

Title: Teaching on the Book of Matthew, Matthew 24-25

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Abstract

In this lecture on Matthew 24–25, Dr. Craig Keener provides a comprehensive analysis of Jesus' prophecies regarding the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and His eventual second coming. Keener contextualizes the practical call to flee immediately by describing the historical horrors of the Roman siege in 70 AD. He evaluates the early reliability of these teachings by tracing verbal and thematic parallels in the letters of Paul, noting that early Christians expected to face tribulation. Finally, the lecture explores the parables of readiness and the judgment of the sheep and goats, demonstrating how nations are held accountable by their reception of the kingdom's messengers.

Outline

I. Historical Fulfillment of Jerusalem's Destruction (70 AD)

A. Practical Advice to Flee Judea

1. Desecration leading to destruction starting with the priestly slaughters in 66 AD
2. Roman siege of Jerusalem resulting in extreme famine and starvation
3. Strategic escape to the mountainous paths of Judea rather than walled cities

B. Haste and Emergency Conditions

1. Descending flat roofs via outer staircases without retrieving household items
2. Leaving essential outer cloaks at the edge of the working field

3. Sufferings of pregnant or nursing mothers experiencing refugee hardships
4. Compounded travel difficulties during the cold, rainy winter or on the Sabbath
5. Closure of escapes due to revolutionary guards and local Roman auxiliary forces
6. Safe flight of prophetic Christian warnings to Pella in the Decapolis
7. Defilement of the temple site through Roman standards and sacrifices to Caesar

II. The Second Coming of Jesus and Cosmic Signs

A. Cosmic Scale of Jesus' Revelation

1. Direct contrast to localized messianic claims with sudden, visible cosmic signs
2. Gathering of chosen ones by angels with a great trumpet call

B. "Non-Signs" of the End

1. False prophets, wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes occurring throughout history
2. Classification of common disasters as the beginning of birth pangs

C. The Only True Prerequisite

1. Comprehensive proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations and peoples
2. Active participation of believers in hastening God's coming

III. Reliability and Comparison with Pauline Letters

A. High Degree of Parallelism and Early Reliability

1. 1 & 2 Thessalonians as the earliest written New Testament witnesses
2. Strong linguistic and structural overlap (e.g., coming like a thief, clouds, trumpets, archangel)
3. Validation that Jesus' end-time teachings were established within two decades of the resurrection

B. Historical Development of Rapture and Tribulation Views

1. Early church fathers' perspective of enduring great tribulation
2. Shifts toward amillennialism/postmillennialism during the Constantinian era
3. Creation of pretribulation dispensationalism by John Nelson Darby in 1830
4. Scriptural alignment indicating the catching up (rapture) occurs at the Second Coming
5. Strong theological call to search and test all historical traditions against biblical scripture

IV. Parables of Readiness (Matthew 24:45 - 25:46)

A. The Servant Left in Charge (Matthew 24:45-51)

1. Blessings for servants actively and faithfully executing duties
2. Severe judgment and castigation of abusive leaders who exploit fellow servants

B. The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)

1. Wedding procession traditions requiring lit torches at night
2. Eternal consequences and severe shame for bridesmaids caught without oil

C. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

1. Stewardship expectations of capital investment and financial returns
2. Lazy servant's insolence in hiding his resource and insulting the master

D. The Judgment of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

1. Division of obedient sheep to the right and rebellious goats to the left
2. Exegetical identification of the "least of these" as messengers and missionaries of the gospel
3. Ultimate standard of judgment based on how the nations welcomed and cared for gospel heralds