

TUESDAY

Day of Teaching, Condemnation & Prophecy

INTRODUCTION:

Deuteronomy 4:7-8 says, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And no other nation is great enough to have laws and rules as good as the teachings I give you today". The believers in the Old Testament knew well enough how privileged they were to have God's word revealed to them. It was through his teachings that God had revealed himself to them. Judging by what they saw in the nations around them, it was very clear that the words revealed to them were superior in every way to the inherent deception and instructions of men that they saw in the religions around them.

Jesus was also a Master-Teacher and it was common for people to marvel (be "amazed") at his teachings. Tuesday of Passion week sees him dedicate the day almost exclusively to teaching. Now that the temple courts had been cleared, he spent a lot of time in the temple areas teaching the people. His teaching was not only directed at communicating new truth. He also exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In doing so he revealed how corrupt the religious elite and indeed the religious system of the Jews had become. This escalated the animosity between him and the religious leaders of his day. It would serve to motivate the religious leaders to increase their attempts to get rid of him by all means.

In his teachings of the day, Jesus revealed to us the prophetic signs that would signal the end of the world. It was these insights into the detailed events that would surround the last days of the world that are unique to Christianity. They have served to keep the church vigilant and given us understanding of world events. The purpose of those warnings was also to keep us from panicking as we see catastrophes unfold and they help us avoid the mass spiritual deception that will mark humanity's last days as Satanic deception will increase. He included very important material warning believers to not only discern the days they were living in. He also warned them to be living in obedience and being active in fulfilling their call to minister. He shared several parables that were not directed at people in general, but at believers in particular, in which he warned them to not be lazy in the last days.

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM IN THE MORNING – LESSONS FROM THE WITHERED FIG TREE

The lessons to be learned from the fig tree were not yet complete. To the astonishment of the disciples, the fig tree that Jesus had cursed was found to have withered all the way to the roots when they passed it the next morning. Jesus used the destruction of the fig tree to teach the disciples lessons about faith in God and about prayer.

- Mar 11:20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree **withered from the roots**. Mar 11:21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" Mar 11:22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. **Mar 11:23** "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart

but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Mar 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mar 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mar 11:26 [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.]

If you read the passage carefully, Jesus used the opportunity to teach about the power of prayer. He taught that while so many of our challenges in life may surface in the natural realm, the key was to remove them at their root source – the spiritual realm, and the way to do this was through prayer.

IN JERUSALEM – TEACHINGS GIVEN TO THE CROWDS

Jesus entered the temple courts and started teaching. It wasn't long before the chief priest and elders questioned his authority. Remember, the previous day he had cleared the temple of the money changers.

- **Chief priests, teachers of the law and elders - question his authority - Matt 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8**

In response Jesus told them three parables that exposed their hypocrisy and abuse of their positions:

- The parable of the two sons – Matt. 21:28-32
- The parable of the Tenants / the Wicked Husbandmen Matt 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19
- Parable of the Wedding Banquet - Matt 22:1-14; (Luke 14:15-24);

AN ATTEMPT TO TRAP JESUS – SHOULD WE PAY TAXES?

The Pharisees, who were sympathetic to the Roman occupation tried to trap Jesus by asking whether it was lawful to pay taxes? This particularly since it seemed that the Romans were an oppressor. Jesus cleverly answered the question and said that we ought to "give back" to Caesar what was due him and to God what was due Him. The phrase "give back" comes from a word that means , "to fulfil one's duty to someone; to give back; recompense". Jesus taught that if citizens receive amenities in their country, it is their responsibility to fund the costs by paying tax. He also used the opportunity to teach that we ought also to give to God what was due to him.

- Matt 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26

ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO TRAP JESUS - TEACHING ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE

The Sadducees were another group of religious leaders. They did not believe in angels nor life after death. They questioned Jesus about the resurrection and Jesus answered the question that many people may have, "Will we be married in heaven?"

