

Signs Of Christ's Coming

Zechariah 2:6-12, Daniel 9:27, Revelation 6:15-17, Revelation 1:7, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Romans 11:25-27, Zechariah 12:10, Revelation 19:17-18, Revelation 16:12-16, Ezekiel 37:9-14, Ezekiel 39:17-20, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Revelation 13:5, Revelation 12:6, Daniel 12:11-12, Revelation 13:1-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Ezekiel 32:4-6, Matthew 24:15-35

Slide 1

Several years ago, Chicago experienced an unusually heavy snowfall. A man and his wife had over a foot of snow piled up on the roof of their two-story home. Then they had a thaw.

One evening when he returned home from work, he noticed that a thick sheet of ice and snow was hanging over the edge of the roof like a glacier hanging over a cliff.

Their driveway runs right alongside the house, and one of their cars was parked directly underneath the overhanging ice.

The man thought to himself, *"When that ice falls, it will land on our car."* However, he did nothing.

Their driveway was filled from end to end, single file, with four family cars, and he'd have to get permission from the police to park on the street overnight.

The temperature was supposed to fall below freezing that night, and it didn't look as though the glacier was ready to fall, so he thought, *"We've lived in this house for 20 years and never had a chunk of ice fall on a car."*

The next morning when he went out to the car to leave for work, he looked up at the roof and noticed that the glacier was still there.

That night when he came home from work after another warm day, the glacier was still in place. He thought to himself, *“Just to be safe, I should at least pull my car as far as possible to the left side of the driveway.”*

But he was tired, cold, and hungry, so he decided to eat dinner first. *“I’ll move it later tonight,”* he said. The night passed, and he went to bed.

The next morning when he went out to the car to leave for work, he looked up and noticed that the glacier was still hanging over the edge of the roof.

“I don’t have time to mess with the cars,” he thought. Moving four cars would take more than five minutes, and he’d be late for work. So, he drove on to work hoping that nothing would happen for one more day.

His wife, however, had not forgotten about the glacier. When she went outside, she saw it hanging two stories above their car and decided to move the car before the ice fell.

But first, she decided to take care of the food cooking on the stove, and then she’d move the car.

A few minutes later as she stood in the kitchen, she heard a crash and ran outside. The glacier had fallen, landing on their car, shattering the front windshield.

What does this illustration have to do with today’s message? Let me tell you, we live in a day and age when the “ice is about to fall.” The signs are “hanging over the roof,” so to speak, and the crash is coming!

This is why we must pay attention to the signs that Jesus described in Matthew 24.

These signs not only include wars and rumors of war, famines, and earthquakes, but we'll also see increased persecution of God's people.

Fake news will lead people astray. There will be an increased lawlessness, but there will also be an increase in the spread of the Gospel around the world. All these signs can only mean Christ's return is near.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Matthew 24. In the first few verses, Jesus describes the signs for the end of the age I just mentioned. Then, starting in verse 15, He describes the signs for His Second Coming.

Slide 2

Matthew 24:15-16, *“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”*

As Jesus' return approaches, we must plan our escape from the wrath to come. Jesus tells us to flee when we see *“the abomination that causes desolation.”*

When Jesus tells us to flee, that doesn't mean to pack your bags and make an airline reservation to leave the country, it means flee. Run like your life depends on it because it does. Don't stop for anything.

The wildfire in Maui is a perfect example. There was no warning. When that fire started for the city, it was fueled by 80mph winds.

By the time the people could smell the smoke it was too late. That wildfire could be called an *“abomination that causes desolation.”*

But this *“abomination that causes desolation”* which Daniel talked about at the end of Daniel 9 is different. There, Daniel spoke of *“the ruler who will come.”*

In other translations, the word *“prince”* is used. Regardless, this prince, or ruler, will establish a 7-year peace treaty with Israel.

Revelation 11 tells us that the temple will have been rebuilt in Jerusalem by that time, perhaps as part of this 7-year peace treaty.

However, halfway through those seven years, this “ruler” will break the treaty, stop the temple sacrifices, desecrate the temple itself, and proclaim himself to be God. This is what Paul warns us about in 2 Thessalonians 2.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, *“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”*

Historically, a Syrian prince, Antiochus Epiphanes, desecrated the Jewish temple in 167 B.C. At that time, he built an altar in the Temple to the pagan Greek god Zeus and sacrificed a pig on it.

