

**Mark 13: 24-27, Matthew 24: 27-29 and Luke 21: 24-28; “The Coming of Christ and Our Rapture”, Sermon # 104 in the series – “Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This afternoon I would like to speak to you about the Second Coming of Christ. As there is much confusion about this greatest of all events in human history, it is important that we as Christians living in this time of Church history be able to know generally what is coming and what to expect. And as we have read this passage I hope that you can see that our Lord Jesus has not left us in the dark. He has given us an overview in a nutshell, here in this chapter of the Scripture, and in the other parallel passages in Matthew and in Luke, of what we should expect to see over the whole Church Age. The Church Age is the time of the gathering of God’s Elect. And during that time there are times when it seems as though only a few are being gathered, and then there are times when it is evident that many have been gathered. As regards the nations of the world, there have been times of great persecution and tribulation, and then there are sometimes times of great peace and blessing. Our Lord Jesus is making it plain in these verses that His return in His Second Coming will be the climax of all of the hopes and expectations of all of His people. It will be the time when we see Him face to face. O what a tremendous joy this shall be for every true Christian; that when He returns He will come in great power and glory, and He will gather all of His elect people to Himself. As I speak to you about this subject I will 1<sup>st</sup> speak to you about the events leading up to Christ’s Second Coming. Then, 2<sup>ndly</sup>, I will speak to you about His coming in the clouds. And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – I will speak to you about His gathering together of His Elect from the four winds. May we all profit together from this study.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – The Events leading up to Christ’s Second Coming.** (Verses 24 and 25)

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will shaken.” I have tried to show you over the past few sermons that the words, “after that tribulation” here in Mark 13, or “immediately after the tribulation of those days”, which we read of in Matthew, refer not simply to one event. It has 3 separate and distinct fulfillments, the first two of which, need to be understood in relation to the calling and the in-gathering of the Jews into the Church; they who are presently in a state of spiritual desolation as nation. The first “tribulation” event being referred to was the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. But this desolation was not only to last just for that shorter period of time, but it was intended by God to last as long as “the times of the Gentiles” lasts in Church history. Luke 21: 24 says – “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations.” “And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” And that time, after that tribulation, the Jews as a nation will be converted and brought into the Church.

Then 2<sup>ndly</sup> I tried to show you that the New Testament Church, itself, has also experienced an “abomination of desolation” which came to her through Pagan and Papal Rome; the Roman Empire in both of these forms being an Antichrist first in Pagan Rome, and then transitioning into Papal Rome, the Antichrist, over the past 1200 years. But this Satanic system of deception by false doctrine and false worship of Papal Rome shall also come to an end when “the times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled. These times will come to an end with a time of tribulation which will come upon the Church also, in a prophetic event called “the slaying of the witnesses”. This time of tribulation is spoken of in Revelation Chapter 11, verses 2 and 7. Speaking of the false church bringing desolation to the true Church for a time period of 1260 years, it says in prophetic language in verse 2 - “And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.” (The forty-two months is the same as the 1260 days. They represent years. And then it says in verse 7 – “When they (that is the 2 witnesses of the Church in its teaching capacity, and in its

governing capacity) finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them; and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” This is the tribulation of the true Church’s witness being slain by the false Church’s propaganda of lies concerning the way of salvation, and what worship is true and pleasing to God. This too, will end with Christ’s coming spiritually to judge that false system, and His spiritual coming at that time is spoken of in Revelation Chapter 19, the time just before the commencement of the Millennium.

I have attempted to show you in past sermons that the conversion of the Jews, as a nation, will be the catalyst to the conversion in a general sense of many of the nations of the world in the Millennium which is coming before Christ’s Second Coming. Listen to Isaiah 60, verse 12 – “For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.” And Zachariah 14, verse 16 and 17 – “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” “And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.” This is what it will be like in the Millennium. And if we were to take the time to look back at verses 1-9 of Chapter 14 of Zachariah, you would find descriptive language that appears to be speaking about Christ 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming. But it is actually speaking of a spiritual coming of Christ, a coming which is spoken of in great detail in Revelation Chapter 19. Zachariah 14: 6 – “It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish.” “It shall be one day which is known to the Lord—neither day nor night.” “But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light.” “And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur.” “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth.” “In that day it shall be—The Lord is one, and His name is one.”

This is speaking of the time period within this present Church age which is called “the thousand years” in Revelation 20, verses 2 and verse 3. And it must come before Christ’s Second Coming and not after it, as I shall demonstrate in a few minutes. In the Millennium Satan shall be bound, and as it says in Revelation 20, verse 3, “And he (that is Christ) shall cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.” “But after these things he must be released for a little while.” You see, Satan is deceiving the nations as to the gospel and the truth of the word of God now, but he shall not do it during the whole of the thousand years when he is bound. During that time, the true gospel of Christ and His grace will go forth and conquer many hearts among the nations of the world. But at the close of that time the Devil will be released for “a little season”, or “a little while”. We do not know how long this will be, but we do know that he will “go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.”

This will all set the stage for Christ’s Second Coming. This deceiving of the nations, once again, and Satan’s gathering them together for war, will be another time of tribulation for the true Church of Jesus Christ. It will be during this time, at the end of the Millennium, that the final form of Antichrist will be manifested. There will probably be an attempt by Satan to reintroduce the false system of Roman Catholic worship by means of the revelation of a man claiming to be Christ Himself; a man who will be able to perform lying signs and wonders in order to deceive, if possible, the very elect of God. He will claim to be the Son of God returning to His people. You must remember that in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, that when Paul is describing for us “the Man of Sin”, the Antichrist, he speaks in this way. “Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us,

as though the day of Christ had come.” “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the Man of Sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” In other words, this final manifestation of Antichrist will be of a man claiming that he is Jesus Christ Himself returning; showing signs and wonders, and he will deceive many. “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” “And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.” “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.” “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”

Now I want you to notice the two-fold fulfillment here in the destruction of Antichrist. There is first, his being consumed with the breath of Christ’s mouth in Christ’s spiritual coming just before the Millennium, by the pouring out of the Spirit and the preaching of the word. The Antichristian system will prevail for a specified time, and then will fall. It will prevail with its false light over the true Church for 3 and a half years. During this whole time the Church’s witness and Christ’s cause through His Church will appear to have died. “When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. This appears to be a great politically organized suppression of the truth of Christ’s teaching and the church’s ability to enact discipline against sinful or false members. The cause of Christ will appear to have been slain and been lost. Revelation 11: 9 says: “Then those from the people, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, (that is, years) and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.” Then will come the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection. “Now after three-and-a-half days (years) the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.”(Revelation 11: 11)

And so we see that that Jews and any countries which militarily support them at that time, may indeed destroy the military forces of the various countries which will have surrounded the Jews and come against them at that time. But at the end of the Millennium, when this final manifestation of Antichrist reappears, Christ will destroy him with the brightness of His literal coming. Those who are deceived by this final form of Antichrist, and try to persecute and destroy the Church at that time will have to meet the Lord Jesus Himself; who having been revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, will take vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” (2 Thessalonians 1, verses 7 and 8)

**Now, 2ndly, I want to speak to you about Christ’s coming in the clouds.**

Our text in Luke 21: 27 says: “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. In Matthew 24: 30 it says: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” In Revelation 1: 7 it says: “Behold He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced him.” “And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.” “Even so, Amen.” You can see here that for all the tribes of the earth to mourn because of Him is as a result of the general resurrection having taken place at the moment of Christ’s return. If “even those who pierced Him” see Him, it must mean that they have been raised from the dead. If you turn over to Matthew Chapter 26, verse 59 you will read this: “Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.” “But at last two false witnesses

came forward and said, 'This fellow said, ' I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.' "And the high priest arose and said to Him, 'Do You answer nothing?' "What is it these men testify against you?" "But Jesus kept silent." "And the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" "Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said.'" "Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Now surely in the primary reference this could be fulfilled at no other time than the literal physical bodily return of Christ at His Second Coming. Even though Jesus came against Jerusalem in 70 A.D., it was with no literal physical return where He would be seen on the clouds of heaven. It is true that Christ came spiritually against Jerusalem in 70 A.D. through Titus and the Roman armies. It is true that Christ will come spiritually against all the political and ecclesiastic Antichristian forces just before the Millennium, during the darkest night of the Church. But those are only types of this much, much greater and final coming of Christ. In this coming, Jesus will raise all of the dead and judge the world.

**And this leads me 3rdly, and finally, to speak to you about Christ's gathering together of His Elect from the four winds.**

Mark 13, verse 27 says: "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven." What joy do I have in being able to share this truth with you. All of God's elect people from all ages of history will be gathered together on the glorious Day that Christ returns. 1 Thessalonians 4: 15 says: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." "And the dead in Christ will rise first." "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." When it says, "The dead in Christ will rise first, it means all the dead in Christ before that time. The resurrection of the righteous will be all on the same Day. There will be only one coming of Christ. And this is how it is referred to over and over again by the Apostles; the Coming of Christ. Therefore there will be no need for a Millennium after Christ comes, for all people will have been raised from the dead, and all will be judged. No the Millennium must come before Christ comes; for during the Millennium Satan will be bound and the nations no longer will be deceived, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

No, on this glorious Day of Christ's Return, we shall all be raised that have died in Christ, and we shall be raptured up into the air to be with Him; we shall instantly be changed and glorified to be like Jesus. We shall be gathered together from the four winds there will be so many of us. The angels will help us to organize ourselves together in a presentable fashion. From the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven we, as God's elect, shall be gathered together to be with our Lord. What a mistake it is, to think that there will be more than one literal bodily appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in the history of the Church and the world. I hope that for some of you the mystery is solved. The Rapture of the Church is not to be secret at all. It will be the most public event that the world has ever seen. Every eye will see Him. Those who believed in Him will admire Him and worship Him. Those who did not believe will mourn and weep and gnash their teeth. The doctrine of the imminent return of Christ is to be held as precious in relation to our death. We have seen that Christ will not return secretly; He will not return for just a select few, before the manifestations of the final forms that Antichrist will take, either before, or at the end of the Millennium. He will come at the end of all of these great events of gathering His elect by the preaching of the gospel. He will come after the Millennium and after Satan's little season. Therefore prepare yourself for His Coming by living to His glory and keeping His commandments now. Prepare yourself by sincerely living a life of faith and

doing righteous deeds, until He comes for you in death. For when you die, your spirit will be made perfect forever. There you shall await the resurrection of your body with the spirits of all the departed saints. And when that glorious Day comes, when Christ returns, we will be caught up and gather together in the clouds with all of God's elect, and meeting our Lord face to face. We should comfort one another with these words.