Matthew 24 Pitfalls of Eschatology

# Intro

* Intro/ Background to Matthew 23-25: Leaves temple,
* 4 sermons so far:
  + 5-7: **Principles** of Kingdom: **Who** do we heed? (Jesus' words)
  + 10: **Mission** of Kingdom: **What** do we do? (Suffer with Christ to bring the Good News to a troubled world)
  + 13: **Secrets** of Kingdom: **When** will it shine? (Once the false is revealed, Jesus is revealed and believers are redeemed)
  + 18: The Children of the Kingdom! **What is the ultimate honour in the Kingdom**? -
* Last sermon before ch26 = final hours of before death
* Topic?!! When will Jesus be revealed? ... When will we have Consummation/ Final fulfilment of all promises... = the 2nd Coming and events leading up to! Very exciting passage - a question everyone wants to hear answered.

# Read

* cf Eschatology, various views; Endless discussion and study
* **BUT: Do you know what Jesus main concern is**? ***Spiritual Stability***. 1st thing he answers, **v4**!

# FCF

* in all Eschatology, hype; **Our** main concern is *Dates* and *Signs - hasn't changed in 2 millenia!*

# Proposition

Too much in ch24 for 1 sermon, So where do we begin? Where Jesus did!

***(4) See that no-one leads you astray***

**3 Pitfalls of Eschatology** (anticipation...)

# Deception [5]

* (5) For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.
* ILLUS: "Saviour Martin"
* **Observe**:
  + *many* x2 - of leaders and followers - as many
  + *in my name* - "Christian brand
* Implication of what's going on here : their eager anticipation + lack of equipping = susceptible to deception.// APP: And that is no less the case today
* ILLUS: False christs in the form
  + of **Political liberators**: time of liberation, Judas Maccabeus had shown the way 200 years earlier - heightened expectation of political Messiah
    - Act 5:36, 37 tells us of 2 more : note their following, and their end: Jesus didn't come to be a political liberator (cf Liberation theology, emancipation)
  + of **a** **Fabricated Jesus**
    - 1st Century: 2 Cor 11:3-4 - as Jesus predicted, his own name used as a mask for error (v14 even Satan disguises himself as an angel of Light)
    - 1800's - Charles Taze Russel - bearing the name 'Christian', founding the cult "Jehovah's Witnesses" - Interesting: was 7th day adventist, taught that end time began in 1799, and Christ returned invisibly in 1874 - that Christians would be resurrected in 1878, and final Armageddon would be 1914. The failure of those interpretations helped him to leave 7th day Adventism and begin his own movement, Jehovah's Witnesses - of which the clearest error is: "Jesus is actually the archangel Michael"
    - Today: a handful claiming to be Jesus Himself!!
      * Brazil: Alvaro Thiesse - a dozen disciples mostly women living full time with this celebate 69-year old, in his walled compound, which is protected with barbed wire and electrical fencing (NationalGeographic, July 12, 2017) - 330,000 followers online
      * SA: Moses Hlongwe - Northern KZN - int he wilderness for 22 years and overcame devil. As I speak to you I will never see death and I am now getting ready for the opening of the graves and healing of blind and lame. Abandoned his wife of 41 years.
    - Today, Over 8mil JW's following C T Russel. 14mil Mormons using the name, "Church of *Jesus Christ* of the L.D.S"
* BUT nonetheless ... (**5**) For ***many*** will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' - WHETHER promoting themselves or a false teaching - a different Christ produces a different Gospel which cannot save anyone from sin. Jesus Christ is unique because only He Himself qualifies before the Father, and that qualification alone is sufficient to forgive us our sins. "
* Heb 1:3 ***He*** is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and ***he*** upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, ***he*** sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"
* See 23, 24, 26 - [[ Can you see the Exclusive Claims Christ makes for Himself?!!]]
* WELL, You can feel the excitement in the disciples voices - in fact Mark writes that it was only Peter, James, John and Andrew, who came to him in private to ask this!
  + !!! ... What Greater Event to ask about than this? - sensational - But it is veiled (and we'll see this next time) - and if it is veiled there has to be Speculation - and that makes our hope susceptible to Deception!
* (! One of the Deceptions we will be prone to, Jesus says, is **Predictions**! cf 36, 42
  + Here's what you need to know: If someone has to offer proof - to come up with some argument, reason, sign to prove Jesus has returned - it's not Him! ... See **v27**
  + "for" - as Lightning. = Sudden, Global, Unquestionable.

