

March 20, 2011

Born Again Series - Discipleship

Matthew 23:37-24:8 – “Is the world really coming to an end?”

This morning we are going to be looking at one of my favorite subjects...a subject that is particularly exciting in these times...

- ...a subject that every Christian should be familiar with...ABLE to answer the question...
 - ...**“Is the world really coming to an end?”**...

Some of you may have heard the word *eschatology*...which simply means the study of the end times...

- ...the study of the final days...which includes the destruction of the earth as we know it...and the creation of a new heaven and new earth...

We know that people have been talking about and predicting the end of the world for a long...long time...

- ...in fact such predictions began shortly after the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and have been going strong ever since...

ILLUST: Christian bookstore in Casper, WY...when I was a new Christian...

- ...as people are shopping... *“There’ll be an early rising on Easter Sunday!”*...
 - ...his friend quickly declaring... *“He never does that!”*...the implication being that Jesus was coming back that Easter...

One website concerning such predictions about when the end is going to come...lists over 200 of those predictions...and yet ‘obviously’ not one of them has come to pass...

- ...which should not surprise us...as Jesus made it clear that **no one** would know...the day or hour...

Matthew 24:35–36 (NKJV) — 35 [...Jesus said...] Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 36 “But **of that day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

- ...Jesus says that the end of the world **is coming**...we simply do not know

WHEN it will happen...*Heaven and earth will pass away...**BUT...My words will by no means pass away...***

It is foolish to try and predict when Jesus is the end of the world is going to come...

- ...BUT...none the less...Jesus declared that it would in fact come...and we would be wise to be ready for it...

Before we go any further...I want to remind you of what we looked at about ‘fulfilled prophecy’...

- ...God’s words about events which were foretold...which were spoken of before they happened...before things actually coming to pass...

If you remember I mentioned...that there are over 1,000 prophecies in the bible of which 500 of them have already been fulfilled...have already...taken place...

- ...approximately 100 of speak prophetically of Jesus of which many have already taken place...
 - ...AND...the odds of just 8 prophecies being fulfilled about one Man...that man being Jesus...is 1 to the 17th power...
 - ...that’s one with 17 zeros behind it...in other words...the odds of that happening are...1 to 100,000,000,000,000 (100 quadrillion)...
 - ...NOW...that is one big number!!!

As we begin to look at the things that Jesus is saying here...about the end of the world...

- ...it is so important to recognize...that if this many prophecies...things spoken of before they happened...
 - ...have taken place...we have NO REASON...to believe that the remaining things that Jesus said will not take place...

I am convinced **with absolute certainly** that everything spoken of in the Word of God...everything that Jesus said...

- ...will indeed come to pass...AND...as I see all of the worldwide events happening around us...on a daily basis...

- ...I become more and more convinced of this reality...

PRAY...

IN OUR TEXT...Jesus in speaking to the multitudes...which included the scribes and religious leaders... along with His disciples said...

Matthew 23:37–24:8 (NKJV) — 37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! **38** See! Your house [...speaking of the temple...] is left to you **desolate** [...Jesus is prophetically speaking of the destruction of the temple...which had not as of yet taken place...]; **39** for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!**’ ”

The fascinating thing about what Jesus says here is that it took place in the last week of Jesus’ ministry on earth...

- ...just prior to Him being nailed to the cross for the sins of the world...

Jesus was quoting a Scripture from the psalms...

Psalms 118:26 (NKJV) — 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!...

AND...what makes this even more interesting...is that Jesus had **already** made what we often refer to as His **triumphal entry**...into Jerusalem...

Matthew 21:7–8 (NKJV) — 8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!**’ Hosanna in the highest!”

AND NOW...in our text...Jesus is saying them something that must have been confusing to them...

- ... you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!**’ ...
 - ...considering...people had just said this...it had already happened and yet He is talking about it as it hadn’t...

Jesus was speaking of His **second coming** which we will talk about in more detail in just a bit...

- ...AND SO...the disciples are trying to grasp the timing and detail of things...

Chapter 24

1 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.”
[...Jesus was speaking prophetically of the destruction of the temple which we know historically took place in 70 AD, under the Roman Emperor Titus...some 35 years after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead...] **3** Now as He [...Jesus...] sat on the Mount of Olives [...just east of the Jerusalem wall...], 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?” [...they ask Jesus three questions about the future...1) *when will these things be*, 2) *what will be the sign of Your coming...Your return...*3) *when will the end of the world come...*] **4** And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. [...before that time comes...] **5** For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. **6** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars [...consider what is happening right now in Libya...US, French and British forces attacking...]. See that you are not troubled; for **all these things must come to pass**, but the end is not yet. **7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be **famines, pestilences** [...diseases...], and earthquakes [...Haiti and Japan...] in various places. **8** All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Of course...it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that all of these things that Jesus said are happening all around us...

- ...and it seems that the discovering of diseases with no known cure...and wars and rumors of wars...
 - ...AND...earthquakes are increasing in frequency...which for Christians...though tragic...
 - ...should be exciting as we anticipate the words of Jesus coming to fulfillment...

Q: What is going to happen?

In studying 'eschatology'...the end times...it is easy to get so wrapped up in all of the details that you get completely confused and the enemy uses that to discourage your faith...

- ...AND SO...to prevent that from happening with you...I want to look at FOUR prophetic events that the bible speaks about...that every Christian should be familiar with...
 - 1) The Rapture...2) The Great Tribulation...3) The Second Coming of Jesus Christ...

- ...AND...4) The Final Events Prior to the End of the World...

Understanding these events...will serve as foundation for you to understand most everything you need to know about the end of the world...

- ...AND...we will be looking at these in the order in which they will take place...

FIRST...is what we know as **The Rapture**...which speaks of when Jesus will come FOR **His church**...

- ...whom we know to be the body of people...like you and me...who have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior...

The rapture is the first event...which like a bunch of dominoes all lined up...is the first one to topple...thereby...setting things in motion...

- ...AND...there is nothing more that needs to take place before the rapture comes...and so we when we learn about what the rapture is...
 - ...we find ourselves eagerly awaiting it...

TURN WITH ME TO...1 Thessalonians 4:13...

There are a couple of key Scriptures in the Bible that speak of the rapture...

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NKJV) — **13** But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep [...those Christians who have already died...], lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus [...those who were Christians when they died...]. **15** For this we say to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

AND SO here is what we can expect to happen...*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye* (**1 Cor 15:51**)...

- ...the Lord Jesus **will descend**, though will not touch upon the earth, with a shout...with the voice of an archangel...
 - ...and with the trumpet of God...and instantaneously...those Christians who have died will be **caught up**...

- ...in the original language a word is used from which we get the word *rapture*...which means...*to be caught up*...taken by force...

NOW...the bible is very clear that to 'absent from the body' is to be present with the Lord...

- ...SO...we do not have to be concerned about the details of what Paul means about *the dead in Christ shall rise first*...Paul is **not** referring to the soul...BUT rather...I believe some part of the physical body...
 - ...perhaps the DNA of the person...united to the soul at this time...

Suffice to say...the bible is clear that there is some sort of connection between the two...

- ...AND THEN...those who remain...those who are living on the earth at the time the Lord descends...
 - *...shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...*

The rapture is the first domino that falls...which begins the SECOND event which we understand to be **The Great Tribulation**...

TURN WITH ME TO...Daniel 9:24...

AND...we will look at one of the most amazing prophecies in all of Scripture...which is known at the 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel...

Dan 9:24-27

24 [...the angel Gabriel tells Daniel...] "Seventy weeks [...490 years...] are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

*25 Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of **the command**...*

Q: What command?...King Artaxerxes (king of Persia) decree found in (**Neh 2:1-8**)...445 BC...to rebuild Jerusalem...

...from the going forth of the command.....To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince [...until Jesus arrives on the scene...], There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [...or...69 weeks of years...or 483 years...]; The street shall be built again,

and the wall [...the wall of Jerusalem with Nehemiah built...], Even in troublesome times.

Q: Why did Daniel say...seven weeks and sixty two weeks?

- ...from the period of time that Artaxerxes made that decree...until Jesus rode into Jerusalem...in what we have come to know as His triumphal entry...
 - ...was...to the day...483 years...

NOW...two SIGNIFICANT events are spoken of in Daniel 9:26...both of which have taken place...

*26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be **cut off**, but not for Himself;...*

- Speaking of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ...

*...And the **people** of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [...the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD...]. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.*

Which ultimately brings us to the 70th week or the 7 years that HAVE NOT YET taken place...

- ...the time gap that exists between the destruction of the temple...and now is what is known as the period of GRACE...the period of time we are now living in...
 - ...where God...because of His great love...is showing His amazing grace by providing opportunity for people to be saved...

This period of time...the period of grace which we are now in...will end at that time when no one knows...it will end with the **rapture**...

- ...which also marks the beginning of this final week...the 70th week...the beginning of the 7 year long period...
 - ...known as **The Great Tribulation**...spoken of in Daniel 9:27...

27 Then he [...the antichrist...AKA the Beast...] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [...great time of peace...allowing the temple to be rebuilt...]; But in the middle of the week [...3 ½ years into the GT...] He [...the antichrist...] shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering [...which will be taking place in the temple...]. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation

[...the end...], *which is determined* [...God knows when that time is...], *Is poured out on the desolate.*”
NKJV

This moment is referred to as...*the abomination of desolation*...it is when literally ‘all hell’ will begin to break loose...Jesus refers to this in...

