

Culture Shock War and Terrorism

Matthew 24—The Setting

“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down’” (vv. 1-2).

The Disciples’ Questions:

- When will this happen?
- What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

Jesus’ Response:

- Accept reality.

“You will hear of wars and rumors 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” (vv. 6-8).

- Be prepared.

“So when you see standing in the holy place the “abomination that causes desolation,” spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (vv. 15-16).

- Stay focused on the gospel.

“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” (v. 14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are your memories of September 11, 2001? How do you think acts of terrorism and violence have affected our culture over the last decade?

- Read Matthew 24:3-8. What did Jesus want the disciples to understand about the world in which they lived? How do Jesus' words help us understand violence and terrorism in our time?

- What do you believe is a Christian response to Islam?

- How can you remain "focused on the gospel" despite troubling trends and events in our culture?

- What are the sources of your deepest fears? How does Jesus' encouragement to accept reality, be prepared, and stay focused on the gospel challenge you in these areas?