

# The End

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew chapter 24. It's on page 999. Matthew chapter 24.

And we're going to look at the passage which we read, as we just take as our text the words of verse 3.

Matthew 24 at verse 3. As Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, tell us when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?

Or, if you're using the authorized version, what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?

[ 1 : 1 5 ] Do you know, have you ever asked someone a question and then thought to yourself afterwards, I wish I'd never asked that question?

If you're like me, I'm sure you've said things and thought to yourself afterwards, I wish I'd never said that. But do you know, have you ever asked a question and then thought afterwards, I wish I'd never asked?

I wish I'd never asked. Because the answer you were given, well, it wasn't the answer you were ready to hear. You know, I'm sure the disciples thought that when they sat down with Jesus on the Mount of Olives that morning.

Jesus had just taught his disciples about the priority of the prayer meeting in the life of a believer. Because in the previous chapter, in chapter 23, Jesus was pleading and praying for the people of his community, and he says there at the end of chapter 23, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

But then here after this morning prayer meeting, as Jesus and the disciples, as they're sitting down together on the Mount of Olives, they would have been looking westward. They would have been looking towards the city of Jerusalem.

[ 2 : 3 7 ] And from where they were sitting, they would have been able to see Herod's palace. They would have seen Pilate's headquarters. They would have seen the temple on the Temple Mount.

They would have also been able to see all the hustle and bustle going on in the morning, people at the marketplace buying and selling their goods. There would have been others they could have seen from the Mount of Olives.

They were traveling in towards the city of Jerusalem to trade their produce at the market. There would have been farmers in the fields and women grinding at the mill. There would have been abuzz about the place because there were some families gathering together as a couple were going to be given in marriage.

Jesus and his disciples, they would have been able to see lots of things while they were sitting there on the Mount of Olives. But when the disciples asked Jesus this very probing and very personal question, they would have noticed the tone of his voice change because there was a solemnity and a seriousness to his voice.

And the thing is, they weren't ready for his answer. Are you ready for his answer? Jesus, what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?

[ 3 : 5 6 ] What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world? And Jesus answers his disciples with solemn signs and serious statements.

What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world? He gives solemn signs and serious statements. There are two headings this morning. Solemn signs, serious statements.

So first of all, solemn signs. Jesus says, we're told in verse three, they ask what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age or end of the world?

Jesus answered them, verse four, see that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name saying, I'm the Christ. They will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not alarmed for this must take place. But the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

[ 4 : 56 ] All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. You know, when referring to something that's common or characteristic of the way things are now, we often hear people saying, well, it's a sign of the times.

It's a sign of the times. So the economic crisis, fuel, poverty, food banks, people say, well, it's a sign of the times. The climate change, global warming, heat waves, forest fires, drought, floods, earthquakes.

It's a sign of the times. Pandemics, epidemics, wars, and rumors of wars. It's all a sign of the times. The LGBTQIA. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual. It's all a sign of the times that we're living in.

But you know what's solemn about all the signs of the times? So they're all mentioned in the Bible. They're all mentioned here in Holy Scripture.

[ 6 : 04 ] They're all mentioned in relation. And this is what's interesting. They're all mentioned in relation to the second coming and the end of the world.

They're all mentioned in relation to the day of judgment when we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

And you know, you might be thinking to yourself this morning, well, Murdo, man alive, you're a bit heavy this morning. You're a bit hard-hitting. I thought church was meant to be a happy place, not a heavy and hard-hitting place.

But you know, my friend, I want us to see this morning that Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about His second coming and the end of the world, it's not because He wanted to be heavy and hard-hitting.

It's because He wanted to show them, to show them that He loved them and He was looking out for them. He wanted to show them that He loved them and He was looking out for them.

[ 7 : 11 ] And we see that because the first thing Jesus says to His disciples, the first thing He says is, take heed. Take heed that no one leads you astray. Take heed no one leads you astray.

And you know, Jesus, Jesus knew that in the last days there will be many, many who will be led astray by dishonesty and by deception. Now, I want to be clear that we are already living in the last days.

