



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 52”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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Matthew 24:16, Mark 13:14-19, Luke 21:20-24

“It’s like a man who took a trip abroad. He left his home after putting his servants in charge, giving each of them something to do. And he ordered his doorkeeper to watch carefully. You too should watch because you don’t know when the Master of the house will return—whether in the evening, at midnight, at dawn, or in the morning. Whenever He comes, don’t let Him find you asleep! I’m saying this not only to you but to everybody: Watch!

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In the movie “Taken”, Liam Neeson plays Bryan Mills, a former CIA agent and “preventer”, charged with providing security for the families of dignitaries travelling abroad while infiltrating militant groups hostile to the United States of America. Mills was divorced from his ex-wife Lenore, with whom he had a seventeen-year-old daughter, Kim. Lenore remarried a rich Beverly Hills businessman, who provided an extravagant lifestyle for Lenore and their daughter. Mills retired from his CIA job in order to spend time with Kim during her senior year in high school.

Lenore and her new husband arranged for Kim and a nineteen year old friend to go to Europe for their summer vacation. Because of the divorce, Kim needed Mills’ permission to go on the trip, but Mills, with his security background, did not want his daughter to travel overseas without adult supervision. After his negative decision brought tears from Kim and a lecture about being overprotective and out of touch from Lenore, Mills reluctantly decided to sign the paper that would allow Kim to go.

Mills tried to warn Kim and Lenore about the potential danger in this situation, but, because of their arrogance and naïveté, they ignored Mills’ warnings. To Lenore, from her secure position behind the walls of her mansion, the world was a perfectly safe place, especially if your overseas accommodations are in condominiums in the finest part of town or in the best luxury hotels. Lenore thought that affluence would insulate Kim from danger, but she were unaware of that which Mills knew, which was that young girls without proper supervision and security are in danger wherever they go. From the title of the movie, you can guess that Kim was taken, or kidnapped, and the rest of the movie is the action-packed adventure of Mills using his investigative and combat skills to rescue his



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daughter and to destroy the gang of Albanians who were kidnapping young female travelers to sell them into sex slavery.

The most interesting aspect of the movie to me, apart from the gunfights and hand-to-hand combat scenes, was the attitude of Mills' ex-wife Lenore throughout the entire movie. Before Kim got on the plane, Mills tried to convince both Kim and Lenore that a teenager travelling overseas without adult supervision was inherently in danger, but Lenore was adamant that her decision to send her seventeen-year-old daughter to follow a rock-and-roll band throughout Europe with only another teenager as a companion was simply a learning experience. After Kim was kidnapped, Lenore was frantic to get Kim back, but she never once showed remorse about her decision to send Kim on the trip. Even after Mills rescued Kim and brought her home, Lenore never expressed any apology for her poor decision making. She never acknowledged that her decision to send her daughter overseas without supervision was not a prudent one.

Lenore never expressed any remorse because her prideful attitude insulated her from feeling any responsibility for the consequences of her actions.

In our last lesson I talked about pride, which is defined as a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, and/or superiority, whether as cherished in the mind or as displayed in bearing or conduct. Proud people often have great focus on obtaining the outcome that they want, even to the point of arrogance. They tend to ignore the possibility of the negative consequences that their desires may bring because they believe that they are entitled to whatever they want. They further believe that if obtaining their desires causes some type of problem, that someone other than themselves should take the responsibility to make sure that the problem caused does not affect them.

Arrogant people often consider themselves insulated from the cares of the world. Arrogance makes people oblivious to danger, and causes them to ignore the warnings of those that have a more realistic view of the world.

