



The Need For Renewal

In **Matthew 24**, we read how **the influences of the world cause God's people to:**

1. **Leave the faith** (verse 10).
2. **Distort the faith** (verse 11; cf. Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Peter 3:16-18).
3. **Grow indifferent to the faith** (verse 12; cf. Revelation 2:4-5; 3:15).

We must fight against the thinking and mindset(s) of the world (Romans 12:1-2) and do so **day by day** (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

The Need For Renewal - Combat "Cultural Christianity"

As our faith and love grow cold, we stop fighting for **"the faith"** (Jude 3) and instead simply call for a "Christian culture."

There is a shift towards "Christian values" and "Christian principles" rather dedication to the revealed will of God.

The Need For Renewal - Combat "Cultural Christianity"

Cultural Christianity is exhibited by:

1. Names and labels rather than conduct and behavior. An affiliation rather than a belonging.
2. Key Christian principles (love, kindness) rather than commitment and sacrifice. Social over spiritual (Matthew 23:23).
3. Adaptable to modern times rather than standards once for all delivered (Jeremiah 6:16; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

The Need For Renewal - Combat "Cultural Christianity"

Cultural Christianity is exhibited by:

4. Responsibility is on "leaders" to address changes (Ephesians 4:11-16).
5. Focus on heritage (national or family) rather than personal accountability (Matthew 3:9; Romans 9:7).

How do we overcome such dangerous thinking? Through daily spiritual renewal (Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 3:5-10).

Context of Isaiah chapter 40

- Isaiah 39:4, a prophecy to King Hezekiah of defeat by Babylon.
- Delivered to the Jews prior to Babylonian captivity prophesying of an end to the 70 years of bondage who needed comfort (verses 1-2) and renewal.
- Also Messianic foretelling of the Christ who would bring spiritual bondage to an end (Isaiah 40:3; cf. Luke 3:3-6).
- Much of this chapter can be summed up with the expression in verse 9, **"Here is your God!"**
- **Let us pray for the renewal promised by God in the year to come!**
- 5 steps outlined in this chapter ...

1. Focus on God's Glory and His plan to Redeem Man (verses 3-5)

- Hope promised through "**the way of the Lord**" (verses 3-4; Malachi 4:5-6; Luke 3:4-6; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12).
- **God's plan** long ago established (Ephesians 1:3-6, "... to the praise of the glory of His grace ...").
- Fulfillment to bring **glory to God** (verse 5; Psalms 79:8-9; Luke 2:14; Ephesians 3:8-10).

7

2. Believe In The Power of His Eternal Word (verses 6-8)

- In contrast to all things fleshly (Psalms 103:15-16), "**The word of our God stands forever**" (verse 8; 1 Peter 1:24-25; Psalms 119:89). We need to shout ("**call out**") this from the mountain top!
- God's word is **divinely powerful** (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 10:4).
 - Note: Romans 1:14-16, **Duty ... Eager ... Proud!**
- **Guaranteed to work** (Isaiah 55:10-11).
- In times of turmoil, only "**God and ... the word of His grace**" will not disappoint (Acts 20:32).
- "**Incline**" and "**apply**" (Proverbs 22:17).

8

3. Remember God Is In Control and Leading His Flock (verses 9-17)

- We need to **let the world know the good news!** (verse 9, "**Life up your voice mightily**"; cf. Psalms 40:8-10).
- **God's arm yet rules** (verse 10; cf. Daniel 4:26-27; Psalms 66:7; 145:13) and **He yet sits on His throne** (Psalms 103:19; Isaiah 9:7).
- "**Like a shepherd He will tend His flock ...**" (verse 11; Ezekiel 34:12-16; John 10:3-4, 14-18).
- Trust **God's power, understanding, and justice in the end!** (verses 12-17; cf. Psalms 73:17)

9

4. Develop a spiritual focus (verses 18-27)

- "**To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal?**" (verse 25; cf. verse 18)
- Our God "**sits above the circle of the earth**" (verse 22).
- "**Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars**" (verse 26; Colossians 3:1-2).
- Application of **time and attention!** (Ephesians 5:15-17)
- We need **childlike trust** in our Creator and redeemer (Matthew 18:2-4).
- **Don't worry!** (Matthew 6:25-34)

10

5. God Gives Strength To The Weary (verses 28-31)

"**Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength**" (verse 31).

What is our part?

- **Focus on what needs renewing** (Romans 12:1-2).
- Look to the "**eternal weight of glory**" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
- Regular **spiritual nourishment** (1 Timothy 4:6; John 6:63).
- **Fellowship** with our brethren (Philemon 4-7).
- **Eliminate the hindrances** (Hebrews 12:1-2; Luke 10:38-42).
- **Lay aside the "old self"** (40:1-2; 6:7) and **be forgiven** (Colossians 3:9-10; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 8:23-24).

11

All Renewal Is Based On Forgiveness Of Sin ...

Without forgiveness, even as Christians, we are in the **bondage of iniquity** (Acts 8:23).

David prayed for a **renewed and steadfast spirit** that was dependent on his **iniquities being blotted out** and once again having a **clean heart** (Psalms 51:7-12).

Is your heart right with God?

12