We are already living in the last days. The Bible tells us and teaches us that the last days are the days after the death and resurrection of Jesus until His second coming.

So the last days are the days between the cross and His coming. The last days are the days between the cross and His coming, which means that we are already living in the last days.

And we've been living in the last days for the past 2,000 years. And in that time, many have been led astray. Led astray into thinking that Jesus isn't coming.

[ 8 : 20 ] You know, the apostle Peter, he actually heard this solemn and sobering answer from Jesus. He heard it firsthand. He was there on the Mount of Olives. But when he wrote to congregations 40 years later, after the death of Jesus, Peter, the apostle, he exhorted and encouraged these congregations to remain focused and to remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

And he says in his letter, he says, in the last days, scoffers will come. Scoffers will slander and sneer and snigger about the second coming of Jesus.

They will question and query. They'll say, where is He? Where is the sign of His coming? But Peter says, don't listen to them. Don't listen to them because with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years.

And a thousand years is one day. Therefore, he says, the Lord is not being slow to fulfill His promise about the second coming and the end of the world. No, he says, the Lord is being patient. The Lord is being patient towards you. Why? Because he is not willing. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance.

[ 9 : 41 ] In other words, my friend, the reason Jesus hasn't returned yet and the day of reckoning hasn't taken place is because He wants you to repent. He wants you to repent.

You know, this is how good and how gracious the Lord is towards us as sinners. That the reason the second coming hasn't taken place yet, the reason Jesus hasn't returned in the glory of His Father, the reason the world is still allowed to continue in sin, the reason, my unconverted friend, the reason you are not in hell today is because of the Lord's patience towards you.

The reason you are not in hell today is because of the Lord's patience towards you. The Bible says to you so clearly and so compassionately that the Lord is not willing that you perish.

He's not wanting you to die in your sin. He's not wishing that you go to hell. No, His love for you and His longing for you is that you will turn from your sin, that you'll turn to the Savior and seek salvation.

You know, can you not see how loving the Lord is? That He's long-suffering. He's long-suffering. But as I've said to you before, the Lord is long-suffering.

[ 11 : 11 ] But He's not all-suffering. The offer of redemption and the opportunity for repentance. It won't be held out forever. Because as Jesus says here, the end is coming.

I am coming soon. And that's why Jesus gives us so many of these solemn signs. He gives so many solemn signs. But as Leon Morris helpfully points out in his commentary, he says sometimes Jesus' solemn signs, they refer to the destruction of the world.

And other times, they refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in 70 AD. And that's what Jesus was speaking about in verses 15 to 35.

He's speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem. But, says Leon Morris, rather than getting entangled into which one refers to which, we are to see the emphasis of Jesus remain focused and remain faithful to the end.

Jesus is saying to us, stay alert and stay awake to all of these solemn signs. Keep an eye out for them. Because as Jesus says, in the last days, there will be false Christs and false teachers.

[ 12 : 28 ] There will be false religions and false revelations. There will be false prophets and false preachers who will preach and proclaim what people want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

They'll tell you many things. They'll tell you that there are many ways to God, not just one way.

They'll say that Jesus is our way, but not the way, the truth, and the life.

They'll tell you to love God and live as you please because life is all about being a good person.

But, says Jesus, see that no one leads you astray. See that no one leads you astray.

There's more, he says. There will also be other solemn signs. There will be wars, he says. Wars and rumors of war. There will be ongoing wars, open-ended wars. There will be wars over religion and wars over land.

There will be wars where there's risings and there's rumblings all the time. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, government against government, empire against empire.

[ 13 : 35 ] And through man's inhumanity to man, there will be clashes and conflicts. There will be destruction and devastation. There will be heartbreak and heartache. And you know, if we even stopped for a moment and considered only some of the wars, some of the wars that have taken place in only the past century, there was the first world war, the second world war, the Korean war, the Vietnam war, Falklands war, the troubles in Northern Ireland, the Gulf war, wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen, presently, Ukraine.

We've all heard about it. We all see it. There have been wars and rumors of war for generations with millions of people being casualties or killed in war. And Jesus says, these, these are the solemn signs of the times.

