

## **Flee the City**

Matthew 24

Peter Hiett

June 19, 2005

It's Father's Day weekend. All good fathers want to bless their children and give them their greatest dreams. When my children were little they had a dream. The dream was the Magic Kingdom. It was a good dream but out of our reach.

In the fall of 1997, a friend offered a gift that made the dream possible. And so I began to plan our journey.

I came up with the idea of surprising the kids for two reasons:

1. If I told them too far in advance, the waiting would probably kill them, and they'd drive me crazy.
2. I cherished the moment of revelation when I would proclaim the good news, "Children, the Magic Kingdom is at hand."

As summer approached, they pressed for information about vacation. We didn't want to lie, so Susan and I told them the truth but not all the truth.

I looked on a map and saw that we'd be driving through Junction City, Kansas, the town I was born in. So the next time they pressed me I said, "Kansas. We're going to Kansas."

They all said, "Wow, we're going to Kansas. What's in Kansas?" And I said, "Stuff... all kinds of stuff. Hotels, swimming pools, stuff. We'll see stuff."

So the kids started dreaming about Kansas.

I remember taking them to McDonald's one day. Their Happy Meal promotion was about Disney World's Animal Kingdom. Elizabeth said, "Dad, this is so cool!"

I said, "What is it?"

Her eyes got big, and she described it to me... this land, this city, this magical kingdom.

I said, "Where is it?"

She said, "It's a place called 'Orlando' or something... Daddy, it's real far away. We could never go there."

I almost lost it. I wanted to tell her so bad, but I forced myself to say something like, "Well, honey, I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil. Trust me, we'll have a good vacation."

So the kids started dreaming about Kansas.

Coleman was three, and in his innocence he had the hardest time fitting his dreams into my description of Kansas. One day he just blurted out, "Dad, Kansas sounds boring." The other kids were better at paring their dreams down to reality as they knew it.

Well, the day finally came, May 28th, 1998. We left around 6 a.m. and got into Junction City around 4 p.m. It was a long van ride for four little kids, quite an accomplishment... the conquest of Junction City, and the kids were proud of this achievement.

Now, Junction City is not known for being a vacation mecca, but as we got off I-70 the kids did their best to make it so.

- Jon was trying to find motels with swimming pools.
- They were all talking about seeing where Daddy was a little boy.
- We drove past a beat-up old bowling alley, and they all said, "We could go bowling," and I said, "Maybe."

Soon we arrived at 1st Presbyterian, the church my father had pastored, right next to the wonderful old manse that I had lived in as a boy. I'd called ahead and now the pastor was waiting for me, Reverend Underall-Pierce, really nice guy. He showed us all around the church. It looked like a giant stone temple.

My kids had disposable cameras and kept wanting to take pictures (it's a way we capture the magic and hang on). I kept saying, "You might want to save some pictures because maybe there will be more to take pictures of later."

"Like what?" they'd say.

"Oh, stuff," I'd say, "Trust me."

Then Pastor Underall-Pierce took us next door and showed us the manse. Afterwards, I had the kids sit down on the front steps across from the park where I used to play as a boy. After ten hours in the van, Coleman was really eyeing that playground.

While I got the video camera set up, Susan went and got the secret bag of Disney World paraphernalia from the van.

I began a pre-arranged dialogue with Pastor Underall-Pierce.

The way I planned it, I would ask him what there was to do in Junction City. After all his suggestions, I'd say, "Well, we've got that in Colorado. We might as well go home." Then when the kids protested, I'd say, "What if we stayed on I-70? Where would we end up?" He'd say, "Florida or Disney World." Then I'd proclaim the Gospel of the Magic Kingdom, "Let's go to Disney World!" At which time, the children would erupt in uncontrolled jubilation as Susan handed out the mouseketeer hats, and they would begin to swarm me and shower me with unspeakable gratitude.

[Peter shows the home video clip of the actual proclamation of the Gospel of the Magic Kingdom. The kids are all sitting on the steps, talking with Pastor Underall-Pierce...]

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "What are you doing on your vacation?"

Kids: "Go swimming."

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "Go swimming?"

Kids: "Go play in the park."

