

Signs of the End of the Age A Woman in Labor

Studio Session 85

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Following the events of the year Y2K, a date and a time that brings back mixed emotions to many Christians, it appears that there has been a dramatic change in the way that church people view the events of the return of the Lord. Before Y2K everyone was thinking that the return of the Lord was imminent. Even the secular world began to pay attention to the things that were coming out of the church. Many people became quite extreme in their prophecies and prognoses as to what the times were and what they would mean. After the year Y2K came and went—the year 2000 and the phenomenon generally reported as Y2K, related to a world-wide crash of computers throwing the world's financial markets into chaos and all manner of things being affected, from trade to transportation, etc.—after that didn't happen as was prophesied, there came to be in the church a very deep sense of disappointment.

At that time I began to say publicly that I was more concerned that because the church felt that Jesus had disappointed it [the church] and had not returned on schedule or as they intended the prophecies should say, that now no one would believe in the return of the Lord. The return of the Lord—the second coming of Christ—is only matched in human history by the first coming of the Lord and it is meant to be the summation of everything God intended from the beginning because it is with this summation that we will see the revealing of the sons of God, of all that God had been doing in the world, all that had been set in motion even before the creation. Jesus himself spoke about his return in a remarkable conversation recorded in three of the four gospels: in **Matthew 24**, in **Mark 13**, and in **Luke 21**, all three writers record the same conversation that Jesus had with his disciples. This tells us that the matter of the return of the Lord is well-documented in the Scriptures, not only in these three passages but in numerous other passages throughout the New Testament and in the writings of Paul and Peter and even John, principally of course the book of Revelation.

This brings us to an understanding that I believe is necessary for us because the events that are unfolding in the earth right now have everything to do with setting the stage for the return of the Lord and it tells us that we are actually at the point that the Scriptures describe as the “beginnings of sorrows.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“All these are the**

beginning of sorrows.” – Matthew 24:8) Human events are meant to be the background around which the return of the Lord would take place. Jesus himself, when He spoke of his return, spoke of signs in the heavens above and signs in the earth below. As Jesus was going back to heaven—this is the story of **Acts 1**—two angels declared to those standing by, to his disciples, “You men of Galilee, why are you looking up into the heavens? This same Jesus that was taken from you into heaven will come again in the same manner in which you have seen him go into heaven.” (Inserted actual verse —**“They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”** – **Acts 1:10,11)**)

This testimony is part of that body of evidence in the Scriptures that corroborate what Jesus himself said, but let’s go to the principle passages: **Matthew 24**, **Mark 13** and **Luke 21**. In **Matthew 24**, the following is said, **“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.”** (Inserted – **Matthew 24:1-8)**)

Then He adds—to those signs—He adds, **“Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ‘At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn.”**” Now He goes on from there to say, **“They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”** (Inserted – **Matthew 24:29-31)**)

Now the reason I read this lengthy reading was to use it as a skeletal framework for your understanding of what Jesus is saying concerning the events that will culminate in the return of the Lord. Now keep in mind where this began. You will find companion passages to this reading in **Mark 13** and in **Luke 21**. I will refer to these readings as we go. They will fill in the details in this structural passage of **Matthew 24**. Now in the

beginning of this we are introduced to Jesus the Prophet. This is the greatest of the prophets.

Moses put it this way, in **Deuteronomy** he said, “ A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up from among the brethren like unto me. Him shall you hear in all things, whatsoever he shall command you and it shall come to pass that the soul that will not listen to this prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.” (Inserted – actual verse —**“The Lord said to me: ‘What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.’” – Deuteronomy 18:17-19**) Peter was moved to restate this verse in the book of **Acts**, the **3rd chapter**, **verse 22** to bring the understanding of Jesus as the greatest prophet up to date in the New Testament. (Inserted – actual verse—**“For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’ – Acts 3:22,23**)

Now the greatest of the prophets remarked to his disciples as they were on the Mount of Olives observing the Temple and thinking about the role of the Temple in the life of the Jewish person 2000 years ago. Jesus, while they were on the Mount of Olives, intending to give a prophetic utterance, commented on the comments of his disciples about how beautiful the Temple was and He said, “You see these buildings? They will not be left here, one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” (Inserted – **Matthew 24:2**) Now you must imagine how this must have shocked the disciples because for the Jew in that day—and his disciples of course were all Jews—for the Jew in that day, 2000 years ago, the thought of the Temple being so utterly destroyed... the Temple had been burned before when Israel was taken into Babylonian captivity but it was not so utterly destroyed. And if you saw the stones of the ancient Temple you would understand why the thought was that it would not be easy to destroy it.

