

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a believer in Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this ninth series, the Bible teaches five truths about the kingdom of God. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: PREACH THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM. We will meditate a new Bible passage, memorise a new Bible verse and then review the previously memorised verses together.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Matthew 24:14. We will meditate the truths in the Bible together. Let me read Matthew 24:3-14. As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, that is, the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of this increase in wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

The memorisation verse is: Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14.

(T) **First. The expectation of the restoration of the theocratic kingdom of Israel among the Jews.**

When Israel was finally exiled to Babylon in 587 B.C. *the theocratic kingdom of Israel* with its institutions of kings came to an abrupt end. All believing Jews after the exile to Babylon believed and hoped that the lost theocratic kingdom of Israel would be restored in the future (Ezek 37:20-28). The disciples of Jesus Christ also believed and hoped that Jesus Christ would restore the lost theocratic kingdom of Israel. And they hoped that they would receive the most important positions in that kingdom (Mt 20:20-28; Lk 22:24-30). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be the sign of the restoration of the kingdom (Ezek 36:27; 39:29). Therefore when Jesus said that the disciples would be baptised with the Holy Spirit in a few days, they thought that Jesus Christ was NOW going to restore the lost theocratic kingdom of Israel (Act 1:5-6)!

But Jesus Christ did not answer their worldly expectation. Instead he said that "the times or dates" which God the Father had set by his authority was not the concern of people, but of God (Act 1:7; Dt 29:29). "The times" are the long periods of time (G: *chronoi*) and "the dates are the fixed moments (G: *kairoi*) in God's history of salvation with regard to the second coming and the final consummation of the kingdom of God on the new earth (1 Thes 5:1).

(S) **Second. The kingdom of God was established at the first coming of Jesus Christ.**

While the disciples of Jesus Christ were hoping to acquire *political power* in a worldly kingdom in Israel, Jesus said that he was going to give them *spiritual power* to be his witnesses, not only in Israel, but also in Samaria and to the ends of the earth. This task to be witnesses was originally entrusted to Israel (Isa 43:10; 49:6), but Israel as a nation had failed to be witnesses. So Jesus said that the task to be witnesses would be fulfilled by the disciples of Jesus Christ (Act 1:8)!

In many of his parables and teachings Jesus Christ clearly taught that the kingdom of God *had been established at his first coming*. (Mk 1:14-15; Mt 12:28-29). He taught his disciples that the kingdom of God was *a spiritual kingdom* (Lk 17:20-21; Jn 18:36) and that it would *include people from all the natural nations* in the world (Mt 8:11-12; 13:37; 21:42-44). He taught them that the kingdom of God was *already growing* (Mk 4:26-32) and that it would get *its final and completed form* at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Mt 13:36-43). Jesus Christ himself preached the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 4:23). And in Matthew 10:7-8 he also sent his disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus had preached the gospel and said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news (Mk 1:14-15)! In Acts 3:19 we read that also his disciples preached the gospel and said, "Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord". In Acts 20:21 we read that also the apostle Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."

(T) Third. The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom fulfilled the Old Testament and began the New Testament. In Acts 3:20-26 the disciples of Jesus Christ preached that Jesus Christ must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything. The final restoration, not only of Israel, but of every nation in the world would happen at the second coming of Jesus Christ. At the second coming of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God would reach its final and complete form.

The apostle Peter preached and said that God's holy prophets in the Old Testament period had prophesied that the kingdom of God would come at the first coming of Jesus Christ. For example, Moses said that God would raise up a prophet among the Jews and everyone in the world must listen to everything he says. Moses warned that everyone who does not listen to this prophet would be completely cut off from among God's people. The apostle Peter said that all the Old Testament prophets from Samuel onwards have foretold these days. Jesus Christ is this prophet! At his first coming Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.

The apostle Peter said that everyone who repents and believe in Jesus Christ would become an heir of God's Old Testament covenant. God had promised that through the offspring or 'seed' of Abraham, God would bless all the nations of earth. The kingdom of God and the fulfilment of the covenant began at the first coming of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God and the fulfilment of the covenant began with the Jews. The apostles first called the Jews to turn away from their wicked ways and receive the blessing of Jesus Christ. After that they began to go to all the nations in the world. At the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the kingdom of God and the fulfilment of the covenant began. At the second coming of Jesus Christ the kingdom of God and the covenant would reach its final complete and perfect form (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-26).

(S) Fourth. The questions about the signs.

When the disciples of Jesus were showing the beautiful buildings of the second temple to Jesus, Jesus said that every stone of the temple would be thrown down. Then the disciples asked him two questions. The first question was: "When will this happen?" And the second question was: "What will be the sign of your coming, that is, the end of the age?" (Mt 23:37 - 24:3).

Jesus first spoke to his disciples about the preliminary signs of the coming age in Matthew 24:4-14. Then Jesus answered their first question about the destruction coming to Jerusalem and the temple in Matthew 24:15-20 and Luke 21:7,20-24a. Finally, Jesus answered their second question about his second coming and the completion of his kingdom in Matthew 24:21-31 and Luke 21:24b-28. The end of this present age on earth comes at the second coming of Jesus Christ!

