

Session 17

Jesus' Teaching on the End Time: Mt 24-25

Context

As we move towards the final chapters of Matthew's Gospel, we note the increased opposition the Jesus experiences from the religious authorities. As we prepare for the story of Jesus' passion and death, as hostility grows, he now teaches about the "end-time": the coming of God's judgement that has already been experienced by the Gospel's audience in the form of the Temple's destruction, already a reality by the time the Gospel is written. Jesus lays out for Matthew's audience what they are to expect. What appears to be prophetic language is, in fact, a reality.



Excavated stones from the Wall of the 2nd Temple (Jerusalem), knocked onto the street below by Roman battering rams in on the 9th of Av, 70 C.E. This first century street is located at the base of the Temple Mount where the western and southern walls meet.

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Insights from teaching video Session 17

Through this video, we see how:

- Matthew prepares for Jesus' passion in the Gospel's final chapters;
- The teaching of Mt's Jesus draws on conventional understanding of apocalyptic teaching, images and insights, especially from the First Testament;
- This "end-time" teaching is intended to offer confidence and hope in what is happening or about to unfold.
- The audience is instructed not to be surprised, but to "stay awake"—which has deep theological meaning.

Mt 24-25: Jesus' "End-Time" Teaching

For these chapters, Matthew draws initially on Mk 13, but also reshapes this in the light of other insights from apocalyptic literature.

Matthew also incorporates into these chapters the well-known four stages of Jewish apocalypticism:

1. The *Present* Time
2. The "*Beginning* of the Birthpangs"
3. The *Birthpangs* proper ("The Affliction")
4. The "*End*"

Undoubtedly, the destruction of the temple is already a reality by the time the Gospel is written.

There are three clear messages that emerge from these chapters:

- Maintain hope
- The Son of Man (the "Human One") will come
- Internal Divisions and Struggles

Summary

Several features emerge in Mt 24-25:

- In moments of upheaval and difficulty Matthew's gospel audience was losing confidence and a sense of hope, especially in the presence of God and the ultimate coming of Jesus in glory. The teaching in these chapters

seeks to address these issues.

- In his apocalyptic teaching Jesus affirms God's ongoing presence and seeks to delimit the proposed knowledge of the "know alls"—those who presume to know God's timetable.
- Jesus encourages a spirit of alertness and sensitivity to the audience's present situation. They are encouraged to "keep awake", to trust in God and not to be surprised by what is happening. This theme of "keeping awake" will emerge also in the next chapters of the Gospel as the story of Jesus' passion unfolds.
- These chapters prepare the audience for the passion of Jesus according to Matthew.

For Reflection

- How do those you know deal with life challenges, personal difficulties or social upheavals? What is their response? How is God perceived in these situations?
- What relevance does the teaching in these chapters have for contemporary Christians today?