

## Madness: The King's Coming

*The King's Coming*

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 24

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I do want to encourage you this morning to turn in your Bibles to the book of Matthew chapter 24. And if you are a first time guest or visitor or a long term member, let me encourage you as we turn to Matthew 24 to realize that we are coming very quickly to the end of this study in the book of Matthew, the very first book of the New Testament, looking at Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords coming as literal, utter madness. And what I mean by that is every aspect of his life and his ministry in particular in the book of Matthew is completely maddening from the perspective of an earthly king or earthly royalty.

Today we come to Matthew chapter 24 and as we prepare to study what we know as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, allow me to share with you that you have opened your Bibles to one of the most debated, most discussed and most hotly intense and arguable chapters in all of the Bible. I promise you that if you were to go do research today, whether in book form, or online form, you will find more than 24 different opinions about Matthew chapter 24. That being said, can we do our best as we open Matthew chapter 24? We are not going to go verse by verse. We are not going to go word for word, but may we do our best today to come to somewhat common ground of what this great passage of Scripture teaches us about the soon coming of Jesus Christ

And before we actually read specific words, I want to begin with a point that I call preliminary thoughts, just some preliminary thoughts about Matthew chapter 24 and how they relate to us. And the first preliminary thought is this, the subject matter that is at hand. This entire chapter and also including chapter 25 are all about the second coming of Jesus. And I know often times we talk about the second coming and sometimes get confused. Sometimes we get bothered. Sometimes people even get a little over zealous. I hear, sometimes, criticism about this subject matter that an over emphasis of it will cause someone to lose sight of every day life.

Well, allow me to give you some statistics about the subject matter of the second coming of Jesus. Statistics, to me, are really important, because numbers don't lie even though liars use numbers. That being said, did you know that in the ministry of Jesus and in the Bible in particular, for every reference or every discussion we have about heaven, there are two about hell? Jesus talked more about hell than he did about heaven. I think he was trying to share with us statistically the importance of making sure we don't go there.

Let's talk about the second coming. For every reference in the Bible to the first coming, references to where Jesus would be born, references to coming out of Egypt, references to how he will be crucified, references to the fact that he would even rise from the dead, for every reference we have regarding his first coming, there are eight involving his second coming. That means for every Christmas verse there are eight second coming verses. For

every Easter verse there are eight second coming verses. And it is utterly critical for us to realize today that this subject matter, though confusing at times and disconcerting at others, please understand that your Bible is so saturated with it that even the book of Matthew dedicates two entire chapters to what we know as the Olivet Discourse or Jesus' describing his second coming.

Luke chapter 21, the entire chapter, Mark chapter 13, the entire chapter are about Jesus' second coming. So, because this subject matter is so critical to God, it needs to be critical to us, an eight-to-one ratio. That is the subject matter. The second preliminary thought that I want you to see is what I call the structure of Matthew chapter 24. And I want to go ahead and encourage you to turn to Matthew chapter 24 beginning at verse one. It says:

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?<sup>1</sup>

Now when I speak about structure you cannot look at the answer to a question without looking at the question. So many times when we deal with the second coming of Jesus, so many times when we look at Matthew chapter 24, we just pick up in verse five. And verse five is where Jesus begins this discourse and this sermon talking about all the things surrounding the end time events and most often seen in the book of Revelation. But you cannot understand what he is saying in verse five on if you don't look at the question that he is answering. In verse three his disciples say:

“...when shall these things be?”

These things are in reference to verse two when Jesus says the day is coming when what you know as the temple, what you know as the temple mount, every stone will be knocked down.

Then they say, “Well, what about the sign of your coming and the end of the world?”

As you go through Matthew chapter 24 I think it is easily divisible. For about the first 31 verses or so you have this discussion about end time events and chronology and the last generation, all these things. And it almost answers that: When shall these things happen question.

