

Soon: The Gospel and the Last Days

Part 1: The King is Coming

(preached 6/27/21)

Please turn to *Matthew 24:1*

JULIUS CAESAR. We embark on this new sermon series, leap frogging over the previous one, and we start off with a history lesson focusing on Julius Caesar.

PARALLELS. ROMAN REFERENCES. *While Caesar was not a righteous man*, there are certain parallels between him and Christ that I would like to highlight for the purposes of today's message. The writers of the NT often used cultural references that were common during their time to communicate to their audience, so Greco-Roman references and examples appear in the Bible more often than we think.

PATER FAMILIAS. For example, a few years back I preached a sermon about our adoption as sons & daughters of God the Apostle Paul refers to and purposefully used when he sent his letter to the ROMANS, chapter 8. He used their own concept of "Pater Familias" to show them how God our Father has brought us into His family with all the same rights and authority as a blood son.

GOSPEL. The word "Gospel" also has a Roman connection and today we link it up to the Last Days before the return of Christ and our specific role in walking in those days.

Matthew 24:1-14 (ESV)

¹ Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.

² But he answered them, "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."

³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

⁴ And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

⁶ 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.

⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

⁹ "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.

¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

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.

Verses 1-2: the Temple being destroyed means the Lord is bringing in a new and better covenant, one based on His grace where we will become the living temples filled with God the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3: the disciples want to know what they need to look for to know that the Second Coming of Jesus is close, so they can be ready and take part in everything.

Verses 4-5: the Gospel is not just the good news of something, but the truth. Hearing the message of the NC will guide people to receiving Christ as their Savior and the Lord is the only way to the Father and His Kingdom. False prophets bring a different message—if the Gospel is news, the FP's bring fake news with the purpose of deceiving people and leading them astray, specifically to a person and path of Salvation other than Jesus.

Verses 6-8 show the last days being full of wars and natural disasters which are a reflection of the war going on in the spirit between God and the Devil, fighting with each other for the souls of mankind.

Verses 9-12: the world hates the Church because we are not of it. We know the truth and are speaking it and the world responds just as it always has: attempting to suppress and silence the truth. A lesser version of this is happening right now with the current administration and Big Tech doing what they can to silence the voice of opposition in our country.

FP'S. Plenty of false prophets already exist within the government, MSM, celebrities, and more who teach the same deceptive Satanic narratives about what's moral and true.

Verse 13: at the “end” those who endure will be Saved because that's when Jesus appears.

Verse 14 is the qualifier: **the end comes when the Kingdom Gospel is shared in all nations!**

CAESAR, CREATIVE LIBERTY. Let's talk about the rise of Julius Caesar and don't worry: you'll see the connection between it all. I will be taking some creative liberties and making Biblical references, but the historical facts of Caesar's journey are accurate.

PRIEST THEN ARMY. Caesar came from an influential pedigree and started out as a priest. Yet when a rival Roman family killed his dad they also took everything and stripped Caesar down to nothing at the age of 16—lands, titles, money, etc. So he ran off to join the army.

TRIUMVERATE. His accomplishments caused him to rise through the ranks to become one of the most effective generals Rome ever had. After a series of both militaristic and political moves, Caesar formed a triumvirate with a rich politician named Crassus and another General named Pompey and the 3 ruled Rome together.

POMPEY ORDERS SUBMISSION. Caesar gains more fame and admiration by securing the country of Gaul—modern day France—for the Roman Empire and even took the invasion into Britain. In the meantime Crassus is killed on one of his own campaigns and Pompey immediately goes to the capital and makes his move for complete power by calling Caesar a traitor and demanding he return to Rome—alone—to submit himself to Pompey’s claim.

RUBICON. A river called the Rubicon was a makeshift boundary for the capital and if, upon returning, Caesar crosses the river with his army its considered an act of rebellion and war against Rome. If he comes alone as Pompey has commanded, it’s a sign of surrender. Caesar wants the throne for himself so he takes his army over the river...therefore the famous saying of “Crossing the Rubicon” means a person has made a fateful risky decision and there’s no going back.

BATTLE: CAESAR WINS. Long story short, Caesar’s army meets with Pompey’s on the field of battle, Caesar wins, and is declared the single dictator of Rome.

HIS FIRST SELF WAS POOR AND SIMPLE AND IT WAS AS THOUGH HE WAS RESURRECTED INTO A POSITION OF GLORY AND POWER.

He was both a priest and a king, declaring himself to be the equivalent of the royal high priest of Rome—Pontifex Maximus.

