

# The Son of Man Coming

Matthew 24:1-51

Key verse 24:30b

**“....And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.”**

Today we will continue the second series on the Second Coming of Jesus. Matthew 24 is really one of the most significant records of our Lord's teachings about the end times and the future course of human history. At the same time it is a complicated and disputed chapter in the New Testament. One of the reasons this passage is so difficult to interpret is because it deals with specific signs that precede the Lord's coming, along with the suddenness of his coming. Jesus speaks in one sense as though his return is imminent, and at the same time he speaks as though it is far off in the distant future. That is the great difficulty to interpreting this passage. This is why some Bible scholars have different views on the end times. What I would like to do is instead of focusing on different views on the end times, I thought on concentrating on a few specific things based on Jesus' discourse with the disciples. Whenever we study any topic, the context cannot be overlooked. Matthew 24 is called the "The Olivet Discourse."

In the previous passage Matthew 23, Jesus had just finished condemning the religious establishment in Israel because they rejected him as the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus had pronounced their impending judgment. As he walked out of the temple, the disciples might have wondered, how could God condemn the temple which was God's dwelling place. Besides, the temple was made of pure marble and gold. In response, Jesus prophesied that the temple that impressed them would be utterly destroyed, **“not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down”** (2). The destruction of the temple seemed like the most improbable thing that Jesus had ever told them. So the disciples asked two questions: **(1) “Tell us when will this happen, and (2) what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”** Based on these questions, Jesus gave them a prophetic overview of the signs of his coming and of the end of the age. These signs are NOT given to speculate the time of Jesus' coming. Rather these signs were given to prepare the disciples and the church which was soon to be born so that, in the midst of extremely difficult and perplexing times, they could stand firm and be assured that God is in control.

## **1. The Beginning of Birth Pains (1-14)**

Look at verses 4-8. Jesus warns his disciples that one of the signs of the end is the rise of false Christs, who will plague and deceive many. When bad things happen in our world, we are prone to be alarmed. People ask questions like, “Why does God allow wars and horrible things to happen?” And they say things like God is great but not all Powerful or God is not good because he does nothing about it. In such vulnerable times, false Messiahs appear and deceive many. Here Jesus warns his disciples, **“All these are the beginning of birth pains.”** The **“beginning of birth pains,”** implies that the intensity of pain will increase. But it will not be forever. Soon birth pains will be forgotten when the baby is born. In like manner, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes and false Christs will come. In fact, it will be in greater frequency and with greater intensity between now and the Lord’s return. Jesus warns us not to let these birth pains be an obstacle to our faith; instead to live with the end perspective that the birth pains will not be forever. It will soon be over.

Look at verses 9-13. Jesus knew that in just two days, he would be handed over to the Romans to be crucified, and his disciples would face similar sufferings. Jesus knew this pattern would play itself out again and again in the life of his followers. Jesus wanted them to be prepared for this! Evidently, the birth pains began almost immediately after Jesus’ death and resurrection. The disciples were persecuted and hated, and some of them were put to death. Here the most disappointing thing that will happen is, **“because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”** In Christian life and ministry, we try to love people as much as we know how. But often our love is not appreciated. We feel used and betrayed. The worst thing is when the love of the people we love gets cold, our love for them can also grow cold. Sometimes because of the increase of birth pains we feel Jesus will come soon. But Jesus warns us ahead of time that these things must happen. Jesus said, **“but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved”** (13).

In verse 14 Jesus said **“....and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end comes.”** Jesus said the gospel would be preached to all nations before what? **“.....Before the end of the age.”** This is a strong indicator that the gospel will be preached to all nations before the end will come. Here, Jesus’ word that the gospel will be preached to all nations does not mean until all nations become Christians. Rather, it is the promise that the gospel will be preached not necessarily believed. Preaching the gospel in the whole world does not mean it will depend on us. Jesus

is going to do it. When we collaborate with God, he uses us to preach the gospel. So that by the preaching, many may come to know who Jesus is and be saved. 24 years ago, when I was in New Delhi if one of our missionaries had NOT shared the gospel with me I would not know who Jesus is, and wouldn't be here preaching this message.