But he says, the end is not yet. There will be more. There will be more because there will be famines and floods and fires. There will be plagues and pestilences and pandemics.

There will be economic crises and crashes. There will be earthquakes and there will be eruptions.

There will be hurricanes and hot weather. There will be the chaos of climate change.

But, says Jesus, these are only the beginning of the birth pains. These are only the beginning of the birth pains. You know, although we haven't seen much of it in the Western Isles, the rest of the UK, as you know, they have encountered and some might say they enjoyed it, but others would say that they've endured a heat wave.

[ 15 : 27 ] It has brought drought. It has brought devastation to crops. And as you know, we hear so much on the news about global warming and climate change where all the leading governments of the world, they're all grappling to be greener in order to save the world.

But, you know, from a biblical perspective, we can't save the world. We cannot save this world because the world is not just contaminated by pollution.

The world is corrupted to the core with sin, us included. The world is corrupted by sin. And you know, my friend, the climate is changing because the creation is groaning.

The climate around us is changing because the creation is groaning. The Bible reminds us, Romans 8, we're told that the creation has been groaning since the fall.

Since the fall of Adam, the creation has been groaning. The creation has been waiting and wanting that new creation. The creation has been looking and longing for that new heavens and that new earth.

[ 16 : 41 ] Therefore, we look around us. We see the world is warming and the climate is changing because the creation is groaning. And as our Bible asserts and affirms, in fact, it was Peter who said it, one day this world will be dissolved and destroyed by a fervent heat.

Dear, my friend, global warming ought to be a global warning. Global warming ought to be a global warning.

It's a solemn sign that the end is coming. The end is coming. And you know, you listen to this and you think, well, it's no wonder that when the disciples asked Jesus that question, what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?

It's no wonder they weren't ready for the answer because it was an answer they never anticipated.

But you know, Jesus, he continues. He not only speaks of solemn signs, he also makes serious statements, which is what we see.

Secondly, he makes serious statements. Look at verse 9. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

[ 17 : 57 ] And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come.

You know, I'm sure that there were many times throughout Jesus' ministry that the disciples, they didn't know what Jesus was going to do or say next.

And this was one of those moments because Jesus says that there will be persecution. There will come persecution on account of the gospel. Christians will be hated and harmed.

And that came through for all of the disciples of Jesus. They were all, they all endured a martyr's death apart from the Apostle John who was exiled to the Isle of Patmos.

[ 18 : 59 ] Jesus says persecution will come on account of the gospel. Christians will be hated and harmed. Christians will be delivered over to death before the end comes. And Tertullian, one of the great men of the early church, I think he made the truest statement that describes the history of the church of Jesus.

He said, the blood of the martyrs will be the seed of the church. The blood of the martyrs will be the seed of the church. And down throughout the centuries of church history there have been countless millions of Christians who have died as martyrs.

And you read their testimonies, you read Fox's Book of Martyrs, you read about Christians being burnt or beaten, scalded or stoned or even stabbed. There's others who are clubbed and some who were crucified.

And you know, now it's estimated that in the 21st century, one in nine Christians one in nine Christians in the world have been persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

That works out at about 245 million Christians with North Korea being the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian.

[ 20 : 22 ] In the end, says Jesus, there will be persecution of the church. But in other places, he says, there will be a lukewarmness in the church.

There will be laziness in Christian service. There will be lethargy in church attendance. More than that, he says, there will be lawlessness with everyone doing what's right in their own eyes.

But not only lawlessness, says Jesus, lovelessness. There will be a complete lack of love for one another. And a love of self. There will be an individualistic, introverted, inward-looking generation. And the result, says Jesus, is that the church will grow cold. The church, that's what he says, the church will grow cold in its commitment to Scripture and the message of salvation.

But, and I'm so thankful there's a but, the one who endures to the end will be saved. The one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

[ 21 : 32 ] That's what the Christian faith is all about. Perseverance of the saints. The one who endures to the end will be saved because the gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

And we see it, don't we? All the advances of modern technology. We now have what is called a worldwide web. We have Zoom. We have YouTube. We have social media.

