

ONE-YEAR DAILY DEVOTIONAL



WITH
COMMENTARY

QUIET TIME

**FOR TEENS
& ADULTS**



QUIET TIME

ONE-YEAR DAILY DEVOTIONAL WITH COMMENTARY

Word of Life Local Church Ministries

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HELPFUL HINTS FOR A **DAILY** **QUIET TIME**

The Quiet Time with Commentary was created to encourage and facilitate spiritual growth in the lives of Christians as they conduct their own personal investigation into the Bible. Consider the following helpful hints:

1 Prioritize your time with God. Morning is often best, but choose the time that works for you.

2 As you read the daily passage in God's Word, look at it from God's point of view. Meditate on what you have read. (In one sentence, write the main thought).

- Apply the truth to your life. (Use first person pronouns: I, me, my, mine). If you have difficulty finding an application for your life, think of yourself as a Bible SPECTator and ask yourself the following questions:

S – Is there any **SIN** for me to forsake?

P – Is there any **PROMISE** for me to claim?

E – Is there any **EXAMPLE** for me to follow?

C – Is there any **COMMAND** for me to obey?

T – Is there a **TRUTH** for me to embrace?

- 3 Read the commentary portion only after you have read the daily passage. This should provide additional insight into the passage.
 - 4 Be sure to fill out your Quiet Time sheets. This will really help you remember the things the Lord brings to your mind and establish action steps to take.
 - 5 Organizing and documenting your prayer time will help you stay faithful in prayer and rejoice as you see God at work. There are several pages in this book for you to use or you can create your own.
 - 6 Each day, purpose to share something you gained from your quiet time with another person. Whether it's face to face, through a phone call, text, or on social media, communicating what you have learned from God's Word encourages others and solidifies its truth in your own heart.
-

PRAY FOR YOUR UNREACHED FRIENDS

“You have 100 times more influence on your friends than a stranger does!”
Dare 2 Share

The CAUSE CIRCLE is a simple tool that will help you be more intentional about sharing Jesus' message with your friends. It's built around three simple priorities that Jesus lived out during His earthly ministry. These same priorities will help you effectively share your faith: Prayer. Care. Share. You will see a reference to this later in your prayer pages.

DARE 2 SHARE CAUSE CIRCLE STRATEGY

PRAYER: Asking God to prepare my friend's heart to hear the good news of Jesus.

CARE: Asking God to help me love my friend by listening to them and caring for them.

SHARE: Asking God to help me lovingly share the gospel message clearly and confidently with my friend.



What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

For God to provide additional financial resources to meet the worldwide needs of the ministry of Word of Life.

As mentioned yesterday, there is a shift of focus that begins here in chapter 21. We do know from the other Gospels that there are miracles that happened during this period. Yet Matthew is not going to include any of them in his Gospel. Instead, he focuses on the fulfillment of prophecies and the interplay between Jesus and the leadership of Israel. Jesus understands that the questioners are not looking for answers; rather, they are looking for an opportunity to trip Him up and condemn Him. Jesus carries on these discussions as a part of His training of the Twelve. In today's passage, we see multiple prophecies fulfilled as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey to the acclaim of the crowds that line the streets of that city. Matthew lists two prophecies that are clearly fulfilled on that day. There is excitement in the air. People are asking

one another, "Who is this?" The answer to that question is very telling. They do not say this is the Messiah, Jesus. They do not say this is our King, Jesus. Rather they call Him a prophet. For the modern reader this may not seem to be that big of a deal, but given what has been happening throughout Galilee and also in Judea, they should've known that Jesus was claiming to be much more than a prophet; He was claiming to be the legitimate King of the Jews. So, even though the crowds were honoring Him and calling out His name, they were still not willing to take that final and necessary step to believe that Jesus was indeed the son of David, and the legitimate heir of the Davidic throne. They were willing to see Him as another "John the Baptist" but they were not ready to take the leap and see Him as their one and only King.



There are many people who are willing to accept Jesus on their own terms. They are willing to accept Him as a great man or even as a great prophet but are unwilling to accept Him as their own personal God. Half a Messiah is no Messiah at all.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

THAILAND – For pastors to accept their responsibility to lovingly confront believers engaging in sin.

The difference between Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and His entry into the temple is dramatic. As Jesus casts out the money-changers, He is making a clear statement. A prophet had the authority to speak out against the king and against the High Priest. Many prophets did this in the Old Testament. However, when Jesus stepped up and physically chased the money-changers out of the temple, He was not acting as a prophet; He was acting as a King. This was a distinction that Jesus was clearly trying to make. Only the king had the authority to physically remove someone from the public area of the Temple. Note in this passage that it was the children who were calling out and proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of David. This once again reinforces the except-you-become-as-little-children-you-cannot-enter-the-kingdom-of-heaven message that we have seen throughout Matthew.

What the children saw and accepted effortlessly, the leadership of Israel refused to see and chose blindness over sight. As Jesus leaves the city that day, He curses a fig tree. Israel has rejected Jesus and now Jesus recognizes in full view of the disciples that this rejection is irrevocable for the current nation of Israel. The leadership of Israel will not change their minds. That incident is followed by a reminder to the disciples concerning faith. Jesus not only taught about faith but He also practiced faith. He did not take direct credit for the miracles that He performed but always attributed them to the Holy Spirit. He did this so that the disciples would be prepared to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Jesus reminds them of the conversation about the demon that they were unable to cast out. Trust is the ultimate responsibility for all who seek the kingdom of heaven.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

SPAIN – For people to be called to evangelize to the remote areas of the country.