Peter: "Now what are the things to do here?"

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "Well, you go swimming. Go for walks, there's a trail along the river. You could go up, there's a big dam and the biggest lake in Kansas just about 5-6 miles out of town."

Peter: "But we didn't bring our fishing poles."

Jon: "We could rent them."

Peter: "Well, I don't know if you can rent 'em, Jon. Well, we already saw the church, and we saw the house. Um, do you guys want to go for a walk?"

Kids: "We have to find a hotel."

Peter: "Yeah, we could find a hotel, but after that, I don't know what. What else is there to do?"

Coleman [very excited]: "Play in the playground!"

Kids: "We could go roller blading..."

Peter: "You know what, guys, we've pretty much seen everything."

Kids: "There's a bowling alley."

Peter: "But we have a bowling alley at home."

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "There's roller skating."

Kids: "Roller skating rink, Daddy!"

Peter: "Well, we can roller skate at home, too. You know what guys, I think we've pretty much seen everything there is to see. Are you guys ready to go home?"

Kids: "We can wear shorts here."

Peter: "Yeah, we can wear shorts. Are you guys ready to go home?"

Kids: "No."

Peter: "Oh, well, what else could we do?"

Coleman [screaming]: "Play on the playground!!!"

Peter: "No, we've got playgrounds at home."

Kids: "We could play here."

Peter: "Hey, what's to the east? If we stayed on Interstate 70 and just kept driving, where would we go?"

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "Well, if you keep on going far enough, you get to the other side of the United States, the east side. If you want to get even hotter, you can take the interstate dangling down. I don't know, go to Florida."

Kids: "I think it's hot enough here."

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "It's hot enough here?"

Peter: "How far is Florida?"

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "Oh, let's see about 1,500 miles."

Peter: "1,500 miles. What do they have in Florida?"

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "You know anything that's in Florida?"

Kids: "Alligators?"

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "Yeah."

Kids: "Crocodiles?"

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "Crocodiles. Anything to do, to play there?"

Elizabeth: "Um, Disney World?"

Peter: "Oh, hey, do you want to go to Disney World?"

Elizabeth: "I'd rather stay here."

Susan: "Jon, do you want to go to Disney World?"

Jon: "I'll think about that one."

Peter: "You need to think about it. Well, we'll stay here, if you want, but..."

Susan: "Becky, you want to go to Disney World?"

Becky: "I have no idea."

Susan: "Who wants to go to Disney World?"

Peter: "You know, I'm gonna go to Disney World. Do you want to go to Disney World?"

Susan: "Who wants to go to Disney World?"

Coleman: "All of us!"

Susan: "Guess where we're going for vacation?"

Peter: "Yeah, we're gonna get back on the road and drive to Disney World. Okay?"

Susan: "We're gonna take you to Disney World."

Peter: "'Cause we saw all the stuff in Kansas already. Okay? You wanna do that?"

Kids: "Like today?"

Peter: "Well, yeah. We'll go to a hotel, and then we'll keep driving and go to Disney World. Do you want to?"

Becky: "For reals?"

Peter: "Yeah. Yeah."

Susan: "We're gonna take you guys to Disney World."

Peter: "And the Animal Kingdom thing and all that stuff."

Pastor Underall-Pierce: "That's right. The Animal Kingdom just opened up. We've been there. My parents live near Disney World, so we've been there lots of times, but we haven't been to the Animal Kingdom."

Jon: "Dad, are you serious?"

Peter: "Yeah, I'm totally serious. We're driving two more days to Disney World, and then we're gonna go to the beach."

Elizabeth: "How many days are we staying here?"

I think that was the most anti-climactic moment of my life. Just after this, Coleman mumbled, "Oh, man. I wanted to go to the park!" And they wouldn't get in the van.

I was embarrassed. Susan was embarrassed. We thought Pastor Underall-Pierce must think we have the most spoiled kids in the world.

I was walking them back to the van (making them get in the van), trying to act cool in front of this other pastor but preparing a tongue lashing in my head, “You ungrateful kids. Don’t you know I’m bustin’ my buns to get you to the Magic Kingdom. What kind of children...”