We can contact people on the other side of the world easily. And the gospel has been proclaimed to the ends of the earth. That was Jesus' commission to the disciples from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And when the gospel has been proclaimed to the ends of the earth, says Jesus, verse 14, then the end will come. Then the end will come.

But my friend, the end will come because God has fixed a day. You know, we miss appointments all the time. I miss dentist appointments. As I said, I'm very forgetful.

[ 22 : 34 ] We miss doctor's appointments. But we will not miss this appointment because God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness. God has fixed a day on which we must all stand before that great judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

And you know, I often think of that day. I will be judged on every word I've said from this pulpit.

Every Christian will be judged on their work, their witness and their worship for the Lord.

It will all, as Paul says in Corinthians, it will all be tested and tried by fire. God has fixed a day on which he will reveal all sin and rectify all sorrows and reward all service.

As Paul says in Acts, as he said in Acts 17, God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and of this he has given assurance to all of us by raising him from the dead.

You can be certain that there will be a day on which we stand before Jesus because God raised him from the dead. God has fixed a day.

[ 23 : 53 ] Verse 36, but concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son but the Father only.

And you know, when it comes to dating and determining the end of the world, there have been many proposals, many predictions, many projections over the years but all of them have been and will be wrong.

one of the latest predictions for the end of the world is the 21st of September 2028. 21st of September 2028.

It's just over six years time so think, well, how old will you be in six years time? I'll be 41. How old will your children or grandchildren be in six years time?

Ours will be teenagers. will the 21st of September 2028 be the end of the world? I don't know.

[ 24 : 54 ] Of that day and hour, says Jesus, no one knows. No one knows because as he goes on to say, it'll be like it was in the days of Noah.

They were eating and drinking, they were marrying, they were giving in marriage. They were all unaware of it. until the flood came and took them all away, swept them all away.

And as you know, Noah was that great preacher of righteousness. Noah was the man who proclaimed God's word and pleaded with the people of his community that he knew and loved. He pleaded with them all to find safety and security in the ark.

As the children's hymn goes, I'm sure we've all heard it, maybe even sung it, Mr. Noah built an ark.

The people thought it such a lark. Mr. Noah pleaded so, but into the ark they would not go.

And they would not go because they were complacent, they were comfortable, they were content with their lot in life. And what does Jesus say?

[ 25 : 59 ] So will it be. So will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. Do you know, as the disciples sat with Jesus that morning on the Mount of Olives and they saw everything going on before their eyes, you know, it must have hit home to them.

It must have hit home when they could see the hustle and bustle of a normal day in Jerusalem just unfolding before them where there was people buying and selling, there was others eating and drinking, there was a couple marrying and being given in marriage.

And Jesus says, so will it be. So will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. It will just be another normal day. It will be another normal day in Barbas.

Children going off to school maybe. People going to work. People getting up, doing their routine. It will be just another normal day. But on that day, says Jesus, you will either be caught up or caught out.

You will either be caught up or caught out. You know, as Jesus brings this probably unwelcome and unwanted answer to the disciples' question, as he brings it to a conclusion, he makes it very, very personal.

[ 27 : 17 ] He says in verse 40, two men will be in the field. One of them will be taken. The other will be left. The converted will be caught up.

The unconverted friend will be caught out. Two women will be grinding at the mill doing their job. One will be taken.

One will be left. The converted will be caught up. The unconverted will be caught out. And you know, I read it.

I tremble at reading it. I don't find this easy. But you know, it's a serious statement. Because Jesus is speaking about separation.

Separation from family. Separation from friends. From neighbors, work colleagues, and congregation. He says, in the end, you will either be caught up or caught out.

[ 28 : 22 ] Caught up or caught out. Therefore. Therefore, and here's the punchline. Here's the answer to the question.

Jesus, what will be the sign of your coming? When will the end of the world be? Therefore, verse 42, therefore, stay awake. You do not know on what day your Lord is coming, but know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would have not let his house to be broken into.

Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. I think they're probably the two most important therefore's in the Bible.

Therefore, Jesus, when, what will be the sign of your coming and when will the end of the world be? And it's obvious, you read this and you think, well, the disciples, they weren't ready for the answer that they received that morning sitting on the Mount of Olives with Jesus.

