

Matthew 24 • Signs of the End of the Age

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When you start reading through your Bible, particularly the New Testament, you see very clearly as you begin that the New Testament is about the coming of the Son of God. And it begins with His birth, and goes on through His ministry, and deals with His death, burial, and resurrection.

But then when you get to the Book of Acts, you find the Bible talking to you about His ascension. Meaning, when He went to once again be with the Father and with the ascension, there's a wonderful promise in God's Word that He's going to return. He's coming back and I love it. Let's put it up on the screen so we can see it together. Acts chapter 1.

Acts 1:9-11 (ESV)

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, (here it comes) will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

And so here's this wonderful promise. This is one of many in the Bible where we see this wonderful promise of our Lord's return. And by the way this whole ascension thing took place on the Mount of Olives. And that's important thing to keep in mind.

But as we get into the Word of God and we've begin to find these further references to the return of our Lord we begin to find that there are some dissimilarities between some of the references or passages that speak of His return.

And ultimately we come to terms with the fact that His return is going to be taking place in two separate stages. Right. And that first stage is talked about in 1 Thessalonians. Again, up on the screen for you, it goes like this,

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (ESV)

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, (the apostle Paul writing here) about those who are asleep, (and that's a Christian euphemism for death—for the physical death of the body) that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

He goes on to say,

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (ESV)

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, (now pay attention here) will be caught up (and please take note of those words, caught up) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord (where?) in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

This is the first reference that we get. Well, it's not the first reference, but the first reference we get in a sense to a different kind of a return for our Lord. And this Word is all given to—about believers and to believers. And it says that when the Lord returns, He's going to, we are going to “*be caught up*” to be with Him in the air. By the way, those words “*caught up*” are where we get our word, rapture. Okay.

And some people are like, the word, rapture isn't in the Bible. Yeah, but the concept is. And when the Bible was translated into Latin, the word there for, caught up, was rapturos. And so that's where we get our word, rapture, to be caught up.

And so we see that the characteristic of this coming of the Lord is that the believers will meet the Lord in the air. Those of you who always wanted to fly, here's your chance. It's going to be fun. So anyway, so this is—but see, as you read through the Word of God, you find some other references related to His coming. And one of those is in Zechariah chapter 14. Up on the screen, we're going to read this one too. It says,

Zechariah 14:1-4 (ESV)

Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. (and this is a message to Israel) For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Zechariah 14:1-4 (ESV)

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east...

Then (he goes on to say) the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east...

This is a prophecy from the Book of Zechariah which also talks about the coming of the Lord. But in this prophecy, there's no reference to meeting the Lord in the air. The reference is to Him coming to the earth; literally coming to the Mount of Olives. Okay. Did you notice that reference?

Which is interesting in light of the fact that the angels told the disciples, this same Jesus who you saw go into heaven will return in the same way. And not

just in the same way, but also to the same place, as He comes finally to earth, right? And it's there on the Mount of Olives. And He comes to fight against the enemies of Israel that have been amassing against her at that time.

So what we see are these two stages of the return of our Lord Jesus. So we'll put these on the screen and bullet point them for you so you can see them.

The Two Stages of Jesus Returning

The Rapture (1 Thess. 4)

When believers meet the Lord in the air

The first stage is what we talked about, that's The Rapture or the catching away of the church, which is talked about in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

It's a biblical teaching. Anybody that tells you there's no such thing as a rapture, well, you just point him to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Paul is very clear. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

The Two Stages of Jesus Returning

The Rapture (1 Thess. 4)

When believers meet the Lord in the air

The Second Coming (Zech. 14)

When Jesus returns to the earth

But then you have that other element or stage, if you will, of the return of Jesus, and that is where what we call The Second Coming, as we read there in Zechariah 14, when He physically returns to the earth.

Now, I happen to believe, and I know there are some who disagree with me, but I happen to believe, but that between these two events; the rapture of the church and the second coming of Jesus to the earth, there is this little thing called the great tribulation.

And there are other believers, sincere believers, who believe that Jesus is going to rapture the church at the end of the tribulation, and the church is going to go through the tribulation period.