Once D.L. Moody heard someone preaching, **“it remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to him.”** Moody said to himself: “Well, I will be that man.” After his conversion, he made the resolution that he would never let twenty-four hours pass without speaking to at least one person about his soul. One night Moody came home very late. It suddenly occurred to him that he had not spoken to a single person that day. As he walked up the street he saw a man standing under a lamppost. He said to the man, “Are you a Christian? The man replied, “it’s none of your business whether I am a Christian or not.” In return, Moody said, “No! it is my business.” A few months later, the man came to D.L. Moody’s house and said, “Mr. Moody, I have not had a good night’s sleep since that night you spoke to me under the lamppost.” And he asked him what he should do to be saved. On that day the man accepted Christ. Soon the Civil war broke out, he went to the war and died. But the good news is he accepted Christ. A few weeks ago I attended a funeral service of an older lady. One thing that struck me was the testimony of her daughter. She said that when her mother was alive she approached people freely to ask them about Jesus. Wherever she was, at the bus stop or at the grocery store, whenever she had the opportunity she asked people, “Do you believe in Jesus? Do you go to church?” The daughter confessed that many times she felt so embarrassed being with her mother but she realized sharing the gospel is the most important thing that she should be doing as well. People must believe in Jesus to be saved because they don’t know when they will die. May God raise men and women who give themselves up wholly to Him.

## **11. Great Tribulations and the Coming of the Son of Man (15-31)**

Look at verses 15-21. Now we come to the most obscure verses. Some Christians, argue that these verses must be interpreted in light of Daniel 9:27, which refers to the 7 years of tribulations which will take place after the rapture. But there is a good reason to think that Jesus is speaking about the events of AD 70. From the parallel passage in Luke 21:20, Luke writes, **“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.”** Roman military action associated with the destruction of the city and the desolation of the temple are clearly linked with AD 70. When the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, the Romans soldiers overturned the stones of the building

in search of gold that was melted into the cracks between the stones of the temple. As Jesus had predicted not one stone was left on another. Jesus' words were fulfilled exactly. It is frightening to notice its exactness.

Here the point Jesus evokes about the destruction and desolation of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, is just a foreshadowing of another destruction and desolation to come, which will be far more horrific and will be nothing in comparison with the past. The terrible nature of that time is underscored by Jesus' comment in verse 21 that **“there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”** In fact, the time would be so terrible that unless God shortened that time, no one could survive. As bad as human evil may get, God is still in control over history and he will keep his people alive and capable of carrying on his plan for salvation.

Look at verses 22-28. When Jesus returns, his return will be visible by everyone. We won't need anyone to tell us about it. We won't need anyone to show us where he is. It will be as obvious as lightning in the sky. It will be as obvious as vultures circling a carcass. Christ's coming here is depicted as a single, visible coming. Jesus tells us that when he comes back it will be a universal event and no one will miss it. This is why Jesus warns us not to be deceived by those who claim to be Christ and those who set dates of his coming.

Look at verses 29-31. The language of, **“the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken,”** is the language of the end of the world. Imagine! When you hear the sound of an earthquake and feel the movement of your house, you know how it feels. Your hair rises! But that's nothing compared to the sun darkened, and the stars falling. When Jesus first came, he came as a humble and lowly carpenter's son. He was a friend to the poor and the needy. He was despised and rejected and scuffed at and finally he was tortured and crucified. But when Jesus the Son of Man returns, he will return with power and great glory. Even the heavenly bodies will be shaken. It will be a great and victorious day for those who persevered the birth pains and stood firm in faith. At the same time it will also be a day of mourning and anguish. Why is that? It is because the Son of Man's Coming will be a day of final separation between those who put their faith in God and those who did not. It will not be about how you feel. God will do the sorting. Jesus says the separation will be universal from one end of the heavens to the other and it will be final. And this judgment will be permanent and irrevocable. The final destiny of each person will be determined either in heaven or in hell. Some people may like to think that at the end they may have one more chance to put

things right with God. I am sorry. The Bible doesn't tell us that. This is why Jesus warns us ahead of time. You and I still have an opportunity to be prepared. We can make a decision to repent now, put things right with God and do what he wants us to do, or be oblivious about the warning and live in tension and finally mourn with no end.

