

The Signs of the Times

by Russell DeLong

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being ready for the Second Coming of Christ, highlighting the signs of the times and the Church's great day.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1

Topics: "Second Coming", "End Times"

Description

Russell DeLong preaches on the Second Coming of Christ as described in St. Matthew 24, emphasizing the contrast between His first and second advents. He highlights the signs and prophecies indicating the approaching end times, urging listeners to reflect on the present-day conditions aligning with biblical descriptions. DeLong paints a vivid picture of the Church's vindication, surprise, and separation on the Day of Christ's return, underscoring the importance of being prepared for His coming and the ever-present reality of death.

Transcript

Suggested Scripture -- St. Matthew 24

Jesus was asked three questions by his disciples:

1. When shall the temple be destroyed?
2. what shall be the sign of Thy coming?
3. What shall be the sign of the end of the world?

Permit me to suggest that you read the answers which are recorded in the 24th chapter of

St. Matthew.

The Second Coming of Christ will be in marked contrast with His first advent. He came the first time as a poor man, born in a borrowed manger and buried in a borrowed tomb. His first mission was that of a Saviour. Thank God, He accomplished that glorious task and every man of Adam's race may be the recipient of His atoning grace.

The manner and mission of His second appearance will be decidedly different. He comes

not as a poor man but with "power and great glory." He comes not as a Saviour but as a Bridegroom.

When will He come? No one knows.

The best one can do is to approximate the end by reference to prophecies depicting the state of world affairs just prior to His second appearance. Present conditions seem to be dangerously parallel to those described by Jesus in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew.

St. Paul gave a detailed enumeration of signs indicating the approach of Christ for His

second appearance. Let us look at these for a moment and as I read them will you honestly ask yourself this question: Do present-day conditions square with these descriptions? If they do correspond we have a rational right to conclude that we may actually be living in the last days. Here is St. Paul's prophetic picture from the third chapter of II Timothy:

"This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come." Does this check? Yes, perilous days are upon us.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves." Check.

"Covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents." Was there ever a day when the children raised the parents as today?

"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good:

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Pleasure-mad America. Over \$1,300,000,000.00 gambled in 1945 and over \$7,000,000,000.00 spent for liquor, and nearly all athletic events broke attendance records. "Lovers of pleasures."

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." More church members than ever and yet the Church is the most ineffective in its history.

"Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." There are more than 1600 institutions of graduate level in the United States.

In a Southern community there lived an elderly gentleman, a godly Christian saint. One day my friend visited him and during their conversation the old man asked, "Did you ever stop to think that our God is one of system and order, that He has a clock and an almanac, that He does things on time? He continued, "We read that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. This figure, seven, runs on through the entire Bible."

Then he added, "We are told that 'a day is as a thousand years to God and a thousand years as a day.' "

And now the old man pressed his conclusion by saying, "I've just been thinking -- the first two thousand years brought us to a great world catastrophe -- the flood the first two days of world's history. Two thousand more years passed and another epoch -- the first coming of Christ --two more days. And now nearly two thousand years more have rolled by.

His final declaration was this, "We are living in the Saturday evening of world's history.

Christ will come and take His Bride to spend the Sabbath with Him at the Marriage Supper."

The old man may have been right. Who is to say that it is not the Saturday evening of

world's history?. It may be ten o'clock -- It may be eleven. who knows but what it may be quarter before twelve? And it could be but one minute before the great gong of God's eternal universe may start tolling 1-2-3- announcing the end -- "at midnight a cry was made, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.'" When He comes it will be:

1. The Day of Vindication of the Church.

From the days of Jesus until now it has never been popular to be a Christian. The man who stands for right will feel the pressure of evil. The world hated the disciples. It has hated His followers since. Jesus didn't promise universal acceptance of His gospel. He said, "Strait is the gate and narrow the way, and few there be that go in thereat."

The Church has been oppressed, ridiculed, hated, despised, and condemned. Millions have been persecuted, tortured, and martyred. Do you think such persecutors will go unpunished and such martyrs will go unrewarded? Not unless the universe is a madhouse and the teachings of Jesus mythical.

The great day of the Church is to come. The crowning day for the Christian is just ahead.

Jesus said, "When ye see these things come to pass -- lift up your heads for the day of your redemption draweth near."

One day a man had reached the summit of a hill, and as he walked down a dusty road he

came to a house on his left. It was an old dilapidated shack -- unpainted, shingles blown off by the winds and storms, window panes broken, the board walk leading to the entrance rotting away and the posts supporting a wooden fence were sagging. He wondered who could live in such a frightful place. As he walked farther down the road he noticed a little girl sitting under a tree rocking a doll on her lap singing and apparently very happy. He approached her and said, "Little girl, do you live in that old house?" She answered, "Yes, Mister."

"Well why are you so happy living in such a poor house?" he asked.

"Oh," she said, "please come with me."

She led him down the road until they could see between yonder hills and there on the

mountainside he saw a beautiful mansion, nicely landscaped with a man on the roof shingling. The little girl said, "Mister, do you see that house? Well that man is my Daddy and tomorrow Daddy is coming to take me and Mamma to our new home. That's why I'm happy."