There are others who believe that the church will be caught up at the midpoint of the tribulation. And there are still others who take a position called pre-wrath, which is the middle of the second half of the tribulation as it relates to the

catching away of the church. It doesn't really matter in the end, it's not a salvation issue. If you do have some different thoughts along those lines, that's quite all right.

But the point is, regardless of the exact timing that you may hold, we've got these two stages in which Jesus returns. First for the church, His bride, right? And then secondly, coming to earth for Israel to come against her enemies.

I'm sharing these verses with you as a preview of what we're going to be dealing with here in Matthew chapter 24, because this whole chapter is about the end times. It's prophecy after prophecy, where Jesus is going to speak about His coming and it will be predicated upon some questions that the disciples asked Him, and so let's get into the chapter.

It goes like this. *“Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (and they were pointing to the magnificence of how it was built) ² 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.” (ESV)* Now stop there for just a minute.

What Jesus is referring to right here, is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that will take place approximately 35 to 40 years in the future of when this statement was made. And He's talking about a time when Israel will ultimately rebel against Rome, and Rome will break into the city. They will destroy it. They will slaughter many people and they will systematically dismantle the temple, to the point where they will not leave one stone upon another.

Here's what's fascinating. If you go to Israel today, and you go to the old city of Jerusalem, you can still see the stones that the Romans threw down when they destroyed the temple. Let me show you a picture. There are pictures.



There's still a portion of the Temple mount that still remains to this day. And by the way, the temple has not been rebuilt since A.D. 70 when the Romans came in and destroyed everything. And you can still see the stones from the temple that have been thrown down. It's really crazy.

But let's keep reading in verse 3 and we'll see what Jesus has to say. *“As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?””*

Now, it's very possible that the disciples thought that they were just asking one question because I think they really considered that it was all going to happen essentially at the same time. But what they're really asking is 3 separate questions. We'll bullet point them for you on the screen. They're asking,

Three Questions:

When will these things be?

What will be the sign of your coming?

What will be the sign of the end of the age?

When are these things going to happen? Right? When's this going to be? They're asking Him, What is the sign of your coming? And then finally they're asking, What is the sign of the end of the age? All right.

What follows in the rest of Matthew chapter 24 is our Lord's response to these questions. And what He does in this response is He intertwines multiple prophecies related to their questions. And He begins by talking about would shortly take place in A.D. 70, which is the destruction of the temple.

But what Jesus is going to do in this chapter, is He is then going to use the destruction of the temple, which will happen in A.D. 70 on their timetable, and He will use that as a foreshadowing of a greater destruction that is going to come upon Israel during the time of the great tribulation. Jesus is going to go from more recent prophetic history to distant prophetic history that hasn't even happened yet. Okay, so let's see how it goes.

He's going to begin this way, verse 4. *“And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ (I am the Messiah) and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, (and then these next words are critical that you hear them) but the end is not yet.”*

And so you see the disciples were asking about timing. When is all this going to happen? So Jesus begins by warning them not to misread the signs of the times. He essentially tells them that there are a lot of things that have to happen prior to these events beginning to happen.

And what He's describing for you and me is life right now and what a life has been for the last couple thousand years. And He says that false messiahs are going to rise up. We've seen a few of those in our time; even in my lifetime. I've seen some false messiahs rise up and say, I'm the redeemer, and so forth. And many truly were led astray by that.

And He said that this time period before the end times would also be characterized by a lot of wars and a lot of talk about wars, and we've seen that obviously too. But He says the end is not yet, right.

He actually goes on to say in verse 7, *“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.”* But He says, here, look at verse 8, *“All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”*

These are just the beginning. In other words, this, these are the Braxton Hicks of history being able or ready to... Some of you might know what that means. Some women, interestingly enough, don't experience contractions until they actually go into labor, and that's the first time they ever experienced a contraction.

