PRAYER BEFORE THE STUDY

Illumine our hearts, loving Master, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed Commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to you. For You Christ our God are the light of our souls and bodies and to You we send up glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Amen

PRAYER AFTER THE STUDY

Christ our God, You are the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. You have completed the divine plan of the Father. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Amen.
MEMBERS OF OUR GROUP

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Matthew 21: 1-22

1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. 3 And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” 4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 5 “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ”

6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. 8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”
Hosanna in the highest!

10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” 11 So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”

12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ ”

14 Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant 16 and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?’ ”

17 Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away. 20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?” 21 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”
1. Vs. 1-11 describes what is called The Triumphal Entry. Have you ever seen the arrival of a famous person into a city or country not his own? Where, when, and what was that like?

2. There is no clear right or wrong answer to this, but do you think most of the people were expecting an earthly restoration of the Israelite nation, or did they understand this was the announcement of a spiritual kingdom?

3. What day in the church year is celebrated because of the events of these verses? What is often done in churches in celebration of this special day?

4. Two animals are mentioned in this account (vs. 2, 7) but Mark and Luke each mention only one in their gospels. Can you explain this seeming discrepancy?

5. How can the actions of vs. 12-13 fit with the one described elsewhere as “the prince of peace,” the “suffering servant,” and the “lamb of God”?

6. Vs. 14-17: What things did Jesus do for the various groups around him, and how did the the various groups respond? Can you relate that to our world today?

7. Vs. 17-22 is a demonstration of and lesson on faith. What can we derive from it, and how can we relate it to our lives?
MATTHEW 21: 23-46

23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”

24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?”

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.” 27 So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.”

And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

28 “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ 29 He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. 30 Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

33 “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 34 Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. 37 Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ 39 So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?”

41 They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the Lord’s doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes’?
43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.
1. Vs. 23-27: Do the leaders of the Jews have a right to know the authority by which Jesus does the miracles? What do you think is their attitude or motive?

2. Why do you think Jesus does not give a direct answer? Are there perhaps times Christians should not even bother giving answers about their faith? Example?

3. Vs. 28-32 is a seemingly simple story. Who today might be likened to the “sons” (vs 26) and who might be the “tax collectors and harlots” of vs. 32?

4. Read carefully vs. 31-44. Compare it with what you know of the Old Testament, and identify: the landowner, the vineyard, the vinedressers the servants that were sent, and finally, the “son” of vs. 38 and the “stone” of vs. 43, 44.

5. In vs. 43, what might be meant by “the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation hearing the results of it”? Who was the kingdom taken from and who was it given to?

6. Where is the kingdom now? How does that affect us tonight? What has happened to those who had the kingdom taken from them?
And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’” But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.”

So they brought Him a denarius.

And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?”

They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.
1. In vs. 1-7, Jesus is talking about a marriage celebration, and it can apply to more than one event. What do you see as the main “wedding” taking place here?

2. Who is the king, and who are the “servants” and how were they received? Can you relate this to events of the Old Testament?

3. Can you think of a specific fulfillment of the picture in vs. 7?

4. In vs. 8-14, who are these servants, and how were they received?

5. Why is the man without a wedding garment treated so harshly? What is the “garment” he was missing, and how does that apply to us?

6. Vs. 15-22 - What two elements of this dialogue tell us it is not going to be successful (see vs. 1 and 18)?

7. How does Jesus’ statement in vs. 21 relate to the Christian and his government? Is part of our money “owed” to God?
23 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. 27 Last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “The Son of David.”

43 He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’?
45 If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.
1. Vs. 23-28: Since the Sadducees did not believe in any resurrection, why would they ask the question posed in these verses?

2. Have you ever met or discussed with persons who like to argue and discuss religious or Biblical matters, but truly have no interest in learning truth? How did you react?

3. Vs. 29-33: What correction did Jesus make to their understanding? Can you imagine a heaven with just such a make up of people as Jesus describes?

4. What does Jesus use to turn the Sadducees argument back on them? What was the reaction of the multitude? Do you think they had never thought of this before?

5. Vs. 34-40. Do you think the lawyer is bringing an honest question to Jesus? How do you think most Christians measure up to Jesus’ answer?

6. Note the puzzling question Jesus poses in vs. 41-46. Think now: How would you answer it?
Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’

But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”
Final Warnings

Except for brief introductory sentences, chapter 23-25 are entirely the words of Jesus.

1. Vs. 1-7: What are some of the signs of pride shown by the behavior of the leaders of the Jews? In what way may we be in danger of showing spiritual pride?

2. What were the people to take from their teachings, and what were they to reject?

3. Vs. 8-32: These are harsh condemnations of the scribes and Pharisees. How does Jesus say their words show they are guilty just like their forefathers? (vs. 29-31)

4. Homework: Review Matt. 3:4-10. How were the warnings of John the Baptist almost identical to the warnings of Jesus here in vs. 31-35?

5. Clearly Jesus is speaking of great judgment to come on Israel. How soon was it to begin? (vs. 36) Does that help make these verses clearer to you?

6. What do you think would be the mood or tone of Jesus in vs. 37-39? What did the final fulfillment of this whole chapter look like to the disciples of Jesus’ day?
Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 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.”

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?”

And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of 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. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 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. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.

Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

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. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

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. 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. 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.

Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
This is one of most confusing and misunderstood prophecies in all of scripture—but it is also one of the clearest and simplest if read correctly.

1. Vs. 1-2: Here, Jesus leaves the temple. What had he just been warning about to the scribes and Pharisees previously, and what does he specifically predict here?

2. Vs. 3: As Jesus is sitting with his disciples, what three questions do they ask of him?

3. Read vs. 4-33. Why would He be giving them such specific signs to watch for? Do you think Jesus would expect the disciples to know what He meant?

4. Note vs. 34. Take it for what it says. What do you think the disciples would understand by this straightforward declaration?

5. Now, review a bit: Can you see how all the predictions of vs. 4 - 33 could have been completed in the disciples’ own generation?

6. Which of the predictions of these same verses is most confusing to you?
35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

45 “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
1. How does vs. 35 clearly contrast with everything that has gone before? Which of the disciples’ questions do you think he is going to answer now?

2. Note vs. 37-41: What is held in common by these various examples—life in Noah’s day, people eating, drinking, marrying, and people working in the fields?

3. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus told the disciples to be on the alert for certain signs and to take certain actions. What will be different about his coming here (vs. 42-44)?

4. What will be the final state of the master’s faithful servants (vs. 45-47)? When will that take place for each of us?

5. What will be the final state of unfaithful servants (vs. 48-51)? When will these servants receive their punishment?

6. Despite confusion, changes, or COVID-19 viruses, what is the best way for us to prepare for the future (vs. 42, 44)? What are some ways we can do this?