

Chapters 23-24: Creative Destruction

The dual missions of Jesus:

1. _____ the notion of the long-awaited Messiah.
2. To _____ His dominion and authority over all other forces.

Recalibration, Part One (Chapter 23)

Today's Equipping Point

Never fail to _____ people to Jesus

Jesus is Lord, Ruler, and Authority over:

1. Jewish _____
2. Gentile _____
3. The god of _____
4. _____
5. Spiritual _____
6. The _____

Recalibration, Part Two (Chapter 24)

He tells _____ about the _____.

This kingdom values _____ over _____.

The fork in the road, the “put up or shut up”, “do or die” moment:

_____ or _____.

Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.

Matthew 11:6

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:66

There's only one question left for us today: What happens to your faith when your _____ aren't met?

"My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast—the breaker and destroyer of images. Jesus is the supreme example; he leaves all previous ideas of the Messiah in ruins."

—C.S. Lewis

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think was the most disarming thing about Jesus?
2. Could Jesus have done without either of his two missions?
3. What have you rejected or resented because it was unfamiliar?

Teaching Script

There are a couple of words you hear a lot these days: *Creative Destruction*.

- Banking system
- Health care
- Car business
- Quote from “Orbiting the Giant Hairball”—p.51

In Chapters 23-24 of *The Story*, Jesus’ mission is one of creative destruction. In each realm cited above (banking, health care, automobiles) we have reached such a crisis point economically that they all have to be rethought at the foundation level—from the ground up. No previous assumptions about the way these industries used to operate can be taken for granted anymore—everything is on the table as both industry executives and lawmakers start with a blank sheet of paper and reinvent the way things work.

And in Chapters 23-24 of *The Story*, at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He also starts with a blank sheet of paper and reinvents the notion of a Messiah, a Deliverer. But it turns out that was just one of His two missions. As He makes his entrance on the scene, there were two critical missions that Jesus had to accomplish.

So today, I want you to hear everything in Chapters 23 and 24 in the context of the dual missions that Jesus had. Everything that happens in these chapters falls under one of two key objectives:

1. ***Shatter* the notion of the long-awaited Messiah.**
2. **To *authenticate* His dominion and authority over all other forces.**

Both of these were absolutely critical.

Recalibration, Part One

First, at the outset of His ministry, everyone was looking in the wrong direction. Israel was anticipating the Messiah would be a world leader, a military force, a revolutionary to restore political power and prominence as in the days of Solomon. The Messiah had been anticipated, promised, and prophesied about for ages, so that now, the expectations for this Deliverer were huge.

But Jesus’ mission was so radically different, so counterintuitive, He found, just like the executive at Hallmark, that He had to effectively start all over, first by destroying these popular characterizations of a man with a cape and a big “S” on his shirt. He had to shatter and then recast and re-purpose this Messiah concept toward his true mission.

Second, He had to validate this new model by demonstrating His power over all obstacles, to authenticate that His absurd claims were actually true.

So, as we go through the events of these chapters, see everything through these lenses. Watch as he simultaneously goes about these two goals: **authenticating** and **shattering**.

First, we see John the Baptist, who definitely marched to a different drummer and, shall we say, lacked a sense of tact or a balanced diet. John was the herald of the Focus of

human history—but we have to ask, “Hey, where did they get this guy?” Why him? John answered their question: “...the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” In other words, I serve as a directional arrow, a sign pointing to the One whose sandals I am unfit to tie.

Now, if you were going to pick some sort of beacon to point people to Jesus, wouldn't you want a very conspicuous one? John was that hard-to-ignore eccentric that signaled Jesus' presence—sort of like those people you see on the side of the street dressed like a mattress and waving a sign about a sale. There's someone close to our home that's dressed like the Statue of Liberty that is this crazy person, doing calisthenics on the side of the road to advertise a tax preparation business.

That was John the Baptist—and for that matter, that's what *we* are called to be: a flare, a flag, a flashing yellow light, a semaphore that signals that the presence of Jesus is in whatever room we occupy. If we are literally the body of Christ, then when we enter a room, it is as if *Jesus* entered the room. John the Baptist's mission was to never fail to point to Jesus.

And so right up front there's Today's Equipping Point:

Never fail to point people to Jesus.

Because when you walk into a room, He walks into a room.

Next we see his first miracle: turning water into wine at a wedding. This wasn't an especially flashy first miracle...you'd think He'd have picked a more public, showy miracle that would at least elicit a golf clap from the crowd. But instead, it was a behind-the-scenes, how-did-that-happen kind of miracle.

