

18 April 2021

Spring 2021 (U1L7) – Jesus Will Return to Establish His Eternal Kingdom

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==Opening Prayer==

The workbook gives us Matthew 24 and shows us “The Point” is that “*Jesus will return to establish His eternal Kingdom*”. The problem with this is that most of Matthew 24 is not about the future, but rather contains covenantal language. In order to demonstrate this, we need to get some context:

**Matthew 21:1-11** = Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. He rode on a baby donkey, people laid down palm branches as a sign of Jesus’ royalty & importance, prophesied from **Zech 9:9**.

**Matthew 21:12-17** = Jesus cleanses the temple with a whip, **pronouncing judgment** on the Israelites for defiling His Father’s House with wickedness (they were overcharging local & traveling Jews for sacrifices, which was prohibited in **Deu 25:13-16, Lev 19:35-36**). He heals a man on the Sabbath, proclaimed that He was the long-awaited Messiah, and left for the town of Bethany.

**Matthew 21:23-22:14** = Jesus returns to Jerusalem and enters the temple. The Jewish leaders question His authority, then He gives them three parables and **pronounces judgment** on them:

- **The Two Sons:** The first who disobeyed, then repented and obeyed. The second who says he will obey but then doesn’t.
- **The Tenants (Harvest of the Vineyard):** The owner of the vineyard sent two sets of servants and then his own son to collect the harvest, but the workers beat and killed all of them. Jesus says “The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people producing its fruits”.
- **The Wedding Feast:** The king sent out his servants inviting the people to a wedding feast but his people ignored it and beat his servants. So the king sent his servants out to invite everyone but only a few truly cared.

**Matthew 22:15-22** = Later the Jewish leaders tried to trick Jesus with words by either angering the Jewish people (saying pay taxes to Caesar which legitimizes Caesar as their king) or by angering the Romans (saying don’t pay taxes to Caesar because he isn’t their true king, thereby committing a crime against Rome). Jesus cleverly saw through this act, **called them hypocrites**, and told them in a not-so-obvious way that everything belongs to God. God is their King, and if they truly cared as much as they pretended they did, that they would be obeying God in recognising and believing in their own Messiah.

(The not-so-obvious part is because Jesus said “*Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*” You must then ask, “What is God’s?”. Everything belongs to the Lord. The Lord is the One, True King reigning over all creation & everything in it.)

**Matthew 23:1-29** = Jesus is before a large crowd, and presents Seven Woes to the scribes and Pharisees, **pronouncing judgment** upon them. After which, Jesus laments over Jerusalem and walks to the Mount of Olives.

**Matthew 24:1-35 / Mark 13:1-31 / Luke 21:5-33** =

- **v1-2** = Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple.
- **v3** = “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the **end of the age**”
  - age = **αἰών αἰόν (n<sub>m</sub>)**, period of time. In context it means “**end of the old covenant**”.

- **v4-14** = Jesus tells them that there will come false Christs, wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, martyrdom, apostasy, false prophets, and lawlessness. But yet, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the nations.
- **v15-28** = Abomination of Desolation, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
  - **Mark 13:14-23** = When you see the abomination of desolation *where he ought not to be*, let Judea flee to the mountains.
  - **Luke 21:20-24** = *When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, let those in Judea flee to the mountains...for these are days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written...great distress and wrath against this people...Jerusalem will be trampled upon by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*
- **v29-31** = The sign of the Son of Man.
  - **Mark 13:24-27** = sun/moon darkened, stars fall from the sky, powers in heaven shaken
  - **Luke 21:25-28** = signs in sun/moon/stars and on the earth
- **v32-35** = The Lesson of the Fig Tree. Jesus says: “Truly, I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all these things take place. **Heaven and earth** will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

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**First**, we’ll notice Jesus said “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”. This creates bookends between when Jesus first started this conversation talking about the destruction of the temple, through the abomination and heavenly signs, and ending with the lesson of the fig tree. “This generation” referred to the people alive at the time Jesus was speaking. Compare to the urgency expressed in **Rev 1:1,3; 2:16, 3:11, 22:6,7,10,12, 20**

**Second**, let’s look at the heavenly signs. This is dramatic language used previously in the Old Testament that Jesus is using again to emphasize the importance of what’s goin on. This is not literal language here, compare these texts:

- **Isaiah 13:9-13** = Day of the Lord, stars/sun/moon not giving their light, heavens/earth shaken
- **Psalms 114:1-4** = The sea fled, mountains/hills skipped like rams
- **Genesis 37:9-10** = Joseph’s dream, sun/moon/stars bow down
- **Leviticus 26:17-19** = Judgment on Israel, heavens like iron, earth like bronze
- **Isaiah 24:1-6** = God’s judgment on His people for breaking His everlasting covenant
- **Isaiah 24:19-23** = God’s judgment continued, earth is split, moon confounded, sun is ashamed
- **Malachi 3:1** = The Messiah is the messenger of the covenant, and will visit the temple in judgement.

