

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 17

Matthew 24-25

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Matthew, Session 17, Matthew 24-25, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Craig Keener's lecture analyzes Matthew 24-25, focusing on Jesus's warnings about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. **Keener connects Jesus's instructions** to flee to the mountains with historical accounts of the time, highlighting the urgency of escape. He **draws parallels between the historical context** and the challenges faced by modern refugees, emphasizing Jesus's compassion. Finally, **the lecture explores differing interpretations** of Jesus's teachings on the end times, particularly concerning the rapture and the timing of the Second Coming, encouraging listeners to examine scripture independently.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Matthews, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Matthew).



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ession17.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Matthew 24-25:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Matthew 24-25

Source: Excerpts from "Keener_Matthew_EN_Lecture17.pdf"

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Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener provides a detailed examination of Matthew 24 and 25, focusing on Jesus' teachings about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the signs of the end times, and the importance of readiness and faithful service. Keener draws connections between Jesus' words and historical events, as well as parallels in other parts of the New Testament, particularly Paul's writings. He also addresses various interpretations of these passages, especially concerning the timing of the rapture and the tribulation.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Imminent Need to Flee Jerusalem:

- Jesus warns of a coming desecration that will lead to destruction, specifically referencing the Jewish patriots' slaughter of priests in the temple in 66 AD.
- *"The Jewish patriots slaughtered the priests in the temple in the year 66. Josephus, who lived through this, and was part of the war actually at that time, reports that he believed that that was the desecration that eventually led to destruction."*
- He instructs his followers to flee to the mountains when they see Jerusalem surrounded by armies. This is counterintuitive to the usual practice of fleeing *into* a city for safety.
- *"Luke says, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you need to flee. Most people, when war was coming, the people in the countryside would flee into a city... But instead of moving on somewhere else, the Romans besieged Jerusalem until people were starving to death inside the city."*
- The urgency of this flight is emphasized by Jesus using examples of leaving cloaks and possessions behind.

- *“Let no one on the roof of their house go down to take anything out of the house... Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.”*
- Keener uses a personal anecdote from his wife's experience as a refugee to illustrate the difficult circumstances and need for quick action when fleeing conflict.
- *“My wife was in a situation of being a refugee a couple of times during wars that took place in her country in Africa.”*

1. The Importance of Haste and Compassion:

- Jesus stresses the importance of fleeing quickly and not being encumbered by possessions or even loved ones if necessary to save lives.
- Jesus shows particular compassion for pregnant and nursing women, highlighting the vulnerability they face during such times.
- *“Woe to those who are pregnant or nursing. Those who are pregnant or nursing are more susceptible to death, bleeding, miscarriage, and so on.”*
- He tells his followers to pray their flight doesn't occur on the Sabbath (when city gates would be closed) or in winter (when travel is difficult).
- *“Jesus said, pray that it's not on the Sabbath... And also in verse 20, pray that your flight will not take place during winter.”*
- The historical context is referenced, using Josephus and accounts of the Roman siege.

1. The Destruction of the Temple and its Significance:

- The destruction of the temple in 70 AD is connected to the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies.
- The Romans erected their standards bearing the insignia of the Roman emperor on the temple site, an act considered idolatrous.
- *“And on the site of the temple, after the people had been slaughtered and burned alive, on the site of the temple, the Romans erected their standards. The standards bore the insignia of the Roman emperor.”*
- Jesus' warnings were not heeded by Jerusalem, but his own followers heeded them, and fled to Pella in the Decapolis, before the city was destroyed.

- *“Jerusalem's Christians, however, had already fled. Jesus' followers had his warning... And so, they fled...and made it safely to a different hill country, to Pella in the Decapolis.”*

1. The Second Coming of Jesus:

- Jesus speaks of his cosmic return, emphasizing that it will be a universally visible event.
- *“When you see the sign of the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory... This isn't somebody just coming in the countryside saying, I'm Jesus, come back. This is something everybody will see.”*
- His return will be accompanied by signs in the heavens, and will be a time of judgment.
- *“The nations respond with terror in verse 30, again, using some Old Testament language. And he's coming with the clouds. And then in verse 31, Jesus' followers will be delivered.”*
- Keener explains how the term *parousia*, often used in ancient times to describe the visit of a dignitary, applies to Jesus' return,
- The imagery of vultures gathering around a body is explained as a reference to battles and the judgement.