I can't help but wonder why. We'll likely never know for sure, but my guess is that this is part of the shattering mission. I think this miracle was the first attempt to recast the Deliverer not as a political animal, or even a party animal, but as the gracious and eternal Bridegroom of the church—the One who provides even the wine, the One who watches over. I believe this miracle was a significant symbol of the role that Jesus will play forever at the marriage feast of the Lamb when He gathers His bride, the church, to Him, and the relationship is consummated by drinking the last cup of the Passover in His presence. Jesus the Messiah, recasting Himself as the husband and provider for His church, turns water into wine.

The next two events are very significant because they happen back-to-back. First, Jesus meets with an expert in the Law, the religious elite, the well-educated Nicodemus. Jesus used a lot of confusing language, especially the part about being “born again.” But His point was this: whoever believes in Him is not condemned. In other words, blessed is he who can look past the unexpectedness of a non-political Messiah and believe He is who He says He is. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have

eternal life in Him.” This is what John the Baptist was saying...this was the Upper Story: everything points to Him.

Then, the very next conversation could not have been more different. It was not at night with a scholar, but in the daytime, in Samaria, with a woman. Jesus moves from esteemed professor to half-breed female in a foreign land. And this time, instead of being “born again,” He speaks of “living water.”

These two consecutive events very clearly shatter the myths and preconceptions of a Superman Messiah. He could not bookend two sequential conversations whose audiences were more different. Jesus is deconstructing the Messiah complex and demonstrating that He is Lord of all, Savior of all: the aristocracy and the riff-raff, male and female, Gentiles AND Jews, Democrats and Republicans, everybody. He wastes absolutely no time in confounding expectations. To Nicodemus, he says all there is, really, is faith—just believe. To the woman, his message is essentially the same: it’s not about worshipping on this mountain, or in Jerusalem—it’s a matter of the heart. Just worship in Spirit and in truth. That’s all—just believe. Two very different conversations, one essential message.

But these two meetings do more than flabbergast their Messiah image—they also demonstrate His Lordship over Jews and Gentiles alike, and there are the first two blanks in the next section on your outline. Jesus seamlessly transitions into His authenticity mission: He is Lord, Ruler and Authority over the **Jewish *elite*** and **Gentile *outcasts***.

Next, He demonstrates His authority over **the god of *this world***. Read with me from page 329 of *The Story*...The third proof of His Lordship was key: even demons obeyed Him.

Next we see the fourth proof of His power and credibility: Lord, Ruler, and Authority over not just people and spirits, but also of ***illness***. From the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law, to the next man with leprosy, to the paralytic lowered through the roof, Jesus demonstrated there was no physical infirmity He could not overcome.

But then He went a step further. As they lowered the paralytic through the hole in the roof, Jesus said to him, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now we have the fifth realm over which Jesus had authority: **spiritual *sickness***. It’s one thing to heal a fever or leprosy—it’s quite another to speak what was considered blasphemy and presume to forgive sins...to heal those with spiritual fever.

And then what does He do next, but broaden His social circle once again, this time having dinner with a tax collector.

Do you see how He is systematically sabotaging every presupposition about this whole Messiah paradigm? Remember again the dual missions:

1. To authenticate His dominion and authority over all other forces
2. Shatter the idea of the long-awaited Messiah.

Jesus is brilliantly accomplishing both missions concurrently. He is cherry-picking the sacred cows over which He has power, while at the same time showing Himself to be a Messiah who was novel, unexpected, and extraordinary.

Then next we see the sixth realm over which Jesus is Lord, Ruler, and Authority. A man with a shriveled hand was in the synagogue, and every neck was straining to see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath. He did, of course, thereby showing Himself to be Lord over **the Law**. The Pharisees had it all wrong—Jesus showed them it wasn't about *legalistic CYA*—it was about doing good, regardless what day it was.

Recalibration, Part Two

Then in Chapter 24, He continues part two of His mission of recalibrating everyone's view of what a Messiah should be. But this time, He tells stories—parables—that start to inform people about “The Kingdom.” This is next on your outline: **He tells stories about the Kingdom**. But surprisingly, He doesn't describe this new kingdom as a political upheaval, a re-ordering of society, or renewed global empire other countries would have to reckon with.

He said the kingdom was like seed scattered on the ground—most people, like most soil, won't receive these seeds, but *some will*—and they'll multiply and produce this radical idea over and over. He said the kingdom is like a mustard seed, seemingly small and insignificant, but when it finds that **good** soil, when it grasps this upside-down solution, it becomes the largest of all plants.