Well, that wasn't the way it was with my wife. We had four kids and she got what—months before she gave birth to our kids, she started experiencing what are called Braxton Hicks contractions. And those are contractions that get the body ready to, sort of a thing. Yeah, I don't mean to be crude or anything, but, you guys know how it works, sort of a thing.

But there are these small contractions that take place leading up to the final delivery of the baby. And so Jesus says here, concerning the false messiahs, and the wars, and the rumors of talk of war, this is all just the Braxton Hicks contractions getting things ready. But the end is not yet. Right.

In fact, some people call these things non-signs. We have signs of the end times, but then we have non-signs, and these are they. They're not really signs of the end times. They're signs of the mid-range of times leading up to the end times, if that makes sense.

So in verses 9 through 14, which we're going to start reading here next, Jesus is going to give a brief summary of this time period He's talking about between His ascension and His second coming. And He's going to characterize that period of time, which by the way, we're still in.

And do you know that time period is called, the last days? Okay. The time from really the ascension of Jesus to His second coming, the whole thing is called, the last days. So if somebody asks you, do you think we're in the last days? Just say, well duh. The real question is, are we in the last days of the last days? Or the last hours of the last days.

Anyway, alright, here we go. Verse 9. *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation...”* Now, that doesn't mean the great tribulation, that Greek word simply means trouble. Okay? So He is not talking yet about the great tribulation. He's talking about how the disciples are going to be treated, how believers are going to be treated during this time.

“...they will deliver you up to... (trouble) and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise

and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, (we don't see that happening, do we? We sure do) the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Right?

So this is that, this is the time we're living in. And you'll notice that Jesus doesn't necessarily paint a super rosy picture of what life is like in this interim time between His ascension and his second coming. But He's telling us essentially that this is where we live in this place of the deterioration of society.

Morally, socially we're seeing it, we're watching it. We're witnessing it every day. Good grief. The things we see on the news, you just, you scratch your head and you think, how in the world is this even going on? But this is what we're seeing.

Now what Jesus is going to go on to talk about in verse 15 and 16 is one of the key events of the tribulation, of the tribulation. Which by the way, you know we're not in the tribulation period. Okay. But He's going to talk about one of the key events that will take place in the tribulation.

Verse 15. *“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, (referring to an Old Testament prophet) standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”* Alright, stop there because these 2 verses require some discussion and some things that we need to point out.

First of all, this term, *“the abomination of desolation...”* He, you'll notice that Jesus, when He refers to that, He speaks of the writings of Daniel and He's actually referring to what is to us the 11th chapter of Daniel. And I'll show you on the screen what He's talking about. This is from Daniel chapter 11,

Daniel 11:31 (ESV)

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

Forces from him (and that's the anti-Christ) shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

And what He's referring to there when He says “...*the abomination that makes desolate.*” He's talking about how the anti-Christ will, an image of the anti-Christ will be set up in the Jewish temple and people will be required to worship that image. Right?

And by the way He's talking, Jesus has jumped to the mid-range time of the great tribulation here. We know that from the Bible, that the tribulation period is going to last for 7 years, so this is the mid-range period of the tribulation.

Now you'll notice as we read through this passage. What, even what Jesus says that it presumes on a couple of things. It presumes that the temple is going to be there and that they're going to be sacrificing animals in the temple during this time leading up to the mid-point of the tribulation period.

Well, right now, the temple doesn't exist. It was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans, and it hasn't been rebuilt since. In fact, there's a mosque, it's not really a mosque, it's the dome of the rock that is sitting on that spot where the temple existed. So sometime between now and the tribulation period, the temple has to be rebuilt. And I believe it's going to go up very quickly.

As a matter of fact, it's my personal opinion that it actually is going to be during the first half of the tribulation period that it goes up. And that's one of the things the anti-Christ is going to allow the Jews to do during that time. And then midway through the tribulation, he's going to renege on the deal he makes with them, and set up, and that's when his own image will be set up in the temple. And he will call and end to the sacrifices that are being made at that time.

The last thing I want to point out from these two verses; 15 and 16, is who Jesus is talking to. Look at what He says in verse 16, “*then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.* Do you live in Judea? Cause I don't. I live in Ontario, Oregon.