Upon his victory one of the first things Caesar would do—and did—would be to send messengers out to the Roman provinces to share the good news.

WORD CAESAR USED TODAY. The word “Caesar” would go from a name to that of title of authority and rulership used by Roman Emperors and even those from other countries which is where we get the labels of Kaiser or Tzar which are used to this day.

MESSENGERS OF GOOD NEWS. The messengers were loyal to Caesar and considered his takeover to be good news. They fully believed his administration would benefit both the individual and the empire as a whole bringing peace, prosperity, justice, freedom, and security. They were glad to see the overthrow of the former ruler who was oppressive and evil and were *enthusiastic* to tell everyone!

URGENCY. They rode forth with a sense of urgency because here was part of their Gospel message: *the capital city of Rome had been taken over and Caesar and his army was coming to the rest of the Roman provinces.*

These messengers would arrive into the Roman towns and cities and they might have said something like this:

“Caesar is victorious over Pompey and he has put his enemies under his feet! He has been crowned as the King of all kings and Lord of all lords! He’s coming soon and when he arrives, all your knees will bow in submission to him and all your tongues will confess that he is Lord!”

QUESTION: WHEN? I can only imagine that, as people heard this, they had questions like “when is he and his army coming?!” One small problem: Caesar didn’t share his detailed arrival plans with his messengers but merely instructed them to relay that it would be “soon” and that he would be arriving “quickly.” However...no one knew the day or hour.

WILLING TO FORGIVE. The messenger would also tell the people what kind of person Caesar was and what he would do once he arrived. They might say something like: ***“In his kindness and mercy, Caesar is willing to forgive any past crimes or debts you have with Rome if you pledge your loyalty to him. He will free you from prison, restore your lands and possessions, and make you a citizen in good standing in his Kingdom. He has come to save Rome and not condemn it.***

“If you reject him, however, you will be condemned. Your crimes and debts will remain on you and when Caesar arrives, He will deal with you directly and crush any resistance. Receive Caesar now and be saved, before he comes.”

SOZO. The word for “saved” in Scripture is sozo which translates to “healing, recovery, deliverance, freedom, and to make whole.”

WHO RECEIVES AND DOESN’T? Imagine, if you will, the hearers of this news and let me ask you an important question: **which listeners would receive this as good news and which ones would receive it as hostile?**

- The ones who rejoice at this news are the ones who've committed many crimes, have lots of debt, are enslaved to things they wish they weren't, and feel like they're in prison.
- The ones who see Caesar's rule and soon arrival as good are the ones who have lost hope, feel greatly burdened, and are like sheep without a shepherd.
- They've been let down by the world, attacked by the devil, and are tired of being led around by their own flesh...they're ready for change.
- They believe Caesar is the guy who can bring it, so they repent of the old and cry out "hail, Caesar!"
- They greatly desire for him to come quickly and bring his reward with him.

BECOME MESSENGERS THEMSELVES. They're so regenerated by the experience they become messengers of the good news themselves, going to the people they know and telling them "repent! The Kingdom of Caesar is at hand and he's on his way!" Some are willing to abandon their former lives completely and dedicate the rest of their time to this mission.

LEARN ABOUT HIM. Others do everything they can to learn about Caesar:

- What kind of man is he? Those who know him proclaim him to be fair and just.
- What kinds of things has he accomplished?

FROM HOMELESS TO EMPEROR. Even with having a royal lineage that dated back to ancient times, the world stripped everything from him. Despite this he was a priest and eventually became the high priest of Rome. He was military man at the same time and rose the rank of general. Then he ascended to the throne and became the emperor.

POLITICAL PROMISES. What kinds of things has Caesar promised he would do once in office?

- He's said that he will take down certain Roman Senators everyone knew were both ingrained and corrupt.
- He promises to unite the empire and end constant civil infighting.
- He's said he will take care of military veterans for life.
- He reforms Roman tax law and cuts spending. National debt was decreased by 25%.
- He limited rich politicians from using tax money on luxuries.
- He rewarded families for having children.
- Created the Julian calendar based on the sun instead of the moon, which resulted in greater harvest and prosperity among farmers.

DISCIPLE OTHERS. The ones who find out the most about Caesar's character, former acts, and future promises then teach others and make them disciples, immersing them in everything Caesar.

THOSE HOSTILE. Who are those who don't take Caesar's rule and coming as good news? Instead, they receive this "gospel" with fear, anger, ridicule, and hostility sometimes to the point of murderous violence. ***Why are they reacting this way?***

STAY IN DARKNESS. They prefer to stay in the darkness of the former ruler Pompey then they would to walk into the light of Caesar.

