

THE SON OF MAN WILL COME WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY

Matthew 24:23-51

Key Verse: 24:30-31

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

In this part of chapter 24, Jesus tells us what will happen at the end of the age: Jesus will come in power and great glory. Jesus will come as the King and the Judge. For those who have accepted Jesus as King, it is a glorious and victorious end. But for those who have ignored Jesus, it will be a time of great mourning. Jesus' coming in glory is our true hope. With this hope, we can live joyful and victorious lives. May the Lord plant this hope in our hearts today.

First, Jesus' coming brings mourning and everlasting glory (23-31).

In verses 23-24, Jesus again warns against false Christs and false prophets. They deliberately deceive people to obtain followers. They have spiritual powers that enable them to perform great signs and miracles. They are the agents of Satan. In early Christian days there were Simon the sorcerer and Elymas the sorcerer (Ac 8:9 ff.; 13:6 ff.). They impressed people with magic and won many followers. During the seventh century, Mohammed arose and started Islam. He denied that Jesus was the Son of God. He denied the reality of the crucifixion of Christ. He led people away from Jesus to himself. Other false prophets have spawned Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Scientology. In addition to these religious false prophets, there are also secular false prophets who point others to money or romance or the fulfillment of ambition as the way to everlasting happiness. One man claims to know how to make a lot of money in real estate. His seminars attract many like-minded people who hope to make a lot of money like he did. One woman claims to have all the answers in solving romantic relationship problems. Many people swallow her advice in the hope that they can find true love. There are many false prophets. Their deception is so powerful that all people can be fooled. Only those who truly know Jesus as the Christ will escape it.

We must see all spectacular people and fantastic works in the light of Jesus' teachings. The word of Jesus reveals the truth. Jesus told us how he will come again. Look at verse 27. “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” When Jesus comes again everyone will know it, for we will all see it with our own eyes. We will not have to be told about it by others. It will be a universal event. Jesus' Second Coming will be very different than his first coming. The first time Jesus came he was born in a manger in an animal's stable. He lived quietly in a corner of the world in an ordinary family. He was revealed to be the Messiah to one nation, Israel, and from there his message went out to all nations over time. But the Second Coming will be the great international event of history. It will be witnessed by all people on earth simultaneously. Anyone who claims the Christ comes in another way is a false prophet.

The signs that precede Jesus' Second Coming surpass anything that has ever happened. Look at verse 29. “Immediately after the distress of those days ‘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.’” One thing has always seemed sure: the sun will rise tomorrow. But when Jesus comes again the sun will be darkened. Of course, the moon cannot give light without the sun. Then the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Who can do this? Only the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth. The Second Coming of Jesus will be accompanied by signs that only God can perform. As verse 29 describes poetically, it will bring the termination of time and space and the beginning of a new age of eternity.

Look at verse 30. “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.” The first time Jesus came he was a humble shepherd. Jesus served all kinds of people with true love and healing grace. Though he was despised and rejected, he did not retaliate. Jesus took up all of our infirmities and carried all of our sorrows. Finally, Jesus died on the cross for our sins. However, when Jesus comes again he will be different. He will come with power and great glory as God's King. At his word of command, all people will come out of their graves and stand before him (Jn 5:28,29). Both great and small, through all generations, will stand before Jesus to be judged.

For unrepentant sinners it is a terrible day. They will be thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev 21:8). This is eternal punishment. All unbelieving people will suddenly realize their bitter end is near. They will realize that their time to enjoy sinful pleasure is over and that now they must give up their eternal souls in return. They will go into utter misery and darkness forever, without love, peace or hope. The mourning of peoples of all nations will fill the air. It will be a mourning unlike any other in history. There will be no comfort and there will be no hiding place.

However, for believers it will be a great and glorious day. Look at verse 31. "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." When the Son of Man comes, legions and legions of angels will come with him. It will be the most impressive and powerful army that has ever been assembled. With a loud trumpet blast, the King Jesus sends them out over all the earth and into all regions of the heavens. They go to his chosen people, to those who accepted him as their Christ and who confessed him as their King. These are his precious children who suffered under the oppression of the devil and his agents. They were persecuted and mistreated by the ungodly for the name of Jesus. However, they will be exalted to everlasting glory. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." For the children of God, Jesus' coming again is entrance into everlasting glory in heaven. They will enter into the joy of the wedding banquet and into the eternal peace of the victorious King. They will live forever with him in the endless rapture that produces praise after praise. This is our hope. This hope gives direction to our souls. This hope is the source of strength and joy. This hope enables us to live a holy life. This hope enables us to endure trials with patience. May this hope of Jesus' Second Coming fill your heart.