The prophets in the Bible tell us about the arrogance of the leaders of Judah who sinned by rejecting the favor shown to them by God. After the death of King Solomon, the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel divided themselves geographically into two kingdoms, the ten northern tribes forming the kingdom of Israel, and the two southern tribes forming the kingdom of Judah. Because the Temple that Solomon built for the worship of God was in that land of Judah, the king of Israel, the northern kingdom, decided that he did not want his people to travel to the southern kingdom for the annual feasts to worship God, as the visit to Solomon's magnificent Temple might cause them to desire the reunification of the kingdom. But rather than setting up a parallel Temple to worship God in his land, the king of Israel arrogantly decided to forsake the Law and worship of God entirely to establish his own law. He decreed that Israel should worship the



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golden calf of Egypt rather than God. As a result of his decision, God sent the Assyrians to defeat the Israelites in battle and take them into captivity. However, the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah began adopting the arrogance of Israel and worshipping idols as well. Jeremiah prophesied to Judah about God's displeasure, as **Jeremiah 3:6** records:

6 The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot.

Idol temples were generally built on mountains, which the Israelites called "high places", and the Israelites that did not have the financial wherewithal to build temples worshipped their idol gods under the cover of groves of trees. Since God's covenant with Israel called for Israel to worship Him exclusively, God told the prophet that Israel's idolatry was analogous to the disloyalty of a harlot, an unfaithful wife who betrayed her husband with lovers. God also calls idol worship harlotry because the idol gods were usually fertility gods, and the ritual act of worship was generally a sex act between the worshipper and a ritual prostitute representing the god. The offering of the worshipper was, at least in part, payment to the prostitute for sex, which was why both idolatry and prostitution were so prevalent and popular in Israel. But, in the analogy, God has two wives, Israel and Judah, and He tells the prophet, in **Jeremiah 3:7-10**:

7 And I said, after [Israel] had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8 Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

9 So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.

10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says the LORD.

Even though Judah had the example of Israel and the words of the prophet to warn them about God's retribution against idolaters, Judah arrogantly refused to listen to the prophet, just as Lenore arrogantly refused to listen to Mills, and Judah rejected God by worshipping idols, even as did Israel. They paid lip service to God, but refused to worship Him, as **Isaiah 29:13** says:

13 Therefore the Lord said: "These people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.

As He was preparing to go to the Cross, Jesus pointed out to His disciples that by rejecting Him, that the leaders of Israel were still rejecting God in their hearts while honoring Him with their lips, that the judgment of God on the sin of



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Israel was coming, and that they, the disciples, should prepare themselves for the trial that they were about to undergo because of that judgment. From “Jesus Christ, the Greatest Life”, the harmony of the gospels that we have been using as a text during this sermon series, the combination of **Matthew 24:11-21, Mark 13:10, 14-19** and **Luke 21:20-24** begins with Jesus saying:

When you see Jerusalem encircled by armies, then realize that the time for her destruction has arrived. Those who are in Judea should flee to the mountains; those who are in the city [of Jerusalem] should run out of it, and those who are in the country should not enter the city. Those are the days of vengeance, when everything that has been written will be fulfilled.

Arrogance often leads to negative circumstances, but you don't have to be arrogant to find yourself in a negative circumstance. I'm reminded of the widow whose fate was publicized after Bernie Madoff was arrested. Upon his death, her husband left her with excellent financial resources, invested with Madoff, a man who was the former chairman of the NASDAQ, and who advertised that he would act professionally to insure that the income from investments would give her financial security for life. Unbeknownst to her, Madoff was a thief, who stole her money and left her penniless. She had to get a job waiting tables, and she probably ended up waiting on some of the same people who had waited on her during her salad days.

When General Motors closes a plant and lays off the workers, both the arrogant and the humble are laid off together. Life on earth is insecure because of the universal sinfulness of man, and we should live in a state of vigilance because the one that judges the sin of mankind may decide to judge sin at any time.

God's judgment of Israel will affect all of the Israelites, just as Bernie Madoff's scheme affected everyone, even the innocent widows, that invested with him. Jesus' warning continues in **Matthew 24:11-21, Mark 13:10, 14-19** and **Luke 21:20-24**:

“How hard those days will be for pregnant women and those who are nursing! There will be great distress throughout the land and upon this people. They will be killed by the sword and will be led captive to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled.