These were massive hewn stones weighing, in some cases, several tons, so the thought of them being thrown off the mountain so completely that one stone would not be left upon another, in the mind of the Jew and clearly in the mind of the disciples of Jesus 2000 years ago, you are talking about the destruction of the house of God. The question is: why would God allow this temple to be so utterly destroyed? In the minds of his disciples the only explanation for this was that it would of course be the end of the age and the cataclysms at the end of the age would be the only phenomena that these disciples and most Jews in their day would entertain as a rational explanation for such utter destruction of the Temple.

So they asked the question, as one would expect them to. This was their question: They

said, in response to Jesus' declaration, "Not one stone will be left here upon another; every one will be thrown down." Later on as the disciples had thought about what Jesus had said they were sitting on the Mount of Olives, and in **verse 3** the disciples came to him privately; it was obvious that they were bothered by this extreme statement that they had heard and equally clear that they had processed this information in a certain way and that is evident from the three questions that they asked. They said, " 'Tell us,' these disciples said, 'Tell us, when will this happen,' that is when will there be the overthrow so utterly that one stone will not be left upon another that will not be thrown down. " 'Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?'" (Inserted – actual verse—"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?'" – Matthew 24:3)

Now it is possible to read these three questions as separate: that they wanted to know when will this happen, when will the Temple be destroyed? It's also possible that they wanted to know two other things: What will be the sign of your coming and what will be the end of the age? But even if you generously interpret the question in favor of the disciples essentially asking one question in three parts the explanation that, to them, the fall of the Temple could not possibly be understood outside of a cataclysm that would bring about the end of the world.

Think about it: If you were living in those times, if this was the house of God, if this is where God dwelt, if this is where the Holy of Holies was, if this is where the Ark of the Covenant—where God would meet the Jews at the Mercy Seat—if this represented the presence of God then the obvious question is: Why would God permit such an utter destruction of the house in which the Ark was and his presence was housed? And again, the only explanation was that of course it would take the events of the end of the age to do this. They did not—indeed no Jew at that time assumed—they did not assume the destruction of the Temple so utterly as it occurred in AD 70, apart from the return of the Lord.

So if one has the theology that these fellows knew exactly what questions to ask and that Jesus answered their questions in the manner in which they asked them, then of course, since the Temple has been destroyed (and it was destroyed in AD 70) you would have to spiritualize the return of the Lord because none of the other signs regarding the return of the Lord are evident, such as: when He went to heaven, in **Acts, chapter 1**, angels assured the disciples that He would return in the same manner in which they were witnessing his ascension. Well in which way did He go up? "**While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.**" (Inserted – Acts 1:9) And the angels said, "This same Jesus, will come again in like manner as you have seen him go up." (Inserted – actual verse—"Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven,

will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” – Acts 1:11)

Many today spiritualize the return of the Lord by a quasi-logical format. They say that the questions that the disciples asked were the right questions and they asked these questions with the appropriate understanding. Therefore since the Temple has been destroyed, obviously the Lord has returned. Well that is rubbish because, number one, it assumes that they understood that these events would be different and number two, the exact manner in which the Lord was said to have returned from heaven has not occurred. He was supposed to return from heaven in the manner in which his disciples saw him go up, as stated in **Acts 1**. He was supposed to come back from heaven with a shout of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, according to **I Thessalonians, chapter 4**.

(Inserted – actual verse—**“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” – I Thessalonians 4:16**) And the dead in Christ would have arisen, and also those who were alive and remain would have been translated in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; none of which has happened.

But for those who would spiritualize the return of the Lord I would remind you that when Jesus said, “There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” He really meant that. Today, not a single stone of the buildings of the Temple remains stacked one upon the other. Some people confuse the Western, or Wailing Wall for a part of what is left of the Temple. No, it’s not. Around the Temple Mountain there was a wall, probably two hundred yards from the Wall to the nearest point of the building of the Temple. The Wall was not part of the Temple, it was the wall around the city of Jerusalem. But as to the Temple itself, not one stone has been left upon another that hasn’t been thrown down.

That being so, the question is: How did that occur? The answer is very simple. When the Roman legionnaires burned the Temple in AD 70, you will recall Vespasian Flavius led the siege and later returned to Rome to be the new emperor, and his son Titus continued the siege until August of that year, according to the historian Josephus. In August of that year the Roman armies overwhelmed the city of Jerusalem and destroyed its population and among their acts of destruction they burned the Temple to the ground. Now a thin sheet of gold overlaid the roof of the Temple and the burning of the Temple melted the gold and it trickled off the roof and some of it settled between the stones of the Temple where it was later discovered by Roman legionnaires. The rumor quickly spread that the Jews had used gold as mortar between the stones of the Temple so these overworked, underpaid legionnaires went treasure hunting and they literally overthrew every stone.

