

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Signs of the Kingdom of God **Selected Scripture**

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SermonAudio Blurb: Having seen a critical shift in how Jesus presented the Kingdom of God in Matthew 13 it becomes evident that it is not going to happen in this first advent of Jesus. But the gospels do not leave us without a witness; rather, Jesus instructs His disciples, not the masses, as to what the signs would be. In this message we focus on a few chapters where these events and signs are explicitly taught to see what we might learn as we look forward to the coming reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

I. Introduction.

- A. A quick review regarding the Kingdom of God:
- B. We learned that the parables taught the “mysteries” of the Kingdom of God and so as we went through them we learned several new things previously unknown in Scripture. And this is something we need to remember because we have the fulness of the bible but at the time of Jesus they did not.
 - 1. First, that Israel would not, as a whole, embrace their King in His first advent. Some would but the majority would not.
 - 2. Second, right now true and false citizens of the kingdom will exist until the second coming where the false will be separated out and judged.
 - 3. Third, the Kingdom of God will start small and will inexorably grow until the fulness comes into existence.
 - 4. Fourth, to be a citizen of the kingdom requires you to have no other thing or person before Christ. To gain it requires you to be wholeheartedly committed to its King.
 - 5. Fifth, the Kingdom of God involves both things promise in the Old Testament and new things revealed in the New Testament.
- C. Today I want to give you what the bible says are some of the signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God.
 - 1. Jesus spoke rather plainly to His disciples and there is much in the gospels from which we can glean.

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2. We will focus primarily in Matthew since Matt Miller is preaching through Luke and you can listen to him develop that gospel.

II. Signs of The Coming of The Kingdom of God.

- A. The first sign is the most obvious, when we see Jesus return the Kingdom of God is here (Matthew 21 and Luke 19).
 1. Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem in Matthew 21:1-9. Two men are given the task to go in and find a specific young donkey for Him to ride on. Notice vs 4-5, for this is important.
 - a. It is a quote from Zechariah 9:9, which Grayson will preach from after Habakkuk.
 - b. And it is overtly stating the reality of the Messiah-King which all the people of Israel were supposedly waiting to come. But remember that they were already rejecting Him, especially the religious leaders who are telling them lies to keep them from believing.
 - c. The crowds give Him a huge welcome. They are calling Him the Son of David in vs 9. Clearly they are expecting the kingdom to come right then and therefore Jesus needs to do a lot more instruction on when to expect the Kingdom.
 2. In fact this is what Luke writes in 19:11 (turn)
 - a. So the disciples are hearing that the Kingdom of God is not yet coming but the crowds believe otherwise and receive Him with that expectation.
 - b. Realize that they saw this as a political and military event. He would come, take the throne of David in Jerusalem and destroy all the enemies of Israel. Rome is cast out and Israel is free. But they simply did not understand. They were all about a political kingdom, but had little interest in a repentance of their personal sin.
 - c. So again, it is obvious that the people, both the crowds and the disciples thought the Kingdom of God was imminent. He refutes this to His disciples.

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- d. The way he does this is via another parable in vss 12-27 about the nobleman and slaves.
 - (1) The nobleman is Jesus.
 - (2) Notice he is to go to a distant place for what purpose (12)? To receive a kingdom.
 - (3) After that occurs what then happens? He returns (12).
 - e. In the meantime the nobleman has given his slaves money to invest for him.
 - f. He rewards them according to their diligence and faithfulness. **But** that occurs when he returns. And what they receive is the ability and right to rule over cities.
3. This is describing Jesus going to heaven to receive the kingdom from His Father, which we have seen repeatedly is to happen. The Father gives His Son the kingdom. And **then** He will return, which is what we call the second coming of Jesus Christ.
 4. This parable helps show that there is no spiritual kingdom right now nor that it was going to happen in the first advent.
 5. In fact this fits with what the Apostles were preaching in the early part of Acts: *“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time”* (3:19-21).
 6. What happens next is important to see. In 19:29-40 there was the triumphal entry of Jesus. The people are crying out “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.”
 - a. In the gospel of Matthew it tells us this is a fulfillment Zechariah 9:9 (once again connecting back to a literal fulfillment of Old Testament promises).
 - b. And this is the last time they will call Him king.
 7. Vss 41-44 tells us why.

