

C3 LEADERS' QUESTIONS

S2022-WEEK 11

4/10/22

Listen to, Learn about, and Love on one another

- Please share with the group the last time you got excited while watching a movie trailer because you couldn't wait to see it.

Getting Started with a Warm-Up:

- Please share with the group something you've heard or read recently that gave you some hope.

Getting Down to Business:

The following questions are following this format: Scripture/Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP).

1) Scripture/Observation:

A) Read Matthew 24:29-31 (see passage and commentary below). What are your thoughts about these future dark days preceding the return of Jesus?

“29 “Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven. (Matthew 24:29-31 NLT)

V 27–31: SIGN Christ's coming will be visible to all just as lightning which flashes across the heavens is visible. After the darkening of the heavenly light, which follows the tribulation, the sign of Christ's

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coming will appear in heaven. All tribes of the earth will mourn Him and He will be seen 'on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory'. His angels, accompanied by a great trumpet sound, will gather His elect who will be borne by the four winds into heaven for that gathering, at the second coming. (Bible Panorama commentary, accessed 4/7/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+24&version=NLT>)

B) Read Revelation 9:20-21 (see passage and commentary below). Please briefly explain if and how you observe these activities already occurring in our world.

20 But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk! 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their witchcraft or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9:20-21 NLT)

The Response to the Invasion (9:20-21)

For the first time, John gives full attention to the human response to these divine judgments. He has mentioned the human response twice before, but only in passing, as a way of dramatizing the severity of the judgments themselves, first in 6:15-17, where people hid in caves and cried out to the mountains to fall on them, and second in 9:6, where they desired death but did not find it. This time the human response is in spite of the severity of the judgment, not because of it. The point is made twice (vv. 20, 21) that these terrible judgments did not bring about repentance or a change of heart among those who were not killed.

It is natural to ask whether these plagues (v. 20) are the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur under the sixth trumpet (v. 18) or the whole trumpet series up to this point. But the question is moot because the three plagues of verse 18 are the only ones in the entire series specifically designed to be lethal to human beings (see v. 15). More illuminating is John's characterization of the rest of mankind that did not repent (vv. 20-21). His own moral values come to expression in his list of their vices: worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and

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wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk (v. 20); also murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts (v. 21).

The vices John lists are characteristic of the Gentile world. John is at one with Judaism in his sharp denunciation of Graeco-Roman society. His list is based in part on the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17), which explicitly forbid idolatry, murder, adultery and theft. He stands squarely in the tradition of the prophet Jeremiah, who ridiculed idolatry in Babylon (Jer 10:1-16; compare the apocryphal Letter of Jeremiah), and of the apostle Paul, who condemned Gentile idolatry and immorality (Rom 1:18-32) and equated idol worship with the worship of demons (1 Cor 10:19-20). John probably still has in mind those false prophets in Christian congregations who advocated "sexual immorality" and eating "food sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:14-15, 20). John's disturbing vision is that none of the judgments described up to now have succeeded in bringing about repentance or any change of heart in an evil world. The surviving inhabitants of the earth are like Pharaoh in the face of the plagues on Egypt in Moses' time: their hearts are hardened and they will not repent. Exodus preserves the sovereignty of God by insisting that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex 7:14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8). No such statement occurs here. On the contrary, it appears that if God's purpose is to bring the world to repentance (compare 2 Pet 3:8-9), it has failed—at least for the time being. (IVP New Testament Commentary Series, accessed 4/7/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+9&version=NLT>)

C) Read Matthew 24:42-46 (see passage and commentary below). Does the challenge in this passage cause you to consider some change in the way you are currently living? (If "yes" can you explain what this change would be?)

42 "So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. 43 Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. 44 You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. 45 "A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. 46 If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. (Matthew 24:42-46 NLT)

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Jesus' prediction regarding the destruction of the temple (24:1-2) leads to two questions from the disciples in 24:3. The disciples wish to know (1) When will the temple be destroyed? and (2) What will be the sign that the Son of Man is about to return? In his response Jesus does not dwell on these questions but rather focuses on a related and more practical concern: In light of the second coming of Christ, how ought persons to live?...Fourth, disciples must be sure they are ready at all times for Christ's return. They should realize that Christ may return at any moment, and therefore they should live constantly as though they expect him to return immediately. This is what Jesus means by watch (24:42). Such watching is essential, because no one knows when Jesus will come again for judgment (24:36-44).

Jesus expands upon this theme of constant readiness in 24:45-25:46. The parable of the wicked servant (24:45-51) indicates that leaders in the church should perform their service always with an eye toward the fact that Jesus may return at any moment. The parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13) poignantly expresses the tragedy of experiencing the second coming of Christ unprepared. Both of these parables refer to the delay of Christ's coming: Persons must beware that the long wait for the return of Jesus does not lead to apathy and carelessness.

