of martyrs. He lists the deaths and the manner of deaths of all of the disciples.

And it's a book that will really give you a 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. There will be the false messiahs and then 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.

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 law. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. Hang in there.

He's saying, and this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness into all nations. And then shall the end come. 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 30 years after the birth of the church said, and the gospel, as it has come to you, as it is in all the world. 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. Uh, the, the gospel has been rejected. It's been outlawed in some areas, uh, 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 income. He does not say that the church will be the instrument necessarily that is preaching this gospel.

Now I do know that many mission groups take this as their, uh, a real challenge and impetus for foreign missionary work, but I do not feel that, uh, it is a necessary, uh, requirement, uh, that the Lord cannot come for the church until we have taken the gospel into all the world. And thus, you know, uh, our primary emphasis should be missionary outreach, getting the gospel into all the world. So Jesus can come again in the 14th chapter of the book of revelation there.

John saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel verse six. I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. 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 judgment is come worship him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters.

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 unto all of the nations. And, uh, whether they're 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. So that is not really a requirement that the church spread the gospel into 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, who so reads, let him understand, then let him, which be in Judea, flee to the mountains, let him, which is on the house top, not come down to take anything 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. Now, Jesus makes reference to the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about.

And then he said, who so 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 spoken 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 sin 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. 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 four forty five B.C. by Artaxerxes. And from that time it would be four hundred and eighty three years, seven sevens, forty nine years and three or and two sevens or four hundred and seventy whatever, sixty two years, four hundred eighty three years altogether.

And that from this time. To the Messiah, so Christ came four hundred 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, they will be a flood or the dispersion. And so the prediction of the Jewish nation being dispersed after the sixty nine 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 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 this 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 days, talking definitely Jewish language to Jewish people.

Now, according to the book of Revelation, the antichrist or 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. In Isaiah 16, 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, the tribute, 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 or 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 cuff of the indignation of his wrath will overflow and God's judgment 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 1,290 days.

And it is given in great detail in the book of Revelation, beginning with chapter six and going through chapter 18. 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 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's 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. In chapter four, verse one of the book of Revelation.

Now, after these things, after what things, the things of the church in chapters two and three, I saw a door open in heaven. The first voice of a trumpet saying to me, come up hither. And I'm going to show you things that 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 that 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 the 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, 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 saved, but for the elects sake, those days shall be shortened. The elects 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 elects 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 Christ and false prophets.

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. And revelation chapter 13 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 a second Thessalonians chapter two is Paul is 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're looking for signs, miracles, and wonders, hey, you haven't seen anything yet. When the Antichrist comes, he's 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 for it.

Or if they say he's in the secret chambers, believe it not. 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 this 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. Now, does that sound to you like a secret coming in a private chamber someplace? I'll tell you there's nothing secret about lightning. It lights up the whole sky.

And for wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Now, there's 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 in direct opposition to each other.

The one interpretation is that the carcasses refer or 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 17, the birds of the air to come feast upon the Kings and the chief captains of 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, I'm 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 I'm 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 are 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? This will be the final aspects of the tribulation, the great cataclysmic signs in the heavens, the sun darken, 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 when immediately after the tribulation of those days, then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven and then show 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.

Now the Jehovah witnesses really have a time when they get to this verse of scripture, double talking and they'll, they'll, they'll throw you off of this one immediately. They don't like this scripture at all because Jesus already came and he's in a secret chamber. Nobody saw him except their leaders who are now getting their instructions from him as he is 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. 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 a sound of a trumpet, the trumpet God shall sound and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of the heaven 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, they are the trumpets of the seven angels and the seven angels prepared to sound their seven trumpets. And there's a vast difference between the seventh trumpet, which is declared to be a woe and that Trump of God, whereby the church shall 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 in the kingdom is established that God is again going to take back the Jews as his people as a nation.

And he's going to bring them back in the land and honor them once more. And in Deuteronomy chapter 33 and four in that particular promise is 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 34 in Isaiah 27, 12, and 13.

There, the Lord said again, as he is predicting the regathering of the people, all ye children of Israel, the end of verse 12, 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 11, verse 12, here they are told to be gathered from the four corners of the earth or from the four winds, as Jesus makes reference here. And a sign, you'll assemble the outcasts of Israel, gather them together, the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. So it is not at all, uh, 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, learn a parable of the fig tree. When his branches yet tender and puts forth leaves, you know, that summer is near. So likewise, when you see all these things know that it is near, even at the doors.

So when you see these things that he has been speaking about, uh, the, uh, world wars, the pestilences, the earthquakes, the false Christ, uh, the tribulation, you'll know that his coming is at the doors. The fig tree is used symbolically in the scripture to represent the nation Israel. And when you see the branches yet tender and puts forth its leaves, you know, that summer is near 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 till all these things be fulfilled. And that would be the generation, of course, that sees, uh, 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, and this is the emphasis now through the, uh, remaining part of this chapter that day in the hour, no man knows not the angels of heaven, but my father only. 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, giving him 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 that. And so again, the 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, uh, 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 to women.

She'll be grinding at the mill. One will be taken the other left. Now again, two divergent interpretations.

One says they are taken away to judgment. And those that 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, um, 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. Now he said, no man knows the day or the hour because you don't watch.

You don't know the hour he's coming. It's going to catch a lot of people by surprise. They're not going to know until the, until the Lord actually comes and all.

Now, if the good man 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 also ready for in such an hour, as you think not the son of man coming. So the twofold watch and therefore be ye ready.

Who is a faithful and wise servant whom when his Lord has made him ruler over his household to give me in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh shall find. So doing, 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 send to 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 him 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. 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've gone through the tribulation. And, 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 will 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.

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