

The Second Coming 2-5-06

Matthew 24:29-35 (NIV)

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. 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. 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. 32 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Remember that this sermon given to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, called the Olivet Discourse, (Matthew 24-25) began with a question from the disciples. They asked what would be the sign of His coming. (Matthew 24:3) They were referring to Jesus taking the power and authority as supreme ruler of Israel. (Jeremiah 23:5-6) The sermon last week covered Jesus' predictions of what would precede the sign. They appeared to be fulfilled in 70 A.D. but with an ultimate fulfillment in the last days.

All these predictions that Jesus gave of impending troubles were not a new teaching. It came right out of the prophets. It is referred to as the time of Jacob's trouble. (Zechariah 14:2) Israel had set those predictions aside and clung to the more promising ones. You cannot blame them. If you read Isaiah 61 that Jesus read in the Nazareth synagogue and declared to be about Him (Luke 4:18-21), it flows right into the predictions of the Messiah bringing God's vengeance and reigning over a restored nation that is honored and respected in the earth. Jesus stopped reading right in the middle of verse two where the predictions of the Second Coming begin. Let us turn in our Bibles to that passage and read those first two verses. (Isaiah 61:1-2) Now, with your finger in the Isaiah passage, look at Luke 4:18-21. Do you see where He stopped? By reading certain prophecies we get the impression the Jews had in that day. They thought the Messiah would show up and defeat all the physical enemies of Israel and set up the kingdom of God. (Isaiah 11:1-4)

Jesus' discourse to the disciples was meant to correct their interpretation. Between the first coming of the Messiah and restoration of the throne of David would come these horrific events that the prophets spoke of in other passages. (Jeremiah 30:7) Jesus put them all together in their proper order. The Messiah comes and is killed for the sins of the people as predicted by Daniel (Daniel 9:24) and the suffering servant songs of Isaiah. (Isaiah 53:6) The Temple is destroyed. (Daniel 9:26) There are increasing natural and man-made disasters. False messiahs and prophets deceive many. Followers of Jesus are hated and hunted down like criminals. The Gospel is preached in all the world, THEN the Son of Man returns like lightning, visible to all.

Commented [notes1]: 3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 5 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. Jeremiah 23:5-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 2 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Zechariah 14:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:18-21 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, Isaiah 61:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ... [1]

Commented [notes7]: 7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. Jeremiah 30:7 (KJV)

Commented [notes8]: 24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Daniel 9:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. Daniel 9:26 (NIV)

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.' After all those horrific events take place in which a great percentage of the earth's population dies (Revelation 6:8), and there are signs in the heavens. Jesus is quoting from two passages in Isaiah that refer to this time. (Isaiah 13:10, 34:4) Some say this is apocalyptic language, that this is only symbolic of spiritual powers in upheaval. I believe it is literal and spiritual. Great sunspots could easily darken the sun for a time and that would result in the moon not reflecting the light, which could coincide with the high visibility of meteor showers. If you compare this with some of the descriptions in Revelation, you can see how these predictions match with Jesus' revelation to John. (Revelation 6:12-13)

In a spiritual sense, Satan will know his time is short. The prophecies speak of him dragging a third of the angels with him in his rebellion. (Revelation 12:3-4) If the Spirit of God stops restraining them, the spiritual heavenly bodies will certainly be shaken. We have never seen such a time, so it is hard to imagine.

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. Finally, the answer to their question, "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" First, all those things will take place, then, at that time, the sign they asked about will appear in the sky. The nations will mourn because they are in rebellion against Jesus. His appearing will be their death knell, but they will refuse to surrender. (Revelation 16:10-11) They will mourn because they will realize that all the prophecies that have been preached to them are true. The day of reckoning will have come. Again, we see the hardness of the heart of man, when he can see with his own eyes and yet remain in opposition to the Giver of all good things. The irrevocable hardness of their hearts will demonstrate itself in their determined effort to defeat God, just as the religious leaders of Jesus' day were determined to kill Him. (Revelation 19:19)

They will see what John saw in the opening chapter of Revelation, ¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Revelation 1:12-17 (NIV)