The parable of the talents (25:14-30) suggests that readiness involves active service. Christians who (because of laziness and lack of affection for God) refuse to use the gifts God has given them for his work will encounter an angry and judging Christ when he returns.

This section reaches its climax with a scene of the Last Judgment (25:31-46). This passage dramatically reveals that disciples prepare themselves for the second coming of Christ by doing good to those who are in need. All will be judged according to the way in which they have treated Christ. The surprise of the Last Day is that they have unknowingly encountered Christ in the persons of the poor and needy. As persons have treated those in need, so they have treated Christ. (Asbury Bible Commentary, accessed 4/7/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+24&version=NLT>)

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D) Read Matthew 24:45-50 and compare this passage with Revelation 22:20, which are the last words from Jesus that are recorded in the Bible. (see passages and commentaries below). Why do you think that these words in Revelation 22:20, this specific statement, would be the last one we have from Jesus? For instance, why didn't He say something like, "I love you!" or "Live right!" or "Keep loving each other!" or "Be good!" or "Don't worry!"

45 "A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. 46 If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. 47 I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. 48 But what if the servant is evil and thinks, 'My master won't be back for a while,' 49 and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? 50 The master will return unannounced and unexpected, (Matthew 24:45-50 NLT)

Christ's Servants Judged (24:45-51)

After Jesus exhorts the disciples to "keep watch," to stay awake, he illustrates what he means. We stay alert not by artificially and perpetually stirring expectation that he will come at a given time, but by living in such a manner that we would have no cause for shame if he did come at any time, since he may in fact do so. Paul may echo the warning against living an unexpectant, self-serving life here (compare 1 Thess 5:3-9).

Of the one to whom much is given, much is required. Ministers have special responsibilities to serve others (Lk 12:41-42; compare Hos 4:6-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4). This parable shows that Jesus' assault on hypocritical leaders in Israel (Mt 23) is also applicable to those in the church at the Second Coming who prove equally unprepared (compare 25:14-30; Jas 3:1; see Meier 1980:293-94; Gundry 1982:497). Here the ruling servant exploits the resources meant for others through his gluttony and drunkenness (Mt

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24:49; compare the demand for sobriety in Lk 21:34; 1 Thess 5:6-7). "You have ruled [my sheep] harshly and brutally" (Ezek 34:4).

Some servants of Christ will be as unprepared at his Second Coming as was much of the religious establishment at his first. Sharing hell with the hypocrites (Mt 24:51) explicitly recalls the false servants of 23:13-29. Like the tenants of 21:35-37 or the shepherds failing to feed the sheep in Ezekiel 34:15 (compare Mt 24:45), these leaders forgot their true role as servants (23:12) and acted as if they could do as they pleased with those God had entrusted to their care.

Ministers who exploit the flock for their own interests will be damned. See also 2 Peter 2:3. Jesus is severe on leaders who are responsible for crushing or misleading others, not because he does not love these leaders but because he also loves the people they are exploiting. Jesus calls us ministers to serve our fellow servants, and we do ourselves a disservice by toning down Jesus' willfully strong language about the lostness of those who do not. If we are (for example) more concerned about getting a good "altar call" for our own self-esteem than about building up the flock with sound teaching or sharing Christ beyond the church's walls, we are using church members for our own interests. Ministers who use churches merely as stepping stones for personal ambition or who are more interested in preserving their wages than fulfilling their calling (see Mic 3:11-12; 1 Tim 6:5) could discover on the day of judgment that they will not spend eternity with the Lord they proclaimed. IVP New Testament Commentary, accessed 4/8/22,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mt+24&version=NLT>)

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20 NLT)

22:20 soon. See note 1:1

Come, Lord Jesus. The whole of Revelation is meant to stir Christians' longing and prayers for the realization of God's purposes accompanying the Second Coming. Revelation ends on this note (1 Cor. 16:22). (ESV Reformation Study Bible, accessed 4/8/22,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rev+22%3A20&version=NLT>)

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If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed. Our Lord, come!
(1 Corinthians 16:22 NLT)

This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, (Revelation 1:1 NLT)

1:1 soon. See 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20. Spiritual war takes place throughout the church age, and the seven churches will soon experience all dimensions of the conflict. Moreover, the “last days” spoken of by Old Testament prophecy have been inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection (Acts 2:16, 17). The time of waiting is over, and God is conducting the final phase of His victorious warfare against evil. By such reckoning, today is “the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

2) Application:

- A) What has been most helpful for you in this series on end times prophecy?

- B) What is the biggest question you have about the Bible and future events?

3) Prayer: Thank the Lord for His grace in giving us a glimpse into His plan for the future. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you balance the prophecy concerning the future with living life today.