He's talking to the Jews you guys. He's talking to Israel in this passage here, and it's very important that you see that. This is not a warning to the church or to the bride of Christ. This is a warning to Israel. Why is it a warning to Israel? Because Israel is going to go through the great tribulation. The church is not, but Israel is going to go through it. And so these warnings are given to them. And this is the first of a few warnings that tell us He's speaking directly to Israel.

Let's keep reading. Verse 17. “*Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,* ¹⁸ *and let the one who is in the field not turn back to*

take his cloak. ¹⁹ *And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!*” And He goes on to say, ²⁰ *Pray that your flight may not be in winter (or look at this) or on a Sabbath.*”

People, do you understand this is yet another reference to, to helping us understand this Word was given to Israel, not to the church because He references the Sabbath.

God created the Sabbath and commanded Israel to keep the Sabbath, which is Saturday by the way. And that was a sign between Him and Israel. Do you understand Christians that the Sabbath was never commanded for the church, ever? It's not. It's just, well, first of all, we're not under the law at all. We're not under the Mosaic law. It doesn't mean we don't recognize and respect the Mosaic law. We certainly do, but we're not under it in the same way that Israel was.

We are under grace, not under law. And Sabbath regulations don't apply to the church. That's why the apostle Paul wrote to the churches that he wrote to, such as the church in Colossae and the churches in Galatia. And he said, I'm worried about you guys because you're keeping Sabbath days. (Colossians 2:16) And then he went on to say, elsewhere, listen, one man considers one day special, another man considers every day alike. Let every man be convinced in his own mind what he wants to do or what day he wants to set aside. (Romans 14:5)

But that's the New Testament understanding of this whole issue related to the Sabbath. And it has been so blown outta proportion by certain teachers and groups, that tell you got to keep the Sabbath and, oh, it's just, it's crazy. This is a thing that the Lord is speaking to Israel about.

And then He goes on, you'll notice, in verse 21. And this is such a critical verse. I mean, this is a verse you should have highlighted in your Bible. *“For then there will be great tribulation, (and that's why we call it the great tribulation) such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, (and look at this) ...and never will be.”*

So what Jesus just did for you and me, is He characterizes the great tribulation period. And how does He characterize it? He says, it's going to be the worst suffering that the world will ever know. Right? Isn't that what it says in your Bible? *“...such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, ...and never will be.”*

Now, the reason I'm emphasizing that verse, and I'm telling you that's such a critical verse for you to know and understand, is there are also some false teachings that are making their way through the Christian church that are essentially saying that all of Matthew 24 and the prophecies that go with it, have already been fulfilled.

They were fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Rome came and sacked the city and destroyed the temple. And they say, see, so you read Matthew 24 and it's all done. It's all been fulfilled. And this is becoming more and more popular in some Christian circles.

But you see, verse 21 is something you have to grapple with if you're going to accept that belief, because Jesus said the suffering that happens during this time of tribulation is going to be greater than any other suffering that will ever be experienced by mankind on the face of the earth. Did you hear Him say that? Because I did.

Well guys, we know what the suffering was like in A.D. 70. It was terrible. It was awful. The Romans came into the city and they slaughtered people. And it was horrific, but it wasn't the worst. That distinction actually goes to World War II. More people died. More destruction took place during World War II than in A.D. 70. So already we've topped what happened on A.D. 70.

So you see to believe that all of these prophecies are fulfilled by what happened in A.D. 70 is ridiculous because of verse 21. That tells us this is still something that is coming. That is still yet future. And it's very important for us to see that so we're not drawn off course by these fine sounding arguments.

Now, Jesus is going to talk about how terrible that suffering is during the great tribulation in verse 22 by saying, “*...if those days had not been cut short, no human being would (survive or) be saved.*”

It's going to be so terrible, so awful, God is going to cut it short. It's going to be kept to a certain timeframe. He says, “*But for the sake of the elect those days (and that means people who are saved, He says) will be cut short.*” And the word, elect, is a word that describes people who are believers.