- Matt 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40. Here Jesus answered the question

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT(S)

A teacher of the law then asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was - Matthew 22:34-40

- Mat 22:37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' Mat 22:38 This is the first and greatest commandment. Mat 22:39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Mat 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

JESUS' OWN QUESTION

Jesus fired back at the religious leaders with a question of his own, whose son was the Messiah? Like so many of his other questions, the leaders were unable to answer – Matthew 22:41-46

THE SEVEN WOES AGAINST THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND THE PHARISEES & THE LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM

Throughout his ministry, Jesus systematically exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his day. However, he was careful not to anger them too much because he did not want them to act to arrest him until his appointed time. On this Tuesday, however, he dedicated a considerable portion of time to systematically expose their lies. The whole of **Matthew chapter 23** contains his criticism of them. In exposing their hypocrisy, Jesus also pronounced the ways in which God was going to bring judgement on their heads.

Jesus once again spoke about judgement that would come against the people of Jerusalem who would later join the Pharisees in condemning him. Many in the crowds who on Palm Sunday proclaimed him their king would reject him and call for his execution - Matt 23:37-39; (Luke 13:34-35):

- Mat 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Mat 23:38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. Mat 23:39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

AT THE TEMPLE: THE WIDOW'S OFFERING - A LESSON ON FAITH & GENEROSITY

We see one of the events of the day in a little more detail than others. Jesus sat in the temple precincts, opposite the place for the offerings near the temple treasury, and he watched people bring their offerings.

- Mar 12:41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. Mar 12:42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Mar 12:43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. Mar 12:44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Jesus commended the widow and didn't have anything particularly special to say about the large amounts that the wealthy had given. The reason for this is that the gifts of the wealthy had not really required much faith since after they had given, they still had much to live on. Their giving was not sacrificial. It had not come at too great a personal cost to them. By contrast the widow, gave all that she had to live on. Her giving was sacrificial, and it required great faith. Having given her last, she had to trust God to meet her needs. Today many people would not require a widow to give. Widows would be classified as the poorest of the poor. Certainly, that would be true of the widows in Jesus's day. Yet Jesus did not stop the widow. On the contrary he commended her.

Some lessons learned here are as follows:

- "God judges what we give by what we keep". – George Mueller
- "Jesus commended the widow not for giving away so much, but for keeping so little." Ed Owens, Chicago fund manager
- Giving By Faith is Better than Generous Giving

PROPHECY ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN 70AD

As Jesus was leaving the temple area, the disciples called his attention to its impressive stones and colossal size. Jesus in a veiled way prophesied that the entire temple would be demolished so that not a single stone would remain on another (Matthew 24:1-2). This was at least the 4th time that Jesus prophesied about the events of the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Each time he added more details. Note, that since the temple would be destroyed, all ritual sacrifices would come to an end. The major reason was that his own sacrifice would replace the imperfect animal sacrifices.

- Luke 19:43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. Luke 19:44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

The Romans, led by Titus, besieged, conquered and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. The city had previously been in subjection to the Romans in Christ's day but the Jewish occupants had rebelled. The temple was destroyed by the Romans as Jesus had prophesied – they threw down all the stones which made up the temple from a large raised courtyard.

Jesus and his disciples then travelled to the Mount of Olives. Here he gave his own disciples private teaching about the events that would surround the end of the world. These teachings have become known as The Olivet Discourse because they were given on The Mount of Olives. No other religion has such specific detail about the future of mankind than the teaching that Jesus gave. When taken together with the other prophetic passages in scripture, we can see a detailed blueprint of how the events of the end of humanity will unfold. You can read the Discourse in Matthew 24:3-52

STAGE 1 - The "beginning of birth pains"

1. False Christs – performing miracles

False Christs: In 2013, a South African man appeared on the eNews Channel Africa to declare publicly that he is the black reincarnation of Jesus Christ. This man whose name is Moses Hlongwane also claims that he is immortal. In that TV interview, Hlongwane said that he was "getting ready" to perform miracles like curing the lame and blind and even resurrecting the dead by "opening the graves."

False Christs: Alan John Miller: Before claiming that he is the reincarnation of Jesus Christ, Alan John Miller or simply known as AJ worked as an IT specialist for an Australian company. What makes his claim quite interesting is the fact that he publicly declares that he has vivid memories of the crucifixion. According to him, his suffering and death on the cross wasn't as "harrowing" as many of us imagine it to be. What's more, AJ claims that his partner, fellow Australian Mary Luck, is Mary Magdalene—the prostitute whose life was changed after Jesus Christ rescued her from her persecutors.