### **111. The Nearness and Time of Jesus Coming (32-41)**

Look at verses 32-35. What does it mean, **“its twigs get tender and its leaves come out”**? It means that summer is near. In the same way when we see terrible things happening in our world and around us, instead of being overwhelmed, we Christians should have a deep sense of the nearness of Jesus coming. It should encourage us to persevere. Verse 35 is a powerful truth, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”** I love this word. Jesus' words are astonishing! Ever since he came and left, many of his words are fulfilled and are still relevant. Only Jesus can speak like this because he is the author of the future and his words are the word of God. This exactness of Jesus' words should give us confidence that His words will never pass away. All His words will be fulfilled just as he said they would.

Look at verses 36-41. Jesus compares the day of his return to the days of Noah. It is not that people didn't know the warning. People knew the warning, because Noah was building a huge ark. The people of our day - you and I, have heard God's warning. If you haven't heard yet, now you are hearing this message. So you and I have no excuse. When Jesus returns, you cannot say “excuse me, I didn't know about that, no one told me about it.” It is not that we have not heard the warning. One of the problems is that like the people of Noah's time, people go back to their business, and are oblivious to the signs and warnings. If we are more observant to the world around us even nature is telling us every day something about God.

### **1V. Exhortations to Watch and Be Prepared (42-51)**

Look at verses 42-44. In these verses Jesus uses an illustration of the unexpected nature of his coming. If you knew when a thief was coming to your house you would call the police and set up an appointment. But we don't do that, because we don't know when the thief is coming. Usually thieves come at an hour when we do not expect them. This is why every time when we leave the house, we make sure the doors and the windows are locked. Almost every night when we turn off the light and are about to go to sleep, my wife asks me, “Did you double

lock the door?” My body says not to check the door but I do it because I want to be safe. Then we can sleep peacefully. Jesus tells us “...**you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him**” (44). It means we need to “stay awake!” Staying awake doesn’t mean that we should not sleep, or stop working. How can we be ready for the coming of Jesus?

Look at verses 45-51. In these verses Jesus tells us to be like the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time. To give food at the proper time could be in many different forms. For parents it may be to take good care of our children, for professional workers to be honest, excellent workers, for ministers to be good stewards in whatever capacity the Lord has given us. Jesus said, “**it will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns**” (46). For those who are faithful and wise servants doing what their masters want them to do, they have no fear. They are not afraid of the master’s return. In fact, it is good news! They are looking forward to his return, the sooner the better. The apostle Paul is one good example. In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul said, “**Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.**” However for the unfaithful and wicked servant, the day the master returns will be a dreadful day. The fate of this wicked servant is a warning to all of us. So, what does it mean to keep watch and be ready? I believe it means to have discernment of what is going on in our world and around us and to see what God is doing. To be ready means to take good care of whatever God has entrusted us to do.

In conclusion, I want to ask you a question. If Jesus came today, would you be ready? I know many of us here are fully devoted to God, so I praise God for you. But some may say, I accepted Jesus but I am not sure if I am ready or some may say I don’t know who Jesus is, how can I be ready? I want to tell you don’t come to Christ because you’re afraid of hell. But I want to challenge you. If you want to become the person God wants you to be and you want to be ready to see the Lord Jesus face to face at his second coming, you need to respond to God. Jesus said in Jn 5:24 “**Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.**” Believing means trust and commitment, acknowledging our sinfulness, trusting Christ’s forgiveness and letting Him control our life and do what He wants us to do. Eternal life is a gift for us to receive. Everybody is invited by the God of the universe to respond. If we are ready there should not be fear but joy. We would be looking forward to the day of the Son of

Man's coming. Even if we are in the midst of difficult and perplexing times, we will stand firm and be assured that God is in control. One thing we can take away from this message is if we do what Jesus wants us to do, like the faithful and wise servants, we will be ready when he comes again.