



KIAMA ANGLICAN CHURCHES



Bible Studies - Term 1, 2024

Studies 5 - 6

# Matthew 22:15 - 28:20

## Famous Last Words

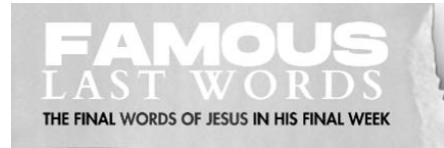
The final words of Jesus in his final week

A Sermon and Bible Study Series  
on the end of Matthew's Gospel

<b>The Preaching Plan</b>		
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Sermon Title</b>
January 28	22:15-22	Government and God
February 4	22:23-33	God of the Living
11	22:34-40	Greatest Commandments
18	22:41-46	David's Son, David's Lord
25	<i>A one-off sermon,</i>	<i>not part of this series.</i>
March 3	23:1-39	You Hypocrites!
10	24:1-44	Keep Watch
17	24:42 - 25:46	Be Faithful and Wise
<i>Palm Sunday</i> 24	26:1-16	Prediction, Plot, Perfume (and Palms)
<i>Good Friday</i> 29	26:17 - 27:66	My God, My God!
<i>Easter</i> 31	28:1-15	Do Not Be Afraid
April 7	28:16-20	Go and Make Disciples

# Study 5 - Matthew 23:1-39

## You Hypocrites



### Getting Started

You've probably heard a story of the man who told the pastor he didn't come to church because 'the church is full of hypocrites.' The pastor replied, 'There's always room for one more!'

- What is a hypocrite?
- What's good about the pastor's answer?
- What's wrong with the answer?

The exchanges between Jesus and the Jewish leaders that have occupied the first four studies in this series (and indeed, the bulk of chapters 21 & 22) make it clear that the religious establishment will not accept Jesus' invitation to the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 4:17). In chapter 23 we have a scathing denunciation of the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees (23:2).

### **1. A Warning against Hypocrisy**

Read Matthew 23:1-12

Who is Jesus speaking to? (verse 1)

Summarise what the leaders are doing wrong in verse 3-7.

How are we to be different in verses 8-11? See also 1 Peter 1:22 - 2:3.

## **2. Seven Woes**

*‘Woe’* is a mixed cry of regret, sorrow, denunciation, and judgement and can even include an element of compassion.

Read Matthew 23:13-36

The seven woes flow from and expand on verses 1-12. Each is introduced by the charge, ‘You hypocrites!’ What is the essence of their hypocrisy in each case.

1. v13
2. v15
3. v16-22
4. v23-24
5. v25-26
6. v27-28
7. v29-36

The following table gives some positive lessons derived from the errors of the Teachers of the law and Pharisees. It is labelled as ‘lessons on leadership’ but the lessons are more broadly applicable. How might they apply to you?

### Lessons on Leadership from Jesus

Context	Warnings for Leaders	Positive Lessons for Leaders
1 <sup>st</sup> warning	Demands of legalistic performance abuse God's authority	1. Live by example God's message of grace
2 <sup>nd</sup> warning	Pretentious displays of piety misrepresent God's authority	2. Earn respect and honor; don't demand them
3 <sup>rd</sup> warning	Exploiting the use of titles usurps God's authority	3. Wear titles lightly that point to God
Jesus' leaders	Pursuit of greatness compromises kingdom equality	4. Serve God's people to empower them to advance the kingdom
Context	Woes for Leaders	Positive Lessons for Leaders
1 <sup>st</sup> woe	Failing to recognize Jesus' identity prevents others also	5. Be a signpost to the doorway to the kingdom
2 <sup>nd</sup> woe	Propagating extremism to entrap converts in error	6. Make converts to the kingdom, not to yourself
3 <sup>rd</sup> woe	Violating commitments made to God by religious game-playing	7. Maintain personal accountability
4 <sup>th</sup> woe	Majoring on the minors of religious performance	8. Major on the majors of the kingdom
5 <sup>th</sup> woe	Failing to restrain impure motives of leadership	9. Promote motives for leadership-ministry from the inside out
6 <sup>th</sup> woe	Creating fake exterior leadership identities	10. Develop personal identity as a leader from the inside out
7 <sup>th</sup> woe	Perpetuating godless institutional establishments	11. Choose carefully the traditions you will represent
Finale	Stifling righteous voices of God so that ours is louder	12. Listen to God's other messengers, because leadership has stricter condemnation