1. Distinguishing Signs of the End from General Upheaval:

- Jesus warns of false prophets, wars, famines, and earthquakes, but clarifies that these are not definitive signs of the immediate end.
- *“You're going to see false prophets. You're going to see... rumors of wars... famines and earthquakes. But he says... such things must happen, but the end is still to come. All these things are the beginning of birth pangs.”*
- These events are considered “birth pangs,” indicating the beginning of a process, rather than the end itself.
- The definitive sign of the end will be the gospel being preached to all nations.
- *“this gospel of the kingdom, this good news of the kingdom, this good news about God's reign will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples. Then the end will come.”*

1. Paul's Teachings and Their Connection to Jesus' Words:

- Keener argues that Paul's writings, particularly in 1 & 2 Thessalonians, reflect Jesus' own teachings about the end times.
- *"Paul says, this we say to you by the word of the Lord. He probably isn't referring just to a random prophecy... He's probably talking about Jesus' own prophecy, by the Lord's own word, by what Jesus had said, by what Jesus taught."*
- He points out similarities, including false prophets, end-time apostasy, the desecration of the temple, and the gathering of believers.
- He notes the parallel in 1 Thessalonians 5 of Jesus coming like a thief in the night.
- *"Matthew 24:43, and this is a motif that I don't find anywhere in ancient Jewish literature of the coming of God. He comes like a thief in the night, 1 Thessalonians 5:2. He comes like a thief in the night."*
- Keener states that these parallels suggest that Jesus' teachings in the Gospels were indeed what Paul was sharing, indicating that the Gospel accounts are accurate records of Jesus' teachings.

1. The Nature and Timing of the "Rapture":

- Keener addresses the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture, where Christians are taken to heaven before a final period of tribulation.
- He points out the rapture is taken from the Latin word for "catch up", and is not a uniquely biblical term.
- He argues that the concept of a separate rapture event before the tribulation is not found in scripture or early church writings before 1830.
- *"Nobody until 1830 is on record as having taught this catching up before a tribulation."*
- He suggests that Paul's teachings about believers being "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air should not be understood to mean they are taken to heaven before the second coming and tribulation, but is rather their escort to the place of judgement at the Second Coming.
- *"His term for meeting, if it's used the way it's normally used, it would mean that we meet him on his way down from his escort on the way to earth."*

- He notes that the early church understood it to mean believers would either be in or about to enter the tribulation, before Jesus' return.
- *"Apparently, Justin Martyr, Papias, and Irenaeus all believed this... the earliest Christians believed that they were either in the Great Tribulation or they were about to go through it, and then they believed there was the thousand-year period."*
- Keener suggests that the church has historically believed that the "catching up" of believers happens at the second coming, when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of God.
- *"I would suggest that it's possible that Jesus meant to warn us about something. When Jesus talks about the sufferings, we shouldn't expect to get out of them."*

1. The Importance of Faithful Service:

- The lecture shifts focus to Matthew 25, with its parables of the faithful and unfaithful servants, the wise and foolish virgins, and the sheep and the goats.
- These parables highlight the importance of being prepared for Jesus' return, as well as the need to use our resources and gifts wisely to serve others.
- *"If we have a position in the body of Christ, let's use it to take care of our brothers and sisters because we answer to somebody who's the Lord over both them and us and who loves them just as he loves us."*
- The Parable of the Talents emphasizes using your gifts and resources for God and not being lazy or fearful.
- *"Don't insult God by not using your resources for God. That's what people do who waste their lives on other things."*

1. The Sheep and the Goats Parable and its Interpretation:

- Keener discusses the Parable of the Sheep and Goats and the question of who the "least of these" refers to.
- *"Well, who are the least of these, his brothers and sisters, who are going to receive a reward?"*
- While some interpret it as referring to the poor, Keener argues that in Matthew it's more likely to refer to those who share the gospel, the "missionaries".