Maybe you weren't ready for Jesus' answer this morning sitting in church. Maybe you never expected to come to church this morning and hear Jesus speaking to you about his second coming and the end of the world.

[ 29 : 38 ] But as we said, Jesus' answer wasn't because he wanted to be heavy and hard-hearted or hard-hitting. No, Jesus gives the answer out of love and this longing for sinners to be saved and for us to be awake because he's not willing that any should perish but that all, every single one of you, that you will come to repentance, that you'll come on bended knee before King Jesus saying like the publican, God, be merciful to me, to me, a sinner.

You know, my friend, that's why Jesus has spoken to you powerfully and personally this morning. He has spoken about solemn signs and serious statements because he wants you to have a Christ-centered worldview.

He wants you to see the world through Scripture. He wants you to look at life and live life with an eternal perspective.

He wants you to see to see that this is only, we're only passing through and this will all pass away. Therefore, you also must be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. You know, my unconverted friend, even my Christian friend, it reminds us not to waste our life living for people and living for the pleasures of this world.

[ 31 : 25 ] Yes, we're to enjoy life. Life is a great blessing. There are so many blessings in it and the Bible emphasizes all that. But you need to live life with an eternal perspective.

Don't waste your life living for people and the pleasures of this world. No, Jesus says, repent.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Repent and confess your sin.

Commit your life to the Savior. Don't let this linger on. Don't let this sitting on the fence thing carry on. How long is it going to go on for?

No, Jesus says, the first thing Jesus says in the gospel is repent and believe in the gospel. So my friend, don't waste your life.

Don't waste your life living for people and the pleasures of this world. You come to this Jesus. You call upon him. You call out to him. You repent and believe in this glorious gospel message.

[ 32 : 33 ] church. I'm sure the disciples when they asked their question, they probably thought, I wish I'd never asked. But what a question to ask.

Jesus, what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world? Let's make sure we're all prepared for that. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the word of God.

We give thanks that the Bible is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. And we thank thee, Lord, that it speaks to us powerfully. It speaks to us personally.

It speaks to us about the serious things and the solemn things of life. And Lord, we pray that we would take heed as Jesus said, that we would be ready as Jesus said, that we would be ready for at an hour when we think not.

[ 33 : 39 ] The Son of Man will come and he will come in all his glory, in all his beauty, and we must stand before him. And Lord, we pray that on that day, that great, great day, that we would all be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, that we would all be washed in his blood, that we would all know this Jesus and follow him and serve him, and that when we see him, we will know, as thy word says, that we will be like him and see him even as he is.

Oh, Lord, we pray that there will be none left behind, none caught out, but all who are coming in, that they would come into the fold and find Jesus for time and for eternity.

Lord, bless thy truth to us, speak to us, we ask, and that we would not forget it, that we would not leave this place the same way we came in, but that we might know that the Lord has spoken to us this morning, speaking into our lives, reminding us that we need to come to him and do business with God.

Cleanse us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 96, the closing words are singing from verse 10 down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 96, it's on page 359, verse 10 to the end of the psalm.

[ 35 : 18 ] Among the heathens say God reigns, the world shall steadfastly be fixed from moving, he shall judge the people righteously. And then the end of this psalm, the psalm began by encouraging us and exhorting us to sing that new song to the Lord.

But then he reminds us at the end, before the Lord, because he comes to judge the earth comes he, he'll judge the world with righteousness, the people faithfully.

my friend, make sure you are someone who is clothed in the righteousness of Christ when he comes. We'll stand to sing verses 10 to 13 to God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Sigh on range The world shall steadfastly Be faithful And he shall judge The people Righteously Let ends Be calm Before The Lord And let The earth Rejoice Let seas

Adole The days Therein Cry out And make A noise Let fields Rejoice And everything The strength Of the earth Then wounds And every tree Shall stay With bondage And with birth Before the Lord Before the Lord Because he comes

[ 38 : 06 ] To judge the earth Come see He'll He'll He'll Just The world With Righteousness The people They believe The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.