236 years later in 70 A.D, the Roman Army overran Jerusalem, desecrated the temple, and totally destroyed it.

However, those two events only foreshadowed what a coming world ruler will do halfway through the end time. This world ruler is none other than the antichrist, described in 2 Thessalonians 3-4 and Revelation 13.

This antichrist, possessed by Satan himself, will create a virtual hell on earth immediately after he desecrates the Temple in Jerusalem. That's why those in Judah were to flee without even taking the time to pack.

Matthew 24:17-19, "Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!"

Pregnant women and those with tiny babies would be overrun, because they couldn't get away fast enough. The same is true for those who had to escape in winter or on the Sabbath.

Matthew 24:20, "Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath."

Winter restricts travel conditions and Jewish Law prohibited riding horses and other means of transportation on the sabbath. The sabbath even limited how far a person could walk, which was less than half a mile.

When the Taliban overtook Afghanistan and captured Kabul, the capital city, on 15 August, 2021, tens of thousands of people were unable to escape that reign of terror.

The Taliban killed women in the streets. They went door-to-door killing those sympathetic to American soldiers. They locked the country down.

Even after that, there were thousands of Afghans at the airport who tried to get on US transport planes. The Taliban did everything they could to block anybody from getting to the airport.

The Afghani people are still living in terror, but that's only a glimpse of what the antichrist will do when he overtakes Judea and desecrates the Jewish temple. So, Jesus says get out while you can!

Matthew 24:21-22, *“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”*

“The elect” in this context are God's chosen people, the Jews. God will cut short those days of great tribulation to spare His chosen people from complete annihilation.

The prophet Daniel predicted 1,290 days of Great Tribulation for the Jews, but the Book of Revelation shortens that time by 30 days to 1,260 days.

I don't know if that's what Jesus meant when He said, *“Those days will be shortened,”* but He's very clear, God will limit their time of suffering.

Now, even though this refers to God's chosen people, the Jews, at a future time, I believe God will limit the suffering of all His people from every tribe and nation.

But we have an opportunity to escape the wrath to come long before the antichrist desecrates the temple.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 says, *“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Thessalonians 1:10, *“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”*

We can escape the wrath to come, whether it's the tribulation wrath or the wrath of hell, simply by putting our faith in Jesus.

In the spring of 2014, Golden-Winged Warblers, a slim, silvery gray bird with golden flashes on the head and wings, fled from their breeding ground in the Cumberland Mountains of eastern Tennessee, immediately after they had just arrived from their migration.

Less than 24 hours later, a storm spawned 84 confirmed tornadoes and killed at least 35 people in the area. All told, the warblers travelled 900 miles in 5 days to avoid the historic tornado-producing storms.

How did these birds know in advance that a storm was coming? Well, meteorologists have known for decades that tornadic storms make a very strong infrasound that can travel thousands of miles from the storms.

It just so happens that that infrasound is the same frequency birds are most sensitive to hearing. So, scientists surmise that the infrasound from this tornadic storm alerted the birds.

Now, we don't need an infrasound to alert us that a storm's coming. Jesus has already done that and in order to escape the wrath to come we must put our faith in Him.

Trust Christ with your life. Cry out to Him and ask Him to save you from your sins, and He will!

So, not only are we to escape the wrath to come, but we're also to ignore those who say Jesus has already come.

Slide 3

We must disregard those who claim the Messiah is hiding somewhere. We must discount those who assert that Jesus has secretly returned.

Matthew 24:23-27, *"At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it.*

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' 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."

Christ's coming will be like lightning flashing across the sky. Everyone will see it, so refrain from following after any secret messiahs.

When Jesus returns, He'll return as the victorious King, obvious to all, friend and foe alike, so disregard all other imposters!

Now, that's good advice for those who'll live during the Great Tribulation, but it's also good advice for us today. There are many leaders who claim to save you if you follow them, but there are very few who are worth following.

In his book *Immeasurable*, Skye Jethani writes:

"Compare two leaders. Leader A lifted an entire nation in a time of despair. He mobilized his people against unimaginable odds with a clear vision and inspiring passion. He launched a movement that has impacted literally everyone alive today. He set in motion an industrial and scientific revolution that produced the first computer, the first jet airplane, began human exploration of space, and unlocked the mystery of nuclear energy. Almost every aspect of the modern world has, in one way or another, been influenced by this man. By the time he died at the age of 56, everyone on the planet knew his name. Without a doubt, Leader A changed the world.