- Perhaps some feel their debts to Rome were only a little and don't believe they're enslaved to their worldly passions...if anything, they like to indulge them and prefer to stay there. They see Caesar's rule as threatening that.
- Maybe Pompey gave others important positions in the empire where they prospered and were the head instead of the tail, and they remain loyal to him. Caesar's promised reforms will upend the rich lifestyles to which they've become accustomed, and they won't have it.
- Others are too busy just living life: going to work, being married, having families, paying bills, and trying to make ends meet. They wave off Caesar's coming as not important to them and figure he probably won't arrive in their lifetime anyway.
- Yet others simply don't believe what the messengers are saying. They deny that Caesar defeated Pompey and is the new emperor and that the messengers are deluding themselves. They ridicule his coming and say it won't happen, claiming there's no proof.

WHAT HAPPENED TO POMPEY? What happened to Pompey? Even though he was deposed, he's taken refuge in Egypt. There are still some, from common people all the way up to generals, governors, and senators, who are loyal to Pompey and act accordingly.

Therefore even though he is a defeated foe, he still has some who are loyal to him and therefore has significant influence in the Roman empire.

CORRUPT GOVERNOR. A governor of a Roman province, for example, still siding with Pompey would continue to rule unjustly, pass bad laws, and oppress people even though Caesar is King. For now, people are still able to live just as though Pompey is in charge and some things won't change until Caesar physically appears.

VIOLENT REJECTION. MARTYRDOM. As I mentioned before, some of those who reject Caesar become violent to the point of murder. Many of the initial messengers—the ones who knew Caesar personally—have been martyred just for sake of bearing and spreading the good news of his dominion. Anti-Caesar authority figures such as politicians and priests alike outlaw the spreading of this news and do their best to stop it...to no avail.

WORD SPREADS, BELIEVERS GROW. The word spreads like a prairie fire as people are being set free, having debts canceled, and being redeemed out of slavery. With every messenger put down by those loyal to Pompey, it seems like many more rise up in their place.

CAESAR ARRIVES. Then the day finally comes when Caesar arrives riding on a warhorse, sword in hand, crown upon his head, and a massive army riding behind him. While those who pledged themselves were ready and saw their redemption drawing near, the unbelievers are taken by surprise...just as if a thief snuck into their house at night. When they see the army about to descend upon them, they cry out for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from Caesar's wrath.

POMPEY KILLED. The news comes back from Egypt that the assassins sent by Caesar were successful, and Caesar now has Pompey's severed head that he shows to all those who didn't believe in him.

ENEMIES FALL, NATIONS JUDGED. All enemies fall before Caesar and his army, then all the nations in the empire are judged: the ones loyal to him enter into his kingdom and those who were not are cast out.

END OF PARABLE.

At the cross and resurrection, Jesus defeated the former ruler of this world: Lucifer.

Romans 16:20 (ESV)

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

John 12:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

1 John 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ ... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

KOK, LOL. ***Jesus is now the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords Who sits upon the throne above all the other thrones. He rules absolutely!***

Philippians 2:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Ephesians 1:19-23 (ESV)

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Hebrews 1:3-4 (ESV)

³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

1 Timothy 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

CANCEL DEBTS. *Before His return He's offered to cancel all debts, free us from slavery, and deliver us from the prison the devil has put us in:*

1 Timothy 1:12-16 (ESV)

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,

¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,

¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Ephesians 1:3-10 (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

FRUSTRATING EVIL. It's frustrating that Satan and his minions still have positions of authority in this country and all over this planet. They do all they can to stop the spreading of the truth.

Jesus was victorious and that He's coming back at the head of a mighty unstoppable army!

Jude 1:14-15 (ESV)

14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,

15 to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Revelation 19:11-16 (ESV)

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on

white horses.

15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

After he returns, His Kingdom will spread to every nation and will last forever!!!

Psalm 145:13 (ESV)

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. [The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.]

Psalm 45:6 (ESV)

⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;

KING NEB. Even Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who ruled over the most powerful empire in the world at that time, was humbled and said this about God and His Kingdom:

Daniel 4:3 (ESV)

³ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

DANIEL. Here is one of the greatest things Daniel himself ever saw, when he was shown the end:

Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Jesus is coming and we are His messengers who have a part to play in "the end" which won't come until the Good News of His coming is heard by everyone God wants it to be heard by.