It is the next morning and Jesus has returned to the temple in Jerusalem and begins a series of verbal encounters with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. The first question has to do with Jesus' authority. They are literally asking why He would think that He could chase the moneychangers out of the temple. Rather than answer their question, Jesus asks them a question about John the Baptist and by what authority he was baptizing. The Jewish leaders find themselves between a rock and a hard place. If they say it is from God, then they were obviously wrong in rejecting him. But, if they say it was from men, then the general population is going to become upset with them. They refused to answer. Jesus follows up with a brief parable concerning two sons. One agrees to work in the vineyard but does not go; the other refuses to work in the vineyard but changes his mind and does go. Jesus

then asked which of the two brothers were doing the will of their father. The chief priests and the elders correctly answer that the second brother did the will of his father. Jesus agrees. He then points out that they are like the first brother. They claim to be listening to the Father and doing what He wants them to do while in fact they are doing the exact opposite. Meanwhile, those who had initially rejected the instructions of the father are now repenting and doing what He asked them to do. Notice the key difference between the two groups. It was not a matter of works but it was a matter of faith. See verse 32. It is always about why one goes to the field not whether one goes to the field. The tax gatherers and harlots saw their need and therefore they looked for an answer. The chief priests and the elders never saw a need to change.



Jesus did not come to augment the lives that we now live; He came to abolish that life and to give us a new life. No one can live two lives. We need to let go of the old in order to embrace the new.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

ANGOLA – For medical missionaries laboring in a nation where landmines outnumber people and famine is widespread.

Jesus continues His discussion with the chief priests and elders in today's passage. He uses another parable to point out the personal and national jeopardy that these men and the nation were in. The vineyard in this parable is the nation of Israel. The vine growers are the spiritual leadership of Israel. The servants that are sent are the prophets. The son would be Jesus Himself. The meaning of the parable is pretty straightforward. It would be very hard for anyone to miss what Jesus was telling them. Jesus then warns them that the events which are transpiring in Jerusalem are not unexpected. In fact, this rejection was clearly predicted by Scripture. This put the chief priests and the Pharisees in a very precarious position. They were livid about what Jesus was teaching. At the same time, they were unable to arrest Him because of His popularity among the people. Yet, there continues to be an

opening that can be exploited. See verse 46. The people have not yet come around to accepting Jesus as the Son of God. They still think of Him in the same way that they thought of John. They believed that John was a prophet and rightly so. But now they're putting Jesus in that same category even though John himself had proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. This very crowd that was defending Jesus early in His final week would turn against Him before the week was over. If we think back to Matthew 16 and Peter's great confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, it would seem correct to think that Matthew's use of the word "prophet" as opposed to "Messiah" is very important in this and other recent passages. There is a direct connection between understanding who Jesus is and understanding what Jesus is offering. A merely human Jesus could never die for the sins of the whole world.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

Pray for the many staff and workers at Word of Life. They are the “behind-the-scenes” people that help keep things going.

Today's parable is a continuation of the discussion Jesus has been having with the chief priests and the Pharisees begun earlier this week. There is a shift in emphasis from personal responsibility to national responsibility. In the previous parables, Jesus was referring to the individuals who were leading the nation of Israel astray. However, in today's parable He seems to be focusing on the consequences for the nation if they continue along the path they are now traveling. The king in this parable would refer to God; the servants or slaves would refer to the prophets; and the invited guests would refer to the nation of Israel. Jesus came to His people and invited them to enter into a covenant relationship with Him. Marriage is often used as a symbol of that relationship. The book of Hosea uses the relationship between Hosea and Gomer as an analogy of the relationship between God and His people.

Here we see marriage as an analogy of the covenant relationship that God wants with His people. The problem is not with the King or His offer; the problem is with the people to whom this offer is presented. Because everything is already set to go, the King sets aside the people He originally invited and sends the same offer out into the highways and byways in a somewhat indiscriminate manner. This is most likely a reference to the Gentile nations that surround the nation of Israel. Jesus is clearly telling the leadership of Israel that if they continue to move in the direction that they are presently going, the result will be the destruction of all that they hold dear and the beginning of a new relationship with those who were previously alienated from the King and His protection. Still, only those who were appropriately dressed were allowed to participate in the feasting.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

SWITZERLAND – Pray that the Swiss may find the true way in Jesus Christ and that the nation might be stirred again by the Holy Spirit.

The first question about the source of Jesus' authority was handled by the religious crowd. Today's questions come more from politicians and lawyers. This is an attempt to alienate Jesus from a specific people group within the population. The first question is designed to bring Jesus into conflict with those who refused to submit to Roman authority, the Zealots. They especially hated paying Roman taxes. Jesus does not attempt to dodge the question. He uses a coin as an object lesson and indicates that God's people ought to render appropriate respect to all of the human authorities in their lives. He then moves the question to the spiritual level. If Caesar's image is on the coin, where is God's image? The answer is in Genesis 1. Man was created in God's image. Therefore, one may give his gold to Caesar but should give himself to God.