Leader B lived during the same era. In fact, he died just 21 days before Leader A, but his life was very different. At the height of his influence, Leader B ran a school with just 100 students. He wrote a few books but he himself wasn't widely regarded.

He was beloved by his friends and family and had a reputation for being both intelligent and faithful, but at the time of his death almost no one knew his name, and most considered his life's work unfulfilled.

So given the choice, which leader's strategies would you rather study? Which leadership conference would you rather attend—the one featuring a keynote address by Leader A or the one with the small workshop in a back hall led by Leader B?

If you're inspired by the world changing effectiveness of Leader A, congratulations! You've chosen Adolf Hitler. Leader B was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor that the Nazis executed for his relentless opposition to Hitler.”

Be careful who you follow, especially in these days before Jesus comes again. As His coming approaches, escape the wrath to come, ignore those who say Jesus has already come, and then, look for signs in the sky.

Slide 4

Watch for a darkening sun, a disappearing moon, and stars which seem to fall from the sky. Celestial changes will immediately precede Christ's glorious return.

Matthew 24:29-30, “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.’ Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.”

Jesus will come “on the clouds of heaven,” a reference which could mean a host of angels, the cloud of God's shekinah glory, or literal clouds. But however He comes, it'll be unmistakably glorious, even as it causes the whole world to mourn.

In Zechariah 12:10, God says, *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”*

When the Jews see Jesus at His Second Coming, they’ll realize the mistake they made when they rejected Him as their Messiah, delivered Him up to Pontius Pilate for crucifixion, and refused to believe in Him even after He rose from the dead.

At that time, they’ll see the nail prints in His hands, and they’ll repent of their hostility towards Him. Then Jesus will save them and bring them into His Kingdom.

Paul says of the Jews in Romans 11:25-27, *“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’”*

God still has a plan for His chosen people, His elect, the Jews. Even though they rejected Jesus at His first coming, at His Second Coming, they’ll welcome Him, and God will keep His promise to forgive them of all their sins.

The Jews will mourn in repentance when they see Jesus, but the rest of the world will mourn in despair, because they know judgment has come.

Revelation 6:15-17 says, *“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”*”

Also at this time, He will gather His elect together. Matthew 24:31, *“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.”*

Now understand, this is NOT the rapture of the church. This is God gathering His chosen people, the Jews, back into their land after they had scattered all over the world to escape the antichrist.

In the Old Testament, trumpets announced the accession of kings, and signaled God’s people to gather, and that’s exactly what’ll happen when Jesus comes again.

He’ll ascend to the throne of David in Jerusalem, and Jews will gather from all over the world to welcome their King. Jesus will come with great fanfare and glory to make all things right.

Conventional wisdom says you don’t want to ruin a good story by learning about the end in the middle of the story itself.

Well, here in Matthew 24, we have the end of the story: Jesus comes with great fanfare and glory to make all things right. This should help us enjoy the story even though the middle of it seems all wrong.

So, as Jesus’ coming approaches, escape the wrath to come, ignore those who say Jesus has already come, look for the signs, and finally, know that He is coming soon!

Slide 5

Conclusion

Realizing that Jesus could come in our lifetime, we must grasp the fact that He is near!

Matthew 24:32-33, "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."

But even though the world will end, Jesus' Words will remain forever. He'll accomplish them exactly as He said. The generation that sees these signs will see His Second Coming.

Now, we may or may not be that generation, because the signs of Jesus' coming start with antichrist desecrating the temple in Jerusalem, and as yet, there's no temple in Jerusalem.

However, the stage is set for all these things Jesus talked about to happen because the world, as never before, is looking for a leader with answers.

The Jews have everything they need to build a temple, and you hear about false messiahs all the time, in fact, if you follow the news, many people today have already put their faith in a false messiah, so we could be that generation.

We see a foreshadowing of those signs, but not the signs themselves. Even so, we shouldn't look for signs as much as we should look for the Savior, because Jesus can come for His church at any time.

As we'll see next week, there are no preceding signs for the rapture of the church, but there are preceding signs for the end of the age.

There are preceding signs for Christ's coming, but there are no preceding signs for when believers disappear from the earth to meet the Lord in the air.

So, the question begs, "*Are you ready to go?*" I hope so because the signs of Jesus' coming are casting their shadows today.

I don't know about you, but I hear God coming. Therefore, as we approach Christ's coming, wake up before it's too late.

Romans 13:11, "*And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*"