When you see the abomination that makes desolation, predicted by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place where it shouldn't be” (let the reader understand), “then those in Judea should flee to the mountains! A man on the housetop should not go down into the house or go inside to take anything out. And the man in the field shouldn't return to get his clothes.

“How terrible those days will be for pregnant women and those who are nursing! Pray that your escape will not be in winter or on the Sabbath.



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At that time there will be a great tribulation, the likes of which has never occurred from the creation of the world until now and will never happen again.

Just as the kings of Israel and Judah led the people into sin, leaders will continue to lead the people into sin in the days of the judgment, as Jesus continues in **Matthew 24:11-21, Mark 13:10, 14-19** and **Luke 21:20-24**:

Many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Because evil will run rampant, the love of many will grow cold.

But Jesus is not telling His disciples about a hopeless situation, but, rather, a situation that calls for patient perseverance. The nation as a whole will fall, but faithful individuals will be saved, as Jesus continues, in **Matthew 24:11-21, Mark 13:10, 14-19** and **Luke 21:20-24**:

But whoever endures to the end will be saved.

“When they persecute you in this city, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, you will not have visited every city in Israel before the Son of Man comes.

“This good news of the kingdom must first be preached all over the world as a testimony to all the nations. Then the end will come.

If the Lord had not shortened those days [of persecution], none of humankind would survive. But for the sake of God’s chosen people, those days will be shortened.

God’s plan is to destroy Jerusalem after giving the Good News to the Apostles, and then holding off the ultimate judgment until the Word has spread and every nation is warned of God’s judgment. This holding off of the ultimate judgment is that which we know as the Church age. The church began, as recorded in the book of Acts, as an Israelite organization, and then, after the vision of Peter on the rooftop and his subsequent preaching to the Italian band, spread among those that are not Jews. Peter preaches, in **Acts 10:34-43**

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ— He is Lord of all—

37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which [Jesus] did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,



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41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with [Jesus] after He arose from the dead.

42 And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He, [Jesus Christ] who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in [Jesus Christ] will receive remission of sins.”

Peter preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Romans, informing them that forgiveness of sin and salvation from the consequences of sin will come to anyone, of any race, creed, color or national origin, that trusts that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary and Jesus' subsequent resurrection from the dead is proof that Jesus Christ is actually God in human flesh.

God gave the Israelites proof of His leadership by the many signs and wonders that He performed while freeing them from slavery in Egypt, giving Moses a tablet of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments, allowing the Israelites to wander in the wilderness for forty years, during which time the soles of the shoes and their clothes never wore out and they never had to farm, but only gather the manna that fell every morning.

In the same manner, Jesus Christ gave us proof of His deity by the many miracles that He worked, including raising Lazarus from the dead, followed by the miracle of His Own personal unassisted resurrection and appearance to the disciples after His crucifixion. Just as the Jews were called to worship God in Jerusalem in accordance with the Old Testament law of the Tabernacle, we are called to worship Jesus Christ. Jesus' warning continues, in **Matthew 24:22-31**, **Mark 13:20-27** and **Luke 21:25-27**:

“If anyone says to you at that time, ‘Look, here’s the Messiah!’ or ‘Look, He’s there!’ don’t believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform such impressive signs and miracles that, if it were possible, even God’s chosen people would be misled. So don’t forget! See, I’ve told you everything beforehand.

“If someone says to you, ‘Look, He’s in the desert,’ don’t go out there. Or, ‘Look, He’s in the private rooms,’ don’t believe them. In the same way that lightning comes from the East and shines as far as the West, so will the Son of Man come. The vultures gather wherever the corpse lies.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ will signal the end of time as we know it. It will be an unmistakable event, one that we will recognize as easily as a vulture recognizes a dead body. It will involve not only the inhabitants of the earth, but the heavenly bodies in the solar system. **Matthew 24:22-31**, **Mark 13:20-27** and **Luke 21:25-27** continues:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days, signs will appear in the sun and the moon and the stars. The sun will be darkened, the moon will not shine, and the stars will fall from the sky. And on earth the nations



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will be frantic and perplexed. The sea and its waves will be roaring, and people's hearts will give out because of fear about the things that are coming on the world.

