

How to Be Ready for the Return of Jesus Or

How to NOT Swallow a Camel

Explain the term swallow a camel (essentially believing culture more than God. EX. Slavery).

Matthew 23-25. Actually one continuous narrative.

Matthew 23 – How the religious leaders (of all people) were not ready for the 1st coming of Jesus

Matthew 24 – How to recognize the season of His 2nd coming

Matthew 25 – How to be ready for His 2nd coming

The 7 Woes of Ch 23

1. V13 - How do they shut the door of heaven? V4&5.
2. V15 - Is the salvation of others a tally mark for you? Or the cry of your heart for a dying people? If it is a tally mark, it will be a tally against you not for you. Surprise! You thought you were bowling but you were golfing. You scored a 280 but it's only par 3! Are we teaching judgmentalism or are we teaching All our righteousness is as filthy rags but though our sins are as scarlet, we can be white as now?
3. V16 - What is your religious emphasis? Is it making sure the church has money or that the facility is nice or in order? Is the the gifts you can bring - your service, your money, your talent as a speaker, prophet, helper, whatever? If it is, then your emphasis is on the tools that serve God and not on God Himself and you are not ready for His return. Have we made church about church? Or have we made it about connecting with God?
4. V23 - The religious leaders created a "saved by works" culture. God did not. Can't tell you how many times I've heard that Jesus came to save us from a salvation by works system. God never set up a salvation by works system. To God, life and religion have ALWAYS been about the heart. Are you trusting in you good Father? Are you treating others right. The law of Moses (religious code) was not given to make us right with God. I am going to spend the most amount of time on this woe because it is important for us to understand the roles of law and grace in order to understand Jesus' point here. 500 years before the law was given we see that salvation has always been by faith. Genesis 15:6 says Abram believed the lord and the lord counted him righteous because of his faith. This brings up the question, if you could be saved through faith before Jesus, what was the point of His sacrifice on the cross. The sacrifice on the cross IS the promise they had faith in. They didn't know His name and they didn't know the details but they had faith in God's promise and when Jesus died for our sins, it transcended time. Galatians 3:8-9 and Romans 3:25-26. So then why was the law given? For that matter, what's the point of any biblical religious code whether the law or even the teachings of Jesus? God's law exists to A) guard us Gal 3:23 B) reveal our sin, pronounce the curse for our sin, and therefore point us to God's mercy Gal 3:19 and 3:13 C) give us expressions of worship John 14:23, James 2:21-24 shows that faith is made complete by actions - that's why there was a forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. So if we start with faith and then attempt the religious code out of a sense of love and worship, we will be like David who wrote Psalm 119:14-16. But the religious leaders of Jesus' day (and in fact people long before then and even now) have a tendency to judge each other based on works and therefore to create a culture that has a saved by works mentality. We may judge someone as a sinner because they drink beer and listen to secular radio while neglect the oppressed and harbor unforgiveness. We are swallowing a camel! Isaiah 1:14-17 reiterates Jesus' heart in this passage. We are NOT ready for Jesus if our religion is not motivated by God's love - we will be in for a sore surprise when we find out all our good works were for nothing.
5. V25 - A natural reaction to the very existence or legalistic religious people is to become licentious. But in this verse, Jesus attributes two characteristics to religious people that we often reserve for licentious people. Greed and Self Indulgence. Religiosity and

licentiousness are not opposites. They are different types of the same trash. Both are man made ways to make you feel good about yourself. In verse 3 of this chapter Jesus tells us to do what the pharisees tell us but to not follow their example. This is a disclaimer that the speech he is about to give against the pharisees is not license to live how you want but an address of the heart. But if religiosity and licentiousness are the same, what is the opposite? Luke 18:18-30 the opposite of religiosity and licentiousness is humble service in view of God's generosity.

6. V27 In the last woe he compared them to a dirty cup, insufficient to quench the thirst of others . Here he takes it up a notch and compares them to a tomb - insufficient to bring life. Luke 18:9-14. Why did Jesus have the stone rolled away if he could walk through walls? So that everyone could see what God can do with death. We need to roll our stones away and expose our death to the Lord so that he can call life out of our tombs.
7. V29 Do we praise biblical heroes and yet reject and criticize messengers of the gospel today who don't look like us?

V37 - the heart of Jesus

Ch 24 V1-3 Tell us about end times Point 1 - Do not be misled

V32-33 and 36 and 42 Pay attention to the season. Keep watch. Be ready for his return. Unlike the pharisees.

Ch 25:1-13 10 Bridesmaids Be prepared in season and out

V13-30 Parable of the 3 Servants Use the opportunities God has given you to make Kingdom investments. This is how we prepare for his return. This is, in fact, the meaning of life.

V31-46 Sheep and goats Obviously a passage about being prepared for the Lord's return. Main points - those who *serve* are rewarded unfairly *in their advantage* while those who don't serve are considered those who have refused Jesus and reap their *just* reward.

The four points in ch 24 and 25 to related to His return are

- 1) Do not be misled
- 2) Be prepared
- 3) Use the opportunities God has given you
- 4) Serve others

All together that makes one big point: Do not be misled but be prepared by using the opportunities God has given you to serve others.

Or, to switch the words around, if you do not use the opportunities God has given you to serve others, you may become susceptible to the misleadings of your culture, and not be prepared for the Lord's return.