

## **The King Is Coming**

### **Matthew 24:26-31**

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Today we come to perhaps the greatest theme in all the Bible: the Second Coming of Jesus Christ or the second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is so much in the Bible about this doctrine or teaching. Actually, both the Old and the New Testaments talk about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the event that all Scripture is looking forward to and all history is leading up to, the King's return.

In the Bible, we have what theologians call the "mega-narrative" or the big picture. The overarching theme of the Bible can be summarized in three statements: the past—our sin and what God has done for us in and through Christ, the present—how we are to respond to what God has done for us and accomplished for us in Christ and the future—how we are to hope with anticipation for the fulfillment of all God's promises.

There are different ways to look at the mega-narrative of the Bible. When we look back, we see that we have sinned, but God, in His love, has sent us the Redeemer in that Jesus died on the Cross to redeem us from sin. In the present, our responsibility is to believe in Him and to trust in Him. The Bible says, "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Then we look forward, as well. As believers, we have a future and a hope. We look forward with anticipation to the fulfillment of all God's promises.

Since there is so much in the Bible about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, it is virtually impossible, in one sermon, to touch on all the Bible verses about it. But Titus 2:13 says, "... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing..."—we get our word "epiphany" from this —"...of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Some feel that both the rapture and the Second Coming are in this one verse of Titus; some feel "the blessed hope" is talking about the rapture, and the "glorious appearing" is the Second Coming. I propose to you that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is our only hope.

I don't put a lot of hope in our next presidential election. I don't put a lot of hope in my government. I put my hope in Jesus Christ. I love that great hymn that goes:

"My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;

All other ground is sinking sand.”

So we're looking for Christ to come again to establish His eternal kingdom.

Now I want to give you the different views that have been in Christianity about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This is not an exhaustive list; I can't get too technical here and I can't give you the pros and cons of each view. I'll give you what I believe the Bible teaches.

These views fall into three categories as they relate to the millennium. There are those in the church that have a “post-millennial” view or are called “post-millennialists.” They believe that Jesus will come back after the millennium. This view was very popular prior to World War I, and especially after World War II. This view taught that we, the church, will Christianize the world, that the church will grow and impact the world, that we will bring in the kingdom of God and the King will return. But you can't have the kingdom without the King. We obviously see that the world is getting darker, worse and more wicked. We're not Christianizing the world; the opposite is actually happening. So I don't believe in the “post-millennial” view that Christ comes after the millennium.

Another view that is quite popular today among those who are in the Reformed or the Calvinistic camp is the “amillennial” view. This conveys the idea of no millennium. What they say is that there is no literal, 1,000-year reign of Christ, when men will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.” “The lion will lay down with the lamb,” Christ will be here and the church will reign with Him. They spiritualize it; they interpret the prophecies about the 1,000-year reign spiritually. And they actually say that we are in the millennium right now.

But the Bible teaches that during the millennium, Satan will be bound for the whole 1,000 years. So if we're already in the millennium, Satan's got a long chain; I know that, because he's wreaking a lot of havoc out there. What these amillennials say—and I think it's a great error—is that the church has replaced Israel, and the promises God made in the Old Testament to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to David in the Davidic Covenant are not going to be literally fulfilled. The church has replaced Israel and is now the nation of Israel, and God's promises are now fulfilled in and through the church and we are in the millennium now.

The third view—and that is the view I hold and believe is the Biblical view—is called the “premillennial view” or “premillennialism.” Basically, that teaches that Christ will come back in His Second Coming before the millennium. He will come back and introduce the Kingdom age on the earth.

It's interesting that in verse 29, it tells us that the Second Coming will be “immediately after the tribulation of those days.” So we do know that the Second Coming occurs after the tribulation. Then in Revelation 19, you see the sequence of events of the Second Coming. Then in Revelation 20, you have the millennium or the Kingdom age when Satan is bound, thrown into the pit and the Antichrist and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire.

So I hold to a premillennial return of Jesus Christ in His second Advent. Jesus Christ is coming before the millennium and will usher in the Kingdom age.

Now as I unpack our text, I want to give you eight facts about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, about the coming of the King. Fact number one is that it will not be a secret coming. Everyone will know about it, and everyone will know it's Jesus Christ. They will see Him. In verse 26, Jesus says, "Therefore." That takes us back to verse 24, where Jesus said there would be "false christs and false prophets" that will "show great signs," so they will work miracles. Then Jesus says, "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it."

I almost want to laugh when I read that. Years ago there were those who said that the Messiah had come back and was living in London in an apartment. "Really? I'm disappointed." In 1914, the Jehovah Witnesses organization said that the Messiah had come back. They even used the term from this verse: "He's in a secret chamber" or "inner room." I guess they didn't read the Bible.

Jesus has not come back in His second Advent yet. When He comes back, everyone will know it. There will be no question about it. Don't listen to them if they say He's in Barstow or Fontana or something like that. That's not the way it works. He's not going to come secretly. He's not going to come spiritually. He's not going to come mystically. He's going to come visibly, bodily, gloriously and powerfully. That's the Second Coming of Christ.

The second fact about the Second Coming is that it will be personal and visible. Verse 27 says, "For..."—so here's the reason you don't go to the desert or to a secret chamber to find Him—"... as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." The title "Son of Man" is Messianic. It comes from Daniel 9. It is the title that Jesus used for Himself more than any other. It is known as Christ's favorite title for Himself. This title speaks of His humanity as well as His Messiahship.

After Jesus was resurrected from the dead, for 40 days there was the "post-Resurrection appearances" of Christ when He appeared to His disciples and others. He met with His disciples on Mount Olivet, the same mountain on which He gave this Olivet Discourse. They asked Him if this was the time He would restore the kingdom of Israel. They were looking for a literal millennium; not a spiritual one. Jesus told them, "It was not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power..."—or "dunamis"—"...when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." It happened in Acts 2. Then they would go out and be "witnesses...in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Little did they realize that over 2,000 years would pass before Christ would set up His kingdom on earth.

After Jesus said all this, He ascended back into heaven. It's in Acts 1. And the disciples were looking up and thought, What just happened?! Then two angels showed up, and one said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?" Again, I see a little humor there. I'd

say, "If you saw what we just saw, Mr. Angel, you'd be staring at the heavens too. That was amazing!" The angel said, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." The Bible says, "A cloud received Him out of their sight." So Jesus is going to come back physically, bodily, visibly, gloriously and a cloud will accompany Him.

In Revelation 1:7, John says, "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him." That's not the rapture. The rapture happens when we are caught up to "meet the Lord in the air." The Second Coming is when we, the church, return with the Lord to the earth.

Fact number three about the Second Coming is that it will come at the end of the tribulation. The Second Coming will take place after the seven years of tribulation and the last three-and-a-half years of the "great tribulation." Verse 28 of our text says, "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days...."

Verse 28 is one of the most difficult of all verses of the Olivet Discourse, at least for me to understand and interpret. Jesus is speaking in allegorical terms here, and they are kind of hard to understand. But we do know—this is the way I interpret it, and I may be wrong—that at the end of the tribulation, there will be the battle of Armageddon. It is when all the armies of the world will be gathered together in the Valley of Megiddo. There will be a great slaughter. The Bible actually says that the blood will flow as deep as "up to the horses' bridles." So this valley will be full of blood with bodies everywhere. The Bible says that birds will come and eat "the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men." So it could be that in verse 28, Jesus is alluding to this event. Revelation 14 describes the time of the battle of Armageddon, when the birds come and devour flesh.

So the Second Coming will come at the end of the tribulation. Verse 29 says, "immediately after the tribulation of those days."

I believe—and I'm not teaching on the rapture here; I'm teaching on the Second Coming—that the rapture is when the church, Christians, will be caught up "to meet the Lord in the air" and go to heaven. The Second Coming is when the Christians come back, with Christ, from heaven to the earth, where He will establish His kingdom. The rapture will only be the saints being caught up; the tribulation will end with the battle of Armageddon and then Christ returns to earth with the church in the Second Coming and the millennium begins. So the rapture happens before the tribulation, and Christ comes back in His Second Coming at the end of the tribulation and introduces the 1,000-year kingdom of God on the earth.

Fact number four about the Second Coming is in verse 29. It is that it will be preceded by signs. That is interesting because before the rapture, there are no signs, but there are signs before the Second Coming. "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." That's pretty radical. If the sun is darkened, the moon won't give off light. The stars will no doubt break up and fall to the earth in meteorite showers. So all these catastrophic and cataclysmic things that will

happen in the cosmos will lead up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and they will happen during the tribulation.

In Isaiah 13:9-10, the prophet Isaiah said this 600 years before Jesus Christ: “Behold, the day of the Lord comes...”—“the day of the Lord” includes the tribulation period—“...cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.”

Let me share a very important distinction. The rapture of the church is not preceded by any definite signs. The way we know the rapture is near is that we know there's going to be the tribulation and the Second Coming. We should view the coming of the rapture as imminent. It's called the “imminent return of Christ.” What that means is—and I believe it is substantiated by the Bible and church history—that at any moment, Christ could come again. We're not looking for the Antichrist, for the “abomination of desolation.” I am not looking for “the moon to turn to blood.” I'm looking for Jesus Christ. And I hope you are too. I'm not looking for the stars to fall out of heaven. I'm looking for Christ to come from heaven and take me home.

He promised in John 14:1: “Let not your heart be troubled....I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” In 1 Thessalonians 4, where Paul mentions the rapture, he says in verse 18, “Comfort one another with these words.” It's comforting to know that I won't be here for this time of trouble, that the Lord is going to come to take me home to be with Him in heaven in the rapture, before the tribulation.

So the rapture is imminent; it could happen before I finish my sermon. I could dig that. But don't be left behind; you don't want to be the only one left sitting in church if that happens. But you could have your dibs on any car in the parking lot if that happens.

The Second Coming has definite signs of its coming. Jesus gave them to us: the “abomination of desolation”; false prophets; false christs; the sun, moon and stars. All these things will happen, and the prophecies foretell that.

It's interesting that when Christ came the first time, there was a star over Bethlehem that announced His arrival. When Christ comes back the second time, the stars will actually fall from heaven, announcing His second Advent.

Fact number five about the Second Coming is that it will cause the nations to mourn. Verse 29-30 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days....Then the sign of the Son of Man...”—this is that title Jesus loved—“...will appear...”—this is the epiphany; the word “appear” means “epiphany”—“...in heaven, and then all the tribes on the earth will mourn.” The Bible is clear that when Jesus Christ comes back, every eye will see Him, especially the Jewish people who crucified Him.

Can you imagine being there at the end of the tribulation, realizing the Antichrist is the deceiver;

he's not your Messiah, because the heavens open and Jesus Christ comes back? A lot of Jews are going to be blown away. They'll wail and mourn and cry. Remember Jesus said in Matthew 23:39, "You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" Then He wept over Jerusalem. They will see Him coming back in power. The Jewish people and the nation of Israel will wail and mourn, because they rejected Him.

Zachariah 12:10 says, "They will look on Me, whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son." That's a prophecy that Jesus repeated in Matthew 24:30. In Revelation 1:7, it says, "...even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him." The Gentile nations will also wail and mourn, because He's coming back to judge in righteousness.

So when Jesus comes back, it won't be secret; it'll be visible. It'll be glorious, and all the nations of the world that rejected Him will wail and mourn.

Fact number six about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is that it will be a glorious appearing. Verse 30 says, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This is one of the great descriptions, by Jesus Himself, about His second Advent. I believe these "clouds" could be literal clouds. Remember in Acts 1:11, a cloud received Him out of the disciples' sight, and the angel said, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." It also could be clouds of shekinah glory; the presence of God will be glorious. It could be clouds or hosts of angels. It could be a reference to the church, the saints, who come back with Him. But it will be clouds.

And He will come back in "power." When He came the first time, He came in humility and weakness; He came as a little baby. Think about God in the flesh lying in an animal feeding trough. How amazing is that! When they looked at the baby Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem, they were looking at the Creator of all the universe. "God contracted to a span and incomprehensibly made man."

But when Jesus comes back a second time, He's not coming back in weakness. He's coming back as the glorified God-man reigning in power and majesty. Notice He comes back with "great glory." It's an awesome thought. When He came the first time, He came meek, lowly and humble. On Palm Sunday, He rode on a little donkey. The peasant people sang "Hosanna!" to Him. When He comes back the second time, He will be riding "a white horse," with His "eyes like a flame of fire," "hair...white like wool" and "out of His mouth...a sharp, two-edged sword." So He's coming back in "power and great glory."

When Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James and John, He was transfigured before them. That is a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He said that "There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God." Just a few days later, He went to a high mountain and was transfigured before them. He pulled back the veil of His humanity and allowed His full deity to shine forth. The disciples saw His

majesty and His full, divine glory.

Revelation 19:11-16 is the classic passage on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. John said, "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." So the Antichrist also comes, in Revelation 6, on a white horse. He is a false christ, a false messiah. The true Messiah comes in Revelation 19:11. He is "Faithful and True." Notice His eyes, verse 12. "His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns." The word "crowns" here is "diadems." There are two words used for "crowns" in our English Bible. The first is "stephanos," which means "a victor's crown." You run your race and get a victor's crown. It's a reward crown. The other crown is a "diadem." It is a king's crown. That is what Jesus is wearing when He returns.

Verse 12 continues, "He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God." This is John's favorite term for Jesus. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So Jesus is called "the Word of God." Verse 14, "And the armies in heaven..."—this is a reference to the church, to the saints, you and I, coming back with Jesus Christ. Notice we're "in heaven"; we're not on the earth—"...clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."

Years ago I said I'd never ride another horse—until the Second Coming. But I'll have a new body to be able to handle it. So the church, the armies, are coming back riding on white horses. It tells us in this chapter about the white robes of the righteousness of the saints.

Verse 15, "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations." That speaks of His judgment. "And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'" So if there is a king, Jesus is King of that king. If there is a lord, He's Lord over that lord. He is the Sovereign who has come back. What a glorious thing that is! He came the first time as the Lamb to suffer and die in humility. He's coming back as the Lion. And He's going to roar.

Years ago we were at the San Diego Zoo. All the way across the zoo, we heard the lion roar. Wow! I'd never heard that before. It shook the whole place. Everyone then ran to the lion area. Now when Jesus comes back as the Lion of Judah, He will roar.

Fact number seven about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is that it will be Israel's restoration. It means that Israel will be restored, and God will keep His promises. Verse 31 of our text says, "And He..."—that is, the "Son of Man," the Messiah, Jesus Christ—"...will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet..."—don't confuse this "trumpet" with the trumpet of the rapture; this is the trumpet at the end of the tribulation—"...and they will gather together His elect..."—that's a reference to Israel and not to the church—"...from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

A mistake people make is that they call the “elect” in this passage the “church.” It’s not a reference to the church but to Israel. It could include people who missed the rapture, then became believers in Jesus during the tribulation. They are what’s called “tribulation saints.” They were not part of the church. The church has already been caught up as the “bride of Christ” into heaven and comes back with Jesus in the Second Coming. So verse 31 is the regathering of the nation of Israel back to the Promised Land, because God made them a promise.

Isn’t it interesting that after over 2,000 years, until 1948, Israel was born once again as a nation from out of the past. No people group has ever been moved out of their homeland for that many generations, been able to maintain their national identity and return to their homeland. But Israel has. One of the miracles of God is the Jewish people, the nation of Israel. They are God’s chosen people. Jesus was a Jew. The Bible is written by Jews. The Covenants and promises of God come to us through the nation of Israel.

Romans 9 is Israel’s election, Romans 10 is Israel’s rejection and Romans 11 is Israel’s restoration. That’s the theology behind the idea that God will keep His promises to Israel. In Romans 9, Israel was elected God’s chosen people, by His sovereignty grace. In Romans 10, Israel rejected God. But in Romans 11, Israel will be restored by God; He always keeps His promises. So when Jesus comes back, Israel will be restored.

I don’t believe in a replacement theology; that the church is spiritual Israel. And when you’re studying prophecy, you have to keep Israel and God’s plan for them in one category, the church and God’s plan for them in another category and the Gentile nations of the world and God’s plan for them in another category. So there are three groups: the Jews, the church and the Gentiles. The New Testament gives us those distinctions. If you mingle them together, it will create confusion.

The eighth and last fact about the Second Coming, which is not in the text, but I have to throw it in here—by the way, the number eight is the number of completion—is it will fulfill God’s promise to King David. When Jesus Christ comes back, it will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to David. It’s called the Davidic Covenant. God made the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7.

David wanted to build God a temple. God said, “No; but your son, Solomon, will build Me a temple. But I’m going to build you a house; through your lineage or seed, the Messiah of the world will come. He will sit on your throne, and it will continue forever.” You talk about being blown away! God gave David kind of a bad-news, good-news announcement.

When you look at the genealogy of Jesus Christ, especially in Matthew, He can be traced all the way back to King David. Did you know that Jesus was the descendent of David? That’s why in the Bible when people recognized Jesus as Messiah, they called him “Son of David.” They said, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” He was born in Bethlehem, the city of David. Jesus would be the fulfillment of the promise God made to David. So Jesus was telling David



that his great-great-great-great-great grandson would be the Savior of the world. Put that on your bumper sticker, like we do when we say, "My son is an honor student!" David could have put on the back of his chariot, "My great-great-great-great-great grandson is the Messiah!"

So God always keeps His promises. That's music to my ears. Whenever I study this subject, I stop and think, It's really going to happen! Jesus Christ is going to rend the heavens and split the sky, and He's going to say, "I'm back!" What a glorious coming that indeed will be.

When Jesus comes back, He will restore the earth, which is groaning and travailing in pain. Satan will be bound for 1,000 years. The Antichrist and false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire. There will be peace on earth; no more wars. The nations of the world "shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." "The lion shall lie down with the lamb." "And a little child shall lead them." A child will come into the house with a poisonous snake, but it won't hurt him. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Hebrews 9:28 talks about the first coming of Christ and the Second Coming of Christ, the first Advent and the second Advent. "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many." That's His first coming. "To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." That's the Second Coming.

1 Peter 1:13 says, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation..."—there's that unveiling or apocalypse—"...of Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ the King is coming again.