



Series: Exploring Christianity: The Foundations of Our Faith

Title: How will the world end?

Passage: Matthew 24:1-14

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Introduction:

- People have always been curious about how the world is going to end.
 - There are books and charts that try to decipher when Jesus will return.
 - But when you read through the Bible, Jesus reminds his people, instead of trying to figure out when, he calls us to think about how we need to live in light of the end.
 - He wants us to be faithful and ready for his return.
 - The title of the sermon should be, not how the world is going to end, but how Jesus wants us to live.
 - And so, let me ask you:
 - “What if Jesus were to come back today?”
 - “What if Jesus comes back, during the middle of this sermon?”
 - Are you ready to meet the Lord?
 - That’s the topic for today.
 - As we look through Matthew 24, we’ll see how we can prepare for the return of Jesus Christ.

Point 1:

- So, how can we prepare for the return of Christ?
 - Jesus begins this chapter by reminding us that we can prepare, by trusting his plan, because it’s better.



- In Matthew 24 verse 1, we're told how the disciples pointed to the temple and its buildings.
 - In Mark 13 verse 1, the disciples even comment how beautiful the buildings look.
 - **“Look Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings?”** Mark 13:1
 - Herod the Great began to build, or renovate the temple around 20BC.
 - And it was an impressive building filled with gold and marble.
 - It was even surrounded by impressive buildings.
 - And according to John chapter 2 verse 20, it took 46 years to renovate the temple.
 - The temple looked awesome.
 - It looked like it would last forever.
- But Jesus says in verse 2:
 - **“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.”** Matthew 24:2
 - For the disciples, this would've been shocking to hear.
 - The temple was necessary for worship.
 - It was an important part of Jewish history.
 - But now, Jesus says it's going to be destroyed.
 - And sadly, it was destroyed in 70AD.
 - It took 46 years to build, but only days to be destroyed.
- And for the disciples, they connected the destruction of the temple, to the end of the world.



- The destruction of the temple would mean, a loss of identity, the end of their place of worship, the end of their religion, the end of their way of life.
 - Think about how hard it was to build the temple.
 - God's people had to wonder in the wilderness, fight many battles, and then choose a king.
 - And then think about how much work the people had to put in, coming back from exile, to build the second temple.
 - And then, it took 46 years for Herod to renovate the temple.
 - That's why, when Jesus speaks about the destruction of the temple, the disciples ask:
 - **“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”** Matthew 24:3
 - When Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple, they thought Jesus was speaking about the end of the world.
- They had no idea, that Jesus had a plan for the spread of the gospel, and the building of the church.
 - That's why they went fishing after Jesus died on the cross.
 - They had no idea, how God was going to use them.
 - If only they could see all that God had planned for them.
 - It's true the temple was destroyed, but look at all the churches that were planted through their ministry.
 - Look at how Christianity has spread throughout the world.
 - In fact, after 70AD, Christianity began to spread with incredible speed.



- They lost something precious, but God was building something even greater.
- God had a better plan.
- We may not have a temple today but isn't it true that we place our hope and security in things that will pass away.
 - A job, a ministry, a relationship, our nation, our finances, our reputation, our way of life, and we could name many other modern-day temples in our lives.
 - And losing them may feel like the end of the world, because we may feel a loss of security and identity.
 - The job you worked so hard to get, that didn't work out.
 - The relationship you worked so hard to make work, that didn't go so well.
 - The ministry you worked so hard to build up, but didn't grow.
 - When things in this world don't succeed, or come to an end, Jesus reminds us it's not the end of the world.
 - Because they weren't meant to last forever.
 - In fact, we don't have to lose hope, because Jesus always has a better plan than our plans.
 - God says in Isaiah 55:
 - **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Isaiah 55:8-9
 - We're going to lose things in this world, even good things, but let's remember, it's not the end of this world.
 - Because God's plans are always better.