There is then an additional question about the resurrection. The Pharisees and the Sadducees had long disagreed about this, the Sadducees saying that there is no resurrection from the dead. This question concerns a woman who through legitimate means marries multiple times and eventually accumulates seven husbands. The question is, whose wife she will be in the resurrection? Jesus points out that there is no marrying or giving in marriage after the resurrection, but He then goes on to point out that resurrection is clearly taught in the Old Testament. He proves this based on God's conversation with Moses in Exodus 3. The whole argument centers on the tense of the verb that God uses. He says, "I am the God of Abraham," not, "I was the God of Abraham." This clearly implies that Abraham must still be alive at the time that God is talking to Moses.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

UNITED KINGDOM – To exchange their passion for political correctness to one of biblical correctness.

A lawyer poses the next question. He, like those before him, is attempting to trick Jesus and to make Him look foolish or inept. There was probably much debate about this question in legal circles since there is frequently an issue of priorities when one is trying to apply the Law to different situations. A modern parallel might be, should a person honk his car horn in a quiet zone if someone is about to step off the curb and be struck. The answer to that would be yes. Preserving human life is more important than protecting human sleep. Jesus' answer is interesting for two important reasons. First, He recognizes that there is not just one "greatest" commandment. In fact, two commandments occupy that position. When Jesus says the "second is like it," He in effect says that the second is equally great. It is impossible

to separate our relationship with God and our relationship with our neighbor. These two commandments are inextricably interwoven. This idea has already surfaced in the book Matthew and will also return a little later when Jesus says, *inasmuch as you've done it to one of these my little ones you have done it to me.*

Second, Jesus argues that these two commandments are the foundation for the whole of the Law and prophets. The commandments were never intended to make a person righteous. They were always intended to enable a person to have a continuing relationship with God and a meaningful relationship with his neighbor. Believers were always intended to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. The Law and the Prophets were specifically designed in order to help us do that.



Others-centered living is the hallmark of a healthy relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the first fruit of the Spirit. Unless we give priority to these two commandments, all the rest of our acts of "righteousness" will be of no value.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

HUNGARY – The rise in materialism over the past 20 years has led to an increase in atheism. 45% of Hungarians are atheists. Pray for revival in Hungary.

As the Passion Week winds down, Jesus turns His attention to the disciples. They have grown up in the Jewish community. All their lives they have respected and looked up to the men that Jesus is now in direct conflict with. Perhaps they expected the response in Jerusalem to be different. Perhaps they had hoped that Jesus' references to His death were not going to happen. Nevertheless, little by little, that hope is slipping from their consciousness and Jesus now turns to them and explains clearly why He has been rejected by those who are highly esteemed by most of the people of Israel. Jesus starts with a very clear reminder. When the Word of God is opened and read publicly, or when the leadership in Jerusalem encourages people to follow the Word of God, these wishes are to be honored. However, while these men may be teachers of truth, their hearts have not been changed by the truth. They do not do these things for the

benefit of the learner; they do them for the benefit of the teacher. Their actions are not controlled by love but by pride. Jesus looks into the eyes of His disciples and tells them that each believer is responsible for their own spiritual condition. Believers are not to depend on others to tell them what to believe. In this regard, we should call no man Rabbi or Father because that implies spiritual dependence. Each person is responsible to rightly divide the Word of truth and to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth. The believer can learn from others but he cannot depend on others. Jesus is not condemning the use of certain words to refer to people; rather, He is condemning those who will not take ownership of their own spiritual condition. The crowds that had welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem are slowly accepting the scribes' and Pharisees' distortion of truth.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

GERMANY – For new and effective ways of reaching the youth for Christ.

In Chapter 11 Matthew pronounced woes upon the cities in Galilee. Here it is referring to people, the leadership in Jerusalem. The scribes and the Pharisees were those who wanted to be called teacher and father and leader. They did not want to be teachers in the sense that we have teachers today but rather they wanted to control people by controlling the Word of God. This would be much like some religious groups today where the leadership claims that they alone have accurate insight into the meaning of Scriptures. This cuts off any direct relationship between the worshiper and the text. The key descriptor that Jesus uses for the scribes and the Pharisees in this passage is *hypocrite*. This speaks of a person who knows the Word and demands that others follow the Word but who does not follow the Word himself.

One of the reasons that Jesus is so upset at this point is because of the crowds that welcomed Him into Jerusalem a few days previous. Even though they had not made that final connection that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, they were moving in that direction by accepting Him as a prophet. It was the scribes and Pharisees who used their authority as spiritual leaders and their supposed ability to understand the Law who were convincing the population at large that Jesus was a charlatan. They were in Jesus' words "blind leaders of the blind." They did not understand the Scriptures and they were refusing to let others access the Word of God directly. Jesus has been teaching His disciples about living a life committed to others, but the scribes and Pharisees are trying to force their disciples to live lives committed to the scribes and Pharisees.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

That God would increase your awareness of the lost and your boldness in sharing Christ's love.

In today's passage Matthew concludes Jesus' castigation of the scribes and Pharisees. He wraps up this sermon with a lament over the city of Jerusalem. Jesus has done two things so far in this sermon. First, He warned His followers not to allow anyone to come between them and the Word of God. Each person is responsible to hear the Word of God directly and believe the Word of God. Whenever a person allows himself to have an intermediary between him and the message, the probability of a corrupted faith increases exponentially. That is why we are to call no man *Father* or *Rabbi*. Second, He rebukes the scribes and Pharisees for doing exactly this. They have made themselves the masters of the message rather than students of the message. Certain evils are more corrosive than others. The general population of Jerusalem had allowed

themselves to become spectators rather than participants in their relationship with the Word of God. They trusted in the scribes and Pharisees rather than being like the Bereans who fact-checked everything that Paul said to them with the Scriptures. See Acts 17:11.