- *“I think it probably refers to missionaries... people like those in Matthew chapter 10 who go out to share the good news with other people and other people.”*
- He supports his position using evidence from other passages in Matthew, where Jesus' brothers and sisters are described as his disciples.
- *“Whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother.”*
- He states that by welcoming the messengers of the gospel, people are welcoming Jesus Himself, and their actions toward these messengers will form the basis of judgment.
- *“So how are the nations judged in the time of the end? How are the sheep and the goats distinguished? They're distinguished by whether they've received the good news or not, by whether they've welcomed the good news.”*

1. The Importance of Personal Scripture Study:

- Keener emphasizes the importance of personal scripture study and discernment.
- *“From now on, I will always go back and check scripture for myself to see what it really says.”*
- He encourages his audience to search the scriptures, just as the Bereans did, and not simply rely on the teachings of others,
- *“But I'm trying to provoke your attention to get you to think about how you approach the scripture on this particular issue. Read the scripture for yourself.”*
- He calls for a return to the Word, similar to the actions of Josiah in the Old Testament.
- *“We need to go back to the scriptures. We need to call people back to the scriptures. We need to hear what the Lord says to us.”*

Conclusion:

Dr. Keener's lecture offers a thorough analysis of Matthew 24-25, providing historical context, theological interpretation, and practical application. He urges his audience to be prepared, serve faithfully, and engage in personal study of the scriptures. He highlights the importance of understanding both the immediate historical fulfillment of prophecy (the destruction of Jerusalem) and the broader implications of Jesus' teachings about the end times, urging his audience not to fear, but be ready. The lecture also acknowledges the diversity of views on these topics, while advocating for a deep and personal engagement with the biblical text.

4. Matthew Study Guide: Session 17, Matthew 24-25

Matthew 24-25 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Keener, what event does Jesus's warning in Matthew 24 about fleeing relate to historically?
2. Why does Jesus advise against fleeing *into* the city when war is approaching?
3. Explain the significance of Jesus's instruction not to go back for a cloak.
4. According to Dr. Keener, what specific practical challenges did refugees face when fleeing?
5. Why does Jesus instruct his followers to pray that their flight does not occur on the Sabbath or in winter?
6. How does Dr. Keener explain the story of Yochanan ben Zekai escaping Jerusalem?
7. What does Dr. Keener suggest are the “non-signs” of the end, as listed in Matthew 24?
8. What is the single prerequisite for the end, according to Jesus in Matthew 24?
9. Explain the significance of the Greek words *parousia* and *apontasis* in relation to Jesus's second coming.
10. How does Dr. Keener interpret the "least of these" in the parable of the sheep and the goats?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Jesus's warning about fleeing relates to the Jewish revolt against Rome, specifically the desecration of the temple in 66 AD that preceded the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. The Jewish patriots slaughtered the priests in the temple, and Jesus had warned that this would be the sign to flee.
2. Jesus advises against fleeing into the city because cities would be besieged during wars. Rather than providing safety, people would become trapped there until the siege was over, often enduring starvation and hardship.

3. Jesus's instruction not to go back for a cloak emphasizes the need for absolute haste when fleeing impending judgment. It illustrates that life is more valuable than even essential personal possessions.
4. Refugees faced numerous challenges including carrying babies and the elderly, difficulty escaping if pregnant or nursing, and the psychological toll of leaving behind possessions and family members and encountering violence.
5. Flight on the Sabbath was difficult because the city gates would be shut and transportation was hard to procure; winter was problematic because of difficult travel conditions, including flooding and severe weather.
6. Yochanan ben Zekai escaped Jerusalem by pretending to be dead, allowing his disciples to carry him out on a stretcher. This allowed him to surrender to the Romans and escape the city's siege.
7. The "non-signs" of the end are false prophets, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes; these are things that "must happen" but do not signify the immediate end, but are the beginning of birth pangs.
8. The single prerequisite for the end, according to Jesus, is the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole world as a testimony to all peoples. Only then, Jesus says, will the end come.
9. *Parousia* means "presence" or "coming," often used to describe a royal visit, while *apontasis* refers to the meeting of the royal figure by an embassy on their way into the city. Together, they portray the idea of Christians being "caught up" to meet Jesus in the air as he comes down to Earth.
10. Dr. Keener interprets the "least of these" as referring to missionaries or those who spread the gospel, rather than simply the poor. He bases this on the usage of "brothers and sisters" in other parts of Matthew's gospel, particularly how it relates to disciples.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each of the following questions in a well-organized essay format.

