

## Eschatology Matthew 24

Since we're living in the last days and getting closer to the return of the Lord Jesus, many of us are watching what's going on in our world and looking for signs that let us know that it's near or **imminent**. And that word "imminent" means

I have two questions for us this morning. First, "are we looking for Christ's **imminent** return?"

*<sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, (Tit. 2:13 NAU)*

*<sup>27</sup> And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*

*<sup>28</sup> so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Heb. 9:27-28 NAU)*

His first appearance was to pay for our sins. His second appearance will be to take His church, His body, His people to be with Him forever in the rapture **and** to pour out His wrath on the devil and his people and to cast them into what the Bible calls "the lake of fire."

And second, "are the signs we're looking for given in the Bible as signs of His **imminent** return?" After studying for this sermon this morning, I have discovered that some events that we have always thought of as signs of Christ's **imminent** return in fact are not. I know what most of us are looking for and what I have always thought were the signs, but my study of our text has changed my mind.

Take your Bibles and turn to **Mt. 24 and v.1** (repeat).

When Beverly and I have been shopping or whatever in Mint Hill and we're head home, we often take Lawyers Road to Wilson Grove Road and then we take a shortcut on Central Road which takes us through several neighborhoods and a half dozen or so stop signs. When we're approaching the first stop sign there's a sign about fifty from the stop sign that has an image of a stop sign on it that warns drivers that they are approaching a stop sign. You've seen them. It is not a stop sign.

The first time I drove that route I almost mistook the warning sign for a stop sign. We do not stop for signs that tell us a stop sign is just ahead. We stop at the stop sign itself. Likewise, we are probably looking for signs of the Lord's return that are not signs of His **imminent** return.

I am beginning a series this morning on the last days or sticking with the title I am giving this series, **Eschatology**.

**Eschatology is a ten-dollar "ology" word that means "the study of last things." It is eschatos, meaning the last, and ology, meaning the study of.** Have you ever heard of soteriology? That's the study of salvation or how one gets saved. And theology is the study of the things of God. There are lots and lots of "ology" words around. Biology and psychology and anthropology and Arachnology which is what? That's right. The study of spiders. I would not want to be an Arachnologist.

What I'm going to do this morning with our text is give a running commentary as I read through it and then point out several truths that we can't afford to overlook. If the Lord wills, I'm going to do this all through this chapter of Matthew as I continue in the weeks to come on our topic of eschatology. This way I can preach through chapter 24 and cover all the words of the word of God.

**Matthew 24:1** *Jesus came out from the temple \*(pic here) and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.* I've always thought that was odd. Why did they think they needed to point out the temple buildings to Jesus when He had been there several times in the last three years? It would be like a tourist visiting New York City for the first time and stopping New Yorkers to point out the skyscrapers. They might think this tourist was a nut or at best a hick. Anyway, Jesus wasn't impressed with the buildings. He was concerned with how His disciples had missed what had just happened in the temple between Him and the Pharisees. From chapter 21 to the end of chapter 23, Jesus had so convicted the hypocrites that they wanted to cease Him and kill Him right then and there. Jesus declared that the physical temple where the moneychangers had set up shop was the House of His Father and the House of Prayer. But it was His body that is

the true temple as well as the bodies of His disciples. That's you and me. It's like the church. It isn't the physical building that is the temple or the church, it's Jesus and His people who are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are the church. So, in truth we don't "go to church," we are the church. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. **Try not to be unduly impressed and distracted with what is passing away. Herod's temple passed and so will this world and our physical bodies.**

Have you seen on the news live shots of downtown Manhattan? It's a ghost town. Who would have ever thought that people would be fleeing New York City? When Beverly and I were there, we were in awe of the beautiful skyscrapers like Trump Tower and One World Trade Center. And walking around Time Square in the midst of all those people was exciting. Seeing all that in person was great. But someday all of that will be destroyed.

<sup>2</sup> *And He said to them, "Do **you** not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."* And it came to pass. Just as a reminder, the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in 70AD by the Romans who were led by their general Titus. Rome had had enough of the rebellions that were so common in Israel against the Roman Empires occupation of Jerusalem. So in 70AD he settled the issue once and for all.

Paul the apostle would later write to the saints in Rome and the saints in America commanding them and us to submit to governmental authority, or face the consequences. **Romans 13:1** *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.*

<sup>2</sup> *Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.*

<sup>3</sup> *For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;*

<sup>4</sup> *for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. (Rom. 13:1-4 NAU)* The evil in that context is rebellion against God ordained authority.