Second, be ready by holding on to Jesus' promise (32-44).

In verse 32 Jesus teaches us to learn a lesson from the fig tree. Jesus teaches us to see signs of the end of the age with hope. Now it is fall here in Chicago. We see the leaves changing color and falling to the ground and know that winter is near. So we prepare by making sure our home heating systems are working and that our winter coats are clean and ready to wear. In the same way, when we see the signs of the end of the age, we must recognize that Jesus' coming is near and prepare. Still, it is such an incredible event; it is beyond the scope of any human experience. How can we be sure that it will happen? Look at verses 34-35. "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Our world view must be based on Jesus' word of promise. However, in our time many have been indoctrinated into a world view rooted in godless humanism. They claim that man came from an amoeba and that his beginning was a random event and his end is without consequence. They live by their feelings, without any meaning beyond their own dreams and desires. They live at random and never think to prepare for the end of the age. But Jesus promises that he will come again in power and great glory as King and Judge. This will be the end of this age and the beginning of a glorious new age for his people. We must seal this promise in our hearts and be ready for his coming. When ungodly people indulge their flesh, we must not be deceived. They are suffering from meaninglessness and will come under God's judgment. They will mourn without remedy. On the other hand, when we live a holy life, we will be welcomed into eternal glory in heaven.

Still, no one knows that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son. Only the Father God knows that day and hour. If someone says they know when Jesus will come again they are lying. No one knows that day or hour, not even Jesus. This is God's wisdom. If we knew when it would happen, we would indulge in the flesh until just before his return, and then repent at the last moment. So he did not tell us when he would come again. God wants us to live by faith and he wants us to devote ourselves to him fully and continually.

Though we do not know when it will happen, we must live by faith in Jesus' promise. There has always been a division on earth between the people who live by faith and those who live according to their flesh. In the days of Noah, people were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage without any regard for God's warning that the flood judgment was coming. When it happened they were completely surprised and all drowned in the flood. In the same way, those in our time who ignore Jesus' word of promise and live in the flesh will be taken by complete surprise when Jesus comes again. They may be at work on what seem like another ordinary day. They may

be on their way to a sporting event. They may be going out on a date. Then suddenly it will happen. Jesus will come with his angels and gather his elect. God's children will enter into glory, while those who lived by the flesh will be left behind. Look at verses 40-41. "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left." Everyone will want to be taken at that time. No one will want to be left behind. How, then, can we be ready for Jesus' coming again?

Look at verse 42. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Here "to keep watch" means to spend time in prayer and in Bible study. This keeps us spiritually alert. One pastor prays every day, "Come Lord Jesus!" And he lives as if Jesus is coming that day. He works hard and does his best to love others and to preach the gospel. At the end of the day he prays, "Lord, thank you for giving me another day to serve you. Please come tomorrow." We must live each day as though Jesus is coming again.

Third, be a faithful and wise servant (45-51).

Jesus wanted his disciples to do even more than keep watch. He wanted them to serve his people as diligent Bible teachers and shepherds. Look at verse 45. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?" This has a spiritual meaning. It refers to giving the word of God to his servants who work for his kingdom. The faithful and wise servant shares well prepared Bible studies that kindle hope, faith and love in his fellow servants and inspire them to advance the kingdom. The faithful and wise servant is rewarded greatly when Jesus comes. The best way to prepare for Jesus' coming again is to share the good news with others.

However, not all those who have been entrusted do well. Look at verses 48-49. "But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards." This servant's problem is his poor attitude toward his master and his calculation that he can enjoy a self-indulgent life while his master is away. He probably planned to repent and be a good steward tomorrow. But tomorrow never comes. What will happen to him? Look at verses 50-51. "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In this passage we learned that the hope of Jesus' coming again is our true hope. This hope gives us power to live a holy life of joyful service to God. This hope will be realized when Jesus comes again. We must also remember that Jesus' coming again is a day of great mourning for unbelieving people. May the hope of Jesus' Second Coming be your true hope and source of strength.