

Matthew 24

Signs of Christs Return

Matthew 24 v 1-8

24 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." 3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6 You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

Jesus wasn't interested in bricks and mortar; He responds to the disciples in a way that dismisses the things that have been built around them and which they value greatly. In the following scripture in **Mark** Jesus points out that these earthly temples are not important and in **Luke** He cries over Jerusalem because they had not recognised the signs of His return.

Mark 13 v 1-2

As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

Luke 19 v 41 -44

41 When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

In **Matthew 24** whilst He was sitting on the Mount of Olives His disciples came asking Him about the signs of the end of the age. The disciples were familiar with the Old Testament teachings and were looking for the signs that would show the return of Christ to meet with His bride, the church. The temple that they now admired was to be destroyed because the religious leaders of the day had put their trust in their traditions and refused to receive the gospel that He had preached. Jesus' public ministry had virtually come to an end and He was preparing them for the next stage of His work on earth. He was to be crucified and killed only to be raised up after 3 days. He tells them that they must guard against being misled. There was to be an increase in the events as the time approached. Of course there have always been wars, earthquakes and resistance to the Gospel but Jesus says that it will get worse as the time draws near and we see that happening today. The weapons of war have become horrific, the whole of our earth is threatened by our so-called *modern society*. The attitudes of people have changed and in the subsequent verses Jesus speaks of things that are happening in 1992 (when this was originally written) and following are some examples. Famines and earthquakes increasing. Think of Somalia, Ethiopia and India. All over the world there is an economic crisis that cannot be changed simply through political means. We are to look out for these signs; nations rising up against nations, which seems to be increasing month by month. Iraq and Syria are arming themselves to attack Israel. America sees the danger but can do little to prevent these threats and actual wars taking place.

These things are only the beginning of birth pangs. We are being warned about the need to prepare ourselves to face the days that Jesus said would take place in the years following His return to heaven, seated at the right hand of His father. We are not to be frightened by these threats but be ready. The whole of civilisation will be affected by the tribulations that shall encompass the whole earth. There will be the appearance of the anti-Christ who will bring about a temporary world peace and world government. This will be welcomed by the majority of the world population but it will be only a false sense of peace to be broken; satan has his final fling, hoping to persuade the world to worship him.

Matthew 24 v 9-14

9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Christians will find it difficult to walk the narrow way. The religious authorities are watering down the gospel and compromising the Word of God. Satan will endeavour to create a religious respectability to appear to be *righteous* and we must be on our guard. Many Christians shall fall away and no longer follow Jesus and will hate each other. There will be many false prophets with false messages that will win new converts and deceive many. There is already an increase in the occult activity in the world, in schools, in the prisons and even in hospitals. These things are already taking place, the spirit of anti-Christ is at work everywhere. Soon the second stage will emerge in the character of the man of lawlessness.

2 Thessalonians 2 v 1-17

2 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

2 Peter 3 v 1-18

3 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

The encouragement to us all is to endure until the end, be prepared, not scared! **Matthew 25** has much to teach us on how to be prepared.

Note: Dennis Marshall's notes for **Matthew 25** to **Matthew 28** are unfortunately missing.

Matthew 24 v 15-28

15 "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 Behold, I have told you in advance. 26 So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. 27 For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

This refers to the time of the great tribulation when satan has his head, not right now but in the future after the gospel has been preached to the whole world.

At present there are still several billion people on the earth who have not heard the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. There are different views about whether Christians will remain on the earth at the time of the tribulation. There is a school of thought that the church will be raptured (taken up) from the earth at this time, which would be my own opinion. We can also look at the prophetic words in **Ezekiel** and **Revelation** to broaden our understanding.

Ezekiel 39 v 17-24

17 "As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God, 'Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, "Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. 18 You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19 So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20 You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war," declares the Lord God. 21 "And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them. 22 And the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God from that day onward. 23 The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword. 24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.""

Revelation 20 v 1-10

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. 4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. 7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Matthew 24 v 29-31

29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

31 And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. Jesus now speaks of the time that He will rapture His Church. There will be signs in the sky.

Matthew 24 v 32-37

32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 34 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

The fig tree is often representative of his people, remember His expectancy of the fig tree in **Teach-In 19 Matthew 21 The Fig Tree Revelation**. The signs will be visible as we move more and more in the Holy Spirit we shall be able to see these signs.

Matthew 24 v 38-51

38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. 42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. 45 "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?"

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46 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47 Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The chapter concludes with a reminder of the days of Noah, a holy and righteous man who was saved from the flood and we also shall be saved as we hunger after righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ. He will come suddenly; *be on the alert* He says and be faithful and sensible.