



SESSION #2
Fear of Global Calamity
Matthew 24:1-14

Introduction: *This Saturday marked the 9th Anniversary of the largest terrorist attack on U.S. soil in our history. Two planes full of people crashed into the Twin Towers in NYC and both buildings collapsed. Another plane crashed into the Pentagon on that day and another was taken down by the passengers to keep it from crashing into either the White House or Congress. All the Airports closed all over the United States that day and everyone wondered if we were safe. How does a Christ follower view an event like this, or a global economic crash?*

Discussion Starter: Choose one of the following questions to start the group discussion.

Option 1 – *What do you wish someone had warned you about in this life?*

Option 2 – *When you fear global catastrophe, what does that look like to you – a national tragedy (like the Oklahoma City bombing of the Federal Building), invasion by another country's army, mass death through a rare disease (like the AIDS epidemic), nuclear holocaust?*

Option 3 – *Do you watch the news, read current events magazines, and so forth, or do you avoid "bad news"?*

When a traumatic event that impacts our nation or our world we are easily drawn into fear. The result is that we tend to look for someone to blame, or blame someone for hiding the truth from us. But Jesus warned us of these events and showed us how to survive through these and even how to come out stronger.

READ: Matthew 24:1-12

Passage Discussion:

Why do you think Jesus mentioned deception first in his description of global calamity? (vv. 4-5) When we're dealing with traumatic events, we're easily persuaded. Our minds are racing to make sense of what's happening to us, and we can be quite quickly tricked. Jesus wants us to be prepared for this—and that preparation starts with God's perspective on global calamity.

Have you witnessed false teachers in your spiritual experience? These people are constantly trying to persuade the church to follow them and their teaching. With radio, TV and the internet we are constantly being bombarded with a new idea about God and His word (e.g. e-mail forwards with an important message for you!)

WHEN THE UNTHINKABLE HAPPENS

What examples does Jesus use of Global Calamity (vv. 6-7)? Wars, threats of wars, rogue nations creating a threat on other nations (e.g. Iran's nuclear capabilities), Famines & earthquakes.

When Jesus says about these things that *those things must take place v. 6* and *all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs v. 8*, He is saying that these things are normal for our world, that we should *expect* them. Why, then, are we so surprised when a Global calamity happens? Apparently we think that the normal life is a care-free, calamity free world.

CALAMITY OF FAITH

What are some of the areas that Christ warns will threaten our faith in Christ? (verses 9-12) *Persecution for our faith, even martyrdom, nations will hate our nation for religious beliefs, people from within the Church turning on others in the Church, false teachers who gather large followings.*

What does it mean that *The love of most will grow cold?* (24:12) When people attack our safety and it surprises us, or our faith that used to make us comfortable now creates more crisis than we had before following Christ, those who expect Christ to follow them are shocked and turn from Him.

What kind of things have shaken you in your faith?

Why do you think you were caught off guard when these things happened?

LEADERS' NOTE: Comedian Louis CK said on Conan O'Brien's show, "Everything is so amazing, and nobody is happy." There is a time for taking the positive and ignoring the negative (Phil. 4:8-9), but Jesus is very clear and realistic about the threats to our following Christ and about the struggles we will face in life. Perhaps our wealth and comfortable lifestyles contribute to a desire to ignore the negative parts of life. Jesus isn't calling us to become Stoics who focus on the negative, but when bad things happen, rather than being caught off guard and shaken to the point of falling from Christ, we should expect that bad things will happen, but we have ultimate safety in Christ.

SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Read 24:13 The New Living Translation says that *the one who endures to the end will be saved*. Why will someone who listens to Christ's words and walks with Him endure while those who rely on their own abilities alone will be shaken in global calamity?

How can the Christ follower walk with Christ so they are strong in difficulty? God gives us His word to warn and equip us, other believers support in arenas like weekend worship & Small Groups.

Read 24:14 Vern gave us a second way to stand firm which is to **LIVE IN THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM**. How does a Christ followers' lifestyle change that prepares him for Global Calamity?

Vern said: "If you don't have Heaven and God's Kingdom in mind you will fall apart in crisis."

"Everything is going to work out in the end, if it isn't working out, it isn't the end."

What things will you address this week to help you face your fears you have from your world?

A Verse to Memorize:

John 16:33 *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (NIV)*