“The powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. At that time all the nations of the earth will mourn as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Then with a loud trumpet call He will send out His angels to gather His chosen people from the four winds—from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven and from one end of heaven to the other.

Jesus continues, in **Matthew 24:32-42, Mark 13:28-37** and **Luke 21:28-36**:

When you see these things beginning to take place, lift your heads and look up because your redemption is drawing near.”

The examples of Israel and Judah are relevant here. Those who forsake God as did those nations will miss the signal that the Lord is coming back. And, as incredible as it may seem, we may miss the signal as well. Jesus warns us, in **Matthew 24:32-42, Mark 13:28-37** and **Luke 21:28-36**:

Then [Jesus] told them a parable: “Learn a lesson from the fig tree. Observe it and all the trees. When you see its branches send out shoots and leaves start to appear, you know summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, know that the kingdom of God is drawing near even at the door! I tell you the truth, this generation will by no means pass away before all these things will have been fulfilled. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away!

“Yet no one knows exactly when this will happen, including the angels of heaven and the Son; only My Father knows. The events of Noah's day give a good picture of what the coming of the Son of Man will be like. In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, getting married and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. They were unaware of what was happening until the flood came and swept them all away.

The coming of the Son of Man will be like that. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding grain at the mill; one will be taken and the other left.

The signs of the end times will be there, just as the signs of summer appear every spring. But people will miss the signs of the end, just as they missed the signs of the Flood, because their allegiance to sin will blind them, and they will rationalize the signs of the end as something else. You may remember the episode that **Genesis 3:4-5** records:

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.



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5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The devil will deceive the nations, just as he deceived the woman, so that they will not worship Jesus Christ. All of the available historical proof of the deity of Jesus Christ notwithstanding, people will continue to find the worship of God and His Son Jesus Christ too confining, and the admonition to follow Jesus' commandments too limiting to their personal choices.

We have a fervent desire to be like God, meaning, that we want to exercise self-determination because of our sin nature, and without regeneration and the power of the Holy Spirit, we simply can not overcome the temptation of the devil and follow the design of God for our lives. Although we crave the fruit of the tree, God's design requires us to forgo the immediate gratification of self-determination in order to obtain the ultimate satisfaction that comes from following the plan of God.

Joe McIlhane, M.D., who founded The Medical Institute for Sexual Health to study the science of human sexual behavior and its consequences, recently wrote a book entitled "Hooked". In his studies of the effects of sexuality on the brain using MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), and PET (positron emission tomography) scans, which are non-destructive tests that measure electrical activity and blood flow in the brain that can be used to determine neurological development, Dr. McIlhane been able to view the affect that being sexually active has on the adolescent brain. Dr. McIlhane has discovered that after sexual activity, and probably during sexual activity, hormones flood the brain to create pathways between the neurons and synapses in various centers of the brain. These pathways cause us to associate sexual activity with certain individuals, and are roughly analogous to the expressways that criss-cross our nation. Just as I-94 creates a vehicular bond between Detroit and Chicago, brain pathways create bonds between people.

Imagine that Detroit was destroyed. What would happen to I-94? The road to Detroit would become useless, unless a great deal of trouble was taken by the government to reroute the expressway to a different destination. The reroute could not be done easily, as a great deal of right-of-way would have to be procured and a great deal of construction would have to be done to change the destination of the expressway to a different town.