Then all at once, a thought came. I think it came from God for it went like, “Peter. Peter. Now do you see how hard it is to be *your* Father and get you to *my* kingdom?”

See, it’s not that my children desired too much but too little. Their dreams were not too large. Now they had become too small.

Junction City was in their grasp.

Junction City was safe and secure. They’d conquered it and were in control.

The Magic Kingdom was just a dream, and they lacked faith that the dream was for real.

They lacked faith in me.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “We are children, content to play with mud pies in the slum when a holiday at sea has been offered.”

Now mud pies are fun, and Junction City would have been fun for awhile. The roller rink... fun. The pool at the inn... fun. Fun for awhile. But after three weeks, it would have turned into hell... another day at the Tasty Freeze, sittin’ on the curb watchin’ trucks go by.

So I had compassion on the kids, but I made them get in the van, and we fled the city.

Flee the city before it turns into hell.

After all, it’s only a junction and not our destination.



Once upon a time, a 600 year old man named Noah heard a voice. "Noah, build an ark. I'm taking you to a new world, and Noah, I'm destroying this old one." And Noah said, "Even the bowling alley?"

Once upon a time, an old shepherd heard the same voice coming from a burning bush. "Moses, I am the God of your father, Abraham. I've seen the affliction of my people. I've come to deliver them from bondage to a land flowing with milk and honey, a promised land."

And Moses said, "I don't want to get back in the van. I'm not up for the drive."

The entire journey the children sat in the back of the van complaining, "You know, we had fish sandwiches back in Egypt." And once they thought they had arrived in the city of peace, Jerusalem, they built a huge stone temple that God didn't ask for (2 Samuel 7). He preferred a tent, a tabernacle... camping.

In fact, every year God commanded His people to go camping, to go live in tents, booths or tabernacles, for a week as if to say, "Our journey is not over. This is only a camp. This Jerusalem is not the city of peace, and this is not yet the promised land."

Well, once upon a time, the voice came from the lips of a man, the Prince of Peace, who came preaching, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The Promised Land,  
The Promised City,  
The Holy Temple,  
The Great Banquet  
is at hand.

Now follow me.  
Get in the van.

Yet that clearly implied this was not yet the truly promised land, promised city, and holy temple. It was a junction city, and not the final destination.

Of course, those in charge of the city and temple didn't take kindly to that, and Jesus wasn't exactly kind to them.

Matthew 23:32, Jesus says, "Fill up . . . the measure of your fathers."

Daniel had prophesied during the Babylonian captivity that it would take 490 years for the Israelites to "finish transgression" and bring about the destruction and desolation of Jerusalem.

*Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.  
You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are  
you to escape being sentenced to hell?  
Therefore I send you prophets and wise men  
and scribes, some of whom you will kill and  
crucify, and some you will scourge in your  
synagogues and persecute from town to  
town, that upon you may come all the  
righteous blood shed on earth, from the  
blood of innocent Abel to the blood of  
Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you  
murdered between the sanctuary and the  
altar. Truly, I say to you, all this will come  
upon this generation.*

"This generation" means "this generation" (about 40 years). That means by 70 A.D. something really big is going down in Jerusalem.

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."'<sup>f</sup> Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.*

How nice the bowling alley was and how beautiful the park.

*<sup>f</sup>But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."<sup>g</sup> As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"*

They asked three questions, although in their minds, it must have seemed like one question.

- First, "When will this be that the temple is destroyed?" It's interesting that Daniel had given the Jews a timeline in Daniel, chapter 9, and time was about up.

- The second question, “What will be the sign of your coming?” Your “parousia.” In Greek it means “effective presence.” It was a type of coming like the coming of a king to conquer a city and change history. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. would certainly be the end of the world as they knew it. When Jesus comes, it’s the end of the world as we know it.
- The third question, “When will be the close of the age, the end of time?”

*And Jesus answered them, “Take heed that no one leads you astray. [Pay attention.] For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs.*

That’s fascinating, for every time there’s a war, famine, or earthquake, someone in America writes another book saying it’s the time of the end.

Here, Jesus says it’s a sign, but a sign that the end is not yet. It’s birth pain, but not the birth.

