

**April 18, 2021**

## **THE RETURN OF JESUS**

**Matthew 24:3-8, 29-32, 42-44**

God established the beginning of history when He created the universe (Gen. 1), and He will complete it at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:11-16). He created the world, He sustains it, and one day He will bring history to its dramatic conclusion. The Kingdom He will establish will last forever, and His people will reign with Him.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus often talked about the age to come. He encouraged His followers to lay up treasure in heaven rather than on earth, to invest in heavenly things with their earthly resources (Matt. 6:19-21). He told many parables that described the nature of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:1-52). He warned unbelievers of the terrible judgment that lay ahead of them (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 16:19-31). Finally, Jesus told His disciples about His Second Coming. He told them certain signs of His coming, and warned them to be alert and watch for that great day so that when He comes, He will not find them unprepared.

If we examine the Scripture passages for this lesson, we find these events occurred during the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. We often call this time "Holy Week." The week began with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-11). He heard the crowds cheering, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Then Jesus went to the temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers who were profaning God's house. The next day Jesus answered the tests of those who challenged His authority (Matt. 21:12-46). He debated with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Many of Jesus' opponents tried to trap Him with questions, but they had no good answers when He turned questions back to them. Jesus warned His audience to avoid living hypocritical lives like the Pharisees and Scribes (Matt. 23:1-12). Seven times in His speech, Jesus pronounced woe to them and highlighted their failures to live out the faith they professed (Matt. 23:13-36). As He finished, Jesus pronounced a lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37-39). As they were exiting, His disciples indicated the beauty and majesty of the temple complex. Jesus replied that every stone would be torn down one day (Matt. 24:1-2).

In Matthew 24:3-8, Jesus and the disciples are sitting on the Mount of Olives and the disciples have an opportunity to speak to Jesus privately about the temple's destruction. The disciples asked Jesus two questions. First, they asked, "Tell us when will these things happen?" The disciples wondered how many years would pass before the temple was destroyed. Would they see it happen, or would it not occur for a long time?

Second, the disciples asked, "What is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Their question reveals a certain depth of faith among the disciples. They believed He would come again to establish His kingdom. In answer to the disciples' question, Jesus warned His disciples to watch out, to be alert so that no one deceives you. They needed to ground themselves in the truth because the heretics' lies could be convincing. Jesus said that many would come claiming to be His agents in the world. They would come in Jesus' name and claim messianic authority. Jesus emphasized they would be frauds and fakes. Jesus also mentioned events that would occur but would not be signs of the end times. The events will be wars and rumors of wars. Nation will rise up against nation. Other events will be famines and earthquakes. All of these events (false teachings, false teachers, wars, famines, earthquakes) will be only the beginning of the catastrophic events leading up to Jesus' return.

In Matthew 24:29-32, Jesus tells His disciples about the signs of His Second Coming. Verse 29 says, "Immediately after the distress of those days...." This refers to the persecutions and tribulations that Jesus spoke about in verses 9-28. After this distressing time, Jesus will visibly return to Earth. He focused on details of His Coming using supernatural imagery to describe the time of His return. It will happen in such a way humans cannot help but notice. They will not be able to explain it in any way. Jesus said "the sun will be darkened" and "the moon will not shed its light." "The stars will fall out of the sky." The powers of the heavens will be shaken." Jesus made it clear that His return would be unmistakable. The "Son of Man will appear in the sky." The disciples had asked for a sign. Jesus indicated He will be the only sign they will need because His return is all that matters.

Jesus noted that "all the peoples of the earth will mourn." Mourning could be for repentance of sins or impending judgment. "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." He will be acknowledged as lord of all. His angels will herald

God's children with the sound of a loud trumpet. Jesus will gather His children from one end of the sky to the other. Jesus had described for His disciples many events that would precede His return. He intended these to help them prepare for and anticipate His coming. In the Gospel of Luke, Luke recounts Jesus' assurance to His followers: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is near" (Luke 21:28). Jesus is coming back, and those who are alive at that time will see it.

In Matthew 24:42-44, we learn no one knows the exact time of Jesus' Second Coming. His Second Coming will occur at a time we do not expect. Believers should stay alert and ready as we anticipate Jesus' return. As His children and servants, we should remember His words: "Blessed is that servant whom the Master finds doing his job when He comes" (Matt. 24:46).

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