The sermon does end up with somewhat of a positive note. Jesus makes it very clear that even though they have strayed so far from the way of God, God was still able and willing to receive them on a moment's notice. Jesus longed to take them under His personal protection. His love and commitment to His people was unwavering. Jesus walked into Jerusalem offering Himself as their Messiah, but He knew that they would reject Him and that He would be unable to bring joy and comfort to the city and people He loved so much.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

BERMUDA – For teens to mature and develop godly leadership skills through Bible Clubs.

As chapter 24 opens, Matthew shifts the focus away from the temple crowd to the disciples. They have been spectators to much if not all of what has happened over the last couple of days. They have seen the apparently irrevocable split between Jesus and the leadership in Jerusalem. When they point out the temple buildings to Jesus, they are in effect suggesting that this in some way must require Jesus to inaugurate the kingdom. That seems to be the case because of how Jesus answers their observation. This Temple could have been the temple to which Jesus returned in all his glory. However, because the people refuse to accept Him as King and Messiah, Jesus announces to His disciples that this temple will be totally destroyed. They immediately ask Him when this is going to happen. Jesus responds with a description of how things will transpire when He finally returns to set up the kingdom promised in the Old

Testament. Verses 5 to 14 speak of the first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation period which Jesus immediately identifies with the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel's weeks are clusters of seven years not seven days. He predicted that the Messiah would be cut off after the sixty-ninth week. That is about to happen. That leaves only one "week" to be fulfilled and that week is broken down into two 3 1/2 year periods. The whole period is generally referred to as the Tribulation with the last 3 1/2 years being called the Great Tribulation. Keep in mind that the question Jesus is answering is a question about the end of the age and the setting up of the kingdom. The Abomination of Desolation is the Antichrist. At the middle of the tribulation, he will stand in the temple and demand to be worshiped. As terrible as the first 3 1/2 years are, they will pale in comparison to what happens in the second 3 1/2 years.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

SPAIN – Wisdom for pastors ministering in a society staggering under drug abuse, unemployment, and gambling addiction.

It is easy to see in this sermon that there is a big difference from the material before verse 15 and the material after verse 15. What happens at the middle of the Tribulation dramatically changes what is taking place on planet Earth. For the first 3 1/2 years, the Antichrist has been a friend and defender of the nation of Israel. He has offered himself to them as their messiah. At the middle of the Tribulation, he demands not just their allegiance but also their worship. This the Jewish people cannot do. When the nation of Israel rejects this future ruler, he turns on them and does everything in his power to kill every living Jewish person on the planet. His ultimate intent is to stop the true kingdom of God from coming to planet Earth. Keep in mind that Jesus is talking to His Jewish disciples about the climax of things spoken to the Jewish

people in the Old Testament. There is no reference in these verses to what we presently know as the *church*. The *church* is still a mystery to the disciples yet to be revealed later in the New Testament. Matthew is living and writing in the church age, but he is referencing things that relate strictly to the nation of Israel and the promises made to them by God in the Old Testament. Later revelation will tell us that the church is to be removed via the rapture before the seventieth week even starts. It is very important in understanding the Scriptures that we keep the promises made to Israel and the promises made to the Church distinct. These are two different worship systems. Applying promises made to one group to another group only leads to confusion about the end times.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

AFGHANISTAN – Pray for the many Afghans, who are uncomfortable with terrorist actions in Islam's name; but are interested in discovering more about Jesus Christ.

Parables can be very difficult to interpret if we do not pay close attention to the context. Remember they are illustrations. Without context, they often become impossible to interpret. The parables we read in today's passage concern the events leading up to and following the second coming of Christ. That second coming is at the end of the Tribulation Period (the "seventieth Week of Daniel"). The sign He refers to in verse 30 and the generation that He refers to in verse 34 are those who see the signs spoken of in verses 5 through 27. He is not speaking about events that take place during the Church Age. Too often people try to use these references as a way of determining when the rapture will take place. That is not possible. Why? Because these things do not refer to what is happening in the Church Age but refer to the generation that finds itself in the tribulation period. A common mistake that we often make is found in verses 40 and 41. On the

surface, these seem to fit very neatly into our understanding of the Rapture. However, these events take place after the second return of Christ not before the Tribulation. The word translated *taken* has a negative connotation. That is, it is used to refer to taking a person to jail or taking a person to judgment. Given the context, it would appear that this is a reference to one of the judgments that takes place at the end of the Tribulation but before the beginning of the kingdom age.

There is one other emphasis in this passage. The believer is not to waste time trying to figure out when the Lord will return. These things will happen unexpectedly. That means that every generation of believers should live with an awareness that the coming of the Lord could happen at any time. Every minute of every day is potentially the beginning of the events Jesus has been speaking of in this chapter.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

UGANDA – For new missionaries to adapt quickly, live the Word, and persevere amidst opposition.

Paul has spent a long time discussing worship issues but now he turns to his final topic, the resurrection. Apparently, some people in Corinth were mocking the concept of the resurrection. The more *scientific* in the community were asking how God could even find all the parts of a body if it were burned and gone up in smoke. Paul is very judicious in his answer because belief in the resurrection is a necessary part of the Gospel. The core content of the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If there is no resurrection, then the Gospel as we know it is a lie and there is no remission of sins. So, how do we know there is a resurrection from the dead?