Then beginning in verse 32 through 35, and we will talk about this more in a moment, you have this interesting, intriguing parable that Jesus tells and then he begins to preach again. The reason I go into elaborate detail here is that you cannot separate the answer from the question. At the same time, you need to understand when Jesus is answering and

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 24:1-3.

what question he is answering. It is almost as though he answers the first question, takes a dramatic pause, which we will talk about in just a moment, and then he picks up on this second one. In other words, we can mess up our understanding of Jesus' return when we make chapter 24 of Matthew answer a question that was not asked. You cannot separate the question from the answer.

So a kind of a structural approach that I wanted you to see, the last kind of preliminary thought, an introduction, so to speak is, what should our strategy be for understanding the second coming?

And if you are a first time guest or visitor with us, what you are about to hear is something that our folks have heard time and time and time again and it cannot and it should never get old. I have got three points. Three simple things that you need to know to understand how you need to respond to Jesus' soon coming return. The first thing you need to know is this. It is going to happen. That is point number one. You cannot argue it. It is going to happen. In fact, 2 Peter 3:3 says in the last days there will, come scoffers who say, "Where is His coming?" And so it is going to happen. The second thing you need to understand is this. In God's great calendar of events, it is next. It is God's next great event on his calendar of what we know for the world. So Jesus is coming. He is coming back next and, number three, the most critical thing for your life in response to this is that you or nobody you know, no matter how educated, how popular, how wealthy, how many degrees, nobody can predict when it is going to happen, nobody.

Let me give some of you some great advice. Turn off your TV. Turn off your radio. Turn off your websites or whatever you are going to. When you begin to listen to men and women, "of God", who claim they know when Jesus is coming back, turn them off. It's pretty simple. In fact, later in chapter 24 Jesus makes this statement. Not even the angels or I know. Only my Father in heaven knows. And if the angels don't know, how do you think he is going to give you or that guy some special insight into what is going to happen?

That is our strategy. He is coming back. It is next. And there is not a one of us who can predict it or pin down the time in which it is going to occur. Now those are preliminary thoughts. That is just an overview of Matthew chapter 24. And so the next thing I want to deal with—and this is when we start diving into the text—is what are the particular things or the particular aspects that we need to pay close attention to?

As I mentioned earlier, beginning in verse five Jesus begins this discourse. It goes two chapters long in the Bible in Matthew chapter 24 and 25 where he begins to answer these questions. When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?

The first particular thing or the thing that we need to take notice of is this, that there will be an increase in "perversions". Now I use the word perversion in quotations for a reason. When we hear the word perversion or we hear someone called a pervert, we most naturally gravitate to a lifestyle or a characterization that involves improper intimate

issues in somebody's life, rightly so. But the word perversion or to pervert something means to take something and utilize it or twist it for a purpose it was never meant to be used for. It just simply means to make something what it was never meant to be.

We are going to see as we draw closer to the return of Jesus an increase of perversions in our culture and in our world. Let's begin with verse five. He says:

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”<sup>2</sup>

When somebody on radio or TV or in person declares that they are the Messiah or they have characteristics or titles of the Messiah, they are a perversion. They are twisting and turning. There is only one Christ. There is only one Messiah. There will be an increase of people claiming that they have a corner on the truth. And yet we know there is only one way, one truth and one life. That is through Jesus Christ.

You continue to read in these passages, verse six and verse seven. It is all about there will be wars and rumors of wars and that the end is not yet. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilence, earthquakes in diverse places.

Verse eight. “All these are the beginning of sorrows.”<sup>3</sup>

We are going to see a perversion increase that things that used to be stable are going to become unstable. Things that used to be predictable are going to become unpredictable. And people out there can blame it on whomever they want, but Jesus said this is going to happen. It is the beginning of sorrows. You pick it up in verse nine:

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.<sup>4</sup>

This passage of Scripture talks about those who are in close relationship to one another, those who go to church together, who are related to one another. They will act improperly toward one another. We will see an increase in the perversion or the twisting of what we call a right relationship or a family structure or whatever you want to call it. It will increase. There will be a twisting of what God meant it to be versus what it has and is continuing to become. And the amazing thing is that all these things happen in our culture in the name of progress. We have an increase in perversions.