- “Bernard Gilpin (1517-1583) was a preacher who was taken into custody for preaching the gospel during the time when Queen Mary was persecuting Protestants. He was being taken to London to certain death, but to the amusement of the guards accompanying him he kept saying, "Everything is for the best." On the way he fell off his horse and was hurt, so they could not travel for a few days. He told the amused guards, "I have no doubt but that even this painful accident will prove to be a blessing." Finally he was able to resume his journey. As they were nearing London later than expected, they heard the church bells ringing. They asked someone why this was so. They were told, "Queen Mary is dead, and there will be no more burning of Protestants." Gilpin looked at the guards and said, "Ah, you see, it is all for the best." God used the delay caused by his painful fall to save his life.” (Fernando, The Call to Joy and Pain, 30-40)
- So, how can we prepare for the return of Christ?
 - Don't put our hope in things that can be destroyed, but trust God's plan.
 - Say to yourself, “Everything is for the best.”

Point 2:

- Second, we can prepare for Christ's coming, by fulfilling his mission because it matters.
 - Trust God's plan because it's better.
 - Fulfill God's mission because it matters.
- The disciples didn't realize the plan that Jesus had, and so they ask when the world is going to end.



- And when you read through this chapter, what you notice is how Jesus never answers their question.
- Many people use this chapter to look for clues for Christ's return.
- But that's not the purpose of this chapter.
- In fact, it can be very dangerous to read Matthew 24, and try to connect it to current events.
- Many people have tried, and failed to connect Matthew 24 to events in our world.
- Jesus even says in verse 36:
- **“But concerning that day and hour no one knows...but the Father only.”** Matthew 24:36
- It's not for us to know when Jesus is going to return.
- And it's not our job to figure that out.

- Rather, chapter 24 is all about how we need to live our lives, knowing the world is going to end.
 - And here Jesus shows us, how we can fulfill his mission.
 - And so, for the rest of the sermon, let's take a look at how we can fulfill the mission that Jesus has given to us.

Point 2A:

- First, Jesus reminds us to stand firm when truth is challenged.
 - How can we fulfill God's mission?
 - But standing firm, when truth is challenged.
 - **“See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, “I am the Christ,” and they will lead many astray.”** Matthew 24:4-5

- Jesus states that many will come in his name.



- Over the course of history, many have claimed to be Jesus Christ.
- You can just Google it, and you'll see several people who claimed to be Jesus Christ, and led people away from Christ.
- In fact, this still happens today.
- When I was in high school, I had a friend who started going to church.
 - And I was really encouraged, because she wasn't believer, and she got connected to a great church.
 - After high school, I ran into her about 6 years later, and she told me how she found a better church.
 - And when I asked about her church, she told me she was going to a place called The Kingdom Hall.
 - She got really involved with the Jehovah's Witness.
 - They teach that Jesus isn't fully God, but only a man.
 - And I realized that she was led astray.
 - And I tried to tell her, how they weren't teaching the truth about Jesus Christ, unfortunately that conversation didn't go very well.
- There are many in the world today, and there will be many in the future, who'll claim to be Christ, who'll distort the teaching of Christ, and try to lead you astray.
 - And so, Jesus commands us to stand firm.
 - **See that no one leads you astray.**
- So, how can we stand firm and not be led away?
 - What can we do?



- We need to be careful that we don't neglect God's word.
 - When we're not reading his word and studying his word, we'll begin to let the world shape our thinking, instead of his truth.
 - And we may be in danger of turning from God's will and wasting many years.

- When you study God's word, and apply his word to your life, you'll begin to grow in wisdom.
 - The Bible doesn't give you an answer for every situation in life.
 - But the more you read God's word, it'll begin to shape how you think.
 - And you'll begin to understand more and more, the will of God, and what's the right thing to do.
 - But when you're not reading God's word, instead of growing in wisdom, we'll be shaped by your feelings, or whatever you're hearing.
 - And so, for us to stand firm, we have to be devoted to God's word.

- We also need to be careful that we don't neglect prayer in our lives.
 - Prayer is dependence on God.
 - It helps us remember that we need God.
 - Prayer keeps us humble and keeps our focus on God.
 - And of course, we all say prayer matters, but if we're honest, isn't it often the first thing we neglect?
 - One more email, one more errand, one more task, then I'll pray.
 - If you don't pray, you can't live.