First, Paul establishes the facts surrounding the doctrine of the resurrection. This is not a new concept nor is it an anti-historical event. It was foretold by the Old Testament, and there are actual eyewitness accounts of an in-time-and-space resurrection, namely, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was a

scientifically verifiable fact at the time that Paul was writing. Peter, the twelve, five hundred followers, James, the apostles, and Paul himself were all eyewitnesses to the fact that Christ arose from the grave. Furthermore, it is a doctrinal necessity that believers accept a physical resurrection. Some have tried to make the resurrection more intellectually acceptable by arguing that Christ resurrected *spiritually*. If we compromise and water down the bodily resurrection of Christ, we undermine the truth of the Gospel and indeed the trustworthiness of all God's Word. We could say the resurrection is salvation central for the believer. In this chapter, Paul argues that if Christ did not rise from the dead then our sins were not properly dealt with at the cross (no resurrection would indicate that God the Father was not satisfied with the Son's death for our sins). He also argues that in order for salvation to apply to us, we must believe in the resurrection of Christ as well as His death for our sins.

LIFE STEP

In today's scientific society, many people try to deny the physical possibility of a bodily resurrection. Remember, they have a vested interest. If there is no resurrection, there can be no final judgment.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

SENEGAL – Pray for Dakar, the capital city with many evangelical churches, to become a source of Gospel light for the whole country.

In today's passage Paul addresses the absolute necessity of the resurrection. His logic is stunning. If we teach that there is no resurrection, then Christ cannot have been resurrected. If Christ was not resurrected then the gospel is false. If the Gospel is false, then we are all still lost. On top of that, Paul says in verse 15, such teaching implies that he is a liar. It is rather amazing how so important a teaching can be downplayed by so many believers as a convenience rather than a necessity. Believing in the resurrection is not an option for believers. It is the very core of the Gospel message that transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. One might legitimately argue that if we do not believe in the resurrection then we do not believe the Gospel.

How silly we sometimes act as believers. Here were people who claimed to believe the Gospel, and yet they were questioning the very foundation of the Gospel. It is kind of like saying you don't believe in cars while driving around in one, or that you do not believe in air while breathing it. Think of how silly that is. That is why Paul says that if there is no resurrection then we are "of all men the most pitiable" (v. 19). Not that we will live a Christian life and not get rewarded for it, but because we would reduce our faith to a ridiculous absurdity. Nothing is more embarrassing than to discover that we have been duped into believing something that is utterly foolish.



Believing God's Word is not something that ought to cause us to feel embarrassed or foolish. We should be proud of what we believe. God's wisdom will always appear foolish to the "wise" of this world. What is to be pitied is when we deny God's Word because some mere man thinks that it is not reasonable or not scientifically accurate.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

UKRAINE – For God to give youth a passion to live for Him and reach their land.

Yesterday we saw that if there were no resurrection and Christ were not raised then the Gospel would be powerless. In today's passage Paul begins to list all of the benefits that we enjoy because Jesus was bodily raised from the dead. We can certainly argue that even if there were no resurrection, serving Jesus with all our hearts would still be worth it. However, there is more to salvation than just the present faith benefits.

1. Because Christ is raised from the dead, we know that we too shall be raised in like manner. In Adam all die. Moreover, just as sure as death is a result of being in Adam, so resurrection is a certain consequence for those who are in Christ. A "first fruit" is a small herald of the larger harvest which is to come later.

2. Our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's resurrection body. His was a physical body. He was touched. He ate and drank food. His was a powerful body. He was able to walk right through walls.

We are not going to live in some intangible shadow world where we sit on clouds and play harps. We will feel the sun on our faces, enjoy the fruits of the earth, talk and walk with friends we knew here. (We might even be able to order a mushroom pizza or ride bareback on a dinosaur.)

3. The resurrection will be associated with Christ's next coming. All saints will be resurrected/transformed at either the Rapture or the Second Coming. This occurs prior to the Millennium and completes the first resurrection. At the end of world history, the unsaved will be resurrected to stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment. The Bible does not refer to this as the "second resurrection" but rather the "second death" because these resurrected unbelievers are sentenced to eternal separation from God in Hell. Believers who live through the Millennium will be transformed into glorified bodies in the twinkling of an eye.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

ARGENTINA – Increased scholarship funding to enable foreign students to attend Bible colleges.

In this section Paul begins to point out how denying the resurrection is in effect contrary to all their practices. The first practice he mentions is “baptisms for the dead.” What exactly he means by that has become obscured by time. Perhaps it is a reference to a symbolic baptism for a believer who died prior to the actual formation of the local church in Corinth. Whatever the case, what we do know is that there is no other biblical or historical evidence that would lead us to believe that anyone thought this was a way of bringing salvation to a dead person.

The next question Paul raises is why anyone would put his life in jeopardy to spread the Gospel if there was nothing beyond the grave. The proper approach for such a philosophy would be to avoid death at all costs to get the most out of your salvation. This is not the way believers are exhorted to live. Jesus said that the one who loses his life saves it, and the one who

saves his life loses it. This makes no sense without a resurrection.

His third suggestion is given in a scolding manner. If you hang around with the wrong sorts of people, you will soon start believing the wrong sorts of things. It is inevitable.