But probably the greatest one is found in verse 15. Verse 15 of Matthew 24 says that one day—and this is in light of Daniel chapter nine—it says that:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel...”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 24:5.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 24:8.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 24:9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 24:15.

What that says is there is coming a day in the future. When there will an event the Bible calls the great tribulation. One day there will be an event where an individual known as the antichrist, or in the book of Revelation the beast, will rise to power. He will captivate the entire world. And at some point in the future of history he will go into a place known as the temple on the temple mount in a city known as Jerusalem. According to the Word of God he will go in completely unworthy and he will make an abominable sacrifice in that place. What is that antichrist figure doing? He is twisting what that was meant to be. He is perverting that building. He is perverting that sacrifice. He is perverting everything about it. And as you read Matthew 24 and 25 you see this incredible increase of perversions, of twisting things to be something they were never meant to be.

Does this not sound to you like a nightly newscast in our culture? We take something that is meant to be A, and all of the sudden now we celebrate it should be B. And we twist it and we turn it and Jesus told us as we get closer particular things we need to look for are an increase in perversions.

The second thing that is particular and I think we need to take notice of is what I call an intriguing parable. Turn over to verse 32 of Matthew chapter 24. Jesus communicates about all kinds of end time scenarios and situations. Then in verse 32:

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.<sup>6</sup>

In Matthew chapters 24 and 25 there are two complete chapters on the end of the world, the sign of Jesus' coming and when these things—specifically the temple events—will occur. Yet in the midst of this great sermon, great message, great teaching, Jesus interjects this, what I would call an intriguing parable. Why is the parable of a fig tree? Why not the sycamore tree? Why not any other tree? He specifically tells a parable of the fig tree. If you have done any study of fig trees and their illustrative aspects in the Old Testament there is only one classification that you can give to them. You can go to the book of Habakkuk chapter three, particularly verse 17. You can go to Jeremiah 24:1 and following. You can go to Isaiah 38:21 and continue. Do you know what you will discover? It is every time there is an allusion of God to an illustration of the fig tree he is talking about the people and the entity that we know as Israel. And what he is saying in Matthew 24 is when you see the fig tree begin to bloom, pay attention.

Do you realize that for 1,900 years that fig tree, in human eyes lie barren, non-existent. Although the people in their genealogies did exist, there was no land. There was no location. There was no flag. But in 1917 in this marvelous event surrounding the events of World War I there was a declaration made known as the Balfour Declaration. For the

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 24:32-35.

first time in 1,900 years they said that the small piece of land that looks like a black-eyed pea off the side of the sea is now to be for the Israelites. It was declared in 1917. It didn't become a realization until after World War II. And I want you to think about this with me if you don't believe this is an intriguing parable.

In World War II a heinous, despicable man rises to power by the name of Adolf Hitler. He systematically annihilates and kills over six million Jewish people and the ones who survive did not have much strength. Within three years they fight their own war for independence and they win without anybody's help.

You say, "How did that happen?"

When you see the fig tree bloom again, it is almost like the Lord Jesus Christ is saying, "Guys, when you start seeing stuff that doesn't make sense and I told you it was going to happen, please pay attention."

Twenty years later the year is 1967 and the entire Middle East decides we have had enough of these folks. Let's get rid of them. The entire Middle East wages war on what we know as Israel and six days later Israel has whooped them all. Seven years later on Israel's holy day, Yom Kippur, a group of entities from the north, out-numbering the Israelites 100 tanks to one, on a holy sabbath day where nobody was on duty, invades and Israel wins. How many more does it take?

Do you realize that we live in the land of free, the home of the brave? We have the greatest military fighting force in the world. But do you know who our pilots learn from? They learn from the Israelis. Do you realize the intrigue?

Listen. When you see this entity that has been barren and was laid waste for 1,900 years, when it not only resurfaces but becomes, from what was desert, to be the leading exporter of fruit to Europe. When it becomes the leading trainers of those of a military capacity? Please, guys, this is absolutely intriguing. Pay attention. Jesus is coming back.

And then there is what I call the interesting parallel. We pick up the story in verse 36. But..., I love when Jesus uses that word.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.<sup>7</sup>

In the allusion that Jesus gives to his second coming he says to go all the way back to Genesis six. Go all the way back to the first book of the Bible and look at the story of Noah. Now let's think about the story of Noah and how it is an interesting parallel for

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 24:36-39.

the world we live in. According to Genesis chapter six it said all the world had fallen into utter wickedness. Sounds like our world. It says in Genesis chapter six that God called a man by the name of Noah, according to Hebrews 11, to be a preacher of righteousness. For 120 years Noah began to build what we know as his ark. And if you study the story that including his wife, his three kids and their wives, only eight human beings got on the ark.

In other words when truth was being spoken, most and the majority ignored it, mocked it or ridiculed it. And yet Jesus says it is going to be the same as in the days of Noah, when I am about to return. There will be people in homes and people in businesses and people in churches who will stand up and speak the truth of the Word of God and they will be mocked. They will be ridiculed. And most people will criticize them.

But what happened in Noah's story? There came a day that nobody suspected. There came a day that was preached about. There came a day when judgment came. And the majority perished in the judgment.

Jesus says, "As it was in the days of Noah, it will happen, then, too." It says they were eating and drinking and giving in marriage. It is almost as if they were so busy with life that they didn't recognize the very one who gave them life. And Jesus says, "Look to the story of Noah. What was happening is the rebellion, the ignoring of the truth. It will happen again." Here is his illustration. Look to Noah. Look to the story. This is how it is going to occur.

And so when we look to the particular aspects we have to look at the story of Noah. We have to look at the intriguing rise of what we know as the entity of Israel. We have to look into the increase of all of the perversions that are happening, which leads to the final point. Because I know there are some of you out there, smarter than I, are thinking, Jeff, we have heard this message before. We have heard it over the decades. In fact, there is literature saying this message has been preached basically in simplistic context for centuries. Why would you say that today is more urgent than then?

Remember my three points? Jesus is coming back. It is next. You can't predict it. In other words, we need to live our lives every day in anticipation that that is the day in which he returns. And so my final point, the walking away, how do we live life with what all we say? I want to give you some basic every day parameters for living.

Knowing what you know, having studied what you have studied, having looked at ideas in Matthew 24 you may have never looked at before, how do you leave this place? How do you go back into your home, back into the work place, back into the school house, whatever you do? What do you do? How do you respond? Three simple things that you need to do. First thing is this. Stop the madness. Stop being a dog chasing its tail.

Now we have discovered this. We have Boston terriers. We have always had Boston terriers in our home. And one of the things that we love and we have discovered in recent days with our new Boston terrier, who is almost a year old, and as feisty as any Boston

terrier, is that if you get one of those laser pointers, she will chase it until her tongue is hanging out. You realize, that is what the world has done to a lot of you, right? It has got a laser pointer out. Some of you are chasing finances. Some of you are chasing power and some of you are chasing this. Some of you are chasing that. And what happens is you end up just running yourself ragged and literally accomplishing nothing.

At the end of the night when we have worn our little dog out, she has not caught the dot. She has only exhausted herself. And so the first thing we need to do—and this will be a little bit clearer in just a moment—is we need to stop the madness of this thing called life that gets us nowhere quick.

Now before you think, oh, great, that means I can quit everything, go to the hill and start humming and waiting for Jesus. No, no, no. Stop the madness.

And here is the second point, start being missional. Now that is a fancy word which means that we ought to be living our life for the sake and the purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And you can break that down into two different dynamics. The first one is this. To be missional means you need to go on mission.

You do realize when you leave our campus today the sign says you are now entering the mission field. And I realize that missions take place in restaurants. It takes place in homes. It takes place in a community center and on a ball field.

