

## Return of the King (Matthew 24:1-31)

Read [23:37-24:3](#)

The last chapter closed with Jesus pronouncing judgment upon those in Israel and (Jerusalem in particular) who had refused to acknowledge the historic and current work of God ([23:38](#))

- While walking away, the disciples, perhaps alarmed by what Jesus had just said, point out how impressive the Temple was ([24:1](#)) (Cf. Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5 = **big, beautiful stones**)
- Jesus reveals an explicit judgment in which the temple would be destroyed (Jewish War A.D. 66-73) ([24:2](#))

While He is **sitting** on the **Mount of Olives**... His followers ask Jesus **three questions** ([verse 3](#))

- 1. When will that happen? (I.e. the destruction of the temple)
- 2. What will be the sign of your coming? (I.e. the second coming)
- 3. What will be the sign of the end of the age? (I.e. the period just before His coming)
  - In their minds these three things form a **"single complex web of events"**<sup>1</sup>
  - In reality, they comprise a **long span of history** reaching from the Ascension to the Return of Jesus
  - Jesus answers all three questions, but provides **no clear delineations in the timing** of things
    - To reveal specific timing is **not His goal**—quite the opposite ([verses 36, 42, 44, 50, 25:13](#))
    - (we misread the chapter if we read it with the goal of determining the time) (soon)
- Christ's goal in this text is to:
  - **Warn** His followers of difficult days ahead
  - **Comfort** His followers with the knowledge of His sovereignty, and victorious mission, and glorious return
  - **Urge** His followers to live responsibly, faithfully, compassionately, and courageously in the present age
  - We will explore Jesus' third goal when we finish the chapter next week (now = warn, comfort)

**Verses 4-8** (general signs of the end of the age)

- **Description of a world that feels out of control (effects of sin and rebellion)**
  - **Deception, wars, int'l intrigue, famines, natural disasters** (everyday newscast) (could be anytime)
  - **Such things must happen / but the end is still to come / All these are the beginning of birth pangs.**
  - I.e. There would be a long period of history characterized by such things (immediate and far)

**Verses 9-13** (general signs of the end of the age)

- **Description of a time where it feels like truth (the Christian faith) is losing**
  - **Persecution, apostasy, increased wickedness, deception** (feels like losing) (anytime)
- These are **warnings** of the way the world would go
  - We can see observe it happen immediately (**Acts**), historically, and presently (most martyrs last c.)

We'll skip to **v. 15** for a moment (**hold v. 14**), because there the warnings continues (then we will get to comfort)

- Notice a shift here:
  - Jesus directions to His followers in the times just described was **"stand firm (faith) to the end"**
  - For the following, His direction to them is **"flee"** (nature of events has changed—results to wrath)

**Verses 15-20** (specific sign of the when the temple would be destroyed)

- The destruction of the temple at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70
  - Jesus **warns** His followers (many there, then) to **flee** when they see this judgment unfolding (history...)
- The next few verses reveal that Jesus is talking about more than just that (multiple fulfillments) (ultimate)
- **Verses 21-22 (unequaled; cut short)** (tribulation) (Cf. Abom. of Desolation; [2 Thess. 2:1-4, Rev. 13:14](#))

**Jesus tells them these things in part to sober their expectations** (shouldn't the Kingdom change more things?)

- We can become disillusioned... but **"Jesus told us they'd be days like these"**
- **"But the end is not yet"** (these difficulties are not the final word)
- [John 16:33, NASB](#)

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Chapters 13-28* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 495.  
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These warning are not given to **startle** us, but to **settle** us (in light of God's **sovereignty** and **promises**)

**Jesus wants to comfort** His followers with the knowledge of His (1) sovereignty, and (2) victorious mission, and (3) glorious return

- "See, I have told you ahead of time." (v. 25) = His **sovereignty** over all
- "But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." (v. 13) = His **victorious mission** for us
- "And this gospel of the kingdom **will be** preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (v. 14) = His **victorious mission** to us and through us

In **vv. 6/8** Jesus said concerning the signs: **the end is still to come... All these are the beginning**

- Here He says "And this gospel... and then the **end** will come."
  - A task to complete
  - (not that we cause His return, but **that we have a cause** to live for until He returns)
- Our focus is not to be on the troubling signs, but on the victorious mission (confronts the signs)
  - The signs are given to us to denote that God knows
    - We will experience times that feel like the world is out of control
    - We will experience times that feel like Truth was losing
  - **But the truth is that the Truth is winning!** The Kingdom is Expanding! Jesus is building His church! (v. 14)
    - After destruction of the temple only about **1 out of every 360** people was a Christian
    - Now, there is **1 active Christian out of every 7** people in the world<sup>2</sup>
    - **More people have followed Christ in the last 100 years than in all of the previous centuries combined**
      - The Truth is winning!
    - But there is still work to be done! **7k UPGs** (Romans 15:20, NLT) (Matthew 9:37-38, NASB)
    - And great commission = a cause to live for until He comes!

**Difficult world conditions and victorious Christian mission will coexists until the end** (end as opposed to renewal)

- Creating a spiritual conflict context of subterfuge (**vv. 23-24**)
- But Jesus wants us to know clearly what His ultimate victory **will** look like (clearly future) (**vv. 26-31**)
  - It will be visible and unmistakable like lightening and vultures in the sky (v. 27-28)
  - It will be earth shattering and sky shaking (v. 29)
  - It will be glorious, powerful, and witnessed by the whole world (v. 30)
  - It will involve judgment (mourning), and salvation (gathering) (vv. 30b and 31)

**The main point of the text is that Jesus is coming again! Physically and visibly and busily!**

- The work of redemption is still unfolding
- If Jesus does not return, then much is left undone... but He will!
- Core teaching of Scripture and belief of Christianity (1/8)

**Here are some snap shots of what that event will entail:**

- The devil will be vanquished (**Revelation 20:10**, NIV)
- Humanity will be judged (**Revelation 20:11-13, 15**, NIV)
- Death will be defeated (**Revelation 20:14**, NIV)
- Creation will be renewed (**Revelation 21:1-5**, NIV)
- Our dwelling will be in glory (**Revelation 22:1-5**, NIV)
- God's loving mission of saving people from every tongue, tribe and nation will be realized (**Rev. 7:9-10**, NIV)
- Christ will be at the center of it all (**Revelation 5:6a, 8b-10, 12b, 13b**, NIV)

**This chapter reminds us that Jesus is the pinnacle and goal of all history**

- That He rules and reigns over every human affair!
- That He is **building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail—Jesus wins!!**
- And we are part of that victory—so live for Jesus!!!

Titus 2:11-14, NIV

<sup>2</sup> Perspectives Reader, 544.