11/01/26
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THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

FASLE CHRISTS AND THE TRUE MESSIAH
MATTHEW 24:23-31

I. INTRODUCTION – THE FIVE DISCOURSES OF MATTHEW

A. Matthew arranges the teaching of Jesus into five major discourses

1. Each discourse looks at the Kingdom of Heaven from a different angle
2. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) – the character of the people of the Kingdom
   a) ***Matt 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** – entrance into the Kingdom begins with humility
3. The Mission Discourse (Matthew 10) – the mission of the Kingdom
   a) Jesus sends out the Twelve and warns them – ***Matt 10:22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.***
4. The Parables of the Kingdom (Matthew 13) – how the Kingdom grows
   a) The sower, the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven
   b) The Kingdom grows quietly in this age alongside evil until the harvest at the end of the age
5. The Church (Community) Discourse (Matthew 18) – life together in the Kingdom
   a) It begins with the disciples asking "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" – Jesus sets a little child in the middle of them – ***Matt 18:4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.***
   b) Humility, restoring a brother who sins, and forgiveness

B. Now it is days before His crucifixion and Jesus has just finished His last public sermon where He pronounced woes against the scribes and Pharisees who loved the best seats, the greetings in the marketplaces, and being called "Rabbi" (Matt 23:6-7)

1. In that sermon He states the principle that runs through everything we will look at today – Matt 23:12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.
   a) He walked out of the temple for the last time – "See! Your house is left to you desolate"
2. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25) – preparation for the return of the King
3. It comes as a response to the disciples questions

II. REVIEW – THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS

Matt 24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." 3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately,

saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

A. The disciples questions

1. When will the temple be destroyed?
2. When will You come and establish Your Kingdom?
3. In the disciples' minds this was all one event – and it would happen soon
   a) ***Luke 19:11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.***
   b) Even after the resurrection they were asking the same question – ***Acts 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***
4. The disciples didn't understand how these events related to each other
   a) That is at the heart of Jesus' longest response to any question asked of Him

B. Jesus' answer – what must happen first

1. Yes, the temple will be destroyed – but then there will be a long period of suffering
2. Jesus calls this period "the beginning of sorrows" – literally the beginning of birth pains
   a) Birth pains are real pain, they come again and again, they increase in frequency and intensity, and they point toward an imminent birth – ***Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.***

C. What marks the birth pains of this age

1. Deception – the first and last warning of the section
   a) "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ'" – the false christs, false anointed ones
2. Wars and rumors of wars – "See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet"
   a) Wars are a hallmark of human history – but only in the last 100 years or so do we see the entire world at war - twice
3. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places
4. Persecution – "they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you"
   a) Opposition is the normal experience of the church throughout history. The freedom many of us enjoy in the US is the exception, not the rule
   b) ***2 Tim 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.***
5. But the end is not yet – the answer implies a delay
   a) Jesus explains a delay in His return. Nations rising and falling, and famines and earthquakes in various places, do not all happen in a few months

b) Jesus further emphasizes this in ***John 21:18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."***

c) Peter had to grow old and the temple had to fall – these had to happen before the Lord returned

Matt 24:15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

D. One especially sharp birth pain – the abomination of desolation

1. A prophecy with a pattern of fulfillment
   a) The origin of movie trailers – God tells the story before He tells the story
   b) 167 BC – Antiochus (an-TY-uh-kus) IV set up an altar to Zeus in the temple and sacrificed unclean animals, He called himself Epiphanes – "God made manifest"
   c) But he will not be the last – Paul writes "And one still to come – the man of sin who "sits as God in the temple of God" (2 Thess 2:4)
      (1) ***21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.***

III. FALSE ANOINTED ONES

Matt 24:23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

A. False christs and false prophets – specific birth pain

1. "Christ" means "anointed one" – a false christ is anyone who claims an anointing that sets him above the rest of God's people
   a) These are not just people who claim to be Jesus Christ, but claim to be specially anointed by God, with an access to Him that others do not have
2. Under the old covenant the Spirit came on prophets, priests, and kings in a unique way – "Do not touch My anointed ones"

3. Under the new covenant every believer has the Spirit – ***Jer 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.***
    a) ***1 John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.***
    b) ***1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,***
    c) Pastors and teachers still have a role – a calling and gifting, not a level of importance than any other Christian