As you have heard earlier in our worship service about a strategic mission endeavor of our church, and there are many more. Please understand that I, as your Pastor, want to encourage you. I want everybody at some point, somehow, to try to go on a mission trip or mission endeavor.

You say, “Why would you do that?”

There are multiple reasons. Number one you need the experience. Number two the purpose of a mission trip is so that the fire that God lights in you there rekindles here. That is the purpose. Why as a pastor do I say I want everybody to go somewhere at some time? Because the heart you give for God, the passion you get to help there, I want to then see it here. We go on mission to help there, but we also go because you can only be there a week or two a year and you are here 50, 51 weeks a year. We want that to transfer here. We need to be going on mission.

And, number two, we need to be giving to missions. As I shared with you earlier in the service, from every dollar that comes through our door somehow in some capacity, almost 20 percent of it goes somehow, some way to missions.

Please understand. You can never give too much to this, period. And we could do all the math and we could do all the statistics and I won't belabor you with this, but do you understand that in our American-chase -the -laser -pointer culture, we are giving less as a percentage to the gospel of Jesus Christ today than they even did in the Great



Depression? We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Why? Because we are chasing the dot and we are running around and we are getting stuff that rusts and we are getting stuff that goes out of date and we are getting stuff that we can't even take with us.

Stop the madness and start being missional. And the last and most important piece of this whole message is to stay the course.

Let me close with this simple analogy and illustration. There are so many people who when they hear about the message of Jesus' return, fall into one or two sides of a great drift. There is a group of people who sell everything they have, go hide up on a mountain and say, "Jesus, come back now." And they will be there for a long time. Why, because we can't predict it. It could be five minutes or it could be 500 years. And there is another group of people that hunker down and get ready for the big war. And then the rest of us who think, "I don't know what to do."

Let me tell you what to do about being ready for the fact that Jesus is going to come back at any moment. It is called stay the course.

You say, "Jeff, what do you mean by stay the course?"

Let me ask you a question. What has God called you to do? If you cannot answer that question, don't go the mountains. If you cannot answer that question, don't go to the cave. You have to ask yourself. What has God called me to be about? What is my life's purpose? What am I supposed to do? Who am I supposed to know? What am I supposed to do here?

And do you know what the the second thing is? Keep doing it until he comes back or changes his mind.

Now let me give you my illustration. Some years ago I was a frustrated college student. I was about 20, almost 21 years of age. I was a junior in college. I was studying to be in the ministry, what I do now for a living. But when you spend all of your life taking in and very little of your life giving out you feel like time is wasting, Jesus is going to come back and I am going to be stuck in the library when somebody else is getting to preach. And I had this wonderful opportunity to have a meal with a man who had been a minister, a preacher, an evangelist, probably for about 30 years of his life. He happened to go to the same university I went to and he knew some of the same stories. And we talked and had a good time. And then he shared with me that many of his friends had gotten so enamored with Jesus' coming that they dropped out of school, started doing who knows what and years down the road found themselves so far off from what God had called them to do. And he looked at me across the table at that restaurant and here is what he asked me. He said, "Right now, today, what has God called you to do?"

I said, "He has called me to be in school. He has called me to finish my degree."

He said, "Son, if Jesus comes back tonight, you had better be in the library with books open."

Now I want you to think about that for a moment, because how many times do we get caught saying, "Well, if this is when Jesus comes, then, man, what a waste of time." Or this isn't good. I need to be here. I need to be there. I need to be...

No, no, no. If he has called you to change diapers, you change diapers. If he has called you to work, you work. If he has called you to go to school, you go to school, whatever it is. If he said this is what you need to be doing right now, then you better be doing that right now if he returns. Because if he comes back and says, "You are supposed to be there, you are over here," you understand that is called disobedience.

And so as we prepare for our time of invitation, this may not be the question you had expected in light of the second coming message. Do you know what God has called you to do right now, because right now is important when he comes back, whenever he comes back.