

Small Group Guide

RETURN OF THE KING (PART 1)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 10, 2012

Matthew 24:1–35

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

***Welcome**—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.*

***Review**—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.*

***Prayer**—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.*

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

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Matthew 24:1-35

- Trust in the authority of Christ.
 - Understanding the text...
 - Prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - Prophecy concerning the return of Jesus.
 - Applying the text...
 - The things of this world are passing.
 - The truth of His Word is permanent.
- Persevere in the power of Christ.
 - Followers of Jesus will face deception.
 - Followers of Jesus will face tribulation.
 - Christians are not saved from trials.
 - Christians are saved through trials.
 - Followers of Jesus will face temptation.

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- Followers of Jesus will face persecution.
 - Persecution inevitably follows kingdom proclamation.
 - Proclamation ultimately results in kingdom consummation.
- Long for the coming of Christ.
 - He came the first time lying in a manger.
 - He will come the second time riding on the clouds.
 - He came the first time in humility to provide salvation.
 - He will come the second time in glory to execute judgment.
 - Christians confidently watch...
 - His timing will confound our wisdom.
 - Christians patiently wait...
 - His return will exceed our expectations.
 - Christians urgently work...
 - His church (our lives!) will accomplish His mission.

Message Summary

In Matthew 24:1–35, Jesus addresses both the coming destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in A.D. 70) and His Second Coming. He teaches His followers how they should live in light of these events.

The primary application of this passage is to trust Christ, daily knowing and acting on the fact that the things of this world are passing. The Word of God is permanent and the basis for Christian belief and behavior in the world.

Despite trial and great difficulty, believers must persevere in the power of Christ. We will face deception and must reject it. It should be no surprise that we will meet tribulation; we must overcome by His grace. We will face temptation and must resist it. We will face persecution and must endure it, for it will lead to the consummation of the kingdom.

We should long for the coming of Christ. Through the church, He will accomplish His mission. Then He will return riding on the clouds in glory for all to see and will execute judgment. His timing will confound our wisdom. Wonderfully, His return will far exceed our expectations.

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Read Matthew 24:1–35, understanding that most scholars believe verses 15–21 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and verses 29–31 refer to the Second Coming. How does verse 35 tie everything together? Ultimately what (who) is worthy of our trust? How should this truth/these truths affect our daily actions and decisions?
- Read 24:1–2. The disciples were likely shocked, confused, and saddened by the words of Jesus about the impending destruction of the temple. Are you ready for whatever may come in your life, in our nation, and in the world? Are you misplacing trust in things or circumstances that will not last? What are those things? Are some of those things good things (family, home, job) or religious things (specific people, buildings, programs, traditions, styles)? How can we examine our lives and change in light of Scripture?
- Consider one by one our time, talents, and treasure (finances, possessions). What are we investing in? Are these things stable? What will last and what will not? What changes can be made to our lifestyles that will focus us more on the eternal?

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- In Matthew 24 Jesus is teaching His followers how to live. Why are exact dates, especially regarding the return of Jesus, not that important to the text? Why should we not get caught up in date setting? What should our attitude be regarding the timing of the Second Coming?
- Read 24:4–14. Believers will face deceptions. How would you define deceptions? How can we as individuals, as a small group, and as a church fight against deception?
- Followers of Jesus will face tribulation. How would you define tribulation? Should we expect trouble in this life? Why? Should we be alarmed (verse 6)? Why not? How are we comforted in times of trial and difficulty? How can our small group and our church support one another in times of need?
- What types of temptation is Jesus addressing in these verses (4–14)? Why do people fall away/stumble? How are they led astray? Why and how does their love grow cold? How can we hold each other accountable?
- Based on Matthew 24:14, what work do we need to be about? What does “all nations” mean? When will we know the task is finished? Why can we be confident that the mission will be accomplished? How can this assurance encourage our boldness in word and deed?
- Proclaiming the gospel will result in persecution. Think of some biblical, historical, and/or contemporary examples. How do believers withstand persecution? Read Matthew 28:18–20. Why is the last portion of verse 20 so important to the church?
- As believers, why should we long for the coming of Christ? What hope enables us to patiently wait? How can we work for the coming of Christ?
- Read Psalm 104:3, Daniel 7:13, and Matthew 24:30. How will Jesus return? How will this differ from His first coming?
- Christ is coming again to judge the world. Are you ready? Have you by grace placed your faith in Christ? If you have been saved, are there sins you need to deal with now? Are there things of this world to which you are too deeply attached? Are you serving Him as you should? Spend some time praying through these things in your smaller, same-gender groups.
- Why is the Great Commission urgent? How should this affect our actions in regard to local and global disciple-making?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

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- **Pray for Our Lives:** As we read this week some of Jesus' teaching about His Second Coming, pray earnestly that He would come soon. Pray for God to grant us wisdom to understand what His Word teaches about the end of the world. Pray we will all own our responsibility to proclaim the gospel throughout the world to all nations. Ask God for discernment to recognize false christs and false prophets. Pray that we would all look for the signs Jesus teaches, eagerly expecting His return.
- **Pray for Our City:** This week we are praying for Gardendale First Baptist, Kevin Hamm, pastor. We are also praying for NorthStar Youth Ministries as they begin their Camp NorthStar summer outreach and discipleship emphasis for urban children and teens in the western area of the city of Birmingham.
- **Pray for Our World:** This week we are praying for Brook Hills member organization Vapor Sports serving in Kenya and Togoville (Togo). Vapor Sports establishes self-sustaining centers for humanitarian aid and disciple-making in third world environments. They do this by engaging students and adults through sports camps at their centers. Currently Vapor has two centers in Kenya, one in Togo, and will fully open a center in Haiti in September. For more ways to pray, visit their website at vaporsports.org.