- Jesus says, if you don't abide in him, you can't do anything.
- We'll go astray.
- We need to be devoted to prayer.

- We also need to examine ourselves, and repent of pride.
 - One of the biggest ways that Christians can be led astray is when their blind to pride in their life.
 - When we think we're always right.
 - When we think we don't need correction.
 - When we stop listening to others.
 - When we're quick to criticize, and slow to examine ourselves.
 - Pride can blind us to the very truth we need to hear.

- Do you remember the story of Jonah?
 - He was a prophet of God, but he hated the Assyrians.
 - He thought he was better.
 - And when God showed mercy, Jonah couldn't understand how God could do this.
 - His pride blinded him to God's love.
 - His pride blinded him to his own sin, and his need for grace.

- In the same way, when we're blind to our pride, it can keep us from truth, we need to hear.

- **“See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, “I am the Christ,” and they will lead many astray.”**



- How can we keep ourselves grounded in truth?
 - Devote yourselves to God's word.
 - Devote yourselves to prayer.
 - Examine your heart for pride.

Point 2B:

- Second, we can fulfill God's mission, by not becoming afraid when the world feels unstable.
 - **“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.”** Matthew 24:6
- Here, Jesus states how there's going to be wars and rumors of wars.
 - Nations are going to fight against nations.
 - And kingdoms against kingdoms.
 - He also speaks about famines and earthquakes.
 - Wars don't surprise Jesus.
- Here, Jesus is preparing us for a world that often feels uncertain.
 - Wars and natural disasters can cause fear, and make us feel anxious about the future.
 - I'm sure many of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world are feeling this right now.
 - Their safety is uncertain.
 - Their future isn't clear.
 - And even for us, I know we live in relative comfort.
 - But honestly, at any moment, our way of life can change.
 - Economies can crash.



- Retirement funds aren't guaranteed.
- Our health can take a turn for the worse.
- Even today, you may be wondering if you're going to get laid off from work.
- And when the future is uncertain, you may wonder if everything is going to be okay.

- But here Jesus says, "Don't be alarmed."
 - Why?
 - Because nothing in this world, is outside of God's control.
 - In fact, Jesus says that these things must take place.
 - He knows the number of hairs on our head.
 - I went to a new barber, and he said, "Wow, you've got a lot of hair on your head. It's so thick."
 - I should've said, "Yes, and God knows the exact number of them."
 - I know it can be alarming when war is taking place.
 - It can be discouraging when natural disasters destroy.
 - But Jesus reassures us, we don't have to fear.
 - The world may feel unstable, but God is stable.
 - He's sovereign over every nation, and every kingdom.
 - And so, Jesus says, "Don't be alarmed."
 - "Don't be afraid."

Point 2C:

- Third, we can fulfill God's mission by enduring through seasons of suffering.
 - Listen to verses 9 to 12:
 - **"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for**



my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. Matthew 24:9-12

- Do you notice all the suffering that Jesus says his followers will face?
 - Christians will face tribulation and death.
 - They'll be hated because they follow Jesus.
 - They'll face betrayal, even from people in the church.
 - False prophets, even trusted spiritual leaders will try to lead them astray.
 - They'll see people turn away from Christ.
 - Jesus is preparing us, and reminding us that we'll face suffering in this world.
 - Suffering is a part of the Christian life.
- There seems to be a good number of people who're disillusioned with the church today.
 - And I think one reason is because we don't have a theology of suffering.
 - For many, instead of learning to suffer, we're more interested in avoiding suffering.
 - But when you read through the Bible, there's so much teaching about suffering and Christian living.
 - Here's 1 Peter 4:
 - **“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking...”** 1 Peter 4:1
 - Here's Romans 5:



- **“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance...”**
Romans 5:3
- Here’s Philippians 1:
- **“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake...”** Philippians 1:29
- And Jesus is reminding us, that suffering will come, that we’ll face pain even in the church.
- Leaders will fail, people will hurt, but those who endure with faith will find salvation in the end.
- If we want to fulfill God’s mission and not be disillusioned, we need to learn to suffer for his name.
- We need to see that pain and suffering are a part of serving the church.