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- a. The key is that Jesus is not rejoicing with them, instead He weeps over them. Why? Because they did not recognize the time of their visitation.
 - b. If they truly believed in Him as the promised King then vs 42 would have happened, but their hearts were still hard. What a sad thing we read in this verse.
 - c. We have in these verses the tenderness of our Savior's heart. He is not cold-hearted and unfeeling about the reality that is before Him. But He is not surprised either, for it was known to Him and it is fully part of the program of God. But He weeps. And then He will judge and judge righteously.
8. So we see in this passage that though the King was present, the Kingdom was not *yet* to be. Rather, Jesus was to go and first receive that Kingdom from His Father.
9. The point of the parable is that Jesus is going to leave. And in the meantime He expects His servants to labor faithfully for Him, doing what He has commanded.
- a. To not do this is simply to show that you are not His servant and eternal wrath awaits.
 - b. But for the one who by faith labors with the expectation of reward there is much gain in the end. But he must be content to wait until the end of this age.
10. So we know that the Kingdom of God is here when we see Jesus return.
- B. The second sign is once the fulness of the Gentiles are gathered in (Matthew 22:1-13).
1. Again, a parable, which describes both the past and the future in its story.
 - a. Kingdom of God is like a wedding feast. But shall attend it?
 - b. The king is God the Father.
 - c. The king's son is Jesus.
 - d. Two invitations to come to a wedding feast by the Son's servants and they are ignored and rejected. The first is likely of John the Baptist and the disciples preaching to repent. The second is the

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- early chapters of Acts where again the call is to repent, but only a few do.
- e. Judgment then falls upon these people in vs 7.
2. Now the call to come and attend is **expanded** outward to the roads and byways. This is simply a description of the rest of Acts from chapter 8 onward, where Gentiles are now gathered in.
 3. And it is what Romans 11 is all about. Once all who are non-Jews are saved, then Israel will be saved and this happens when Christ returns.
- C. The third sign is a major increase in natural and civil unrest (Matthew 24:3-8).
1. In chapters 24-25 we have what is called the Olivet Discourse.
 2. 24:3 sets the stage—the disciples are admiring the temple and He makes a very disturbing statement that it will be destroyed and this sets up the whole section.
 3. These two chapters set the stage for the establishing of the Kingdom of God and therefore they are both very important and are a focus of many different viewpoints.
 4. Instead of taking up time on the positions, I will simply give you mine and go from there. They represent the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. to a smaller degree and the events leading up to Christ's return in a much bigger degree.
 5. In 24:4-8 He explains that there will be an increasing amount of wars, unrest, natural disasters and famine. But these are only the beginning though many will rise up claiming to be the savior because of these sorts of events.
 - a. It is interesting how in vs 8 he calls them “birth pangs.” The imagery is quite vivid if you have experienced or watched this with a woman.
 - b. The whole of creation is sort of developing ever increasing distress and contractions as the culmination and end of this age comes about.
- D. The fourth sign is a great apostasy within the church (Matthew 24:10-14).

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1. He then speaks of a growing apostasy among those who claim to follow Jesus in vs 10-13.
 - a. The word “many” in vs 10 should make all of us give pause before we pat ourselves on the back.
 - b. The only answer we can give to one another is to remain faithful and unmoving in the object of our faith, Jesus Christ.
 2. Vs 14 shows explicitly what we saw parabolically in Matthew 22. The gospel proclaiming Jesus as Lord and King would go throughout the world first. **So we can now say with confidence that the gospel is to be found throughout the world before we can expect the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.**
- E. The fifth sign is the abomination of desolation in the temple (Matthew 24:15-28).
1. The next key event is found in 24:15 which refers to the Abomination of Desolation which is a clear reference back into the book of Daniel 11 and 12.
 - a. There were two times prior to the time of Jesus that the temple was desecrated. Back in 597 BC with Nebuchadnezzar and in 167 BC by Antiochus IV.
 - b. Coming soon after the death of Christ will be the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - c. But there is a further event that is spoken of in the New Testament that occurs in the end of the age.
 - (1) In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 it is written, *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”*
 - (2) This person is also given the disturbing title of the “Beast” in Revelation 13, where the whole world worships him as God.

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- (3) This too has not happened. So we can expect the temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem for that must happen as well.
- F. The final sign is the events portrayed in Revelation about the Great Tribulation must play out.
1. Back to Matthew 24, vss 16-26 Jesus warns the reader in very Jewish terms to flee when this occurs. It will be a terrible time. Notice what is said:
 - a. Leave everything behind, to try to save something will cost you everything.
 - b. This will be known as the great tribulation. And it will be something unlike anything else in human history, which tells us right there why 70 AD cannot be the fulfillment, for many events far greater than that one have occurred.
 - c. Vs 22 says that no one would be survive this except for the fact that some are chosen, elect of God and so God intervenes and limits.
 - d. And in this time of great horror many will rise up claiming to be the Christ, the Savior. But do not listen to them.
 2. It is clear that Jesus is giving a flow of events that exist within a specific time frame. The disciples asked when the end of the age would come. Jesus begins to make time references in vs 6, 9, 14, 15, 19, and 29 are all examples of a chronological progression.
 3. Vs 29-31 is key: At the **end** of the tribulation Jesus, here as the Son of Man as spoken of again in Daniel, shall come.
 - a. Note how this will be a very public coming.
 - b. And it will be one of mourning and terror as He comes not weak and mild but as a conquering King.
 - c. And it is this coming that the angels gently rebuked the Apostles in Acts 1:11. He will come in the same way as you watched Him ascend to heaven.
 - d. And He will cause His angels to gather the elect to be saved. Here we see a clear reference to His many parables where the tares and wheat or good fish and bad ones are separated by His angels.