To the Hebrews, clouds represent the glory of God. (Exodus 24:15-16) When Jesus ascended in the clouds, the angels said, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11 (NIV) He is coming back in the same way, but not in the same form. The disciples could stare at Him when He left, but His brilliance will keep anyone from gazing too long at His return. He is the One that Moses gazed at

Commented [notes11]: 8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. Revelation 6:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 10 The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. Isaiah 13:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 4 All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree. Isaiah 34:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. Revelation 6:12-13 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. Revelation 12:3-4 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. Revelation 16:10-11 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. Revelation 19:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, 16 and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. Exodus 24:15-16 (NIV)

causing His face to glow. (Exodus 34:29) He is the goodness of God, the visible manifestation of the invisible God. (Colossians 1:15)

He came the first time in humility, born in a stable to poor and humble parents. Paul writes that He made Himself nothing, even to the point of taking on the very nature of servant. (Philippians 2:5-7) He came as the Lamb of God to plead with man to repent and receive Him as the Way, the Truth, and Life itself. (John 14:6) He came to lay down His life for the sins of the world. But He is coming back with power and great glory. He entered Jerusalem the last time on a donkey and the foal of a donkey, but He is coming back on a war stallion with myriads of saints. (Revelation 19:11) Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword. A great trumpet will sound and a war cry will go forth. He will not be calling for repentance, He is coming to perform the rest of Isaiah 61:2, "To declare the day of vengeance of our God."

Some people ask how a God of love could judge the earth? How can we reconcile the first coming in such humility and love with the Second Coming in vengeance? Actually, if you will think about it, you cannot have one without the other. Love without justice is merely selfish indulgence. Love without justice has no basis in morality and is therefore immoral. The judge that avoids sentencing the guilty is not only harming society but ultimately further harming the guilty who will go on committing crimes. If there is morality, then there must be judgment. If there is righteousness, then unrighteousness must be dealt with. A just and righteous ruler must punish the guilty for their crimes. If God is good, then He must deal with evil, for evil is opposition to what is good. It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said, "The only thing necessary for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing." God did not arbitrarily pick certain actions and call them evil. That which is opposed to His nature, which is good, He labels as evil.

The ones who mourn the coming of the King of Righteousness are those who after numerous signs and witnesses have so irrevocably hardened their heart that they would aim their weapons at God incarnate who gives them life and breath and their very being. God will repay their brutal acts of slaughtering His innocent lambs with vengeance. (Revelations 16:5-7) The same God who held out His hand to them, who hung upon a cross for them, who sent messenger after messenger to warn them, will finally raise His hand in vengeance. A just God would do no less. Universalism, the theology that all will be saved, calls for a compromising unjust god who is willing to live with evil and its destructiveness. That is not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible hates evil and is angry with wickedness every day! (Psalm 7:11)

Before He pours out His wrath, He will call out those who are His. Just as He took Lot and his family out of Sodom before He destroyed it (Genesis 19:15-16), He will take the elect from the surface of the earth. 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. The Apostle Paul wrote of this day in 1 Corinthians 15. He said that when that last trumpet sounds, we will be changed. We will undergo a metamorphosis. We will have eternal bodies, (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) with eyes that can look upon our glorified Lord. Our vocal chords will be able to sing praise like you have never heard on this earth. He wrote of that trumpet in his first letter to

Commented [notes19]: 29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.
Exodus 34:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
Colossians 1:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.
Revelation 19:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 5 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; 6 for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." 7 And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."
Revelation 16:5-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 11 God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.
Psalms 7:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 15 With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished."
16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them.
Genesis 19:15-16 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV)

the Thessalonians. Listen to what he wrote. ¹⁶ *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.* ¹⁷ *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.* ¹⁸ *Therefore encourage each other with these words.* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV)

Those of us who have died prior to that time will be in spirit with the Lord, but our body will be decomposing here on the earth. When He comes back and that trumpet sounds, our bodies will be reconstituted in a new and different form similar to Jesus' resurrected body. (Philippians 3:20-21) He ate physical food, but He could walk through walls. (Luke 24:41-43; John 20:19) He said He had flesh and bone, but there was no mention of blood. (Luke 24:39) He could appear wherever He was needed.