Surprisingly, AJ's cult, called the Divine Truth, is fast becoming popular not only in Australia but also in other parts of the world. For instance, Louise Faver, a 39 year old British woman, left his job as a neuroscientist in the UK to go to Australia to live near AJ. Aside from Faver, other people, just like George Hamel who abandoned his family and business in California, are forsaking their "earthly" lives to be near their "saviour."

2. War and rumours of war
3. Enmity between nations and kingdoms

New research by Professors Mark Harrison from the University of Warwick and Nikolaus Wolf from Humboldt University has revealed that between 1870 and 2001, the frequency of wars between states increased steadily by 2% a year on average. Between 1870 and 1913, the frequency of 'pairwise' conflicts (the numbers of pairs of countries involved in conflicts) increased on average by 6% per year. The frequency of wars increased by 17% per year in the period of the First and Second World Wars, and by 31% per year during the Cold War. In the 1990s, the frequency of wars between states rose by 36% per year.

Professor Mark Harrison explained how: 'The number of conflicts has been rising on a stable trend. Because of two world wars, the pattern is obviously disturbed between 1914 and 1945 but remarkably, after 1945 the frequency of wars resumed its upward course on pretty much the same path as before 1913.'

4. Environmental disasters – Famine (shortage of food and water)
5. Natural disasters – Earthquakes

In 1970, the average of natural disasters that were reported was 78; in 2004, this number jumped to 348. According to AccuWeather, since 1990, natural disasters have affected 217 million people every single year. From 1980 to 2009 there was an 80 percent increase in the growth of climate-related disasters. Between 2001 and 2010, more than \$1.2 trillion was lost to the increased rates of natural disasters. This was a dramatic rise, which between 1981 and 1990 had been roughly \$528 billion.

During times of famine, basic food prices escalate alarmingly. One record of this is in 2 Kings 6:25

- 2Ki 6:25 There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty pieces of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five pieces of silver.

STAGE 2 – THE COMING OF THE ANTICHRIST & THE GREAT TRIBULATION

5. The "abomination that causes desolation" sets himself up as God

Microchip mark of the beast?: What if you didn't have to worry about finding your keys before work, or leaving your company ID card on your desk when you went to lunch? At Epicentre, a high-tech office complex in Sweden, you don't need either, just a tiny microchip — embedded in your hand. All of the complex's more than 700 employees have been offered one, and it serves as key, business card (tap your phone on someone's hand to get their details), and perhaps early entry into the next phase of human-machine convergence. TODAY's Keir Simmons volunteered to undergo the implantation process himself.

6. Persecution of Christians
7. Hatred of Christians
8. Falling away from the faith and betrayal of Christians
9. False prophets and religious deception – performing miracles
10. Increase of wickedness – love of many will grow cold
11. Many will be saved
12. Gospel will be preached throughout the world

STAGE 3: THE FINAL SIGNS IN THE HEAVENLY BODIES

13. Great upheaval in planets and stars

- Luke 21:25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Luke 21:26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.
- Mat 24:29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

STAGE 4 – THE SUDDEN, PUBLIC, VISIBLE RETURN OF JESUS

14. The sudden return of Jesus

- How he will return:
- Act 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Act 1:10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. Act 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."
- Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. Mat 24:31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

WARNINGS TO BE VIGILANT

- The day and hour unknown, be watchful and faithful as his servants (Matthew 24:36-51)
- Parable of the ten virgins – always be ready. Keep your lamp full, with some for reserve (Matthew 25:1-13)
- Parable of the Talents – work with what has been given to you (Matthew 25:14-30)
- The sheep and the goats – rewards for benevolence towards God's people (Matthew 25:31-46)

THE PLOT TO ARREST HIM

The day closes with the chief priests and elders gathered at the high priest's palace to plan how to arrest him in some sly way and kill him. However, Jesus was

- Mat 26:1 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, Mat 26:2 "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Mat 26:3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, Mat 26:4 and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. Mat 26:5 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people." - Matthew 26:1-5

At the close of the day, Jesus must have been exhausted. He and the disciples return again to the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany.