

“The Signs Of The Times”

1st Timothy 1: 3 – 11; 2nd Timothy 3: 1 – 17; Matthew 7: 15 – 20; **Matthew 24: 3-14 & 36 (Sermon)**

As you know The Bible clearly tells us that God choose the Jewish people to be His people and God established the Jewish people in The Promised Land.

But when the Jewish people broke God’s commandments and started worshipping foreign gods God withdrew His protection from the nation of Israel.

Prior to 1948 the Jewish people were scattered all over the world.

But in 1948 God miraculously gathered the Jewish people back into the land He gave to them hundreds of years ago.

I recently read that there are approximately 8.5 million Jews in Israel and the Nation of Israel is surrounded by over 600 million Arabs living in over 20 Moslem nations.

The rebirth of Israel as a nation can only be described as a miracle by God.

The rebirth of Israel as a nation in 1948 caused a renewed interest in Biblical prophecy because the nation of Israel is the centerpiece of all Biblical prophecy.

In Ezekiel we read these words; ***“This is what The Sovereign Lord says; “I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel.”*** (Ezekiel 37: 21b – 22a)

In Matthew 24:2 the disciples asked Jesus two questions:

When are you coming again, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?

Jesus answered their two questions in reverse order.

The prophetic sign of Jesus’ coming is actually a series of signs.

The Sign of Spiritual Deception:

The first sign Jesus gives us in in Matthew 24:4-5.

Watch out that no one deceives you for many will come in my name claiming, ‘I am the Messiah’ and will deceive many.”

These false prophets will claim they have all the answers for a troubled world.

But Jesus says, ***“Watch out”***.

Keep your eyes opened so you are not fooled.

In the end times people will be desperate for leaders to solve the world’s problems and to deliver them.

In their desperation people will seek and follow mystics and religious leaders who claim to have superior knowledge.

As you know there are many health and wealth and prosperity gospels being preached today.

When people are desperate they will fall for anything.

In 2nd Timothy 4:3 we read, ***“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”***

The second sign is **the sign of political unrest.**

In Matthew 24:6 – 7 we read; ***“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom”.***

We understand ***“nation rising against nation”*** because everyday the 6:00 pm news is dominated with political unrest all over the world.

Everyday we hear of wars over geographic territories, ethnic wars, religious wars, and trade wars.

But Jesus added; ***“kingdom against kingdom.”***

This is a reference to Satan’s evil kingdom trying to destroy The Kingdom of God.

We must never forget we are all engaged in a spiritual war every day.

Satan is trying to rob you of your joy, your peace, and your hope.

The third sign is devastation.

In verses 7-8 ***“There will be famines and there will be earthquakes in various places.”***

But Jesus warns that all these are the ***“beginning of birth pains.”***

This year there have been many natural and man made disasters but Jesus said these disasters will intensify in the last days.

The fourth sign is religious persecution.

Verse 9 says, ***“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.”***

I recently read that more Christians have been martyred in the 20th century than in the past 19 centuries combined.

We hear a lot about Christians being persecuted in China, Iraq, and Iran, but notice in verse 9 Jesus said that eventually Christians will be persecuted in all nations.

In verse 10 Jesus said, *“Many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.”*

In verse 11 Jesus repeats the warning in given in verses 4-5 about false prophets deceiving Christians.

Then in verse 12 Jesus warns that the love of many Christians will grow cold because of the increase of wickedness in the world.

Please notice Jesus listed 4 responses that will take place in the church.

1. Christians will turn **away** from the faith – i.e. leave the church
2. Christians will turn **against** the faith. This group will stay in the church but they will stir up quarrels and cause divisions and strife in the church instead of focusing on our real enemy, Satan.
3. Many Christians will **twist** the faith. 1st Timothy 4:1-2 says, *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”*
4. *But fortunately many Christians* will **stand firm** in their faith and these faithful Christians will **share** their faith with non-believers.

Matthew 24:13-14 says, *“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*

The fifth sign is the fig tree. (Matthew 24:32.)

When a fig tree sprouts new leaves in the spring it is only a short time until summer.

Jesus also uses the analogy of a woman giving birth to Jesus’s 2nd Coming.

Likewise when the final labor pains begin Jesus’ 2nd Coming is very near.

The 6th sign is The Day of Noah:

In Genesis 6:5 we read, *“The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.”*

Then in Matthew 24:37-39 we read: *“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”*

It is interesting that in Matthew 24 Jesus did not emphasize the wickedness of man, but rather Jesus emphasized people’s preoccupation with physical activities and the pleasures of eating and drinking and marriage.

In the last days spiritual activities will take a backseat to physical activities.

Noah preached to the people in his day (2nd Peter 2:5) and warned the people but they did not listen and they perished in the flood.

And in our lesson from Matthew 24 Jesus is warning all of us and Jesus is emphasizing the need for us to be prepared.

We are to remain faithful, we are to watch, we are to be good stewards, and we are to expect Jesus' return.

Jesus teaches these virtues in the parables that are contained in Matthew 24:42 - 25:30.

We find the 7th sign in Matthew 24:30-31.

The sign of the Son of Man in Heaven.

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. 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. 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 2 Peter 3:3-4 we read, ***“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”***

And then in 2nd Peter 3:8-9 we read these words. ***“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, , but everyone to come to repentance.”***

Please note that ***“He (Jesus) is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish.”***

This is a clear command for all Christians to get serious about sharing the Good news of Jesus with all the unsaved people God has put in our life.

The Apostle Paul also described what it would be like just before Jesus comes again.

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people” (2nd Timothy 3:1-5).

Our lesson from Matthew 24 began with the disciples pointing out the magnificent buildings of The Temple. (Matthew 24:1)

But Jesus reminded them that physical things are only temporary but spiritual matters are eternal.

Therefore our focus should be on spiritual matters not physical things because spiritual things are eternal.

Jesus gave the disciples and us the signs of the times leading up to His 2nd coming.

But Jesus made it crystal clear that no one knows the day or the hour.

Only God The Father knows the day and the hour. So we should not waist our time trying to figure out when Jesus will return.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36)

But rather Jesus told us that we should watch, we should be ready, we should remain faithful in obeying God’s commandments and following Jesus way of life, and we should get serious about sharing the Good news of Jesus with all the unsaved people God has put in our life.

The one sure thing we know is this; the date of Jesus’ second coming is one day closer today than it was yesterday.

So if you knew you were going to stand before Jesus and give an account of you life at 11:00 am tomorrow how would you spend your last 24 hours on earth.

AMEN