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4. Building off of this He continues with a parable of the fig tree. To those who pay attention to the development of the fig tree they can tell when summer is coming. In the same way, those who are present in the final days and who are observant will realize what is coming and be prepared.
 - a. So notice what He says in vs 34. This is a point of question and disagreement regarding the coming of Christ.
 - b. The question that you need to deal with is to whom does the phrase “this generation” refer?
 - (1) Many will say it is the time frame of the disciples. But then there are several problems, the most important is “until all these things take place.” Those things have not occurred, most importantly is the second coming of Jesus Christ.
 - (2) It is better to see it as referring to the generation in which those signs all take place. Once the events begin to unfold they will do so rather rapidly is the point.
 - (3) But the harsh reality is that most people in that day will not notice the times and events. Which is the point of vss 38ff. Everyone will be going about with their lives like in the days of Noah. Even after repeated warnings they will think tomorrow is coming just like the people of Noah, until the rain came and the door of the ark was shut.
 - (4) And so He gives more parables to illustrate to the disciples His point.
 - (a) In vss 45-51 it is about the faithful and unfaithful slave. Neither knows when the master will return but they react in two different ways. Take note of the unfaithful servant in vs 51 if you think that everything is fine even if you choose to be unfaithful and live for sin.
 - (b) In 25:1-13 it is about 10 virgins who are to be waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. In that culture they would wait for the bridegroom to come for his bride and they would meet him and bring him to her.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

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- i) But only some of these young women were faithful to stay prepared while the others assumed they had time to prepare. And like the unfaithful slave here we see those who thought they would participate in the wedding feast but are categorically rejected by the groom.
 - ii) The Groom is Jesus, the bride is His people and the virgins are professing believers. Some show themselves to be truly following Christ and others find themselves cast away into hell.
- (c) Then in vss 14-30 is another parable about a master who goes away and leaves his slaves to continue to do work.
- i) He gives them money (talents, around 6,000 denarii. A day-laborer would have to work over 19 years to earn one talent). He leaves and all but one slave was faithful to invest and expand his holdings.
 - ii) When he returns they are all rewarded except the unfaithful one who hid the money so he could not lose any of it. He is cast away forever. Jesus is the master who leaves. The slaves are those who claim Him as their Lord. But in the end, when He returns not all will be found to be truly His. Some are rewarded greatly according to their faithfulness in this age. But some will show themselves to be unbelievers and cast into hell.

III. Conclusion.

- A. The signs are simple and yet a bit frightening of the coming of Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom.

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1. The first is that the gospel is to go to all the nations and peoples of the earth.
 - a. This is a joyous promise and reality. And we see the end effect of it in Revelation 5:9, “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”
 - b. But it is frightening too as you realize that the nations yet to be evangelized are the most dangerous for believers. It means that Christians must love the gospel and the Kingdom of God more than their life. It means that many must lay down their lives that these people might hear of King Jesus.
2. The second is that things will not get better leading up to the Kingdom of God.
 - a. We have witnessed in the last 2,000 years countless wars, pestilence, and destruction. This is something post-millennialism errs on, seeing that we are gradually moving toward a better and ultimately Christian world.
 - b. Evil men and women rise up and fall away and humans keep buying into the lie that things will get better. But in an age that is under the dominion of sin this cannot be.
 - c. And as the day approaches when our Lord returns it is only proper to expect our great enemy, Satan, to hurl his own vile wrath against those who bear the image of his God whom he hates. And this is exactly what Revelation portrays.
 - d. **But** in those moments of relative peace so many who claim to love Jesus more than life show that they love life and safety more than Jesus. And then in the times of great trouble they shake their fists at God, angry that somehow He is cheating them of this safety.
 - e. America’s great idols are that of safety, comfort and convenience. Threaten any of these and we react in shameful ways.
3. Three groups of people are identified as we considered signs of the Kingdom of God.

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- a. The first is simply the unbeliever. This is the one who does not love God. Who does not believe and trust in Jesus Christ as their savior. Who has no interest in God.
 - b. The second are the ones who think they are believers. This one claims to be looking for the bridegroom, like the parable of the virgins. Or who claims to be a servant of the Lord, like the slaves of the landowner. But in the end, they are found not waiting or preparing for His promised return, but living for themselves with their goals in mind.
 - c. These two groups shall suffer loss in the fullest sense of the word. They shall be found guilty of unfaithfulness to their Creator and their King. Eternal damnation is their end.
 - d. The third are those who truly love God and show it in faithfulness. They order their lives under His rule and make His will their desire. They live with an expectation that He may return and they desire to be ready rather than ashamed at His coming. These will enjoy life eternal with their King. These will rule with Him in His earthly kingdom
- B. And that is what we will see next week, the Kingdom of God on earth.

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Community Group Questions

1. To what degree have you considered your current choices in light of Christ's return? What are competing ways we experience when thinking about the kind of choices we make?
2. What stands out with the idea that things will move from bad to worse over time? How might this impact your engagement in the public and private sectors? Why or why not?