KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material – *by Jenny Laithwaite*

Matthew 24:15-28

Week of 1st September

Events surrounging the End *part 1*

Leader Preparation

Here are some key themes from this week's passage:

Abomination of Desolation:

- Definition: A term indicating a severe desecration of the temple. Jesus references Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), which originally referred to Antiochus Epiphanes IV's desecration of the Jewish temple. Jesus uses it to point to a future event involving a similar desolation.
- Historical Fulfillment: Historically, this event is seen in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans, but Jesus' prophecy also points to a future eschatological event.

Urgency and Preparedness:

- Fleeing: Jesus advises immediate flight from Jerusalem when this sign appears, emphasizing the urgency and the danger of staying in the city.
- Conditions for Escape: The challenges of escaping during difficult times, including winter and Sabbath restrictions.

Great Distress:

- Unprecedented Suffering: Described as a period of tribulation unlike any before or after.
- Divine Intervention: The days are shortened for the sake of the elect, reflecting God's mercy and the preservation of believers.

False Messiahs and Prophets:

- Deception: Warnings about false claims of the Messiah and miraculous signs meant to mislead.
- Discernment: Emphasizes the need for vigilance and discernment in recognizing true versus false teachings.

Second Coming:

- Visibility: The return of Christ will be visible and unmistakable, contrasting with false claims of His presence.
- Certainty: The coming of the Son of Man will be as evident as lightning across the sky.

Group Time:

Spring is a time for us to contemplate new life and sometimes refocus, sometimes with renewed energy.

- Are there any areas of your life that you feel have been “dead” or “hibernating”? – a relationship / an activity you are passionate about / a habit / . . .
- How can you ask God to renew and refresh your life in that area? What is something you can do to prioritize an area that he may want to fill?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 24:15-28

1. **Understanding the Abomination of Desolation:**
    - What do you think the "abomination of desolation" refers to in this passage?
    - How does understanding this term affect your interpretation of Jesus’ warning?

    (see Daniel 8:13, Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11)

2. **Responding to Crisis:**
    - How can the urgency Jesus describes for fleeing Jerusalem apply to how we respond to crises or spiritual warnings in our own lives?
    - What steps can we take to be spiritually prepared?
    - What other situations should we flee from?

3. **The purpose of the Crisis:**
    - Richard spoke about how tribulation can be used as a punishment, and as a way to draw people back to God. How can we pray for and reach out to non-believers in these times? How can we support one another?
    - What comfort is there for Christians in this tribulation?

4. **Hope and Assurance:**
    - Jesus’ coming will be visible and undeniable. How does this assurance of Christ’s return impact your daily life and your faith?
    - How can this hope influence your outlook and actions?

5. **Responding to Misleading Claims:**
    - How can we apply Jesus’ advice on avoiding false messiahs and prophets to our modern context?
    - What practical steps can we take to ensure that we are following the true teachings of Christ?

Prayer

Pray for Discernment:

Seek wisdom in understanding and applying the teachings from this passage.

Pray for Preparedness:

Ask for guidance to be spiritually prepared and to support others effectively in times of crisis.

Pray for Hope and Assurance:

Thank God for the promise of Christ’s return and ask for strength to live in light of this hope.