

The Signs of His Coming

by Chuck Smith

Jesus gave several signs that would precede his coming and the end of the age, including wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and the destruction of the temple.

Duration: 38:10

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 24:1-3, Matthew 24:44, Matthew 25:13

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by emphasizing the importance of being awake and alert in these times, as the salvation of believers is drawing nearer. The church is encouraged to hold fast to the truth of God's word and not be swayed by the changes happening in the world. The sermon then delves into Matthew 24 and 25, which discuss the future and the signs of Jesus' coming and the end of the age. The speaker highlights the need for believers to remain faithful and ready for Christ's return, as well as the importance of sharing the gospel with others. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's love and the promise of a new world.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to Isaiah chapter 35 for our scripture reading. I'll read the first, the odd-numbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation as you read the even-numbered verses, and shall we stand as we read Isaiah 35.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with the joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not.

Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with the recompense. He will come and save you. And then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.

The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as in heart and the tongue of the dumb sing. For in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.

And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.

The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon. It shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Let's pray.

Father, how we look forward to that wonderful day when we shall gather in your kingdom, and that the problems, the trials, the burdens, the weariness of this life will be over. No more wars, no more striving, but living together in love and in peace. The redeemed of the Lord in your kingdom.

Lord, we pray that this day, as we study your word, that you'll make us very conscious and aware of the new day that is about to dawn, as the day of man comes to a close. Lord, how we long for that new world, that new day that you have promised to us through the word. Bless now, we pray, the study of the word open our hearts, Lord, to the working of your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated. We're continuing our study through the Bible.

We are this week in Matthew 24 and 25. Fascinating chapters in that they deal with the future. And we're going to just try to touch on it lightly this morning, but tonight we'll be going into details of the prophecies of Jesus concerning the last days, concerning the signs of his coming and the end of this age.

And then the warnings of Jesus in regards to his coming and the importance of us being ready. So, two vital chapters that should be of tremendous interest to each of us today, because we are living in these times that are being spoken of here in Matthew 24 and coming up to 25. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 24th chapter, beginning with verse 1. Jesus went out and he departed from the temple and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.

Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of this world, or the end of the age? So basically they're asking for signs that would forewarn them of the destruction of the temple, when not one stone would be left standing upon another. And then the signs for his coming and the end of the age.

When Jesus was having the last supper with his disciples, there on Mount Zion in the upper room, he said, I'm going to go away, and where I am going, you cannot come now. Peter said, Lord, why can't we come now? And Jesus, he said, Lord, you know, I'll die for you. And Jesus said, Peter, before the rooster crows, you will have denied me three times.

And he vehemently denied the words of Jesus, saying, I will never deny you. I will die for you. Jesus then said, let not your hearts be troubled.

You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places, and I'm going to prepare a place for you, that where I am there you may be also. And where I'm going, you know,

and the way you know.

Thomas said unto him, Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way? And Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.

But he was saying, I'm going away. But if I go away, I will come again. And so their question, Lord, what will be the signs of your coming again? What will be the signs of the end of this age? And so Jesus, here in Matthew 24, began to give to them a series of signs.

Some of them relating to the destruction of the temple, and others relating to his coming and to the end of the age. He began talking about signs of the end of the age. As we noticed here in King James, it says the end of the world.

And people say, oh the end of the world is near. No, the end of the world is not near. The end of the world as we know it is near.

That is the world that is dominated by the forces of darkness. That world is, will soon be over. The world that knows so many wars and so much strife and so much heartache, that world will soon be over.

There's going to be a new world, the kingdom of God, and the glorious aspects of the coming kingdom of God. But the end to this old world, and the disciples are saying, what are going to be the signs that show us that we're just about ready to enter in to that new world? This new world, there will be no wars. There will be peace like a river.

In this new world, they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and they will study war no more. In this new world, as we read there in Isaiah 35, there will be an end to physical disabilities. The lame will leap as a deer.

The blind will see. The mute will be singing praises unto God. But Jesus gives them some signs that will precede his coming and the establishing of his kingdom.

He said there will be wars and rumors of wars, but don't be dismayed, this is not the end. Surely we have seen in our lifetime wars and rumors of wars. In fact, since the time of Christ, there have been 17 years of war to every one year of peace here on the earth.

And of course, during my lifetime, I don't know if there's been any time in which there wasn't war being waged somewhere in this world. Jesus said this is not a sign, this is just man, warring man. But there will be nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

In the Greek, this speaks of worldwide wars. And of course, in the last century, we had two such world wars. And it would appear that we are building up for a third world war, as we look at the world today.

And as we see the nations more or less aligning themselves, it would appear that we could be on the verge of another world war. But with that, famines. Of course, the drought in Africa and the thousands of people that are starving to death.

In Asia, the problem with feeding the people. And around the world, the famines, the World Hunger Organization of the UN tells us of the number of people that are dying every year from malnutrition and the lack of food and the various diseases that attack them. And they haven't the strength to fight them off.

There would be pestilences. Have you heard anything about a thing called the bird flu and the possible dangers that it is presenting? Some 88 people already dead as a result of the bird flu throughout the world. And of course, we've heard of the flesh eating viruses and AIDS and the havoc that is in the world today as a result of AIDS.

I guess India now leads the world as far as numbers of people with AIDS, but how it has been devastating throughout Africa, creating hundreds of thousands of orphans and the sociological problems that are resulting from the pestilences. Then there will be earthquakes, he said, in diverse places. And of course, this week, the number of people that were killed by earthquakes in Java and just this past month in Iran.

Again, these are the signs of his coming again, the signs of your coming, the end of the age. But they also wanted signs that would talk about the destruction of the temple. Not one stone would be left standing, he said, upon another.

An amazing kind of prediction. The temple was the temple that was built by Herod, and Herod enjoyed using huge stones. If you're there in Israel and you look at the western wall, you realize these huge stones that Herod loved to use in building.

The temple was built out of these huge stones. Jesus said not one would be left standing upon another. The prophecy was so literally fulfilled that the site of the temple is not really known because not one stone was left standing on another.

There are some archaeologists that believe that the temple stood perhaps about 300 feet north of the Dome of the Rock Mosque, where it presently stands. There is a little cupola there called the Dome of the Spirits, and also the Dome of the Tablets, and they believe that that is where the Ark of the Covenant stood in the Temple of Herod. It is directly in from the east gate, and according to the Talmud and all, the priest would stand at the gate of the temple and look out over the east gate to the priest up on the Mount of Olives that would signal when the Passover, or when the scapegoat was disappearing on Yom Kippur.

So, but we're not, we're not sure. Not one stone was left standing on another. Luke records this same discourse of Jesus with the disciples, but he records this particular portion in much greater detail than does Matthew.

So, I'd like to read to you what Jesus said according to Luke's gospel. As he was giving them the signs of his coming in the end of the age, he said, but before all these things, that is, this is the signs now of of the destruction of Jerusalem, they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, being brought before the kings and the rulers for my name's sake, and it shall turn to you as an opportunity to give a testimony. Therefore, settle in your hearts not to meditate beforehand what you're going to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to gainsay nor resist.

As you read the book of Acts, you find that this is exactly what was happening. They were in prison. They were brought before the magistrates.

You read Stephen's defense before the council. Brilliant. And it was definitely given to him by the Holy Spirit, and we see that fulfilled in Acts.

And you will be hated by all men for my name's sake, but there shall not a hair of your head perish, for in your patience possess you your souls. And when you will see Jerusalem surrounded with armies, then you

know that the desolation is near. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not, let them not take, let them not that are in the countries enter into the city. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are with child and those that are nursing in those days, for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations.

And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. So a lot of things that will be taking place. Jerusalem is going to fall.

There's going to be a great slaughter. Those that survive will be scattered throughout the world, and the nation will cease to exist for a long period of time. Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

In 1967, Jerusalem again became an Israeli city, and thus signifying that the time of the Gentiles is just about over. Jesus then returned to the prophecies concerning his coming, the end of the age. He said, there will be many false prophets who will arise and deceive many.

A false prophet has to appear like a true prophet, or he has no impact upon people. We are seeing many false prophets in the churches, even as there were false prophets in Israel, even among the leadership. So we see in the church, many false prophets.

There is a real attack against people who they call fundamentalists. And there are those who say that the greatest danger in the world today comes from fundamentalists, the Muslim fundamentalist and the Christian fundamentalist. I am a fundamentalist.

The five points of fundamentalism are, one, belief in the herency and the full authority of the Bible. I'm guilty. Number two, belief in the virgin birth and the deity of Jesus Christ.

Guilty on count two. Three, the substitutionary death of Jesus for our sins. Oh, I believe that.

Number four, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Guilty. Number five, the eminent return of Jesus Christ.

I also believe that. So five points of fundamentalism. And I confess, I believe them.

I believe that the Bible is the word of God inherent. I believe that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and that he is the Son of God. I believe that he died on the cross for my sins and that he rose again for my justification.

And he's coming again that he might establish his kingdom upon the earth. I shudder when I hear many prominent ministers say fundamentalism is a very legalistic narrow view of Christianity. I think that it is the only true view of Christianity.

There is what is known today as the emergent church and they seem to deny the basic tendents of fundamentalism. You go down and try to get their position on these and they say, you know, the church really ought to be interested in taking care of the social needs that are in the world rather than the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They tell us that the real problems of the world today are hunger and lack of education and AIDS and poverty.

And these are the issues that the church should be seeking to alleviate. The major problem with the world is sin. And it's time we recognize it.

We might feed them. We might clothe them. And we do.

We have orphanages around the world. We have medical clinics around the world. We have schools and we have food distribution centers.

And we have people that are still working over in the area where the tsunami hit. And we have people that are still down in Bay St. Louis and working there in the result of the Katrina hurricane. And we're doing that.

But we're taking them the gospel. Because if we don't take them the gospel, what value is it to build them a home and to feed their fill their stomachs if they're going to die in sin? And so the real issue for us is to take the gospel. And these are means by which we share with them the gospel.

It opens the door. Why are you here? Why would you come all the way over here? Why are you working so hard? Because Jesus died for our sins and he died for the sins of the world. He died for you and he loves you.

And we're here because of his love. And we use it as a platform to share the gospel. But we're not there just to do the good deeds.

We're there primarily to bring the truth of Jesus Christ to these people. In the signs of the end of this age, Jesus went on to say, because the iniquity in the earth shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. We need to watch that one.

You remember Jesus said concerning the church of Ephesus, you know you have a lot of good works, but you have left your first love. The love of many will wax cold. The iniquity of the earth abounding.

You can't deny that, can you? If you try to deny the fact that iniquity is abounding, you've got your head in the sand. Interesting, there is an open attack on Christianity. Here in California, the 9th District Court of Appeals ruled that it was unconstitutional for the children in school to give the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag when the words were included, one nation under God.

And they ruled that that was unconstitutional. This very same District Court of Appeals, the 9th District Court of Appeals, these very same judges ruled recently in a suit that was filed against the school system. They ruled that it was all right for the schools in the state of California to teach the children the Quran and to allow the children to say Allah Akbar.

Allah is great. And to go through and dress in Muslim attire and all. And that's perfectly constitutional and legal according to these same judges that say it's illegal for the children to say one nation under God.

An attack on Christianity from the highest places. Jesus then spoke about when you see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place. What is that? A man is going to rise to rule over the European community.

A man of tremendous power and tremendous charisma. And he's going to make a covenant with the warring factions in the Middle East. It will be short-lived.

But in this covenant, no doubt, they will allow the temple to be rebuilt. And he will come to this rebuilt temple. He will stand in the holy of holies.

And he will stop the daily sacrifices. And he will declare that he is God and demand to be worshipped as God. That's the abomination that of desolation that Daniel the prophet spoke about.

When you see that happen, Jesus said, then time to flee again from Jerusalem. And time to get out of there. And they will be fleeing over into the area of Jordan, the area of Petra.

And it's interesting that, you know, that this is prophesied in many places throughout the scripture. Then Jesus said, unless those days be shortened, no flesh would remain upon the earth. Now in these signs that Jesus is giving for his coming, notice he presupposes that Israel will be a nation dwelling in their land again.

That's a fact. We know it does exist. They are dwelling in their land as a nation since 1948.

