

The Last Days (Part 1: The Signs of His Coming)

Matthew 24

The study of future events is the study of “the last days that we are living in today.” We as Christians rely on God who knows it all and his Scripture tells us about the major events yet to come in the history of the universe. But one thing that I do want to point out is that when studying the last days and the Second coming of Christ is that God never:

- **Shared His Word to confuse His Church on future events.**
- **Desires His Church to divide over disagreements about the millennium.**

It is sinful, and it dishonors God to divide over issues that are not essential to our faith as Christians, and not even essential to our mission and fellowship in a local church. Instead, we're going to learn from one another and respect one another in the body of Christ as we talk together about things that matter pertaining to the end of the world. *In Mark 13, Jesus teaches his disciples Signs of the Times concerning the destruction of the temple, future persecutions, and his Second Coming.*

1. What we know about JESUS CHRIST

- **Jesus Christ is God Eternal.**

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”
John 8:58

- **Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Messiah.**

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” *Philippians 2:8*

- **Jesus will Return.**

He humbled himself coming from a king to a servant, from a celestial kingdom to a crucifixion cross; He rescued us from sin and eternal death. We know he is coming back because of these signs in the last days.

There are several signs that Scripture says will come before the time of Christ's return. Last week, we talked about that when Jesus comes back we *don't know the day or hour of His return*, but I do want to acknowledge that these signs get us ready... we don't know how long we will have to wait. *If we knew when Jesus would return we would most likely be lazy in our watchfulness.*

Undoubtedly these scriptures reference the days of the apostles but our days as well. May we be encouraged as believers and followers of Jesus by what He says:

- Be Watchful: know what is God's truth!
- Do not be alarmed, but have the spirit of faith!
- Be on your guard to not give up or worry during persecution!
- Stand firm with divine help during a time of grace and evangelism!

As Jesus leaves the temple, the disciples are marveled by its magnificence. Herod the Great began rebuilding the temple in 19 B.C. using marble and gold as decorative materials. The outer court measured five hundred by three hundred yards. This temple is obsolete & will be destroyed; its leaders seek to destroy Jesus' life and will seek the disciples. Daniel 11:31 predicts the coming of the desecration of the temple in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes set up a pagan altar and sacrificed a pig in the Most Holy Place. and Jerusalem was sacked and the temple burned and destroyed in A.D. 70 by Titus, the Roman general.

"To reverence the temple means to disavow (deny) trust in Jesus and his commands. His followers should not allow themselves to become entangled in the fate of the doomed nation and its temple."

Jesus' disciples must watch because evil will materialize in proud nationalism, socialism, secularism, all false religions, and sacrilegious symbols that will threaten the elect "who are believers". (v. 5, 20, 23) How did Jesus prepare them for this event?

1. FALSE PROPHETS Working Signs and Wonders (v 5, 11, 23-28)

We have to be careful in our world today to not be lead astray and conjure up some new belief, truth, or way that contradicts the teachings of the Bible.

■ God rebukes the church because of compromise.

In A.D. 130, Bar Kochba, the leader of the Jewish rebellion against the Romans, claimed to be and was accepted as the Messiah, and the list has gone on since then. I am he. This phrase is also the name of God (Exodus 3:14: burning bush); the title chosen by Jesus.

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" **John 11:25***

These signs are given to keep Christians from being surprised by these remarkable events, that God knows them in advance and to keep them from following a false messiah.

The Church must not have...

i. **Tolerance of EVIL (idolatry and immorality)**

For the sake of financial gain, social acceptance, and personal safety, don't lose your job, reputation, or get detention at school because of this, just go with it. The church started to blend in to what was going on around them. We are just another organization, another business, and not the ultimate source of direction for life. In our circumstance today it is not popular for Christians to believe and proclaim that Jesus is the ONLY way to eternal life and that God's Word is the ONLY authority. Do not be surprised, do not fall back and give up in this war of opposition. If you are against homosexuality, abortion, pro-choice, you are considered sexist, racist, a bigot, and just dangerous.

The Church must not have...

ii. **Tolerance of ERROR, which is false teaching (v 23-28)**

"I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News ⁷ but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

⁸Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. ⁹I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed."

Galatians 1:6-9

Because of Christ's warning and the Holy Spirit giving us discernment, we would be able to test each Spirit as it says in 1 John 4:1 and see if it is of God or the work of Satan; if it is truth or a false prophet. False prophets will arise, who will exploit catastrophes for their own ends and add to the miseries of the people. We must guard against religious leaders who appeal to false hopes and want to exalt themselves and expand their influence.

2. FALSE FEARS of Wars & Earthquakes (Mark 7-8; Matthew 24:6-8)

Jesus warns us about international wars and natural disasters. This sign was for original audience and us. Earthquakes, warfare, and famines are always happening - *When one stands in the middle of history, one can easily misjudge the importance of events on God's scale. God is still sovereign. Realize wars bring death, not the kingdom of God. This is more of a warning sign.*

- Jesus warns us to **NOT BE ALARMED**

*“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” **Romans 8:22***

3. PERSECUTIONS that can Break Resolve (Mark 9-13)

This is a specific persecution that targets Christians because they are Christians. 9 Suffering and hatred come to Christ's followers because they preach the gospel faithfully. So intense that family members will turn on other family members because they passionately hate the gospel or desperate to escape persecution themselves. Lost people, countries are always doing this... When we see it for Christians, we know it's a sign. Social media, movements, etc. are breaking resolve among families, friends and employees

- Jesus warns us to **BE ON YOUR GUARD!**

Jesus is not teaching his disciples the timing of the end times, but what they will do when these events happen. The timing of the end depends entirely on God, not on any human activity, including our preaching.

- Jesus warns us to **NOT WORRY!**

Do not worry about what to say. Jesus promises divine help to preach, not necessarily divine deliverance. It is not simply a time of suffering and persecution, but a time of grace and of evangelism.

- Jesus commands us to **STAND FIRM!**

4. The Great TRIBULATION (Matthew 24:6-10, 23-28)

We are uncertain of this fulfillment. There will be a period of suffering coming to the earth that is far greater than anything that has yet been experienced. *When we read these verses in context, toward the tribulation believers...* Some refer this to the Roman siege of Jerusalem in the Jewish War A.D. 66-70; the intense persecution of the church in the 1st Century and even in our Century dealing with ISIS; former Soviet Union, in communist China, and in Muslim countries.

We must realize that...

- **When you STAND UP for God's authority, even amidst suffering, God is PRAISED and He is GLORIFIED.**
 - a. **Remember**... Who you are and what Jesus says.
 - b. **Repent**... Turn from sin and trust in Jesus. Stop compromising and

- c. **Receive...** Find your treasure in Jesus, clothe your life in Jesus, and fix your eyes on *Jesus*.

Christians have longed and prayed for the day when Jesus returns for us all, who have said, "Yes LORD" and truly believed in their heart. Are you in enduring your own tribulations to the end?