Matthew 24:15–16 (NKJV) — 15 “Therefore when you see the ‘**abomination of desolation,**’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet [...this brings tremendous credibility to these events which are to come...because Jesus spoke about them...], ...when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet...standing in the holy place [...desecrating the temple which had been rebuilt...]” (whoever reads, let him understand), **16** “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

These will be times of unspeakable horror...which we read about in (**Rev 6-18**)...speaking of **The Great Tribulation**...

TURN TO: Daniel 12:11

Daniel 12:11

*11"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the **abomination of desolation is set up**, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days [...3 ½ years...].*
NKJV

Which brings us to the FOURTH event...

- FIRST...The Rapture...SECOND...The Great Tribulation...and...
 - ...THIRD...**The Second Coming of Jesus Christ**...

The first coming of Jesus Christ...is when He was born...when Jesus became a man...

- ...the Rapture of the church...is when Jesus came FOR His church...and as we will see...

TURN WITH ME TO...Rev 19:11

- ...AND...we will conclude our text with these passages out of the Book of Revelation...

Revelation is misunderstood by many to be a book...much too difficult to understand...

- ...BUT...this is simply is not the case...this morning...will give you a good foundation for understanding it...
 - ...the key of which...is knowing how it is laid out...

Jesus revealed all that we read in Revelation to the apostle John...saying...

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV) — **19** Write the things (1) which you **have seen** [...have already taken place...], and (2) the things **which are** [...currently taking place...], and (3) the things which **will take place** after this.

LET’S LOOK AT IT TOGETHER...

We are going to just skim through these verses to show you where the Bible speaks of ...The Second Coming of Jesus Christ...

- ...AND THEN...The Final Events Prior to the End of the World...

Revelation 19:11–21:5 (NKJV) — **11** Now [...John writes of the vision...] I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He [...Jesus...] who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. **12** His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. **13** He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **14** And the armies in heaven [...speaking of us...the church...who will return to the earth with the Lord at His second coming...], clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

The easiest way to make a distinction between The Rapture and The Second Coming of Jesus Christ...

- ...is this way...at The Rapture...Jesus comes FOR His church...at the Second Coming...Jesus comes WITH His church...

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **16** And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. [...The Second Coming of Jesus Christ marks the beginning of what we know as the Millennium...the period of 1,000 years when Jesus will reign on earth.....]

Which brings us to...**The Final Events Prior to the End of the World...**

- ...Beginning with that great **Battle of Armageddon...**

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds

that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, **18** that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.” **19** And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. **20** **Then** the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone [...describing Gehenna...the eternal hell...]. **21** And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him [...Jesus...] who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Chapter 20

1 Then [...**Satan is Bound...**] I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. **2** He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years [...the millennial period...]; **3** and he [...the angel...] cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more **till** the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. **4** And [...speaking of **The Millennial Reign of Jesus...**] I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God [...Christian martyrs...those who had been put to death for their faith in Jesus...], who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. **5** But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. **7** Now when the thousand years have expired, [...**Satan Loosed for Short Time...**] Satan will be released from his prison [...one last futile attempt to destroy God’s work...] **8** and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. **9** They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them [...I love this picture...]. **10** [...**Satan’s Final Judgment...**] The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night **forever and ever**. **11** **Then** [...**Final Judgment...AKA...The Great White Throne Judgment...**] I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. **14** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **15** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Chapter 21

1 Now I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. **2** Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. **4** And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” **5** Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for **these words are true and faithful.**”

CONCLUSION...

Jesus said...

Matthew 24:6–8 (NKJV) — **6** 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. **7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. **8** All these are the beginning of sorrows.

ILLUST: Mike Doran...SLC... *“Ron, the Lord is Coming Back!”*...

- ...I think it is so important to understand...how very true this is...

Nothing more needs to take place...before that first domino falls...

- **...The Rapture...The Great Tribulation...The Second Coming of Jesus Christ...**
 - ...AND then...**The Events Prior to the End of the World...**

On Sunday mornings...I usually get a text message from my brother and fellow pastor, Tom Blumberg, CC Northwest (Bellingham)...

- *“Ron – Your legacy is this: you will always be known as a last days preacher You stood strong just before His return. You never ministered to itching ears. You were a watchman, who took the charge from God to preach His word in every season, you never compromised the truth, you fulfilled your ministry with long suffering...and it was worth every ounce of sacrifice and it was all by the grace of God. We belong to a blessed brotherhood of NW Pastors who are warriors for our King.”*

PRAY...