And then I thought of the people of God. Every one living down here in these old tenements of clay -- some with dim eyes, deaf ears, tottering forms, rheumatism, arthritis, and all experiencing sorrow, bereavement, and death. And yet -- there is a deep joy. The world says, "You fool you. What are you shouting about -- why are you so happy -- you are having the same battles, sorrows, and troubles we have?" Well, they just don't understand. We are not happy because we are living in these tenements of clay but we are happy because just tomorrow Jesus is coming to take us to our new mansion where pain, suffering, and death shall never come. That is the all-inspiring, dynamic hope of the Church.

We shall say, "Good-by, old earth, good-by.

"Good-by sweat shops. I'm going to a country where sweat shall never adorn the brow of the redeemed.

"Good-by rent. I'm going to a country where the rent will never fall due on our new mansions.

"Good-by taxes -- I'm going to a city where taxes are unknown, for the city is governed by King Emmanuel.

"Good-by pain, rheumatism, arthritis, I'm going to a country where pain shall never wrack the bodies of the redeemed.

"Good-by sorrow and sighing, I'm going to a country where sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Good-by scalding tears wrung from broken hearts, I'm going to a country where God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

"Good-by old-age, tottering form, I'm going to a country where the old shall be young there forever, transformed in a moment of time.

"Good-by death, crepe, cemeteries, I'm going to a country where crepe shall never adorn the doorknobs of our new mansions, where no funeral processions shall ever march down the gold-paved boulevards of the New Jerusalem and where no cemeteries shall besmirch the ill-sides of glory.

"Good-by sin, I'm going to a city where God has decreed that thou shalt never come.

"Good-by Satan, thou art deceiver of the saints. I'm going to a country barred against thee forever.

"I'm going to a country where gold is so cheap they pave the streets with it and jasper is so plentiful they plaster the walls with it and pearls so large they make gates of them."

I want to be there in that great climactic moment when all the assembled hosts of heaven gather. There I shall see the multitude no man could number -- the bloodwashed. I want to be among that number. There is the colossal orchestra of 144,000 standing on the sea of glass all with golden harps.

Hovering over the throne is a cloud of cherubim and a cloud of seraphim. Gabriel comes forward with a pearl-studded baton calling all the hosts of heaven to attention and then leads in the coronation anthem:

All hail the power of Jesus' name,

Let angels prostrate fall,

Bring forth the royal diadem

And crown Him Lord of all.

2. His Coming Will Also Be a Day of Surprise.

Some who have prayed long and loud will be left. Others who have had good motives although misjudged will go.

3. His Coming Will Be a Day of Separation.

Jesus said, "Two shall be in the field, one shall be taken, the other left. Two shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken, the other left."

But His coming will not only be a Day of Vindication, a Day of Surprise and a Day of

Separation but it will be a Day when Mercy shall take wings and fly away, and the Justice of God shall be ushered in. Today is one of mercy. You can ignore the Church, refuse Christ, wade through His shed blood, disregard mother's prayers and get by -- it is a day of mercy.

Christ may delay His coming. But -- you may go to meet Him in death. Your going and His coming mean the same thing as far as preparation is concerned. Are you ready for His coming? Are you prepared for death?

If -- this very moment -- the door of this large studio should open and a white-clad being

from another world should walk up to this microphone -- all would be quiet and awesome. And if that angel should say, "I have been sent to announce to the world that at midnight tonight Jesus will return" and then should slowly with measured tread leave this studio, what would happen? Well, for a moment we would all be stunned and then methinks all over America and around the world saints of God would begin to rejoice -- old veterans would cry out, "No shroud for mine - no funeral for me -- my Lord cometh." But something else would be happening -- in thousands of homes people would drop to their knees by their radios and begin to repent and cry out for forgiveness. I would not have to give an invitation. There would be a wholesale seeking of God.

Why wait for the tragic? why not now get ready for His coming? And get ready for the

ever-present monster Death. It is a sobering thought to realize that many to whom I am now speaking will listen to me no more forever. It is probable that before "Showers of Blessing" peals out next week, some souls will be in eternity. God grant that you may take this message of warning and get right with God now. Kneel by your radio, confess your sins. It could be that God has thrown this radio service across your pathway providentially to give you another warning to get ready. Don't pass it up. Suppose it should be

your golden moment? make the most of it. Pray. Confess your sins, trust God, and be saved.

When Jesus comes to reward His servants,

Whether it be noon or night,

Faithful to Him, will He find us watching,

With our lamps all trimmed and bright?

O can we say we are ready brother,

Ready for the soul's bright home?

Say, will He find you and me still watching,

Waiting, waiting when the Lord shall come?

Are you ready? Jesus commanded, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Christ is coming. Death is sure. Prepare to meet thy God.

Blessed are those whom the Lord finds watching,

In His glory they shall share;

If He shall come at the dawn or midnight,

Will He find us watching there?

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