Beginning with verse 35, Paul begins to answer technical questions about the resurrection body. Perhaps this is the area that the Corinthians are having the most difficulty answering the critics. Paul begins with the analogy of a seed that is planted in the ground. The plant that grows out of the dead seed is not molecule-for-molecule identical to the seed that was planted, but it has enough connection to the seed to be considered “the same.” Likewise, our present body is “planted” a decaying body and emerges as a forever body. There are of necessity some upgrades that must take place, but it is still considered to be “our body” that resurrected from the ground.



Scientists tell us that our entire body is coded in the DNA of one cell. Even if our body is “lost” in death (such as in a fire) God knows the code and will recreate us in a body designed to live forever! That is why we say, live with eternity’s values in view!

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

ETHIOPIA – Pray that Ethiopia, which has remained a bastion of Christianity withstanding Islamic advances for centuries, will continue to do so.

Picking up from the train of thought begun yesterday, Paul is answering the critics who ask, how can a decayed body be reassembled? Paul's answer: the same way a seed that has died is "resurrected" as an exact duplicate of itself. The kernel of grain that is planted in the earth is not the kernel that we eat. In the same way, the body that dies is not the body that is resurrected because the resurrection body is designed for a totally different purpose. But, at the same time, it is not a different body. The kind of grain you plant is the kind of grain that is resurrected come spring. So the resurrection body is both the same (it will look exactly like the person who died), but it will also be different (it will be improved incredibly). Next Paul introduces the illustration of Adam. His argument is from design. The body that we received from Adam was

designed to live in the "earthly" realm. But the "earthly" realm and the "spiritual" realm are dramatically different from one another. A body designed for living in this present realm is not suited for living in the realm we will later inhabit. That is why there must be changes introduced when our bodies are resurrected from the grave.

To be only in Adam is to die and to eventually be resurrected to never ending death. To be in Christ is to be resurrected to eternal living. Death begets death, and life begets life. Just as our present body is after the likeness of Adam, in the resurrection we will receive a body that is after the likeness of Christ. In order to share in Christ's resurrection we must share in Christ's life. So long as we refuse to accept the new life that Christ offers, we can never share in His resurrection.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

Praise the Lord for His sovereignty over details of your life.

Today Paul introduces a “mystery” associated with the resurrection. The Thessalonians were concerned about the “dead in Christ” when Paul wrote to them. Paul now gives us some more insight into the “alive” in Christ. Paul told us in Thessalonians that we would be caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air. Now he reveals some additional information about that *catching up*. The word “mystery” (Greek *musterion*) is used in the New Testament to refer to a teaching that was not mentioned in the Old Testament but now is being revealed by Paul. The mystery revealed by Paul in this passage is that Church Age saints still alive at the Rapture will be instantaneously transformed from earthly bodies to eternal bodies. This is not the first time that Paul has written about the Rapture (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.), but it is the first time that he

has spoken of the bodily transformation that will occur.

We need to appreciate the breadth of Paul’s teaching here. Resurrection bodies are not just a solution to the death and decay problem; they are an absolute necessity for salvation and for eternal life. Without resurrection bodies there can be no eternal life.

Death is not just a future enemy; it is a present foe. Neither future death nor present death can be defeated if there is no bodily resurrection. The two are inseparable consequences of sin. Because Jesus defeated sin and death, we can be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” If there is no resurrection, we have no confidence in our future because we were not designed to exist as mere spirit beings. We must have bodies to function as the humans that we are.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

BANGLADESH – Pray that the church may grow in this poverty-stricken land to which William Cary took the Gospel over 200 years ago.

As Paul begins to wrap up this long letter, he addresses a couple of matters that are more business than theology. The first is the matter of a collection that is being taken in Corinth to be sent to Jerusalem. Apparently, the church in Jerusalem is suffering a time of severe food shortage and many churches throughout Greece and Macedonia are preparing a gift to be taken to that city. Verse 2 has been variously interpreted. Because so little is said it is hard to draw too much out of the verse. Several comments do seem possible however. It would appear that the first day of the week, Sunday, was of special significance for Christian worship even at this early date. Giving of this kind was according to one's ability. Paul will expand on this more in 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul also makes a change in his upcoming plans. Originally he considered crossing the Aegean Sea from Ephesus to Corinth

and traveling north from Corinth to visit the cities of Greece and Macedonia and then returning to Corinth. This change in plans causes some in Corinth to be upset with Paul, and the letter we know as 2 Corinthians was written to address this new challenge to his authority as an apostle!

Beginning at verse 10 Paul refers to two of his coworkers. For some reason Paul seemed to fear that Timothy might be mistreated at Corinth. This fear might be based on the fact that there were some in the church who violently opposed the apostle Paul. This hostility might very easily be transferred to Timothy. Additionally, Timothy was being sent to reinforce the apostolic teachings contained in this letter. One cannot help but conclude that the situation in Corinth must have been tense.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

HONDURAS – For God to provide the teaching staff and funding needed to keep Bible Schools operating.

Paul opens today's section with a few short but meaningful exhortations. In effect, he summarizes the core principles that ought to govern believers in troublesome times. He emphasizes the need to be ever vigilant, to keep faith in its central role, to take responsibility for our actions, to be strong, and all of these things must be exercised with a genuine love for one another. This simple recipe can keep a church or an individual from falling victim to the divisions that were plaguing the believers in Corinth. Preventive medicine is always better than surgery.

As Paul wraps up his letter, he interjects a number of personal comments and some final instructions. His commendation of the house of Stephanas is beautiful. This family is "addicted" to the ministry of the saints. What greater way is there to be remembered than to be addicted to the ministry. In effect Paul says, *Those are*

the kinds of people you should submit yourselves to.