# (which can lead to ) Frenzy [6-9]

* (v**6**) "**AND**"... you will hear/experience things... "*see that you are not alarmed*."
* "*you will*" = *impending, near*. The disciples themselves were about to enter; precipice of events that one would expect to be signalling the end of the world
* read **v6-8**
* (Doesn't Acts and 1st Cent history confirm to be true!) -- **1 Pet 4:12-14**
* When Jesus uses the word "Alarmed" = same word in **2These 2:1-2** - "spiritual panic": they were being led astray to believe that the Day of the Lord had already come - and I perceive that to mean that the persecutions they experienced, they were equating with God's judgement. But Jesus is saying - you're about to hear and experience all kinds of trouble ("tribulation") - don't panic! It's NOT the Day of the Lord! Some Eschatology can lead to Fearfulness - that is not the Lord's will.
* Now in v15, He instructs the inhabitants of Jerusalem to flee from terror - for the sake of their own safety. This is not about carelessness. The apostles fled from one town to the next to spare their lives and continue preaching the gospel. Mk 13: "*Do not be alarmed*... yet be on your guard" - That is not frenzy. Yet, in our own persecution-free countries, we however DO find frenzy and panic about the return of Christ- the Internet is full of it!
* **APP: Context** of this fear - They will be tempted to think that the tribulations they encounter signal the end of the age. Isn't that what we do today? - identifying world events (like , , , ) as signals of the end - because they're mentioned here. But we're not reading properly. Jesus says these things are *NOT* the END!(**v6**) - Precisely what Jesus is warning against!
* "(4) See that no one leads you astray". ***Firstly*** in led astray in Deception, ***2ndly*** ... in spiritual panic! "*See that you are not alarmed*"
* Why is FEAR a pitfall? Cultivates the wrong perspective:
  + **Minimises the work of Jesus**: 1Thes5:9-11

9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1Th 5:9-11)

* + **Misses the wrath of God**: **Php 1**: not being afraid of the persecution is evidence of God's wrath on His enemies.
  + I think in this way, FEAR is a pitfall: that it erodes faith in the trustworthiness and completed work of Jesus on our behalf, His Kingdom, His dominion = Unwarranted Fear, Hype and Spiritual Panic: undermines faith.
  + cf Daniel - knowing his time was near, did what he did every day - got on his knees by the window and prayed to His God.
  + (Are we not in the last days every day?)

# (or opposite) Sleepiness [10-13]

* This 3rd pitfall is found in **v10-13**. READ
* The **period** in question: from 33AD till "coming of the Son of Man"
* The **characteristic**: will be marked by increasing ***'loss'*** - loss of standing[], of trust[], of love[][], morality[]...
* summed up in (13) - ***'non-endurance'***
  + cf **Matt 13**:21,22
* The **quantity**: many x4!
* On one hand **Frenzy** - panicy preoccupation, - on the other **Sleepiness** : and both are destructive to faith.
* ! describing people who At one time **were** standing in truth , love, morality - who know the scripture - but "*fall away"* from it (probably due to false teaching, but probably also persecution.) In **v42** described as becoming sleepy and the image is a drowsiness in regards the return of the Son of Man - and eventually ignorant sleep which ends in unreadiness and damnation (and 4 parables waiting to be told regarding this!)
* Already in 2 Peter (+- 65AD) people were saying, "Where is this Promise of His coming?" (2Pet3)
* Prediction of Christ: there will be stumbling blocks, scandals that cause people to lose sight, lose hope, become cold, and if not remedied, not Endure, and if not Enduring - Not Saved (13)

# APPLICATION

* On the one hand - FRENZY, on the other - SLEEPINESS: ... "Tell us when we'll see you again!?" - See that you are not LED ASTRAY!
* It will be edifying for you to be reading Matt 24-25 at home and discerning what Jesus answers about the timing and signs of His coming - but if you're honest and studied properly, you'll come away with many questions. What is Jesus Primary concern, however? Your spiritual stability -
  + Not the Signs and Times, but
  + that no one leads you astray:
  + in Deception, Frenzy, or Sleepiness
  + So that you’ll be Ready for Him!