The point was this: **The Kingdom values people over process.**

He said the kingdom values people over process so much, that it's like the foolish shepherd who'd leave 99 safe sheep and look for one that was lost...like a woman who loses a coin and turns her house upside down...like a man who had two sons, and even though the younger was a greedy opportunist and a jerk, his father couldn't wait for him to come back home. That's how important people are in this kingdom.

Just how important are people? A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, attacked and left for dead. Was it the clergy who helped? No, it was someone you'd never expect: a Samaritan, who wasn't blinded by ethnicity and prejudice. Who's your neighbor? Anyone who needs you.

Jesus was saying, “You may think I'm an odd kind of Messiah, but my kingdom is even more so. Because you get to choose whether or not you belong—but once you decide, you can't have it both ways...you can't have two masters, or store up treasures here, or worry about where the next meal is coming from.”

And one more thing: once you hear this intriguing message, if it really captures you, put it in “Drive” and engage. Hearing about this extreme philosophy, but keeping your life in neutral is like building sand castles—they'll be gone with the next tide. But put these uncommon principles into effect and no one can shake your foundation.

First, in Chapter 24, Jesus continued to rock their world with descriptions of this new order, this new worldview, by shattering their Messiah conventions.

Now open to page 343 of *The Story*. Next, Jesus again seamlessly moves back and forth between his two missions, again focusing on His Lordship and Authority. Look at the sequential exhibition of His power over all creation on pages 343-345:

- Nature (calming the waves)
- Spiritual forces of darkness (cut self, Legion, to pigs)
- Debilitating illness (12 yrs bleeding, and she just touched him in faith)
- Death—Jairus' daughter

We need to place a mental bookmark, a mile marker at this juncture, because right here in *The Story* is the turning point. Right here we come to **the fork in the road, the “put up or shut up”, “do or die” moment.** You've heard about this different kingdom, you've seen God's power—now the next move is yours: ***Believe or not.***

From here on, it was all about faith: can you trust that I am who I say I am?

- To Jairus: don't be afraid, just believe
- To the two blind men: Do you believe I'm able to do this?
- There are 5000 hungry people—YOU feed them—I gave you power
- Peter began sinking in the water: O you of little faith!
- I am the bread of life—whoever eats this bread (*believes*) lives forever

In fact, the key to both chapters can be found on page 334 of *The Story*:

Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.

Matthew 11:6

In other words, blessed is he who can think out of the box. Blessed is he who doesn't get tripped up by a Messiah like Me. Blessed is he who can see past his preconceptions and embrace a life of giving away, not acquiring for self. Blessed is he who gets it.

Because here was the sad truth: at the very end of Chapter 24, the Bible says this:

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:66

You can't be lukewarm, or have it both ways, or sit on the fence—complacency is not an option.

And so, in the face of this fanatical, avant-garde Messiah, this revolutionary way of life, **there's only one question left for us to ask today: What happens to your faith when your expectations aren't met?**

Some people, when faced with a decision, try to play both ends, to serve two masters—but Jesus has already addressed that. So what do you do? What happens to your faith when your expectations aren't met? What do you do with a God you can't explain, a Messiah who can't be manipulated into your preferences because you've behaved yourself? A God who won't conform to your stereotypes?

Why do people reject this counter-intuitive Jesus? The same reason they did when they built the golden calf: We prefer our own gods.

Israel had cried out for centuries, asking this God of their fathers to rescue them. The problem was, when He actually showed up, He was not what they'd expected. So what did they do? They traded down for a golden calf, because it was a god of their own design. A god they could see and touch, a god they could feel good about. Their stand-in god suited them just fine. It wouldn't descend on mountaintops in fire and smoke. It

didn't make their knees weak or their hands tremble. Their god of gold wouldn't talk out loud or make demands. They wanted a god they could control, a "preferred" god that never made them feel uncomfortable.

And guess what? As we see through the present day, nothing really changes. I would much prefer that God fix my problem without messing with my paradigm. Today we have built deities of affluence, power, adulation, busyness, and addiction. And as bad as those gods are, they are familiar to us. They serve us, instead of the other way around. We prefer what we know, however dysfunctional, to something new. (P. 101, *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*.)

The problem is, God is as demanding as we are—He will do whatever it takes to get our attention. This is what is required to get to that next level we keep talking about: a complete jettison of the gods we prefer, who don't ask too much, and a full embrace of a counter-revolutionary Messiah who will never demand anything less than everything.

Will we give it? That is the question for each of us this morning.

As usual, C.S. Lewis has the perfect thought, the perfect benediction, for our study today:

"My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast—the breaker and destroyer of images. Jesus is the supreme example; He leaves all previous ideas of the Messiah in ruins."

—C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*

What will we do with this Jesus?