In verse 17 he thanks them for sending specific individuals. These three men supplied the apostle Paul all the love and support that the church itself had failed to do. The "holy kiss" of verse 20 was a custom of the day. He is not suggesting that we should follow the practice. This is another culturally conditioned command. For us, an enthusiastic handshake should meet all that is intended by this command. Anathema means to be devoted to destruction or condemned to Hell. It is a very strong term. *Maranatha* is an Aramaic word and means either, "Our Lord has come," or, "Our Lord, come." There is a similar sentiment in Revelation 22, but here in 1 Corinthians 16 is the only occurrence of the specific word *maranatha* in the New Testament.



This was a hard letter for Paul to write, but it was the message that the church needed to hear. What we need is not always what we want. We must learn to respond properly to both the encouragements and the confrontations that Scripture brings into our lives. The harder something hits us, the more important it is likely to be.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

Pray for opportunities to witness to your unsaved friends and loved ones.

Today's parable has occasioned a number of improper conclusions. The thing to keep in mind when interpreting any parable is that the parable is intended to illustrate one lesson about a particular subject and not many lessons about many subjects. Some attempt to use this parable to address whether or not a person can lose their salvation. Keep in mind that the parable is addressing the end times and how a person should respond to the concept of an imminent return by Jesus Christ. The specific message that this parable is illustrating can be found in verse 13. Jesus is warning them to be alert. What He wants them to do is to live life with a constant anticipation that the Lord could return. If we make assumptions about this time or that time, we only bring complications into our spiritual lives. The foolish and the wise virgins represent two different ways that a person can evaluate the

message that Jesus has just given. One group chooses to live with the constant awareness that the Lord could return at any time. The other group chooses to pick and choose when they think this event might happen. The foolishness of the second approach is illustrated by the fact that these women are unprepared when the wedding actually takes place. Therefore, they lose out on many of the benefits of being invited to that wedding. If a believer chooses to live in such a careless way, then he ought to expect that careless living will have consequences. Jesus is not suggesting that they would lose their salvation, only that there are consequences for careless living. One should always make decisions about salvation based on passages that are discussing salvation. One should never choose a passage that is addressing another topic and then use that passage to refute a much clearer passage.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

UKRAINE – Wisdom and courage for full-time workers hampered by restrictions that limit growth.

Today's parable, like yesterday's, presents a number of unique challenges. Jesus has repeatedly taught throughout the Book of Matthew that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. He has also taught that he who would be greatest of all must become servant of all. If we are not careful, we might come to the conclusion that this parable is teaching the exact opposite, namely, that he who is first will be given more and he who is last will be given less. Parables are earthly stories with heavenly applications. On an earthly level, one would not expect the servant who had hidden his talent in the ground to be rewarded. The story would make no sense if Jesus presented it that way. The application of the story is about opportunity not how many talents were given to each person. There is a

somewhat similar parable in Luke 16 about an unjust steward. That parable is not commending the behavior of the steward. It is teaching that people ought to plan for the future. The same is the case here. The real question in life is not whether or not people have opportunities. The question in life is what people do with the opportunities they have. Life may appear unfair at times. Not everyone will be given the opportunity to walk and talk with Jesus the way the twelve disciples did. And yet, everyone is expected to avail themselves of the opportunity that they have been given. Those who use the opportunities wisely will be given more opportunities. Those who pass on the opportunities they are given always end up closing the door on further opportunities.



There is no question that some people live in good times and some people live in very dangerous times. Many who come to Christ in the tribulation will suffer greatly. That does not excuse people from their responsibility to be men and women of faith. Never pass on an opportunity because it seems too small.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

KOREA – For the message of the Gospel to penetrate North Korea's isolation from the modern world.

At verse 31, Jesus starts to wrap up the teaching that He began at the beginning of chapter 24. Until this point, He is still dealing with issues that relate to the tribulation and when He would return to set up His kingdom. He now begins to teach concerning what will happen when He arrives back on planet Earth. The first event spoken of here is the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats. Before the kingdom can be started the population must be purged so that all of the people that enter into the Messianic Kingdom are believers. No one can say that he or she did not have an opportunity to change his or her situation, as we saw in yesterday's parable. But there are still a number of elements within this judgment that would've been an eye opener to the disciples. We should first note that this is not a final judgment. It is a judgment to determine which Gentiles will enter into

the kingdom. The intense persecution of the last three-and-one-half years of tribulation period would have effectively separated believers and unbelievers. God does not judge them based on the condition of the hearts. He judges them based on how they interacted with the believing community during those days of intense persecution. Those who buried their talents and ignored the needs of those who were under stress are cast into outer darkness. Those who invested themselves and their lives to protect others were welcomed into the kingdom. Their outward actions mirror their hearts. Jesus also draws us a clear parallel between how people treat one another and how they treat Him. The lesson seems very clear here: how a person treats other believers is exactly how they would treat Jesus. To say we love Jesus and not love our brothers and sisters is a lie.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

FRANCE – For an impact to be made on the core French population.