Table from: *NIVAC: Matthew*, M.J. Wilkins, Zondervan, p.762

### **3. A Compassionate Lament**

The denunciation of the woes blends into lament which tinges all the proceeding woes with compassion.

Read Matthew 23:37-39

How does Jesus portray Jerusalem (here referring to the nation of Israel as a whole)?

How does Jesus portray himself in verse 37? See also Deuteronomy 32:10-11; Ruth 2:12; Psalm 17:6-9; 36:5-9; 91:3-4. What are the implications for who Jesus is?

What is weighing on Jesus' heart?

This is the last time that Jesus speaks to the ‘crowd’ and he concludes with a dramatic prophecy in verse 39 and then walks away from the temple. (24:1a)

In what context have the crowd previously said those words? (See Matthew 21:9)

This is a quote from Psalm 118:26. What does the context there imply about Jesus as he applies the Psalm to himself?

When and what is Jesus referring to in verse 39?

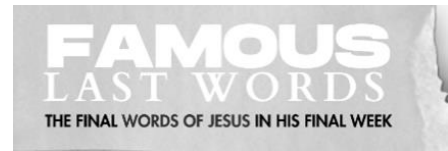
## **Conclusion**

As Jesus walks away, he has pronounced judgment and reached out with compassion. He has identified himself as Messiah and Saviour and kept open the way he will be received when he returns, either as “as consuming Judge or welcomed King.” *D.A. Carson*

Pray that we will grow in the humble service Jesus spoke about in verse 11. Pray for those known to us who are not willing to come to Jesus (verse 37), that their hearts would be softened.

# Study 6 - Matthew 24:1-44

## Keep Watch



### Getting Started

When will these things happen? It's a question asked by the disciples in this study's reading. And it's a question that has been asked by many Christians ever since.

Why do you think there is often such a fascination with the 'end-times' and passages like this one and others such as the second half of Daniel and most of Revelation?

Don Carson notes that 'few chapters of the Bible have called forth more disagreement among interpreters than Matthew 24 and its parallels in Matthew and Luke.'

Pray for wisdom and clarity as you begin this study.

Read Matthew 24:1-44

### **1. The Setting (v1-3)**

How do you think Jesus' reply to their observation of the temple buildings would have been received by the disciples?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the disciples want to know 'when will *this* happen, **and** what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' (verse 3)



The way the question is asked implies the disciples link Jesus' coming with the end of the age, and that both are linked with the destruction of the temple.

Their question leads to two chapters of what is traditionally called the Olivet Discourse. It is the fifth and final major block of Jesus' teaching in Matthew's Gospel.

In it we have references to 'historical' and 'end of time' events which are intertwined - hence the varying interpretations. George Ladd refers to a 'prophetic foreshortening' where the immediate event of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem is a foreshadowing of the far-off event of the end of the age and return of Christ. (This foreshortening is also evident in some OT prophecies.)

What is clear is that Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple in verse 2 did occur in 70 AD.

The original Temple (Solomon's Temple) was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC. After the return from the Exile the Second Temple was built. It was not as large or grand as Solomon's Temple. It had fallen into disrepair when Herod the Great undertook major rebuilding (from 20 BC) to gain favour with the Jews. Work was ongoing but largely completed at the time of Jesus. The Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD leaving only the western wall, or as it is often referred to today, the Wailing Wall.

## **2. The Beginning of the End (v4-14)**

What is Jesus' warning in verse 4?