- In fact, if you were to find a perfect church, where you never get hurt, you wouldn’t be able to love.
 - Jesus says in Luke 6:
 - “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.”
 - I’m pretty sure there’s no church you can go to, where you’ll never be hurt or disappointed, because the church is made up of sinful people, just like us.
 - And that’s exactly why Jesus calls us to endure.
 - Let’s not let our love grow cold.
 - But rather, let’s endure as we love and forgive, and show grace.

- Not only that, but what you see in the Bible, and throughout history is how suffering often produces growth in the church.



- Before the destruction of temple, there was actually great persecution against believers.
 - Many people tried to destroy God's people.
 - But what we see is how the persecution prepared God's people to endure for his name.
 - And that's why the gospel was able to spread throughout the world.
 - Bible teacher Ajith Fernando writes:
 - "One of the glaring omissions in modern church growth studies is the key part that suffering has played in the growth of the church. The witness of Scripture and church history is that usually before significant church growth there are some in the church, especially leaders, who suffer." (Fernando, *The Call to Joy and Pain*, 83-84)
 - If you're going through a season of suffering, God may be preparing you for a season of growth.
- And here's the great truth we find in the Bible, our greatest joy can be found, not when we avoid suffering, but when we learn to suffering for his name.
 - In fact, in the Bible, suffering and joy are tied close together.
 - **"Rejoice and be glad, when others revile you..."**
Matthew 5:11-12
 - **"Count it all joy, when you face trials of various kinds..."** James 1:2-3
 - **"Rejoice in your sufferings..."** Romans 5:41
 - We can rejoice in our sufferings, because God is using it for our good, God is teaching us to love, because God is furthering his kingdom, because God is preparing us for an eternal glory.



- Again, Ajith Ferando writes:
- “The happiest people in the world are not those who have no suffering, they are those who are not afraid of suffering.” (Fernando, The Call to Joy and Pain, 56)
- **The love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**
 - We can fulfill God’s mission by enduring through seasons of suffering.

Point 2D:

- Fourth and finally, we can fulfill God’s mission, by continuing the work of spreading the gospel
 - Listen to verse 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.”** Matthew 24:14
- There are people in the world, who haven’t heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - There are people in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces, in other countries, who haven’t heard the gospel.
 - And so, Jesus is calling us to continue the work of spreading the gospel.
- I feel like churches today have stopped encouraging people to go into fulltime ministry.
 - Well, I want to change that, and I want to start encouraging people to consider ministry.



- And for some of you, God may be calling you into fulltime ministry.
- If that is you, I encourage you to take up that call.
- Don't be afraid, because God will provide everything you need.
- It's not always easy, but it's filled with great blessing and joy.
- In fact, as you may know, our church is partnering with Trinity seminary, and so you can get an MDiv, by studying at our church.
- Others of you are preparing to go overseas, to serve in a global context.
- Don't be afraid, the Lord is with you.
- And by serving him, you're fulfilling God's mission.

- For others of you, God has called you to bless those around you, and to share the gospel with them, or to invite them to church.
 - We oftentimes forget this, but every single one of you is a missionary in North America.
 - It just happens that you live and work in your mission field.
 - And here's an easy way for you to begin sharing Christ with others.
 - Begin with prayer.
 - Pray for an open door, pray that God would soften their heart.
 - And then, listen with care, listen to their needs, listen to their story.
 - And then, find time to eat and spend time with others.
 - Seek to truly be their friend.



- Then, serve with love, and help them in any way you can.
 - And then, share your story of salvation and invite them to church.
 - That's how you can bless others and share the gospel.
 - B – Begin with prayer
 - L – Listen with care.
 - E – Eat together.
 - S – Serve with love
 - S – Share your story.
 - And by doing this, you're fulfilling God's mission.
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- Many people will try to lead you astray, but let's stand firm in the word of God.

 - I know there are wars and unrest in our world, but let's not be afraid, but trust God's plan.

 - I know that suffering will come, but let's remember that our suffering is leading us, to a glorious future.

 - And let's not forget our calling, but let's continue to share the gospel with energetic passion, remembering that Jesus will come back at any moment, to take us home.