Israel's rebels broke the will of God and Jerusalem paid for it.

It makes me wonder about the people who are rebelling against our government and who are destroying buildings and businesses as we speak. Apparently our federal government and our governors and mayors aren't going to do anything about them and it looks like most of them are going to get away with their crimes. Why? Because we're living in the last days. **2 Timothy 3:1** *But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.* And when Paul wrote "difficult times," he was saying times that will try men's souls. They will be that evil. They will be *troublesome, perilous times and people will be fierce, violent, dangerous.* All of that is from the Greek word translated in my Bible version as difficult. Difficult is an understatement.

<sup>2</sup> *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,*

<sup>3</sup> *unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,*

<sup>4</sup> *treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (2 Tim. 3:1-4 NAU)* Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

**Matthew 24 verse 3,**

V.3, <sup>3</sup> *As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

<sup>4</sup> *And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.*

<sup>5</sup> **"For many** will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead **many.**" "Don't you be one of the "many."

Beloved, that isn't a sign of His imminent return. It is what has happened since the day the Lord ascended back to His Father. There

always have been those false christs in the world. Jesus said “for many will come in My name” and they have been coming ever since.

But how are we to understand that saying, <sup>5</sup> *"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,'"*? What did Jesus mean by many coming in His name saying “I am the Christ?”

Here’s what Johnny Helms believes based on the context of this verse. He was saying that many false prophets and false teachers and false evangelists will appear claiming to believe in Him and claiming to work great signs and wonders in His name, even saying “Jesus is Lord!” all the time denying Him; they just don’t believe anything they say they believe. It’s all a con game to them. It’s how they make a living. It’s how they make themselves rich. Here’s why I say that.

Turn for just a minute to Matthew chapter 7, Mt. 7 and v.21. <sup>21</sup> *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*

<sup>22</sup> *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'*

<sup>23</sup> *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (Matt. 7:21-23 NAU)*

<sup>5</sup> *"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,'"* So, they come in Jesus name saying He is indeed the Christ while they perform fake healings and speak false prophecies and fake the other gifts of the Spirit and **they will fake faith in Jesus.** **2 Peter 2:1** *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will **secretly** introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (2 Pet. 2:1 NAU)* They will secretly deny the fact that they don’t believe.

I want to point out two things about the timing of what Jesus said in that passage in Mt. 7. First, this will happen at the very moment these false prophets are about to be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the

devil and his angels. It is the Day of Judgment, Jesus said “*on that day.*” This is that day for these false prophets. They’re standing there before Jesus among the goats, on the left hand of the throne, terrified, looking at the hell that’s right in front of them, watching others being thrown into the lake of fire and begging for their lives. I imagine them screaming their defense before the throne. When they say “Lord, Lord,” they’re screaming it, they’re trying to persuade Jesus to fall for their lies. But Jesus will tell them, “Depart from Me, you who have deceived the multitudes, for I don’t know you now and I have never known you.”

And second, the fact that Jesus never knew them means they never knew Jesus but claimed to while secretly denying him.

Do you realize that men and women in our day who are false prophets and false teachers and false evangelists and have huge followings do not know Jesus and He doesn’t know them? Do you realize that these false prophets and false teachers secretly deny Jesus? They profess to know Him publicly, they say He is the Christ, and what they do, the fake healings and all their fake miracles are done in Jesus’ name. But in truth and in their secret place, they deny Him. Do you understand that the false prophets and false teachers and false evangelists and false apostles of our day will be cast into the lake of fire on that day? “*See to it that no one misleads you.*”

I close this first sermon in our series with this.

That’s not the end of the story. Life for those who are in Christ is not gloom and doom.

From the New Testament letters, we see that life for those in Christ can be good and at times great and normal. We will suffer illnesses. Our bodies are falling apart and sometimes they’re hard to put up with.

*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16 NAU)* Our aches and pains and diseases and illnesses happen to our bodies, not our souls. *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

But we're free in Christ and free to enjoy the gifts and blessings of God on our lives. We work we play we worship. And despite what the naysayers say, God has given us all things to enjoy, now. **1 Timothy 6:17** *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, **but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.** (1 Tim. 6:17 NAU)*

Studying eschatology is an eye-opener. Are we looking for His imminent return?