“The end is not yet.” Which end? Jerusalem or time?

*Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated*

*by all nations for my name's sake. <sup>1</sup>And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. <sup>1</sup>And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. <sup>1</sup>But he who endures to the end will be saved [rescued].*

According to Eusebius, the 4th century historian, the Christians in Jerusalem received a prophecy and heeded Christ's words to "flee the city" at the sign of the desolating sacrilege and so were saved.

*<sup>1</sup>And this gospel [good news] of the kingdom will be preached [proclaimed] throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.*

That sounds like the end of time. Yet according to Paul in a couple places like Romans and Colossians, the Gospel has already been preached in "all the world."

Colossians 1:6, "The Gospel has gone into all the world," and in verse 23, "It's been preached to every creature under heaven." Colossians was written in 60 A.D., ten years before the fall of Jerusalem.

*So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains [flee the city].*

In the parallel passage in Luke 21, Jesus associates this desolation sacrilege with the armies that will surround the city.

The Roman armies carried ensigns bearing images of Caesar and the Roman eagle. They were idols. They were sacrilege—abominations that make desolate.

Josephus records that after they burned the temple, the Roman soldiers set up those ensigns and offered sacrifices at the eastern gate of the holy place.

Next verse,

*Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle. <sup>1</sup>And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! <sup>2</sup>Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath.*

“Fleeing on the Sabbath” is not a problem anywhere in the world except in Judea, among the Jews along about 70 A.D.

*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.*

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian wrote extensively about the five month siege of Jerusalem—civil war in the city, famine, mass murder, cannibalism... And at one point he writes,

I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly—that neither did any other city ever

suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.

During the time of the siege, Josephus records there were many false prophets that lead many Jews to their deaths. He even records extraordinary signs and wonders performed in the city. But you know, demons can perform signs and wonders. Take heed, flee that city.

Verse 21, great tribulation.

Verse 22,

*And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. Then if any one says to you, "Lo, here is the Christ!" or "There he is!" do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, "Lo, he is in the wilderness," do not go out; if they say, "Lo, he is in the inner rooms," do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming [parousia] of the Son of man. Wherever the body [the corpse] is, there the eagles [also translated "vultures"] will be gathered together.*

Remember the Romans carried eagle ensigns or standards. Also remember that Jesus had just declared Jerusalem desolate, a corpse. The bridegroom no longer defended her for she had cursed Him and cut Him off. Now the eagles (or vultures) had come to devour the carcass.

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Scripture uses the same language to describe the destruction of Babylon, Edom, and Egypt. Sun and moon are darkened with smoke in war. Stars are usually spiritual or heavenly beings in scripture. Jesus saw Satan fall. At the cross, he was utterly defeated and the powers of heaven shaken.

In Genesis 37, Joseph dreams sun, moon, and stars will bow to him. Joseph is a picture of Christ. Israel is the sun, Rachel the moon, and the stars are the brothers, the sons of Israel.

Next verse,

*Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven... [Or “the sign that the Son of Man is in heaven.”]*

In John 2, when Jesus cleanses the temple, the Jews wonder “Why should we bow to you?” Then they ask, “What signs have you to show us for doing these things?”

And Jesus says, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”



John tells us that He was speaking of His body. But clearly, the end of that old stone temple is connected to the resurrection of the new temple,

which is His body,  
which is us.

Jesus continues,

*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 out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

In Revelation 10, the seventh trumpet call appears to last for many days, perhaps for 2,000 years, as if it's what everyone hears when they die... when they leave this world of time (chronology) and step into God's eternity.

In two chapters, Matthew 26, after they accuse Jesus of threatening the temple, Jesus says to the High Priest, "I tell you heretofor [from now on, from this point onward] you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

*From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.<sup>f</sup> So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.<sup>f</sup> Truly, [Amen, it means "what I'm about to say next you can take to the bank. If the rest is confusing, believe this."]*

*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not  
pass away till all these things take place.  
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my  
words will not pass away.*

That is,  
take my word more seriously than heaven and earth.

That is,  
walk by faith and not by sight.

