

“The End”
January 7, 2023
Matthew 24:29-35

I. Introduction

Before we took a break to celebrate Thanksgiving and Advent, we were working through the Gospel of Matthew. We were in the middle of Jesus’ prophesy concerning the end of the age which He gave on Tuesday of Passion Week. But rather than beginning in the middle of His conversation, let’s start at the beginning of this discourse called the Olivet Discourse. **Please turn to Matthew 24:1-35.** The disciples hadn’t experienced or understood Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection or ascension and they **certainly** weren’t ready for a complete picture of the Tribulation—and, for that matter, neither are we. Jesus was just giving a rough outline of the coming end of the world.

As we have already seen, any prophesy for the future is **NOT** given with the purpose of setting dates or times in the future. Rather than causing an obsession with dates, events, and other minute details, prophesy should encourage godly living and behavior in the present. Even though it warns of difficult times ahead followed with judgment, Christians can have confidence about the future. Things aren’t going to continue the same forever. Life, as we know it, will end—but it will be in God’s timing not man’s.

By reading all these verses together, it is relatively easy to see a progression from general events preceding the Great Tribulation to more specific events during the Tribulation itself and, finally, to a conclusion that is quite specific. In the first 14 verses are some signs leading up to the Tribulation and the return of the Messiah—wars & rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, earthquakes—**verse 8** says **“These are the beginning of birth pains.”** Jesus told His disciples, including us, to **“Watch out that no one deceives you”** (**verse 4**).

In the next 14 verses (**verses 15-28**) Jesus described the abomination that causes desolation which is the Antichrist and his dictatorship during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. It is a time of great distress and as Jesus said in **verse 22**, **“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive.”** As in the first group of verses, Jesus finished this collection of verses by warning His disciples and those that follow not be

tricked by anyone claiming to be the Messiah. The return of the Messiah won't be in secret—quietly like He did at Bethlehem—but, as [verse 27](#) says, “**As lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.**”

II. Jesus' Return or Parousia

A. The timing Jesus finished this part of His teachings concerning His return in power and authority in the verses for today—[Matthew 24:29-35](#). He began by giving the timing: “**Immediately after the distress of those days.**” “**Those days**” obviously means the days of the Tribulation. As we saw back in November, during “**those days**” using the Antichrist as his instrument, Satan will kill every Christian and Jew he can lay his hands on. As we read in [Zechariah 13:8-9](#), 2 out of every 3 Jews in Palestine would be killed. These will be days of great distress. We can put together more information about the end times if we would consider other Biblical writings about the end times from both the Old and New Testaments, but that is beyond the purpose and time of our study of Matthew. I will leave it up to you to do any follow-up. The bottom line is that this tribulation time would not be a good time to be alive and when things seem to be at their worst, the Messiah will return.

B. The Heavenly Signs Jesus then said that the end of the age and His return will be accompanied with great disturbances in the heavens. The sun and, therefore, the moon will cease to give light. The stars will fall from the sky. Luke also recorded this discussion—[turn to Luke 21:25-27](#). The events will be so severe that men will faint from terror. The Greek word translated “*faint*” means *to expire or stop breathing*; i.e., people will die of fright. But that isn't all, even “**the heavenly bodies will be shaken.**”

Everything moves at God's command. In [Joshua 10:13](#) we read that God “**stopped the sun in the middle of the day and delayed it going down about a full day.**” In [2 Kings 20:11](#), God made the earth go backwards in its rotation. When Jesus hung on the cross, [Luke 23:44-45](#) records that it was dark from noon until 3 pm. As the Creator of everything, God can move or stop or dim the sun and the moon and even cause the stars to go away. Nothing is too great for Him.

As well as allowing the political and spiritual chaos on the earth, at the end, God will, to some extent, remove His hand from the heavens and there will be chaos there as well. Jesus didn't explain specifically what will happen, but those left on the earth will be shaken. Isaiah, as well as other prophets, wrote about this "Day of the Lord." **Turn to Isaiah 13:6-13.** This is not the time to be at enmity with God!

C. The Sign in the Sky Jesus said that after the heavenly signs, "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky." There is much debate as to whether this "sign" is some sort of symbol like a flaming cross or a banner that appears in the sky or if the "sign" is the Son of Man Himself. Regardless, when those on earth who have rebelled against God and His Laws see Christ coming in power, they will take notice. Some are going to continue to rebel and as **Revelation 16:9** says, they will "curse the name of God who had control over the plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify Him." Others who have heard the "gospel of the Kingdom" (**verse 14**) will turn to Him. Some of those who repent will be Jews. **Zechariah 12:10** says, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

In **Acts 1:11** the angels told the disciples, Jesus "will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." In **Revelation 1:7** John wrote, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen." Zechariah wrote about this day in **Zechariah 14:6-7**, "On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light." At the end of that period of time with darkness both physical and spiritual, the "Light of the world" (**John 8:12**)—Jesus Christ—will come. As **Revelation 21:23** says, there will be no "need for the sun or the moon to shine (on the New Jerusalem), for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." The first time Jesus came to earth He came in weakness and humility. The second time He is going to come "with power and great glory."