Here's the deal. You need to know and understand that people are going to come to faith in Jesus Christ during the great tribulation, by huge numbers. Most of them are going to be martyred for their faith because they will refuse to take the mark of the beast in order to buy and sell. They will just say, no, I'm not going to do that, and they will be killed. They will literally give their lives.

Now, not everybody will be. Some people are going to be saved and they're going to survive. And the Jews will also survive, and there's many elect among the Jews as well. The word, elect is a word that God uses in the Word to describe believers from His perspective.

We don't use it to describe believers from our perspective. I don't go around talking to people and telling them I'm elect. What I tell them from my perspective is, I've received Jesus Christ as my Savior. That's my perspective of getting saved. That should be your perspective too, because most of you know that there was a time in your life whether, you know the exact day or not isn't important.

But there was a point of time in your life where you bowed the knee and you said, Jesus, I need You. I need You to be my Savior. I invite You to be my Lord. I receive what You did on the cross. That's salvation from our perspective. But you see, God doesn't wait around for anything. He, in His eternal being outside of time, He knew that you were going to come to Him before the world was even created. And so as far as He's concerned, you are elect from the foundations of the earth, right? But again, that's His perspective. It's not a word we use to describe believers ourselves.

Anyway, let's move on verse 23. *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and (He says, even some of them are going to) perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand."* And of course the main false Christ there is going to be the anti-Christ during the great tribulation.

"²⁶ So, (He goes on to say) if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. (don't go out looking right) If they say, (to you) 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." Crazy little word picture there at the end.

But what Jesus is saying here is, and this again, is to the Jews who are enduring the great tribulation. He's saying, here's a warning. Don't run after anybody who says, I've got the answers or the Messiah is here. Hey, the Messiah's here. Did you hear that? He's out in the wilderness, or he is over there, or whatever?

He says, no, don't believe that because listen, when I come, everybody's going to know. Nobody's going to have to tell anybody. It's going to be as apparent as

lightning flashing from one end of the sky to the other. Everybody's going to see it. Everybody's going to know, so don't follow any inside track that somebody gives you and so forth.

And now as we go on verse 29, Jesus is going to speak a little more clearly about how and when He will return. He says, *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days (there are going to be some cataclysmic things happening in the heavens. He said) the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, (that’s going to be pretty trippy) and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”* And I believe those are demonic powers that are going to be shaken.

And then verse 30 is where Jesus answers the question, what's going to be the sign of your coming? *“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, (and we don't know what that is by the way) 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 this is exactly what the prophet Zechariah for tells in his prophecy, chapter 14. You can read that later. Verse 31. *“And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect (that's people who've gotten saved and so forth) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

And again, this word, elect does not refer to the church because you have previously been caught up to be with the Lord. Right? So this is referring to people who've gotten saved during the tribulation period.

But here's what's interesting. We've been reading this. Jesus is giving us this illustration or this picture of His coming that is based on a worldly viewpoint. In other words, what people are going to see, what the Jews are going to see, those who are waiting for their Messiah to come. They're literally being pummeled by the nations of the world, and it looks like they're about to go down bad. And they're calling out to the Lord with all their hearts to send the Messiah, the Savior, and this is what they're going to see. He talks about how this is going to happen.

John, on the other hand, sees this whole picture from heaven's perspective and it's pretty trippy. It's in Matthew, or excuse me, I'm sorry. Revelation chapter 19. Let me put it on the screen. It says,

Revelation 19:11-16 (ESV)

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, (that's crowns) and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

And He goes on to say,

Revelation 19:11-16 (ESV)

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, (these are the nations that have come against Israel) and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

He's talking about Jesus. He's seeing Jesus from heaven's perspective, returning to fight for Israel, to come against the nations that God's wrath would be poured out upon the ungodliness and so forth that has been going on for so long.

Now a little more from Jesus on the timing of His coming. Verse 32, it says, "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near." ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." What generation? The generation that sees these things beginning to take place. Okay.