The nation of Israel stood at the doorway of greatness. The kingdom promised by God was right there before them. All they had to do was say yes. Yet, as today's passage opens, the chief priests and the elders of the people have gathered together plotting to destroy their Messiah. Jesus is now just outside of Jerusalem in a town called Bethany. There, He is having dinner at the home of Simon the leper. It is not the chief priests and scribes who confront Jesus at this point but rather His disciples. After a woman anoints His head with oil, there is discussion as to whether this oil should have been sold and the profits used to help the poor. It is not clear how many of the disciples raise this objection but Matthew points out that Judas Iscariot is one of the key objectors. This is the first time that Judas is mentioned except in the listing of the Twelve. He has been with Jesus since almost the beginning.

It is impossible to imagine that anyone could have had a better opportunity to make the right decision about whether or not Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Yet Judas, with all of the evidence that he has seen with his own eyes, refuses to believe and willingly goes to the chief priests and scribes in order to make a deal. It is impossible to know what was in Judas' heart. Perhaps the events of the last days have unsettled him. Perhaps he was more committed to the idea of being a part of the kingdom than he was committed to the person, Jesus Christ. Whatever the case, great opportunity does not always result in great decisions. Others would desert Jesus at times during the coming crucifixion but Judas went one step beyond this, he betrayed Him. He chose physical wealth over spiritual wealth. He tried to store up for himself treasures on earth instead of treasures in heaven.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

JAPAN – For the Holy Spirit to help believers overcome ancestral influences by the study of God's Word.

The narrative is picking up pace and events are moving rapidly toward the final rejection of Jesus Christ. As Matthew recounts the meal in the upper room, often referred to as the Last Supper, he places a significant amount of emphasis on Judas Iscariot. This is an important element in Matthew's understanding of why the nation of Israel turned its back on its legitimate Davidic King. It was not that they did not have enough evidence. It was not that Jesus did not meet all of the requirements. It was simply a decision of the heart. The leadership of Israel, like Judas, was more interested in here and now physical benefits, than they were in eternal life. This is hard for many of us to understand. Yet, if we are honest, we should recognize that the material things around us often exert a greater pressure than the God who lives within us. Judas

buried his opportunity, and like the servant in the parable, forfeited the opportunity to be a part of something really incredible. He saw the miracles of Jesus. He heard the words of Jesus. He was included in the brotherhood of the disciples. It is likely that he also performed some of the miracles that the Twelve were empowered to do. What he did not do was believe and receive the salvation that Jesus was offering. He wanted a different kind of salvation. He was unwilling to become poor in spirit. He hungered and thirsted after material benefits at the cost of spiritual benefits. The contrasts in this passage are monumental. While Jesus prepares to give His life for all mankind, Judas is nickel and diming and trying to turn his association with Jesus into a profit.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

KYRGYZSTAN – Pray the people of Kyrgyzstan will continue to have the chance to hear of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Matthew moves the narrative toward the climax of all human history, he continues to develop the themes that he has been emphasizing throughout his entire Gospel. Jesus and the disciples leave the upper room and walk towards the Garden of Gethsemane. It is at this point that Jesus tells the remaining eleven that they will all fall away because of Him that very night. Matthew who was one of the eleven wants the reader to understand the difference between what Judas did and what the rest of the disciples did. Judas had a lack of faith. The rest of the disciples had a crisis of faith. They believed and trusted in Jesus. But at the same time they were putting too much trust in themselves. Peter, who was the first to step up and proclaim his faith in Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of the living God, responds quickly to Jesus' words. Peter's intentions were good but he has allowed his ideas of how

things should unfold to conflict with God's plan. Jesus then predicts that Peter will deny him three times before the night is out.

The events in the garden of Gethsemane only serve to reinforce what Jesus has just said to the disciples. Jesus is agonizing with what He knows is about to happen and asks the disciples to pray with Him. They agree to do this but keep falling asleep. They appear to be in denial. Jesus clearly understands the necessity and the implications of what is about to happen. He understands the opportunity and joy that it will bring. Still, He embraces the suffering. That does not make the suffering any less painful, physically or psychologically. Jesus' agony is genuine. He is both man and God. Jesus walked down this road because it was the only way. He accepted the suffering because He loved those very disciples who were having trouble staying awake.

What is the writer saying?

How can I apply this to my life?

PRAY

MOZAMBIQUE – Pray that religious freedom might continue and that true Christian faith and love might be expressed throughout society.

There are four Gospels in the New Testament. Each one covers the events of the last few days in Jesus' life. Each one chooses to emphasize different factors and different people. The event itself is the most important thing that has happened in the history of the world. Yet, the most important event in each personal life is how we respond to what happened to Jesus. Matthew was particularly interested in convincing the nation of Israel that Jesus was indeed the Messiah even though the kingdom was delayed. The leadership of Israel, the throngs in and around Jerusalem, Judas, and the rest of the disciples all help us understand why Jesus was lifted on a cross and not seated on the throne. As Judas steps out of the darkness leading a great multitude with clubs and swords, we are reminded that there are frequently those who follow Jesus for what they can get out of it. As a disciple steps up and

cuts the ear off one of the attackers, we are reminded that there are those who allow their genuine faith to be distorted by self-interest. As Jesus steps forward and stops the fight that is about to break out, we are reminded that all the occurrences of life must be filtered through the prism of faith. Jesus did not hesitate in this situation. He clearly understood what needed to be done. He clearly understood where the strength to do it had come from. Yes, He was God. But for the time He walked among us as a man, He lived with the same limitations that we have. It was not that He had great strength, or great education, or great willpower, or any of those things that we frequently attribute to those we consider great among us. Jesus had faith. He trusted God. He knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that all of these things had taken place that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.