I'm telling you all,  
in this generation,  
the Son of man coming on clouds,  
the powers of heaven shaken,  
the greatest tribulation,  
wars, rumors of wars,  
earthquakes and famines,  
they will all happen in the next forty years.

As Daniel prophesied,  
"To finish the transgression,  
make an end of sins,  
make reconciliation for iniquity,  
bring in everlasting righteousness,  
seal up vision and prophecy,  
anoint the most holy,  
who will be 'cut off,'  
but not for Himself,  
and then the city and sanctuary will be destroyed."

*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not  
pass away till all these things take place.  
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my  
words will not pass away. But of that day  
and hour no one knows, not even the angels  
of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*

Answer to the first question, “When will Jerusalem be destroyed?” Within forty years.

Answer to the second question, “What about the ‘parousia,’ coming of the Son of man?” Maybe He comes more than we know. We’ll talk about that next time.

Answer to the third question, “What about the consummation of time?” Of that day and hour, no one knows but the Father.

That means so far, Jesus has been answering the first question, maybe the second question, but not the third, for of that day no one knows but the Father.

So all these things through verse 35 will happen in that generation, culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem. And unlike the end of the age, He wants them to know the signs and the seasons because He wants them to flee the city.

He wants them to flee the city when they feel threatened and afraid.

He wants them to flee the city when the enemy appears.

And that, my friends, is entirely counter-intuitive. For Jerusalem and its temple were an immense, stone fortress. When the armies came, everyone would run from the fields and villages into the fortress.

The city was their security.

The city was their society, family, and culture.

The city was their identity,  
but Jesus was making it profoundly clear...

We are done with military fortresses.  
 We are done with stone walls and steel swords.  
 We are done with the society of vengeance and law.  
     We are done with these priests,  
         done with these prophets,  
         done with these kings.

We are done with this religion of flesh.  
 Done with this old covenant.  
 We are done with the blood of bulls, and goats, and sheep,  
 and oxen...

For I am prophet, priest, and king,  
     And My blood is enough,  
 And My Spirit will inhabit a new temple and  
     New Jerusalem.

So flee this wretched city.  
 I have declared it desolate.  
     It will burn,  
 And you must not burn with it.

See what He's saying? "You thought this old city  
 was the destination, but it's only a junction, a camp, on the  
 journey." So get in the van, the Way, the ark which is  
 Christ.

Daniel prophesied a flood. It was a flood of fire.  
 Kids, there's a bomb in Junction City! Now get in  
 the van!

Last January, I preached two sermons about Israel and Jerusalem that got a lot of people mad. Basically, I just wanted to ask a question, “What’s changed since Jesus left the temple?” I mean, why do so many followers of Jesus unquestioningly support old Israel and old Jerusalem? And some even want to build the old temple and reinstate the old sacrificial system.

Why do we so want to occupy that old city? Has something changed since Jesus said, “Your house is left to you desolate.”

Now listen, you must love every Israelite with all the love of Jesus, but make no mistake, all that we just read is a warning. “Take heed! Pay attention! Don’t be fooled! There are those that will tempt you to run back to that old city in fear, run back to that old covenant in fear, run back to the Law in fear. Don’t follow them. That city is desolate and will be destroyed.”

Now that’s not only a warning for first century Christians of Jewish ancestry. That’s a warning for all people everywhere.

Jerusalem and Israel are archetypical of us all.

There is an old Jerusalem and a new Jerusalem,  
an old Israel and a new Israel,  
an old man and a new man, new Adam.

So the city is more than Jerusalem. It’s Beijing, Moscow, London, New York, and Washington D.C. It’s any city, any country built by human hands.

The city is a human fortress—swords, guns, tanks, military might—surrounded by a wall of stone.

But there is a new city coming down. Zechariah prophesied the New Jerusalem would be surrounded by a

wall of fire. That fire is the Spirit of God. He's the wall around her and the glory within her.

When I feel threatened, I am so tempted to run into the old city... legislation, military might, and human energy.

Jesus says, "Flee that city. I Am your refuge, your mighty fortress."

The city was a fortress, and the city was a sociology. Like Aristotle said, "a unity of unlikes." Cities in this world are unified by law, vengeance, fear, and repression. They're all unified by old covenant.