B. How to recognize a false anointed one

1. Signs and wonders – power is not proof of truth
    a) ***2 Thess 2:9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,***
    b) Just because they stretch a leg doesn't mean they can transform a life
2. Hidden places – "in the desert," "in the inner rooms"
    a) A special word, a secret knowledge, an inner circle – truth that can only be had through them
    b) In early 2026, a group of prominent evangelical pastors, podcasters, and Christian broadcasters revealed that they attended a secret meeting regarding upcoming government UFO and extraterrestrial disclosures – (secret information that can only be obtained by watching them)
        (1) They implied that the U.S. government or the Pentagon had officially summoned them to this classified, top-secret briefing to help the state manage public panic.
        (2) The U.S. government did not host or sponsor this meeting. The event was organized by a podcaster and held at an Airbnb he rented.
    c) Consistent characteristic of false christs - They draw people to themselves – ***Acts 20:30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.***
    d) Paul shares his conversion with King Agrippa and Festus - ***Acts 26:24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" 25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."***
        (1) Any truth that is worthwhile is open and available to all – stay out of the corners and the inner rooms
3. They add to the word of God – from our Proverbs 30 study – ***Prov 30:5 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. 6 Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.***

C. antichrists leading to the Antichrist

1. ***1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.***
   a) John does not say the Antichrist is not coming because he is already here. The many antichrists of this age are a preview of the one still to come
   b) "Anti" means both against and in place of – a counterfeit who takes the place that belongs to Christ
2. The Antichrist is these false christs fully grown
   a) ***Dan 11:36 Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.***
   b) ***2 Thess 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.***

IV. THE PRIDE OF I WILL

A. The pride behind every false christ – the "I will" of Lucifer

Isa 14:12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' 15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

1. The abomination of desolation is Isaiah 14:13-14 acted out – a created being sitting in the place of God
2. Isaiah 14 is addressed to the king of Babylon (14:4), but the language reaches beyond any human king to the power behind him – as Ezekiel 28 does with the king of Tyre
   a) ***Ezek 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground,***
   b) Jesus – ***Luke 10:18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."***
3. The five "I will" statements
   a) "I will ascend into heaven" – the dwelling place of God
   b) "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" – rule over the angels
   c) "I will also sit on the mount of the congregation" – the seat of authority and worship
   d) "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds" – the clouds are the sign of God's own presence and glory (Ex 13:21; 40:34)
   e) "I will be like the Most High" – the goal of the other four
4. "Yet you shall be brought down" – ***Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.***

a) Literally Abomination that leads to Desolation – the Abomination – a created being elevating himself to the position. The result - desolation

5. C.S. Lewis – "it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind" (Mere Christianity)

B. That abomination exists within all of us. The same "I will" repeated through history

1. Eden – Satan offered Eve his own ambition – ***Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.***
   a) Made in the image of God was not enough – the lie was that we could be exalted as gods – that is what satan desired
2. Babel – ***Gen 11:4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."***
3. Pharaoh – "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?" (Ex 5:2)
4. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon – ***Dan 4: 29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" 31 While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."***
5. The rich fool – ***Luke 12:18 So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you..."***
   a) They all met the same end – they were brought low by the God of heaven and earth

V. I AM

A. Satan is a created being trying to grasp what belongs only to God – Jesus is God who has come down to us

1. Everything Lucifer grasped for Jesus has done
2. "I will ascend into heaven" –***John 3:13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.***
3. "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" – ***Matt 25:31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.***
4. "I will also sit on the mount of the congregation" – Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives teaching His disciples and He will return to that same mountain – ***Zech 14:4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east.***
5. "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds" – "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30)
6. "I will be like the Most High" – Jesus does not need to become like God – "before Abraham was, I AM"

7. Lucifer was called "son of the morning" (Isa 14:12) – Jesus is the true morning star – ***Rev 22:16 I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.***

B. The False christ says I WILL, the True Christ says I AM

1. The I AM statements in John – the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:9), the good shepherd (10:11), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), the true vine (15:1)
2. Satan says "I will" about what he does not have – Jesus says "I AM" about what He has always been
    a) Every I AM statement is what Jesus is for us

VI. CLOSING – WHICH VOICE IS SHAPING US?

A. The spirit of antichrist is not only out there, this abomination that leads to desolation – the heart that says I will – that exists in all of us

1. ***James 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.***

B. The promise to the humble

1. ***1 Pet 5:5 ... Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,***
2. ***James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.***
    a) Andrew Murray – "Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue. And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil."