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Signs that the Savior is Coming; Matt 24:1-14

GPBC

11.21.21

Introduction – Advent season begins next Sunday, so as we are meditating on His first coming as we approach Christmas, we will also be meditating on His second coming for four weeks.

Our text begins today with Jesus departing the temple following the 7 woes of judgment pronounced upon the false religion of the Pharisees and Jesus' lament over Israel's rejection of Him as Lord and Savior. It's still Tuesday of the week of Passion and probably at this point late afternoon, early evening.

One of the statements Jesus made in His lament was a prophetic word regarding the house of Israel. There He was standing in the temple and He declares in v38 – See, your house is left to you desolate. In other words, when Jesus leaves the temple, so will salvation and life. It will just be an empty edifice – their empty religion will be housed in an empty temple.

As they leave the temple grounds, the disciples are perplexed at this saying. They begin to point out the temple buildings to Jesus as if to indicate, look at the grandeur of the temple. This is the place where we worship God. Surely it will not be desolate. So in v2 Jesus takes the prophecy one step further. Not only will it be desolate but it will actually be torn down. They had to let that sink in for a while. When they reach the Mount of Olives and can from that point view Jerusalem and the temple, they ask Him this question – when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming (v39) and of the end of the age? (instinctively the disciples understood when Jesus returns, this age will come to an end)

Jesus begins His reply with a warning. There will be many who will come in my name, even claiming to be the Christ and have the answers to that question. Don't listen to them. This is what you need to know. And He proceeds to tell them what will happen in this world right up to the end.

- I. Global Unrest and the Unrest of the Globe (vv6-8)
 - a. There's going to be global unrest – wars and rumors of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom. But not only will people

war with one another, the world itself will be in a state of unrest, famines and earthquakes. Lasting peace will not be found in this age, there will always be turmoil and disaster.

- b. Jesus says, “See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place” I take this to mean, Don’t be surprised that fallen humanity and a corrupt world will be dark at times under the weight of sin.
 - c. But the end is not yet – in fact these are but the beginning of the birth pains. In other words, wars and natural disasters are not the sign of His coming (v3). All of these things must take place because this world lies in sin. Now just like birth pains, they are going to continue in frequency and intensity. But don’t be alarmed. Don’t let anyone tell you this particular war or tragedy is the sign.
 - d. These are signs of the times but not the sign of His coming.
 - e. Now when we look back in history, Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. V2 was fulfilled before John wrote Revelation.
 - f. The destruction of the temple marks the beginning of the last days. John would write in 1 John 2:18 – Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come (Matt 24:5). Therefore we know that it is the last hour.
 - g. Let’s keep reading 1 John 2:19 (Matt 24:5)
 - h. The last days has been occurring now for over 2000 years. In other words, the age in which we live today is the last age of history. The next turn of history on God’s timeline of redemption is eternity.
 - i. All of these things – false Christs, false religions, people being led astray, wars, natural disasters, will continue throughout this final age, they will increase and intensify – but they are not the sign. and there are some more events that will continue to occur as well.
- II. Persecution of the People of God (v9)
- a. John 15:18-19
 - b. It is the story of the church from the apostles to the present day. Everywhere the gospel goes, two things are sure – people will come to Jesus and the world will hate the people who come to Jesus.
 - c. We walk the path that leads to heaven and glory and life and joy, but it is a difficult path in this life and a bloody path at times. Paul says through much tribulation you will enter the kingdom of heaven.

- d. When you follow the history of the church, you will find a trail of hardship and pain, imprisonment and torture, and death. As the gospel advances throughout the world, so do the number of martyrs.
 - e. Why so much hatred by all nations? Christians, like their Savior Jesus, are people of love and peace who go about doing good? Jesus says, “for my name’s sake” Christians are hated by the world for the same reason our Savior was hated by the world – they speak truth and they speak the gospel and darkness cannot tolerate either one.
 - f. Persecution will continue with frequency and intensity throughout this age, but that is not the sign of His coming.
- III. Falling Away from the Faith (vv11-12)
- a. Nothing purifies the church quite like persecution. There comes a point when you cannot fake a relationship with Jesus any longer because that relationship gets too costly.
 - b. There will always be those voices that degrade and ridicule the church and claim a better way, a safer path, one where you can be at peace with the world, even join it, and still go to heaven.
 - c. It’s very telling in our day that one of the trends among younger evangelicals in our day is deconstruction and deconversion. In other words, social media is filled with testimonies of those under 40 who are leaving the faith and posting how freeing and how good it is to finally shack off the chains of mom and dad’s rigid, archaic, judgmental faith.
 - d. But this leaving the church has been happening since the days of the NT, it will continue in frequency and intensity throughout this age but it is not the sign of His coming.
- IV. Loss of Love of Neighbor (v12)
- a. As sin increases in occurrence it also progresses in depravity. Think about it – we used to sleep with our doors unlocked now we arm our houses with alarm systems. Gruesome acts of violence that were at one time few and far between happen all the time.
 - b. As sin increases we begin to lose trust, to suspect, to fear, to withdraw. Have you seen the videos where people are violently attacked, raped, or murdered and the bystanders just walk on by or video with their phones.

- c. This coldness toward one another has always been and will continue in frequency and intensity throughout this age but it is not the sign of His coming.
 - d. So what is the sign of His coming? What is Jesus' answer to the question in v3?
- V. Completing of the Commission (v14)
- a. Then the end will come.
 - b. Matt 28:18-20
 - c. When the gospel reaches every tribe and every tongue, Christ will come. It has been advancing since the days of the NT and will continue to advance. In fact if you lay church history over a map of the world you will discover that the gospel, beginning in the Middle East, has swept over Africa, Europe, Australia, North and South America, and Asia, with a few pockets of people groups still to be reached in South America, Asia, and Southeast Asia.
 - d. There is much work left to do in terms of getting the gospel to lost people around the world, but there is not much territory remaining in terms of the gospel spreading to all nations and peoples.
 - e. With missionaries and social media and radio and tv and a million individual believers living out the faith all over the world in unknown places doing unknown gospel work, there is no way to tell how close we are or when exactly the day will be when the church will complete the commission.
 - f. But of this we can be sure – it will be completed and maybe in our lifetime.
 - g. So beyond doing our part to fulfill the Great Commission, what are we to do in the mean time with all this expected national turmoil and natural turmoil and persecution and falling away and love of neighbor growing cold?
- VI. A Powerful Promise for the Persevering (v13)
- a. Keep believing. Don't lose heart and don't lose hope and don't lose faith. Your salvation is nearer today than it has ever been before!
 - b. No matter how dark the days become, the light will soon break over the horizon, the trump will sound, the angel will shout, and Jesus will come to take us home!!