Jesus says, "Flee that city. I Am your covenant. I Am your sociology. I Am love poured out." The city coming down from God is unified by love, the very blood of Christ.

When I feel threatened and afraid, I'm tempted to run into the old city, justify myself, defend myself (it's the sociology of every human city). I want to defend myself rather than sacrifice myself (which is love and the sociology of heaven).

The eternal city is a dance of grace where everyone dances, everyone gives. When only one person dances it looks like a cross at the edge of the old city.

The old city was a fortress, a society, and an identity (I'm a Denver Bronco!). A city is security, sociology, and identity.

The temple was religious security; God in a stone box.

It was religious sociology; business with God.

It was religious identity,

but the identity was flesh,

my accomplishments,

my good deeds,

my works.

The city and the temple were built with human hands. We love the old city and temple because we feel in control there. But God will destroy the old city, and the old temple because He wants us to be His city and His temple.

See, we're like a frightened and frigid bride on her honeymoon (a foolish virgin), but the bridegroom is calling to us to surrender our temple and receive His love.

People think I'm being crass, but Jerusalem is a bride. Her temple is her deepest longings. The bridegroom longs for us to surrender control that He might fill us with Himself,

that He might be our fortress  
                     (not stones and steel),  
 that He might be our family  
                     (our society, the trinity of love),  
 that He might be our identity (give us His name),  
                     and tell us who we are.

We are His beloved.

As I preached on Jerusalem in January, my friend had a vision. He writes,

I saw before me a large battlefield filled with death and destruction. People were being abused, murdered, raped, beheaded, torn limb from limb, shot, burned. The fighting ended when there was no one left standing, and then the rain started. It came down and created rivers of blood. Then a lone figure appeared in the distance, picking his way through the remains. A breeze followed him and a voice was heard on the wind saying, "BEHOLD, I AM... COME!"

If you will lay down your swords, set aside  
your violence, give up your lives...

If you will be conquered?

Then I will raise you from the ashes, hold  
you to my bosom... and call you  
BELOVED."

"If you will be conquered..."

Matthew 24:1, "He left the temple." In three days,  
those old Jews and old Romans and old Jerusalem would  
crucify Jesus outside the old city.

It created a river of blood that won't stop. He was  
conquered, but not by them. He was conquered by Love,  
God Himself. And conquered by Love, He conquered  
Jerusalem, Rome, and all things, including you.

Now, we conquer by being conquered with love.  
Jesus is God's love poured out.

In this world, it looks like a cross at the edge of the  
old city—the city that's actually a camp, for we're still on a  
journey.

"Therefore, let us go to Him outside the camp and  
bear the abuse He endured, for here we have no lasting city,  
but we seek the city that is to come." (Hebrews 13:13-14)

"Abuse..." that's scary, and so I'm tempted to run  
back to the old city, my old securities, old ways, old  
identity—my flesh, this world, and the things of this world.  
But this world and all its ways are not the destination, just a  
junction along the way. So flee the world! It's desolate,  
slated for destruction. Don't be destroyed with it.

So I said to the kids, "Get in the van!"

I know it felt like death to them because they had  
Junction City in their grasp and under control. But they



allowed themselves to be conquered by my love. They endured abuse, got in the van, and we fled the city, arriving at the Magic Kingdom on the third day.

Now, you may say, “That’s sweet, but why stop in Junction City at all? Why stop in this world at all? Why the murders, rapes, suffering, and abuse of this desolate world?”

Well, I’m not totally sure.

It appears to have something to do with learning about our Father, seeing His heart crucified for us on a tree outside town.

It appears to have something to do with deciding at a junction whether we’ll seize control or surrender control.

It appears to have something to do with emptying of ourselves so we can be filled with God, who is love.

But I’m not exactly sure why we had to stop here in old Jerusalem on our way to the New Jerusalem. However, I do know Disney World was that much better because we stopped in Junction City on the way to the kingdom.

When we finally got to the Magic Kingdom, the kids kept saying the same thing. We’d be standing in line at Space Mountain or something, their eyes would be huge with wonder, and they’d say, “Wow, I can’t believe I wanted to stay in Kansas! I love you, Daddy. You were right.”