Those believers who manage to survive until the coming of the Lord will also be transformed and meet Him in the clouds. We will never have to leave His manifest presence again. That is supposed to be encouraging to you. If it is not, you might be living for something else, or your revelation of Christ is lacking.

³² *"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.* ³³ *Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.* There are many different interpretations for this passage that have to do with the symbolism of the fig tree. Jesus is using a simple analogy. Maybe there is a deeper meaning, but the intended meaning is the obvious one. If you want a sign, He just gave us a bunch of them. When you see them happening, you know the time has come. A fig tree shoots out its leaves toward the end of Spring. When you see those buds and leaves you know Summer is soon to arrive. When you see the signs Jesus gave, you will know the end of the age has come.

Why do we need to know? Just as in 66 A.D. the Christians fled to safety and could carry on their witness, Jesus wants those living in that time to be prepared. He wants them to understand that the time of that chaos is limited and that He will soon come to rescue them. He wants them to be encouraged and not fearful. That is true for every day of our life, (1 Corinthians 10:13) but it will be especially applicable then.

³⁴ *I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.* This verse has been interpreted to mean that Jesus was speaking to his disciples and telling them that He would return in their lifetime. Some have said that Jesus incorrectly predicted his Second Coming in that generation. There are several problems with that interpretation. Jesus said, two verses later, that no one, including Himself, knew when that day would come, so how could He predict a certain time? (Matthew 24:36) It is incongruent. So what was He saying?

There are two possibilities. One is that the word for generation, *genea*, should have been translated people or race. In other words, the Jewish people will survive until this all comes to pass.

Commented [notes28]: 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence. Luke 24:41-43 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" John 20:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." Luke 24:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Matthew 24:36 (NIV)

I prefer another interpretation, and that is that the generation who sees the signs He has mentioned will also see Him return. If you see the natural and manmade disasters increase in frequency and intensity, the abomination of desolation, the world hatred and murder of Christians, the gospel preached in all the world, then know that that generation is the one in which Jesus will return.

³⁵ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.* Jesus wants us to be assured of this. He began the last verse by saying, "I tell you the truth..." He followed it with the assurance that what He says happens. The generation that sees those things can count on His return in that generation. It is by His word that the heavens and the earth exist. (Psalm 33:6) No wonder He can say they will endure longer than heaven and earth. His word is power. It is the sharp two-edged sword that comes from His mouth that will judge the nations. (Revelation 19:15) Isaiah wrote that God's word is eternal. (Isaiah 40:8) It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Psalm 119:105) It is God's revelation of Himself to us. It feeds our spirit, comforts us in grief, guides us through life, counseling us in difficulty, encouraging us and giving us hope. Does it mean all that to you?

If you are spiritually anemic, it is probably because you are not feeding on the word. If you are stumbling on the path of life, you need to devour more of life's guidebook. If you are bouncing around from one thing to another, unsure of where you are headed and what you are doing, you need the Rock, the Word of God. You cannot read it once a week and expect to grow. By some miracle of God you might cling to life, but you will be so weak that you will be of little worth to the kingdom of God.

There are many anorexic Christians. They eat a little word on Sunday, and then they go about their life as if they never heard it. What does it mean to you today to read of Jesus' prediction of His own Second Coming? It should make us realize that life is short. We had better be living for what lasts. Are your priorities eternal things?

When we see Him come again, we will either mourn or give a great shout of joy. Which will it be for you? We will either be transformed to live forever in His presence or face the vengeance of the LORD. His word is certain, more certain than this earth we stand upon. He is coming again. We will all be on one side or the other. I hope you will choose the love of God so that you will not have to face His just vengeance. Choose goodness over evil. Choose life!

This study about the inevitable end of all things should cause us to examine what we are living for. Is your life just about you? You need to submit to your Master, your Maker. Did you submit long ago and then go your own way? You need to resubmit. And if you find you are balancing in between, maybe you need to recommit this morning. Jesus died so that you might live in Life, in Him, today.

Commented [notes34]: 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
Psalms 33:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes35]: 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.
Revelation 19:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."
Isaiah 40:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--

3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;

4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Isaiah 11:1-4 (NIV)