D. The summons of the angels Jesus added that when He returns, His angels will summon all those who belong to Him who are still on the earth. Many may be in hiding, fearful for their lives. Those gathered will

include the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, their converts, as well as all others who have trusted Jesus Christ and been saved. They will be assembled together before Christ and led into the glory of His eternal kingdom.

III. The Parable of the Fig Tree—Be Prepared

A. The Analogy After describing the end times, Jesus then used several parables to warn His disciples—both present and future—to be prepared. The first parable is the parable of the fig tree. Fig trees grew all around Palestine—in fields as well as in people’s yards. Everyone knew that when the buds became tender, and the leaves began to sprout on the branches of a fig tree that the warmth of summer was just around the corner. This was something they had all seen and understood.

B. The Application Jesus said that just like the buds were obvious signs of summer, when “*these things,*” i.e., the birth pains, the abomination of desolation, the need to flee for one’s life, the upheaval in the heavens, were all happening, the return of the Messiah was “*at the door*”—His return was imminent.

Verse 34: “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” has caused many interpreters problems. Some scholars interpret “this generation” to refer to the disciples’ generation or to some other complex or twisted interpretation. But the simplest and most reasonable interpretation is that “this generation” refers to the people living at the end time who will see and experience all these signs. In other words, Jesus was saying that just as the budding fig tree indicates that it isn’t long to summer, when the signs that He had talked about occur, the generation that sees these signs will not have long to wait for Christ’s return.

C Conclusion

Jesus concluded this part of His last discourse by saying that “heaven and earth will pass away.” Heaven and earth as we know them will cease to exist; **Revelation 21:1** says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.” But Jesus said that His words will never fail. In **Luke 16:17** He put it this way, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.” It is not possible for God’s Word to be broken and this includes all He has said about the end time.

IV. Application

As we begin another year, it is easy to assume that it will be just like the last—life goes on as it has before—just as it has from the beginning of time. Whether we say it or not, we would echo what Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 1:9, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” But just as Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection were each one-time-things, the end of the world is going to be another one-time-thing. We shouldn’t be surprised when we see and hear of the Bible’s prophecies coming true. Without a doubt, we know that Jesus is coming again; He said it many times. There is going to be an end to all this. We can be sure that some day every person who has ever lived is going to stand before Him and give an account for what they have done with and for Jesus. So, what about you and your life? What are your priorities? Turn to Matthew 6:19-21. Where are your treasures? Are you so busy with earthly things, that you don’t have time for God’s things? Are you concerned about those who don’t know who Jesus is or about God’s gift of eternal life?

When it comes time to leave this earth, all these earthly things will be left behind as totally insignificant. In the end, they will burn like wood, hay, and stubble. Only the things that have been done for God will last. God sends each one of us opportunities to be about His work. We have the choice of doing them or not. Because of the different abilities and talents God has given us, we won’t all have the same opportunities. As we begin a New Year, I would challenge you to deliberately seek to know God better by studying His Word and spending time in prayer. Then using your talents and abilities, bring glory and praise to God as you help others and as you carry out the Great Commission of “Go and make disciples of all nations” The time of Jesus’ return is drawing near and the unsaved need to repent before it is too late. Where are your treasures? What are your priorities? ***Remember: Only what you are doing for God will count in the End.***

Communion - January 2024
1 Corinthians 11:23-31

God's will for every person is that they make Him their personal Lord and Savior. But God's will doesn't stop there—Ephesians 2:10 says that “we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Using the gifts and talents He has given you; you are to bring Him honor and glory by going into the world and making more disciples by telling others what God has done for you and by sharing His love and mercy. God isn't going to ask you to do the impossible—if you have a voice like a frog, He isn't going to ask you to become a soloist. But He will ask you to do some hard or difficult things using your particular abilities, just like He asked Jesus to freely lay down His life for you.

This morning, as the elements are being passed, as you look forward to a new year, take time to inventory your life. Search for hindrances—things—whether good or bad—that are keeping you from being and doing all you can for the One who gave His all for you—and then with God's help, get rid of them. As we were reminded last week, allow the Holy Spirit to change you from the inside out. Then and only then, when you stand before God, you will hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Welcome home.”

This communion table and these elements are to remind us of God's love for each one of us and what He did for us so that we don't have to fear death and the eternity that follows. Think about God's love—Jesus' love—as He took the bread, broke it, and said, “This is my body given for you.” He didn't have to do it, but He did. When He took the cup and said, “This is a new covenant in my blood.” He knew He was shedding His blood for love of you. If you have accepted God's gift and have made Jesus your Lord and Savior, then whether or not you are a member of TBC, we invite you to join us in this celebration of love and victory.

As the elements are being passed, thank God for His gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Then ask yourself a couple of questions: How are you going to respond to Jesus' love and sacrifice for you? How are you going to show your appreciation, your love?