Just like the Israelites drinking wine in the promised land saying, “Wow, I can’t believe we wanted to go back to Egypt.”

Just like Noah sitting under a rainbow, a new covenant in  
a whole new world.

Just like us standing on the streets of gold in the heavenly  
city, having been raised from the ashes by the  
power of His blood, staring into the eyes of Him  
who fills all our deepest longings.

Just like us saying, "Wow, Jesus, I can't believe I was so  
afraid to die."

So, on the night He was betrayed, He took the  
bread, and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to  
you. Do this in remembrance of me. Take and eat." And in  
the same way, after supper, He took the cup, and He said,  
"This is the cup of the New Covenant, the New Covenant  
in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it,  
all of you."

And so if you want Him, we invite you to come to  
the table, tear off a piece of the bread, and dip it in the cup.  
The black cups are wine; the purple cups are juice. They're  
both blood. And by coming forward, this is what you're  
saying, "Lord, I surrender my city, my self, my identity, my  
sociology, my security. I surrender myself. I surrender the  
city and long for your city."

So get in the van, in Jesus name. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

[The worship band plays...]

"Behold, I Come"

Words and Music by Todd Ballard

Laid before me is a battlefield  
Loss of life, their fate was sealed  
The horror weighs heavy on my soul  
Devastation nothing left to console

The fight has ended and the rain's pouring  
down  
River of blood flowing over the ground  
In the distance He appeared that day  
With a mighty wind I heard Him say

Chorus:

Behold I come, I come to the land of fire  
Behold I come to set you free  
So lay aside the pain of your desires  
And my beloved you will be

Laid before me is a battlefield  
Loss of life, their fate was sealed  
The horror weighs heavy on my soul  
Devastation nothing left to console

The fight has ended and the rain's pouring  
down  
River of blood flowing over the ground  
In the distance He appeared that day  
With a mighty wind I heard Him say

Chorus:

Behold I come, I come to the land of fire  
Behold I come to set you free  
So lay aside the pain of your desires  
And my beloved you will be

Behold I come, I come to the land of fire  
Behold I come to set you free  
So lay aside the pain of your desires  
And my beloved you will be

[The congregation sings “A Mighty Fortress  
Is Our God”]

\*\*\*\*\*

What’s the name of your fortress? Jesus, God, all those children’s sermon answers are correct. And before you go, I want to say, speaking on this topic has been tough because people think I’m saying all kinds of things about politics and Jews the Middle East. I am talking about your heart, and I’m talking about a kingdom that will not fail—a New Jerusalem that’s coming down, not made with human hands, a land that’s not of this world, but one which our Father will give us when we finally cross the Jordan to our home.

Believe that Gospel.

And now, I also need to say this, we preached through Matthew 24, we took a big chunk of it, and we’re going to go back to parts of it, but it is a controversial section of scripture.

There are a few books I have really found helpful. One, I ordered for the bookstore by a guy named J. Marcellus Kik. It’s called An Eschatology of Victory. I got my copy from the tall guy in the back, the best man at my wedding, Dave Jones, he’s back there. He gave it to me years ago. It’s a wonderful exposition of Matthew 24 and Revelation 20.

The other book you might want to check out is Eternity Now. And that’s in the bookstore. Preaching through the Revelation for me started opening my mind to all sorts of things that aren’t necessarily popular in our

culture but has been the dominant view of the church throughout history.

Whatever the case, this much is important. If you came to this table in faith, just a mustard seed of faith, let me tell you, you are going to the kingdom. All right? And this place is only a junction, and so stop messing around here and get in the van! Jesus is the van. Remember what He said, "I am the way." Remember that. In His name. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. <sup>†</sup>You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? <sup>†</sup>Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, <sup>†</sup>that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. <sup>†</sup>Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation.