What are the ongoing things that must happen, but do not signify the end? (verses 5-8)

Verse 9 begins with ‘Then...’ which some take to mean that this follows the birth pains of verse 8 and therefore is the ‘very end.’ More likely, it signals a change in focus from the general suffering of the world in this present age to the particular suffering the disciples will face because they are his followers, throughout this present age. To be sure the nature and intensity of this persecution has varied over time and place, but it is the way of the disciple of Jesus.

What suffering do we face as disciples of Jesus?

What will happen if we stand firm?

What can we do to stand firm?

What explicit indicator does Jesus give of the activity that must be accomplished before the end of the age?

### **3. The Abomination that causes Desolation** (v15-28)

Jesus moves from general conditions of this age, until he returns, to a specific prophecy from the book of Daniel.

What is he talking about?

The ‘abomination that causes desolation’ (verse 15) is a phrase taken from the book of Daniel where it occurs four times (Daniel 8:13, 9:27, 11:31, 12:11).

The references in 9:27 and 12:11 appear to refer to the end of time, but 11:31 fairly clearly refers to the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC. He erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple and sacrificed a pig on it. This occurred during the days of the Maccabees (between the Old and New Testaments) and along with other things, made this one of the lowest points in Jewish history.

So, what is Jesus referring to? He is saying the prophecy of Daniel is still to be fulfilled. But is that with the destruction of the Temple in 70AD or the end of time (or some other time)?

In Luke’s parallel account the focus is placed on the fall of Jerusalem. In Matthew and Mark it seems to have more of a

forward lean. Certainly the verses before us have prophetic relevance to the fall of Jerusalem as well as other events through over the last 2,000 years. When read in conjunction with passages like 2 Thessalonians 2 they also seem to have particular relevance for the end of the age and the return of Christ. See verse 27 in particular.

Note that the 'last days' in biblical terminology covers the period of time from the day of Pentecost until the return of Jesus. (See Acts 2:16-18, 38) We are therefore living in the 'last days.'

Whether we are living in the 'last days' or also the '*very* last days' what do we learn from this section as to how we should live as followers of Jesus?

#### **4. The Coming of the Son of Man (v29-31)**

The coming of the Son of Man was mentioned in verse 27 and is now described in verses 29-31. It will come after the 'distress of those days' which were described in verses 15-28. Although there have been days of distress throughout the ongoing 'last days,' from this and other passages it does seem that the '*very* last days' will be a time of particular distress.

Is verse 29 to be taken literally or figuratively?

Note the allusions to passages like Isaiah 13:10, 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:30-31 (Acts 2:19-20).

See Daniel 7:13-14 for the background to verse 30.

What comfort do you gain from verse 31.

### **5. The Lesson of the Fig Tree (v32-35)**

A change in emphasis now occurs as Jesus deals with the attitudes that should characterise us as we await his coming.

Earlier (verses 4-8) Jesus had stated that distressful events must not be interpreted to mean that the end is near. There he said that we are to watch out that we are not deceived; now he says we will know when it is near.

How do we hold those two things together?

What was Jesus referring to in verse 34?

What assurance do you have from verse 35?

## **6. The Time of Jesus' Coming (v36-44)**

According to verse 36, when will Jesus return?

Jesus refers to the days of Noah. Although there was much sin at that time, that is not the point Jesus is making about the people of that time. What point is he making about them?

How did their attitudes and actions compare with that of Noah?

Do we see similar attitudes in the world today?

The three other scenes from daily life (verses 40, 41, 43) also illustrate the unexpectedness of the return of Jesus. What does that teach us about how we should live?

Jesus began his reply to the disciples' question of verse 3 with the command to 'watch out' so they were not deceived. He now urges then to 'keep watch' (verse 43) and to 'be ready.'

How are you to keep watch?

Are you ready?

How can you be ready?

## **Conclusion**

There is much associated with the return of Jesus and the end of the age over which Christians seem to disagree. Some groups have very specific and detailed conclusions about what happens when and won't have fellowship with you unless you agree with their particular interpretation.

Although there are things that we do not know, what is clear that Jesus "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will never end" and so we look forward to "the resurrection of the dead the life of the world to come."

Pray that we will watch out so that we are not deceived and keep watch so we are ready.