A second presupposition is that there will be weapons of mass destruction that threaten mankind. Unless those days be shortened, no flesh would remain upon the earth. We do know that such weapons do exist.

And of course, this is one of the big major problems that the world is facing today. Iran, which is a rogue nation ruled by a rogue leader, is on its way to the development of nuclear weapons. They already have the rockets that can cover anywhere in Europe.

And of course, we're all aware that this is the current issue. And just how long before we intervene to stop them from the development of nuclear weapons is a matter that I suppose only those highest up in government know what are the plans of halting the development of nuclear weapons by Iran. We know from the scriptures that Iran and Russia will unite with other Muslim nations to destroy or to seek to destroy the nation of Israel.

How long before Iran tries to wipe Israel off the map? Again, we don't know. Back in February of this year, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from Iran said this year the Palestinians and other nations will eventually remove Israel from the region. He said, we ask the West to remove what they created 60 years ago.

If they do not listen to our recommendations, then the Palestinian nation and other nations will eventually do this for them. He said, do this before it is too late and save yourself from the fury of the regional nations. Isn't it interesting that about 3,000 years ago, a prophet by the name of Ezekiel said that in the last days when Israel has been gathered together and is dwelling in the land again, that an evil thought will come into the minds of the leaders of Russia who will join with Iran and Libya and Turkey and will join together to try to destroy the nation of Israel? And now we see these very things coming to pass before our eyes.

Jerusalem, again an Israeli city, no longer trodden under the foot of the Gentiles, but now is a Jewish city. They are dwelling in the land. Surely the signs of the times and the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishing of the new world order is to be experienced in a very short time.

Now, the signs here are for the coming of Jesus Christ. Nothing is spoken of concerning the rapture of the church, but in other places the Bible does speak of the rapture of the church before this time of great trouble such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. And it is immediately after the tribulation of those days that they'll see the Son of Man coming with clouds and great glory.

Paul said, when Christ who is our life shall appear, we will appear with him in glory, which means that we will have to be taken up to glory to appear with him when he comes in glory to establish his kingdom upon the earth. As we will be going into the 25th chapter of Matthew tonight, Jesus is warning over and over again in the light of his return to establish God's kingdom that for the church there needs to be a real alertness, that we need to be watching and we need to be ready for his coming for his church in an hour when we are not expecting him. And many parables and all that deal with the preparedness of the church for the rapture of the church prior to the second coming.

And that is why in Luke's gospel in this very same discourse Jesus said, when you see these things begin to come to pass then look up and lift up your head for your redemption is drawing nigh. And so we'll be getting into this more this evening but sufficient that it's time as Paul said, high time to awake out of our sleep for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. Father we pray that as your church we might hold fast to your truth and Lord let us not be carried away by the changes that are taking place in the church and throughout the world but Lord may we devote ourselves to the study of your word and to prayer and to waiting upon you as we Lord do our good works in your name in order to share your truth with those who without you are lost.

Help us Lord that we might be a powerful strong witness to the truth of your word in Jesus' name. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today who are not quite sure if you're ready or not to meet the Lord.

Remember when we were kids we used to you know play that game hide and go seek and we'd count off and then we'd say here I come ready or not and I think Jesus is probably saying to that here I come ready or not and how important that we are ready to meet him when he comes. We'll get that tonight as we go into the next chapter, 25th chapter. They that were ready went in.

Blessed is that man who when his Lord comes he finds him so doing and the importance of our being ready for the rapture of the church. So look forward to seeing you tonight as we continue in the study of chapters 24 and 25. But in the meantime you don't know.

The Lord could come before we gather together tonight and if you're not ready where will that leave you? Well we won't go into that now but revelation will tell you where that's going to leave you. But the great tribulation that's what Jesus talked about such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. Pray that you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things as he was talking of the great tribulation and are you ready? Will you escape? All depends ready or not.

If you are not quite sure I would encourage you as soon as we're dismissed come on down to the front. These men are here to pray with you that you might know and I want to know. I don't want to, I hope so.

I want more than that. Well I trust and I want more than that. I know that I'm ready and I trust that you know that too and if you don't you will before you leave here today.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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