1. Analyze the historical context of Matthew 24:1-35, focusing on how the events of 66-70 AD relate to Jesus's teachings about the destruction of the temple and the need for believers to flee.
2. Compare and contrast the various views on the timing of the "rapture" within the Christian tradition, referencing the arguments for a pre-tribulation rapture and the traditional view held by most of church history.
3. Discuss the role of the church in preparing for the return of Christ, using Dr. Keener's argument that the preaching of the gospel to all nations is a prerequisite for the end, and referencing relevant scriptures from Matthew 24 and 2 Peter 3.
4. Explore how the parables in Matthew 25, including the parable of the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats, emphasize the themes of readiness, stewardship, and judgment for believers.
5. Evaluate the importance of personal biblical interpretation and the role of tradition in Christian faith, drawing on Dr. Keener's encouragement to "search the scriptures" in conjunction with respectful dialogue with differing viewpoints.

Glossary of Key Terms

Apostasy: The abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief.

Apontasis: A Greek term often used to describe the meeting of a king or dignitary by an embassy on their way into the city. In the context of Christ's return, it signifies Christians going out to meet Christ in the air during the *parousia*.

Auxiliaries: Non-Roman troops who served in the Roman army; often recruited from local populations.

Birth Pangs: A metaphor used in the New Testament, particularly in Matthew 24, to describe the events and signs that will precede the end times, as a woman experiences pain before giving birth.

Canon: The body of writings that is held as authoritative by religious communities and used as a standard for belief and practice.

Decapolis: A group of ten cities primarily located east of the Jordan River, where early Christians fled after the warning in Matthew 24.

Dispensationalism: A theological system that divides biblical history into distinct periods or “dispensations” in which God relates to humanity in different ways; this doctrine includes the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture.

Eusebius: A historian and bishop of the early church who held the amillennial view that the church was already in the millennium following the time of Constantine.

Exegesis: The critical interpretation or explanation of a text, especially of scripture.

Great Tribulation: A period of intense suffering and persecution, which some Christians see as a future event before the second coming of Christ.

Guerrilla Warfare: Military tactics that use ambushes and hit-and-run tactics, typically used by small bands or groups of fighters.

Herod the Great: A Roman-appointed ruler of Judea who is mentioned in the New Testament, known for being shrewd and tyrannical.

Josephus: A Jewish historian who lived during the first century AD and provided crucial accounts of the Jewish War and the destruction of the temple.

Millennium: A thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation 20, often interpreted as a period of Christ's reign on Earth, with varying views concerning its timing.

Parousia: A Greek term meaning "presence" or "coming," used in the New Testament to refer to the second coming of Christ.

Pella: A city in the Decapolis to which early Christians fled to avoid the siege of Jerusalem.

Premillennialism: The belief that Jesus will return to Earth *before* the millennium, establishing his kingdom and then reigning for a thousand years.

Pseudepigraphic Letters: Writings falsely attributed to someone, particularly writings using the name of a well-known figure.

Rapture: A term derived from a Latin word meaning "to be caught up" and referring to the belief that Christians will be taken from Earth to meet Christ in the air.

Schofield Reference Bible: An influential study Bible published in the early 20th century that popularized dispensationalist theology and a pre-tribulation rapture.