Something similar happens in the human brain. When we have sex with someone, the pathways created in our brains form bonds that attach us to that person, just as I-94 attaches Detroit to Chicago. When a sexual relationship breaks up, the work required to repair the damage to our brain's ability to form these pathways properly is analogous to fixing I-94 after destroying Detroit. We have to reroute pathways in our brain, and the reroute cannot be done easily. According to Dr. McIlhane's studies, our capacity to bond is damaged by the reroute, and the more reroutes that we have to undergo, the more our capacity to



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form bonds is damaged. In the immature brain, severe damage can be done, and people can go into depression or frank mental illness, or lose the ability to bond altogether, and become psychopaths. People often require psychotropic medication to try to reintroduce a healthier chemistry to their brains.

Dr. McIlhane postulates that the human brain is chemically designed to function optimally if we have only one sexual partner, which does not surprise me, since God, the designer, tells me, in **Hebrews 13:4**:

4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

But when it comes to sex, our society, as did the Israelites, prefers to worship idols and refuses to worship God. We have decided that since we can, to some degree, sidestep the two major negative consequences of out-of-wedlock sexual activity, those being pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, by using the proper contraceptive methods, we can nullify the judgment of God against fornication and adultery. Dr. McIlhane's research indicates that there is a third negative consequence that we cannot sidestep with impunity, one that affects the very structure of our brains.

Although we may not create life or contract a disease by our fornication or adultery, we may find ourselves the recipients of different consequences, say, four bullets, two to the head, and two to the chest.

But God tells us to take the long view, find a partner, commit our lives to that person in marriage, and then spend our lives treating our spouse in such a way as to build an emotional building of love on top of the foundation of chemical bonding created when we have sex with one another. If we successfully commit to God's plan, our lives will be in tune with the design with which God has created us, and we will not be so distracted by the drama involved in illicit sexual relationships that we miss the plan of God unfolding before us, as Jesus warns us in **Matthew 24:32-42, Mark 13:28-37** and **Luke 21:28-36**:

“So watch yourselves and make sure your hearts do not become weighed down by wild living and drunkenness and the worries of this life. Then that day would surprise you. It will come like a trap on everyone living on the face of the earth! That is why you should continually watch and pray that you may have strength to escape all these things that are certain to come about, and to stand before the Son of Man. Therefore, be careful! Keep watch because you don't know when your Lord is coming.

The simple reason that we should devote ourselves to living by Christian principles is that the end time is coming, and we don't want to be caught off guard. Sin of every form distracts us from being watchful, and dealing with the negative consequences of sin will have us looking the other way as the Day of the Lord comes upon us. In other words, Jesus is telling us to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly



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understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

Jesus is telling us that it is wise of us to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner, so that we do not miss the signs that the end of time is coming. In our text for today, **Matthew 24:16, Mark 13:14-19, Luke 21:20-24**, Jesus warns us:

“It’s like a man who took a trip abroad. He left his home after putting his servants in charge, giving each of them something to do. And he ordered his doorkeeper to watch carefully. You too should watch because you don’t know when the Master of the house will return—whether in the evening, at midnight, at dawn, or in the morning. Whenever He comes, don’t let Him find you asleep! I’m saying this not only to you but to everybody: Watch!

John 3:16-17 tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jesus Christ did all of the heavy lifting for our salvation on the Cross of Calvary. He suffered, bled and died that our sins might be forgiven, and that we might have access to the Kingdom of God. Jesus rose from the dead, physically, and returned to heaven to prepare a place for us, as He tells us, in **John 14:2-3**:
2 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

And the one way, the only way for us to get to the place that Jesus has prepared for us is to obtain the mind of Christ, to understand His principles and to base our daily personal decisions upon them, as Jesus tells Thomas in **John 14:6**:

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

What the world tells us does not matter. The only way through the tribulation of those days is through Jesus Christ. As we go down from this place, let us be in a state of vigilance, living our lives according to the dictates and doctrines of Jesus Christ and watching for His return that we may be ready as the Day approaches.

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