

June 7, 2009

Week 36

## **Bring Back the King**

*Matthew 24*

### Group or Family Study Guide

1. READ Matthew 24 together.
  
2. Jesus is nearing the end of his earthly trek. He's urgent about telling them truths about ultimate things. If you knew that your days were numbered, and that your trek on earth were nearing completion, what would you feel urgent to communicate? To whom?
  
3. The disciples seem to be understanding that Jesus is the king of all reality. They are asking good questions, like, "What will mark your arrival at the end of the age?" Then, we know, they will turn around and desert him in a matter of days. Why so fickle? Are you ever so fickle? Do you ever have a propensity for believing him one day/moment and then disbelieving him the next? Explain.
  
4. Jesus talks about false prophets and messianic figures. Have you known some or heard about some? Swap stories.
  
5. "...Wars and rumors of wars..." Some world-watch agencies report that there are fewer wars and war-related deaths today than at any time in history, mostly because of a reduction in tribal wars that don't usually make the newspapers. How do you see conflict in the world in relationship to Jesus' predictive words?

6. Famines and earthquakes ... nothing new, of course. And caring agencies are trying to eliminate the effects of famine in the world. If these tragedies are “signs of the times” that portend the coming of the Lord, what if we watch poverty and famine greatly reduced? Can we relax about expecting the end of the age?

7. Jesus calls the upheaval of the end times “birth pangs.” Talk about birth pangs. What do you remember? What are the takeaway lessons from that experience? What is Jesus saying?

8. “Some will stand firm to the end.” What are the characteristics of someone with a faith that stands firm? Do you have that kind of faith? Where could you find it, if you don’t?

9. “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Some believe that this is a prediction only, and not a mandate. Others say that we can actually quicken the coming of Christ by making sure that the gospel reaches all nations. What do you think?

10. Jesus predicts his own appearance, riding the clouds like a chariot and sounding thunderclaps like a trumpet. Can you imagine such an appearance? Is this good or not-so-good to you? Do you believe that Jesus will come again? Why or why not?

11. All of this raises the tough dilemma of living in two worlds. On the one hand, we aren’t eager to see this life upended so radically. On the other hand, if Jesus is who Jesus says he is, then that cataclysm should be our glorious

hope. We should be living today in light of that anticipation. Do you? How so? How is your life today affected by your hope of Christ's return?

12. If Jesus won't come back until the gospel reaches every people group, what are you doing to promote that cause? How do you feel about your contributions?

For the hardcore group:

*Recently, a street preacher stood on the busiest corner of Los Gatos, telling people that Christ is coming soon. He urged us to repent and believe and to prepare our lives for the return of the King. People mostly walked by, disinterested and amused. A few sat and listened as he cried out warnings and urgings. Others probably told him to go away in certain terms.*

*Most Christians wouldn't stand on a street corner (why?). Most Christians prefer other methods of getting the word about Jesus out (why?). Most Christians prioritize messages about God's love and transforming power, rather than warning about end things (why?). Most Christians are somewhat embarrassed by street preachers who do this kind of thing (why?).*

*But honestly, most Christians would say that we believe in the content of most street preaching. Why are we reticent about warning people? Why do many churches ignore the topic altogether of Christ's return? If Jesus is coming back to lay claim to the throne of heaven and earth, isn't that the biggest news item to come along in some time ... all time? What do we do with this?*