KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material – *from Margie Muller*

Matthew 24:36-25:13

Week of Sunday 15th September

Prepare Yourself!

Leader Preparation

In preparing for this week's study, let us be reminded of very wise advice quoted by Richard as to how we should live in these end times:

Live as if you thought that Christ might come at any time. Do everything, as if you did it for the last time. Say everything as if you said it for the last time. Read every chapter in the Bible, as if you did not know if you would be allowed to read it again. Pray every prayer, as if you felt it might be your last opportunity. Hear every sermon, as if you were hearing once and forever. This is the way to be found ready. This is the way to turn Christ's second appearing to good account.

JC Ryle: 'Are you ready for the end of time?'

This passage in Matthew 24 and 25 is an exhortation to **alertness**.

Jesus' goal is not to provide additional information on the signs and timing of His second coming, but to exhort believers with **the proper response to the certainty of His coming**.

The disciples must **live** (as must we believers) **as though Jesus' coming is imminent**.

Jesus illustrates his exhortation with an example from biblical history: time of Noah (24:36-42)

This is followed by three parables drawn from contemporary life:

- a house owner (24:43-44)
- servants in a household (24:45-51)
- bridesmaids (25:1-13)

Group Time:

A lot of the material we are discussing this month can become quite theoretical and heavy – or inspiring and motivating. Pray as a group that we would focus not only on the "what" of the end times, but also the "so what" of how it changes us.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 24:36-51

Jesus was so earnest that we should realise the seriousness of His exhortation to be ready when he returns, that it is repeated by others in Mark 13:32-37 and in Luke 21:34-36. Read these passages.

Content

- Do we know from Scripture when Jesus will come again?

  Jesus emphasizes the fact that the timing of his coming is not known, and that even He does not know when it will occur.

- What is your reaction to 'prophets' who predict the hour and the time of year that Jesus will come?

- Why does Jesus specifically use 'the days of Noah' to illustrate the state of the world? What is similar about the end of the age to the moment the flood of the earth began?

We are told repeatedly that 'the Son of Man will come' - a certainty– at which believers rejoice. We are also told that 'the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.'

- How then should we be living all the time, especially if we cannot know when Jesus will come?

- Are we intentional about filling our lives with the teachings and mission of God and not becoming overly busy with things of the world?

- Are we fearful about Jesus' second coming or are we looking forward to being with Jesus?

- In studying these scriptures, is your vision of Jesus sharpened to see His purpose in coming and His purpose for leaving us here on earth until His return?

Some guidance

Comparison to the days of Noah (24:36-42)

In the days of Noah, men were found absorbed in their worldly pursuits, utterly regardless of following God's word or taking heed of Noah's warnings. We are told in verse 37 and again, verse 39, 'so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man'. They were swept away in the flood, unpardoned, unconverted and unprepared to meet God. Let us take heed we are not found among them.

In the days of our Lord's return, there will be a division (v40-41). Believers will be caught up to glory and eternal life and unbelievers left behind in misery and everlasting contempt. This swift judgment occurs at a time no one is expecting.

Parable of the thief (24:43-44)

Necessity of alertness: The owner would not have let his house be broken into if he had known when the thief was coming. Jesus' disciples do not know when He will come, but they do know that He will come. They must be ready to meet Him (Rom13:11-14).

The Faithful and the Evil slave (24:45-51)

The first slave is found faithfully serving his master who returns unexpectedly, and this slave is rewarded. The second slave assumes his master will be gone a long time and lives selfishly and wickedly. Upon his master's surprise return, he is severely punished. True Christians ought to live like watchmen. Our Saviour knows how unceasingly Satan labours to obscure the glorious doctrine of His coming again. We should behave like the sentry on guard duty in an enemy's land. John sees a future hope as placing on us a very real present duty (1John3:2-3).

Delving deeper

Coca cola/ Honda/ Microsoft … Why is it that these products can become a household name even in places that people battle to find on a map, while the good news of Jesus Christ remains a mystery to millions?

Is it because their 'product' is better for you than ours?

Or is it perhaps that they are more committed to their commission than we as Christians are committed to ours?

Christians must constantly expect Jesus while they persevere in faith, obedience and missional service.

Eternity with Christ tomorrow, must be preceded by a life with Christ now. (Bishop J.C. Ryle)

Closing off

We pray that we would be fully committed to serving Christ faithfully until He comes, and of telling others the overwhelmingly good news of Jesus' death and resurrection for our salvation.

Oh Lord, may we walk by faith and not by sight; let us believe assuredly in Christ, serve Christ, follow Christ, and love Christ, so living that whenever Christ may return, we shall be ready to meet Him.

Some guidance

The wise and foolish virgins (25:1-13)

This parable reminds us, for the last time in this discourse that the time of Jesus' coming is unknowable, but the emphasis is that Jesus' disciples should be ready for His arrival, no matter when He comes.

Some of the allegories and allusions extracted from this parable, such as the symbolism of the use of oil and lamps divert attention from the main point about alertness.

In the context of the Olivet discourse, this seems to reference the wedding feast at the end of time (see Matt 8:11, 9:14-17, 22:1-4, Rev19:6-9)

The wise virgins are prepared in case there is a delay, while the foolish ones are unprepared when there is a delay. The point is our readiness for the arrival of Jesus, which is on His Father's schedule, not ours.

The foolish virgins underestimate the time of the arrival of Jesus, while the wicked slave overestimates the arrival.

The wedding feast begins and the door is locked, blocking admission to the foolish virgins. Their appeal to the groom and his refusal to permit them entry, ominously recalls the judgment scene of Matt7:21-23.

In the days of our Lord's return, there will be a division (v40-41). Believers will be caught up to glory and eternal life and unbelievers left behind in misery and everlasting contempt. This swift judgment occurs at a time no one is expecting.