What Jesus is saying here is that when these things begin to take place, they're going to consummate rapidly. It's not going to be over an extended or protracted period of time. Once it begins, it's going to go rapidly. And we know that the tribulation period really lasts for 7 years. And the difficulty of the tribulation period really just lasts 3 and a half years. So this is going to be a rapid form of unfolding of what the Lord is speaking about here, right?

That's why He says, *"this generation (is) ...not (going to) pass away until all these things take place."*³⁵ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* Alright?

Now Jesus is going to stop here and He's going to get into the real issue of how about Lord, how about giving us a date? Can we give us a date that we can put on the calendar?

People have been trying to do this for 2,000 years. Come up with a date. I know when the Lord is coming back. Listen to what Jesus says about setting a date. *"But concerning that day and hour no one knows,..."* Okay. So if some yahoo comes along and says, I know, you just go, no you don't. Yeah, and I'm not going to listen to you. He says, listen to this, *"not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father (knows)..."*

Okay. That's an interesting statement, isn't it? So let me address the elephant in the room, okay. I get this question from time to time. So if Jesus is God, how come He doesn't even know the time of His coming? I mean, it's just it's, I got to, you might as well ask all the questions. If Jesus is God, why did He ever get hungry? If Jesus is God, why did He have to sleep? If Jesus is God, how could they kill Him? He's God.

Well, first of all, it's not if Jesus was God, Jesus is God in human flesh, but that's the point. He came in human flesh. Jesus, God the Son, the Word of God, became a man. And we call that the miracle of the incarnation for a reason because it's beyond our comprehension.

To truly understand how God could empty Himself and become a man and still be God, is beyond us. And yet we know that He emptied himself. Paul tells us that in Philippians, and we know that part of that emptying Himself, was that He set aside certain prerogatives and rights that would otherwise be His as God. And so He hungered. He didn't have to hunger, but He opened himself to that. He didn't have to become thirsty. He never needed any sleep as God, but He became a man as well. And again, how He could be fully God and fully man, we don't know, but we simply know that's what happened. And He submitted to

His Father in certain areas of things that He would not know, and this was one of them. And so it's really not a big deal at all. Okay.

He also wants to communicate something else important here in verse 37 and following, *“For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”* Well I wasn't alive in the days of Noah, so Jesus, You need to explain it to me.

That's what he does next. *“³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”* And so what Jesus is telling us here is that life is going to be going on as normal, right? There's going to be the usual things happening.

And then He says in verse 40, *“Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.”* And what I need to tell you about verses 40 and 41 is that these two verses are very widely and hotly debated. And they are debated concerning what it means to be taken.

If you go with the immediate context of the passage, then it would appear that taken refers to being taken in judgment. Because the context of the passage is, as it was in the days of Noah, right? And then He went on to talk about these two men in the field, two women at the grinding mill, and so forth.

However, if you look at the meaning of this Greek word that is translated, taken, it means taken to be with someone. Right. So in that sense it could refer not to being taken in judgment, but being caught up to be with the Lord.

Well, here's the interesting thing. All these debates have gone on for years and years and years about what does taken mean? I'm like, who cares? Because the point that Jesus is trying to make is, be ready. That's the point. And we sometimes miss the point by dancing on the head of a pin. Just be ready. Be ready for his coming. Don't be caught off guard for whatever reason. Right?

He goes on in the next few verses and talks about being ready. Look what He says in verse 42. *“Therefore, stay awake, (and He is not talking about never going to bed, He's talking about being alert to the signs of the times and the fact that Jesus could return at any time. So He says, stay awake) for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have*

stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.” Guys, we learned about this from Kevin in home alone. He knew when the thieves were coming, and so he was prepared. He had a plan, right? You guys have seen home alone, right? It's a Christmas classic.

Anyway, verse 44. *“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”* Okay. Now, we're also told in the New Testament that the coming of the Lord is not going to take believers by surprise. So how do you reconcile those two statements? He's coming, we don't know when He is coming, but we're not going to be surprised. Why? Because He told us He's coming and He told us to be ready at any time. So if you're ready at any time for someone to come, you're never going to be surprised when they show up. You're going to go, yeah, I was expecting you. Right?