5. FAQs on Keener, Matthew, Session 17, Matthew 24-25, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Matthew 24-25

1. **What is the primary instruction given in Matthew 24 regarding impending events?**
2. Jesus instructs his followers to flee immediately when they see signs of a coming desecration and destruction. Specifically, Luke's Gospel indicates that this sign is Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, rather than the typical response of seeking refuge within a city during war. Fleeing to the hills was strategic for safety and to escape the siege, mirroring historical examples of guerrilla warfare. The emphasis was on swift and decisive action, leaving behind even valuable possessions for the sake of survival.
3. **Why does Jesus emphasize the need to flee with such haste, and what examples does he use?**
4. Jesus stresses the urgency of fleeing because the judgment would come swiftly and decisively. He provides examples such as not going back inside a house to retrieve items or returning to the field to collect a cloak, items that were of great practical importance. This illustrates that physical safety and lives were more important than any material possessions. His teaching is that when judgment is clearly coming, the priority is to escape immediately without delay or attachments.
5. **What challenges did those fleeing face, and how did Jesus express compassion for them?**
6. Those fleeing faced severe challenges, including the difficulty of travel for pregnant or nursing women and the vulnerability of infants and children to starvation and illness. Jesus expressed compassion for these groups specifically, acknowledging their added hardships and heightened risk. This compassion underscores his awareness of the harsh realities faced by those fleeing war and conflict, including the physical and emotional trauma involved. His mention of the difficulty of fleeing on the Sabbath or in the winter further reveals the urgency he is conveying.

7. **What is the significance of the "desecration that causes desolation," and what historical event does it likely refer to?**
8. The desecration that causes desolation is likely a reference to the Jewish patriots slaughtering priests in the temple in 66 AD, which was followed by the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 AD. The Romans even set up their standards with the image of the Roman emperor inside the temple, which was considered an idol and a desecration. Jesus warned his followers to be aware of the severity of such an event, because it was an indication of the judgment on Jerusalem.
9. **What are some "non-signs" of the end times, according to Jesus, and why is this important?**
10. Jesus identifies several events that might be misinterpreted as signs of the end times, such as false prophets, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes. He emphasizes that these events are not definitive indicators of the end but are the beginning of "birth pangs," which occur throughout history. This distinction is crucial because it cautions against premature pronouncements of the end, urging believers to focus on their present role in spreading the gospel rather than being overly concerned with specific signs.
11. **What prerequisite does Jesus identify for his return, and how should believers respond to this?**
12. Jesus states that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all peoples before the end will come. Believers should respond by actively participating in this mission, striving to share the good news with all nations. This emphasis on mission work means that the return of Jesus is not something passively awaited but actively hastened through the spread of the gospel, and is what provides an answer for the question of "How can we hasten it?" It also means the focus is not solely on what is happening *before* the end, but also in working *toward* the end.

13. What are the key themes in the parables of Matthew 25, and how do they relate to Jesus' teachings in chapter 24?

14. The parables in Matthew 25 — the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats — illustrate the importance of being prepared, using gifts wisely, and showing compassion to Jesus' brothers and sisters. The parable of the talents emphasizes faithful stewardship of resources and talents given by God, that failure to use God's gifts and resources is an insult to Him. The parable of the ten virgins illustrates the necessity of being ready for the return of the master/groom, because the time of return is not certain. The sheep and the goats parable shows that on the day of judgment, those who have assisted God's messengers, especially those spreading the Gospel and living the good news, will be rewarded. These relate to Matthew 24's focus on the urgency of action and the need to be alert and ready, but here it emphasizes the importance of serving and fulfilling the tasks laid before them, as well as the need to be focused on the future.

15. What does the speaker say about the different views on the timing of the second coming, specifically regarding the "rapture"?

16. The speaker notes that various views exist on the timing of Jesus' second coming, especially the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture, which is when believers are caught up before a period of tribulation. The speaker notes that this view is a more modern view, tracing its popularization to the 1830's, and noting that he and the majority of the church throughout history do not hold to it. The speaker suggests that this was not the view held by most early Christians, and that instead that the "gathering" of Christians happens at the second coming and includes the "catching up" to meet Jesus as he comes. He also notes that while there are different viewpoints on these topics, it is most important that we as believers read and understand the scriptures ourselves, not simply relying on other people's interpretations.