

Matthew 24:1-14

“The King’s Return Foretold”

Pastor Bruce Zachary

Intro. The New Testament repeatedly encourages Christ’s followers to be ready for His return. About 2,000 years have passed and still no return. Is the 2nd Coming real? When will God put an end to evil? Is God slacking on the job?

Subject: Signs of Christ’s return [The Olivet Discourse]

Object: Be encourage and prepared for Christ’s return

A. Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple [1-3]

24 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” ³ Now 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?”

Jesus departed from the temple [1] crosses the Kidron Valley and ascends the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem [3]. Jesus and His disciples look across the valley and see the glorious temple. The disciples marveled at the temple with beautiful white marble and gold overlay, and large stones weighing several tons chiseled so well that there was no mortar between them. Jesus predicts that not one stone will be left upon another that will not be thrown down [2]. The temple was so grand, and the prediction seemed so improbable that it had to involve divine intervention. Which prompts the disciple to ask Jesus three questions [3].

When will the destruction of the temple occur? What will be the sign of Your coming?

What will be the sign of the end of the age [i.e. When will you reign on earth]?

Since the destruction of the temple occurred exactly as foretold, you can have confidence the Second Coming will also be fulfilled.

In 70A.D. a Roman Legion put down a Jewish rebellion in Jerusalem. During the battle a soldier threw a torch inside the temple causing a fire inside the temple. The interior of the temple was entirely covered with gold. The gold melted between the stones, and the Roman soldiers were ordered to recover the gold so that not one stone was left upon another, and the stones were thrown down from the temple mount (and are there today on the southern slopes).

B. The signs of the times and the end of the age [4-14]

Jesus’ answers the questions regarding His Second Coming and provides nine signs. Like road signs they reveal and warn regarding what’s up ahead. The Rapture of the Church where believers are caught-up and meet the Lord in the air [1Th. 4:13-18] is distinct from the Second Coming. The Great Tribulation directly precedes the Second Coming and is the last seven-year period of this age and is

God's judgment upon those who reject His gospel [Rev. 6-19, Mt. 24:15-31]. We believe the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation [Pre-Trib] as the Church is not appointed to the wrath of God [1Th.1:10, 5:9]. Nevertheless ...

There will be much hardship before the Second Coming. Don't be surprised or discouraged.

False Messiahs [4-5] *And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.*

⁵For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. Jesus warns us to be careful to know the truth so we won't be deceived. In difficult times, people are looking for a Savior and Jesus wants us to be aware of false messiahs. In 132A.D. Simon Bar Kokbah claimed to be Messiah and led a rebellion against Rome and 580,000 Jews died in battle. More recently: Sun Young Moon, Heaven's Gate Cult, David Koresh, and Waco are names synonymous with false messiahs and destroyed lives. **World Wars [6-7] *And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*** We should not expect peace to usher in the Messiah's return. The phrase, "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" implies wars beyond a local or regional scale. In the last century, we experienced World Wars for the first time in the planet's history [1914-18, 1939-45]. There has not been a single day of peace on the planet since WWII. There are over 500 million soldiers on the planet. Forty percent of research dollars are spent on weapons.

Famines [7] despite all of our advances in food production famine continues to be a reality on our planet. 3.11.17 U.N. Chief Humanitarian reported, 20 million people in Yemen, S. Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria face famine and starvation. **Pestilences [7]** Infectious diseases are the leading cause of death worldwide. They kill more than 17 million people per year, and cause half of all deaths in developing countries.

Note the parallel to the Four Horsemen of Rev. 6:1-11 during the Great Tribulation: the white horse is a false messiah, the red brings war, the black famine, and the pale pestilence. **Earthquakes in diverse places [7]:** they occur all the time all over the world.

All these are the beginning of sorrows [8] Birth pains precede birth but let you know the birth is coming. These occurrences signal that Messiah is coming but not immediately.

Persecution [9-10] *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.* Followers of Jesus need to be prepared for persecution by government authorities.

There were ten distinct periods of persecution during the first three centuries of the Church. Presently, Christians are persecuted in over 60 countries. Per Open Doors, each month: 322 killed, 214 churches destroyed, 772 violent acts (beatings, abduction, rape, arrest). **False prophets [11] *Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.*** The false prophets are distinct from false messiahs [5]. False prophets are known by delivering: a prediction that doesn't come true, a message that mischaracterizes God, or draws people away from God. Current false teachings such as the Word of Faith and Prosperity heresies are some examples. **Apostasy [12-13] *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*** Don't expect the world to be converted and a global revival before the Lord's return. To the contrary, there will be an increase in immorality and apathy towards God. The time before His return will be

characterized by a departure from the faith and false doctrines [1 Tim. 4] and a falling away from God [2Th 2:3]. The Greek term *sozo* translated “saved” [13] refers to God’s blessing. The sense is believers will be delivered at the Second Coming. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ [Eph. 2:8].

Witness to the world [14] *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.* The gospel (Jesus’ sacrificial death to provide atonement for our sins, and resurrection that proves that God accepted the sacrifice) shall be proclaimed in all the world to all nations (people groups). And then “the end” (Greek *telos* refers to the very end). The invention of the printing press, radio, TV, air travel, and the internet have allowed the Church to make great gains in proclaiming the gospel to the world. The International Missions Board [IMB] and Joshua project estimate 16,000+ people groups, and 3,203 unreached (361 with a population in excess of 100,0000).

C. Is God slacking in regard to Christ’s Second Coming [2Pet. 3:9]?

There are times I yearn for Jesus to return. I’m blessed with a good life, but nothing in this world satisfies. And trying to advance God’s kingdom in this fallen world is difficult. I can’t wait for goodness to once and for all triumph over evil, and for Christ to take me home. I consider the evil, immorality, and wickedness and wonder, what is taking Jesus so long to return? What may be perceived as God slacking may more accurately be seen as His patient endurance to allow as many as possible to repent, and be saved, ***The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance [2 Pet. 3:9].***

If Jesus returned 30 years ago I would not have been included among the saved who are delivered by Christ. Similarly, many of you would not have been delivered 10, 20, 30, 50 or 80 years ago. So, I give thanks for His timing, patient endurance, and my salvation. Although I yearn for Jesus to return, I know the reason He delays is to allow other people to repent and be saved. So, I’m encouraged that Jesus has a perfect redemption plan, and that it will come to pass. And every day I want to live expecting Him to return (although I don’t always consciously live that way). And to take advantage of the opportunities I (and we) have to love Him and neighbors better, and to advance His kingdom. That is God’s heart that none perish, because He has invited people to repent, receive Christ, and receive life with God. And that understanding encourages me in difficult times, and motivates me to grow in Christ to be ready for His return.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How often do you think about Christ’s Second Coming, and what comes to mind?

Q2. How does the fact that the temple was destroyed exactly as Jesus predicted encourage you in regard to His return?

Q3. How can unrest in the world cause believers to want Jesus to return now; and may even make it appear that God is slacking in delaying His return and ending evil?

Q4 How does the promise of Christ’s Second Coming encourage and motivate you?