**Third**, let’s examine the phrase “heaven and earth” with other Scripture:

- **Isaiah 51:15-16** = God says “You are my people”, established the heavens and earth
- **Isaiah 65-66** =
  - **Isaiah 65:1,13-14,17** = God seeks a “New People” = “New heavens and earth”
    - A people that is humble and respects God’s Word (**Isaiah 66:2**)
    - A people that understands the sanctity of life and the depth of their sin (**Isaiah 66:3**)
  - **Isaiah 65:17 / Rev 21:1-2** = The “New heavens and earth” is not the eternal state (Heaven).
    - People die, and sin exists (**Isaiah 65:20**)
    - They build houses and do work (**Isaiah 65:21-23**)
    - They have babies (**Isaiah 65:23**)
    - They evangelize the nations (**Isaiah 66:19, cf. Rev 21:24 & Rev 22:2**)
    - They look out at all the dead bodies of the wicked (**Isaiah 66:24, cf. Rev 22:15**)

- **Acts 2:14-21** = Peter at Pentacost quotes Joel 2
  - **Joel 2** is about God's judgement on His people and talks of signs and wonders
  - Peter didn't quote the rest of Joel 2:32 → **escaping Jerusalem and saving the survivors**
  - John the Baptizer in **Matthew 3** said the same thing:
    - **v2** = "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"
    - **v10** = The axe is laid at the root & every tree which doesn't present true repentance will be thrown into the fire.
- **2 Peter 3:11-13** =
  - Peter was at the Olivet Discourse with Jesus
  - Peter talks about a new "heavens and earth", and it's where righteousness dwells.
    - Unlike the old "heavens and earth" (temple)
    - Now we have the Holy Spirit which dwells in God's People (**Ezekiel 36:26-27**)
  - v12's "heavenly bodies" is better translated "elements"

**Fourth**, let's look at how the ancient Israelites viewed the term "heaven and earth":

- Flavius Josephus was a first century Jewish historian. He recorded that the temple was designed in such a way to represent "heaven and earth". (Antiquities 3:181, cf. 3:123)
  - The outer courts represented the sea, where the general public could gather
  - The Holy place represented the earth, where only priests who represented Israel could enter
  - The Holy of Holies represented the heavens, separated by a curtain, where God resided
- The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was crafted in a way to represent the earth: (scarlet = fire, flax = earth, blue = air, purple = sea).
  - Flavius Josephus (Wars 5:212-213; Antiquities 3:138-144; Quaestiones in Exodum 2:85)
  - Philo of Alexandria was a first century philosopher who agreed (De Vita Mosis 2.18.88)

**Fifth**, let's bring everything together into a bigger picture:

**Genesis 1-2** = In the Garden of Eden, heaven and earth were one. Mankind walked with God.

**Genesis 3** = Adam and Eve sinned, creating a great divorce, being kicked out of Eden

**Genesis 3 --> onward** = We see God create a covenant between Himself and His people (Israelites) to bring back heaven on earth through the temple. His bride was the people of Israel, but they continually rebelled against Him and broke His everlasting covenant.

- God uses very harsh words to judge the Israelites (**Isa 65-66, Eze 16, cf. Rev 17 & Rev 22:4**)

**Acts 1** = Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father, He reigns now (**Colossians 3:1-2**)

**Acts 2 – Revelation** = Gospel spreads, Romans & Jewish persecution

- Satan attempts to destroy the young church
  - Persecution, death
  - Trying to put Christians under the old covenant
- "Tale of Two Cities" (**Galatians 4:21-31, Hebrews 12:15-29**)
  - Present Jerusalem / Old Covenant / Slaves / Old People / Harlot Bride (**Isaiah 65-66, Ezekiel 16, cf. Revelation 17**)
  - Heavenly Jerusalem / New Covenant / Free / New People / Bride of Christ (**Gal 4:26, Heb 12:22, Rev 21, Rev 21:9, Rev 22:4**)
- Satan's plan is foiled when God destroys the Jewish temple
  - Romans surround and invade Jerusalem
  - Christians who heeded Jesus' prophecy (**Matthew 24:15-28**) flee to a city called Pella
  - Romans desolate and destroy the temple (70 AD, **Isa 65-66**)
  - The Old Covenant was destroyed, the New Covenant in Christ is the only way (**John 14:6**)
- Jesus destroys the Roman Empire in 476 AD

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Having said all of that...

*“Jesus will return to establish His eternal Kingdom”*

What now? What do we do until then?

- “No one knows the day or the hour” of the Lord’s return, so we must be joyfully and faithfully expectant of His return (**Mark 13:32, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**).
- Love God and love others (**Mark 12:29-31**)
  - Not hate anyone through our thoughts, words, or actions (**Matthew 5:21-26, 1 John 4:20**)
  - “As much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people” (**Romans 12:18**)
  - Take care of the less fortunate (**Exodus 22:21-22, Proverbs 14:31, James 1:27**)
- “Walk in the same way in which He walked” (**1 John 2:6**)
  - Trust in the Lord with all your heart... (**Proverbs 3:5-6**)
  - Store up His Word in our hearts (**Psalms 119:11**)
  - Do justice, love kindness [steadfast love], and walk humbly with your God (**Micah 6:8**)
  - Rejoice in the Lord, pray always, give thanks in all circumstances (**1 Thes 5:16-18**)
  - “Be holy for He is holy” (**1 Peter 1:15-16**)
  - Go and Make disciples (teach the Gospel) (**Matthew 28:19**)

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[Final thoughts:]

We should be encouraged that the future of God’s People isn’t bleak, or scary, or unknown. Jesus is fully sovereign (in full control), and Satan cannot stop God’s plan for renewing His creation and fulfilling His promises to His People in Christ. There may be wars, and rumors of wars, but Christ is in charge.

Christ reigns now! (**Acts 1:9-11, Colossians 3:1-2**)

God the Father told Jesus to sit at His right side until all His enemies are destroyed  
(**Psalm 110:1, Matthew 22:44, Acts 2:33-35, 1 Cor 15:24-28**)

“I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (**Matthew 16:18**)

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, **is greater than all**, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ” (**John 10:27-29**)

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (**Matthew 28:18-20**)

==Closing Prayer==

==**BMB 2021**==