And that's what the heart of the Spirit. Remember the Book of Revelation ends, *The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.”* (Revelation 22:17) Even so, *“Come Lord Jesus!”* (Revelation 22:20) That's our heart. Lord, we want You to come. I'd be fine if You came at the end of the day. You could even come before the service ends. Thank you very much, Lord.

When I was a kid, I wanted Him to wait until I got my driver's license. Seriously. I really did. I wanted to learn how to drive because I just thought that was really fun, and frankly it was. It was a kick, so thank you, Lord. He answered my prayer, but here I am now in my 60 and I'm like, Lord, You can come anytime. Anytime, anytime You want. Just you. Don't let me slow You down, sort of a thing, yeah. Anyway. We're to be ready.

Anyway, Jesus ends this section with what we call the parable of the two servants. It says, ⁴⁵ *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

The thing I want to leave you with. Something that I've said many times to you guys as it relates to parables and that is be careful when you're reading a parable not to try to interpret every single aspect of the parable. Because people have gotten in trouble doing that many times parables just are giving a very simple

message. But what we've done as Christians is we've looked at a parable like this and we'll say, well, who are these two servants? And why did this one servant get cast out into a place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth and they want to... And so everybody comes up with an opinion as to why and this and that.

And I really believe that Jesus had one simple message in this parable to convey to you and me. And that is, be ready because I could come anytime. That's all. Be ready.

So my question to you is, are you ready? And really what's involved in being ready is just making sure that, first of all, and foremost, that you know, that you know, that you know, Jesus is your Savior, and that's by faith. You put your faith in what He did on the cross. And then you say, Lord, You can come at any time because I'm ready. I'm ready for You. I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid of You coming again because I know I'm going to be accepted by You, not because I've done good things or I've been a good person, but because You died on the cross for my sin and I believe it and I trust You. I trust that what You did on the cross was enough.

And Lord, I believe that when You cried out on the cross saying it is finished, that You paid the whole price of my sin and there's nothing left to pay. Amen. Boy, I tell you, if you have that kind of assurance, it's okay. Hey Lord, You can come any time. I'm ready. I'm good.

Do you know why people don't have that kind of assurance? It's not because they don't believe in what Jesus did on the cross. It's because the enemy has been accusing them of their sin because they know, they know they're sinners. They know they mess up. They know they, every day they mess up. And the enemy comes to remind them of how much they're messing up, and he gets them to actually doubt their salvation. And that's what the enemy, that's his goal, you guys, is to get you to lose faith and to doubt. Don't let him win.

Jesus died on the cross for you and said, if you accept that sacrifice, you will be saved. End of discussion. We don't go beyond that. We don't say, well, yeah, but. There's no yeah, but when it comes to salvation. You're either born again or you're not, and you are if you have accepted what Jesus did for you on the cross. And so if you haven't done that. Do it today. Let's stand together. We'll close in prayer.

We're going to have some folks up here in the front to pray for you if you need prayer after we're done.

Father God, I want to just pray right now for anybody in this room who may not be sure. I pray for them in the name of Jesus Christ and I ask, Lord God, even as I'm closing in prayer, that in the quiet of their own heart, they would say, Jesus I accept what You did for me on the cross. I receive the free gift of forgiveness because You paid the price for my sin. You took my punishment and I accept what You did for me. And I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit and make me new.

And Father, I pray for those and for the rest of us. We would walk each and every day in the power of the Holy Spirit, that we would live in a way that is pleasing to You.

Now, I know, Lord God, that we're going to mess up, but I also know that the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from sin. And so, Lord, help us to live for You. Help us to walk with You with a whole heart.

Help us, Lord Jesus, to honor You and glorify Your name and all we do and say and keep us in perfect peace until the day You come again. The Spirit and the Bride say, come Lord Jesus.

We pray all of these things in the name of our Savior, our Redeemer, our soon coming King Jesus Christ. And all God's people said, amen.

God bless you.

Have a good rest of your Sunday.