In summary: Jesus first speaks of the preliminary signs that occur between his first coming and second coming in Matthew 24:4-14. Then Jesus speaks of the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple at Jerusalem in Matthew 24:15-20. Finally, Jesus speaks of the signs of his second coming, that is, the end of this present age in Matthew 24:21-31. In Matthew 24:33 Jesus says that his disciples would *see* the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. And in Matthew 24:34 he says that in spite of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, the Jewish race would continue until his second coming. In Matthew 24:36-41 Jesus warns that his second coming is going to be sudden and unexpected. On the day of his second coming the Christians will first be caught up into the clouds to welcome Jesus Christ and to admire him (Matthew 24:40-41; 1 Thes 4:16-17; 2 Thes 1:10). Later, on that same day, also the non-Christians will be driven in front of the judgement throne of Jesus Christ in the sky and the final judgement will take place (Mt 25:31-46).

(T) Fifth. The preliminary signs show that there will be a definite end of this present world.

In Luke 21:8-19 and Matthew 24:4-14 tell that before the second coming of Jesus Christ, there will be many *disturbing signs* that all point to a definite end of this present wicked world. There will be false prophets in many nations and even people who pretend to be Jesus Christ. There will be wars and revolutions. Nations will rise against nations. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places. The genuine Christians will be oppressed, persecuted and imprisoned all over the world. Genuine Christians will even be betrayed by their own parents, brothers, relatives and friends and some will be put to death. Christians will be hated by all men. That is why people who pretend to be Christians will rebel and fall away from the Christian faith. All over the world people will despise laws. They will especially reject righteous laws. The love of most people will grow cold.

These preliminary signs must not alarm Christians. They must happen, but do not mark the end of this present age (Mt 24:6). They are only the beginning of birth pains (Mt 24:8). Luke chapter 21 verse 20 and 24b show that these preliminary signs of the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of this present age will take place from about the first coming of Jesus Christ when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. to the second coming of Jesus Christ when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

(S) Sixth. Only three very clear and decisive signs point to the end.

One. There will be a long period of preaching the gospel.

Matthew 24:14 says that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations in the world. 'The gospel of the kingdom' is exactly the same as 'the gospel of grace' (Mt 4:23; Acts 8:12; 20:24-25; 28:31). The gospel tells people about God's love and grace shown in the first coming of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. Jesus Christ died on the cross as a punishment for the sins of everyone who believes in him. Jesus Christ was raised from death so that all who believe in him are also raised to live a complete new life in this world. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is also a guarantee that their bodies will be resurrected at the second coming. From the first to the second coming Jesus Christ sits on the throne of God and sovereignly rules as the King over the whole universe and especially in the hearts and lives of Christians (Eph 1:20-23; Lk 17:20-21). This gospel is preached in every country of the world today. And in every country in the world today, people begin to believe in Jesus Christ and submit their lives to his reign in their lives. This period of preaching the gospel will be a long period. Nobody can calculate when the preaching of the gospel as a testimony in every nation has been completed. That is why the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of this present age cannot be calculated!

(T) Two. There will be a short period of great tribulation.

Matthew 24:21-29a says that the great tribulation will happen when the last antichrist will rise to power in this present world. All through this present age there have been antichrists (1 Jn 2:18). But the final antichrist will be the worst. He will gain political, economic and spiritual power in the whole world. He will especially persecute the Christians. He will try to deceive the genuine Christians by performing great signs and miracles. But Jesus Christ promised that it is impossible to deceive genuine born-again Christians (Mt 24:24). Jesus Christ says that this period of great tribulation will be very short (Mt 24:22). Because the beginning and the length of this period of tribulation is not stated in the Bible, the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of this present age cannot be calculated.

(S) Three. The appearance of the final sign.

In Matthew 24:30 Jesus Christ says that the only clear sign of the end of this present age will be his majestic second coming. Suddenly and unexpectedly Jesus Christ will appear on the clouds in the sky. The sun, moon and stars will be shaken, there will be a loud trumpet call and a shout from heaven, many angels will appear with him and gather all genuine Christians to come and welcome Jesus Christ in the sky. The only definite sign is the second coming of Jesus Christ himself and no one can calculate when he comes.

Therefore, we must conclude that THE SIGNS that Jesus Christ gave are NOT signs that help us *to calculate when* his second coming at the end of this world would take place. The preliminary signs help us to be sure that this present evil world will not continue forever, but will come to a sudden and definite end. The long period of preaching the gospel to all the nations in the world and the short period of great tribulation and persecution of genuine Christians are absolutely necessary before the end of this world. The length of these periods cannot be calculated. The second coming of Jesus Christ is THE only SIGN of the end of this world, but because his second coming will be sudden and unexpected, it will take everyone by surprise. That is why all genuine Christians must be watchful and prepare themselves for the end of this world. That is why all genuine Christians must live holy and righteous lives in this present evil world (2 Pet 3:10-14).

(T) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is "Preach the gospel of the kingdom" and the reference is Matthew 24:14. Let us memorise the Bible verse together.

(T+S) Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

(S) Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

(T+S) Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14.

(T) Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14.

(S) POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks. Series "Christian parents", verses 3-5 and series "The kingdom of God", verses 1-2.

(T) To teach God's Word: Deuteronomy 6:6-7. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

(S) To bring up in the Lord: Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.

(T) To love through discipline: Proverbs 13:24. He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24.

(S) Enter into the kingdom: John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:3,5.

(T) Welcome children into the kingdom. Luke 18:16-17. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Luke 18:16-17.

(S) **POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".