The prophecies of Jesus are meant to be this literally fulfilled. All prophecy in the Scriptures is meant to be literally fulfilled unless the prophecy itself tells you that it is figurative. But otherwise if it says, “A star appeared in heaven,” then it will literally

mean that a star appears in heaven. It is not meant to be spiritualized. The moment you spiritualize Scripture then the understanding of it becomes exclusive to those who have done the spiritualizing. So there are those who have spiritualized it by saying, “Well it marked the end of the world of the Jews.” Well that’s true, but that is not the meaning of the passage. It marked the end of the Law but it wasn’t the return of Jesus.

Some will say, “But you don’t understand. He returned in his body.” No, He returned by his Spirit and the Spirit of Christ is in the body of Christ but the actual, physical return of the Lord out of the heavens is as much what He prophesied as when He said, “Not one stone will be left here upon another that will not be overthrown.” Otherwise, as I said, who can know the meaning of the spiritualized thing except the one doing the spiritualizing? Did Jesus literally go into heaven and while the disciples beheld was He literally taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight? Yes. We have the testimony of angels that says that He will come again in exactly that way.

Has He come again in that way? The answer is: No, and He has actually warned us not to believe in that kind of spiritualizing. For He said, “One will come in my name. He will be in the secret place; he will be in the desert place. Don’t you go out and look for him because,” He says, “When I come again it will not be with a whimper, it will not be in secret, it will be with a bang.” (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.’** – Matthew 24:26,27)

The heavens will declare the return of the Lord at the shout of the archangel and the trumpet call of God and it will be loud enough to raise the dead so you don’t have to worry about whether or not you’ve missed the return of the Lord. (Inserted – actual verse —“ **‘At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.’**” – Matthew 24:30,31) Frankly, this isn’t heaven. If you are here, this isn’t heaven.

Now concerning the return of the Lord, Jesus meant for us to have abundant and copious signs of his return—signs in the heavens and signs in the earth. In the first of these—signs on the earth—He gives us a string of happenings. We’ve read them already but here let’s plug in some of the holes. In **Matthew**, He speaks about first the coming of the spirit of anti-Christ. “Many will come in my name saying, ‘I am Christ,’ and will deceive many.” I will comment on all of these individually but I want to show you first the “big sweep.” The first event will be the coming of the anti-Christ, the coming of the false Christs leading to the coming of the anti-Christ and literally the “many” leading to the

“one”—the spirit of anti-Christ coming first and leading to the belief in the anti-Christ.

The second will be of “wars and rumors of wars,” and He describes the wars and rumors of wars as: “nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom.” And then there will be “famines and earthquakes in various places, and these,” He says, “are the beginnings of sorrows.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ, and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.’” – Matthew 24:4-7**) Then He refers to “signs in the heavens above.”

Luke adds a remarkable comment to these. Essentially the same thing is repeated in **Mark 13**, and then Luke adds this: **Luke 21:25**, “**‘There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.’** Amazing, isn’t it? But people will always say, “You know, in human history there have been deceivers, there have been wars, there have been earthquakes, there have been famines, there have been pestilences, there have been the roaring and tossing of the sea... tsunamis and the like. So how is this different? How are these signs indicative of the return of the Lord? How do you know the difference?”

Well of course there have always been these events because these signs were not meant to first occur when Jesus was coming. Otherwise who would know what an earthquake was, who would know what the roaring and the tossing of the sea was, who would know what pestilence was? But the example that Jesus gives is “like birth pangs on a pregnant woman.” Now when a woman is about to give birth she begins to have contractions, and let’s say the first set of contractions begin to occur about twenty minutes apart. The second set of contractions will begin to occur about ten minutes apart with twice the intensity of the first set and then the next series that comes will come in about half of that time—about five minutes apart, twice the intensity of the ten minutes apart to the point where—just before the child is born—the rhythm of these contractions is so (that’s why they are called contractions, I suppose) so truncated that the woman can hardly breathe. And it is analogous to the Biblical statement that men’s hearts will fail them for fear. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” – Luke 21:26**)

What makes it different? When you begin the spirit of falsity, followed by the spirit of warfare, followed by earthquakes, followed by pestilences, followed by tsunamis... when they are all occurring in the rhythm of one after the other so that you can hardly catch your breath, that’s when they become a sign in the earth below to the return of the Lord:

the rhythm of childbirth. But the end is not yet, it will be awhile, because there will come signs from the heavens. So when the signs begin to appear like birth pangs on a pregnant woman, then know that you are at the “beginning of sorrows.” This sounds frighteningly like what we have been seeing. The church has been disappointed that the Lord hasn’t returned since Y2K, but now we better start looking up because we are in a different season. I’m Sam Soleyn. Pay attention to the signs on the earth below. God bless you, I’ll talk to you again.

Scripture References:

Matthew 24:8

Luke 21:25,26

Acts 1:10,11

Acts 1:9

Matthew 24:1-8

Acts 1:11

Matthew 24:29-31

I Thessalonians 4:16

Deuteronomy 18:17-19

Matthew 24:26,27

Acts 3:22,23