*Matthew 23:32-36 (RSV)*

Seventy weeks are determined [490 years]  
 For your people and for your holy city,  
 To finish the transgression,  
 To make an end of sins,  
 To make reconciliation for iniquity,  
 To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
 To seal up vision and prophecy,  
 And to anoint the Most Holy.  
 Know therefore and understand,  
 That from the going forth of the command  
 To restore and build Jerusalem

[Ezra returns to Jerusalem about 458 B.C.]  
 Until Messiah the Prince,  
 There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [483 years];  
 The street shall be built again, and the wall,  
 Even in troublesome times.  
 And after the sixty-two weeks  
 Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;  
 And the people of the prince who is to come  
 Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.  
 The end of it shall be with a flood,  
 And till the end of the war desolations are determined.  
 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week  
 [7 years];  
 But in the middle of the week [3½ years]  
 He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.  
 And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes  
 desolate,  
 Even until the consummation, which is determined,  
 Is poured out on the desolate.

*Daniel 9:24-27 (NKJV)*

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

*Matthew 23:37-39 (RSV)*

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

*Matthew 27:38-40 (RSV)*

¶Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."<sup>¶</sup> As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"<sup>¶</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. ¶For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ¶For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: ¶all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. ¶And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¶And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved. ¶And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."

*Matthew 24:1-14 (RSV)*

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel ¶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing. . . which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

*Colossians 1:5b-6a, 1:23b (RSV)*

So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),<sup>†</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains;<sup>†</sup> let him who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house;<sup>†</sup> and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle.<sup>†</sup> And alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days!<sup>†</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath.<sup>†</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

*Matthew 24:15-21 (RSV)*

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it;<sup>†</sup> for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written.<sup>†</sup> Alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people.

*Luke 21:20-23 (RSV)*

It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly—that neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.

*Josephus (1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Historian)*

<sup>†</sup>And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.<sup>†</sup> Then if any one says to you, "Lo, here is the



Christ!” or “There he is!” do not believe it. <sup>¶</sup>For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.<sup>¶</sup>Lo, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, “Lo, he is in the wilderness,” do not go out; if they say, “Lo, he is in the inner rooms,” do not believe it. <sup>¶</sup>For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

*Matthew 24:22-28 (RSV)*

Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

*Matthew 24:28 (ESV)*

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

*Matthew 24:29 (RSV)*

<sup>¶</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>¶</sup>For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day; <sup>¶</sup>but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>¶</sup>And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; <sup>¶</sup>yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>¶</sup>And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; <sup>¶</sup>the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon

into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day. <sup>†</sup>And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

*Acts 2:14-21 (RSV)*

<sup>†</sup>Then he dreamed another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” <sup>†</sup>But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?”

*Genesis 37:9-10 (RSV)*

(See Ecclesiastes 12:1-3, Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:2-8, Luke 10:11, Revelations 1:20, 2:28, 6:13, 8:10, 9:1-2, 12:4)

Then will appear the sign of the Son of man 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.

*Matthew 24:30 (RSV)*

And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” <sup>†</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for thy house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign have you to show us for doing this?” <sup>†</sup>Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

*John 2:16-19 (RSV)*

“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.’”<sup>†</sup>And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”<sup>†</sup>But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” . . . And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.<sup>†</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>†</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

*Matthew 26:61-64, 28:18-20 (RSV)*

And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

*Matthew 24:31 (RSV)*

<sup>†</sup>And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven<sup>†</sup>and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there should be no more delay [literally “chronos”—time], but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.

*Revelation 10:5-7 (RSV)*

(See Revelation 14:15-16, Matthew 9:36-37, 13:37-39)

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.<sup>1</sup> So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.<sup>2</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place.<sup>3</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

*Matthew 24:32-36 (RSV)*

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.<sup>1</sup> For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.<sup>2</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.<sup>3</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.<sup>4</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. . . .<sup>5</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,<sup>6</sup> and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,<sup>7</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. . . .<sup>8</sup> Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.<sup>9</sup> For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.

*Hebrews 11:9-10, 11:13-16, 12:22-24, 13:13-14 (RSV)*

© 2005 Peter Hiet

**Lookout Mountain Community Church**

534 Commons Drive, Golden CO 80401

Phone: 303-526-9287 Fax: 303-526-9361

E-mail: [info@lomcc.org](mailto:info@lomcc.org)