

The Beginning of the End - Part 2

by Chuck Smith

The sermon discusses the beginning of the end, the great tribulation, and the second coming of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the importance of being prepared and the need for spiritual discernment.

Duration: 38:44

Scripture: Psalm 1:1-5, Psalm 19:7-8, Daniel 11:32, Matthew 24:2, Matthew 24:4-6

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the consequences of rebellion against God's laws. He highlights the importance of the law of the Lord, which is perfect and can convert the soul. The sermon discusses the relationship between humans and God, as well as the relationship between humans themselves, as outlined in the Ten Commandments. The preacher also mentions the book of Daniel and its prophecy about the end times, suggesting that the world is currently being prepared for the final act of human history. The sermon concludes with a warning about the judgment of God and the need to heed the signs of Jesus' coming.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 24. Our scripture reading this morning will be verses 1 through 22. I'll read the first, the unnumbered verses.

Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses as we stand to read the Word of God. And Jesus went out, and he departed from the temple, and his disciples came to him to show 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 your coming and the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars.

See that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nations shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows. And then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you. And you will 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. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for witness unto all nations. And then shall the end come.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, whoso readeth, let him understand. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And one to them that are with child, and those that are nursing in those days. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. But for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Let's pray. Lord, we do thank you that first of all you are coming again, coming to establish the kingdom of God here on the earth. And Lord, we do pray thy kingdom come, thy will be done here on earth, even as it is in heaven.

But Lord, of the times and the seasons of your return, we ask that you will give to us understanding, Lord. As you said that the wicked would not understand, but they that are wise should understand. So Lord, may we understand today more fully the things that are transpiring in the world and how they point to the soon return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bless, we pray, the study today, Lord. Open our eyes and our understanding, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated. Tonight, Pastor Skip is going to finish the book of Daniel chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 11 is one of those amazing chapters in the Bible in which Daniel wrote history in advance, which is called prophecy.

Interesting to see just how accurately the 11th chapter was fulfilled during the time of what they call the intertestamental period between the testaments. As he speaks of the division of the Grecian empire to the four generals and of the wars that were fought between the generals that controlled Syria and that controlled Egypt, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. And to help you to understand this, Skip has made a great little sheet that he gives you the history as recorded alongside of the prophecies that spoke of these events before they ever took place.

And it helps to bring to you that marvel of the fulfillment of God's word that we find here in the book of Daniel as you place the historic events beside the predictions of those events taking place. So chapters 11 and 12 tonight, as we finish the book of Daniel and next week, we move on into the prophecies of Hosea. This morning, we'd like to have you look at chapter 12, especially verse six, as Daniel said that one said to

the man that was clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, how long shall it be to the end of these wonders? Daniel had just prophesied of the great tribulation that is going to come upon the world and of the resurrection of the dead.

And so Daniel was then ordered to seal the book up because it will not be understood until the time of the end. So he then hears this one asking the question, how long shall it be to the end of these things? And as we look at our world today, it seems that God is setting the stage for the curtain to rise for the final act of the tragic story of the history of man. In this final act, we will see how that the human race will experience the bitter consequences of its rebellion against the laws of God, not living according to the rules that God has set for a good life.

David wrote, happy is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stands in the way with sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord. And in this law, he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree that's planted by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit in his season.

His leaf also shall not wither and whatever he does will prosper. The ungodly, he said, are not so, but are like the chaff which is driven by the wind. Therefore, the ungodly will be cut off in the day of judgment for the sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.

When you look at the law of the Lord, you wonder why would man choose to rebel against God's law? For the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. They're more to be desired than gold.

The law of the Lord tells us how God wants us to live in our relationship to him and in our relationship to each other. The first four commandments talk about your relationship with God. The second six talk about your relationship with fellow man.

Basically, they can be summed up very simply, as Jesus did. Love God supremely. Don't allow any other love to exceed the love for God in your life.

Second, love your neighbor as you love yourself. Jesus said, this sums it up. In these two is a summation of all of the law and the prophets.

Now, when I look at that, I wonder, how could people object to that? I don't see that that is so odious that I have to say, well, I don't like the law of God. What's wrong with loving God? Supremely, what's wrong with loving one another as we love ourselves? And yet we find that throughout history, man has been in rebellion against the law of God. The others sort of give you examples of what it is to love God supremely and what it is to love another, your neighbor like yourself.

What's so wrong with that? You know, to me, it's sort of a mystery why people are so angry and do not want the law of God taught to our children. As the prophet Micah said, he has shown you, oh man, what is good. What does the Lord require of you? Well, to be fair, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah said, that's good. As I read that, I say, yeah, that's good. To be fair in your dealings, to love mercy, to be merciful and to walk humbly before your God.

When Moses died and Joshua took over the leadership of the children of Israel as they came to conquer the promised land, the Lord said to Joshua, be strong and very courageous that you may observe to do all of the law which Moses, my servant, commanded you. Do not turn from it that you may prosper wherever you go. For this book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.

For then you shall make your way prosperous and then you will have good success, good life, a blessed life, if you will just keep the law of God. Love God, love your neighbor. Why would anyone object to this being taught our children in our public schools? So many of our schools, the children are being encouraged to question God, to hate the word of God, encouraged to disobey his commandments.

In fact, they will even provide the children free condoms so they can practice so-called safe sex against the law of God, which talks about not having sex outside of marriage. But the schools will take the children who slip up to the abortion clinics where they can have the child aborted without their parents even knowing it. Today we see senseless drive-by shootings and freeway shootings because the courts have decreed that we should not teach the children the law of God that says, thou shalt not kill.

We have millions who do not know God or his son, Jesus Christ. Thus, they are living amoral lives because our courts say that we cannot teach our children about God. We cannot teach them that God created them and the universe in which they live, that they are the product of accidental circumstances.

And thus, there is no real purpose for their existence. We teach them the fairy tale of evolution and that they are here as the product of chance, that they are related to the animal kingdom. And then we wonder why they act like animals.

In our democratic controlled state legislature, it seems that they are more interested in creating laws to open the doors to immoral homosexual relationships than to solve the real problems of our state, the financial problems and the social problems that plague our state. As in the days of Noah, God warned that his spirit would not always strive with man. There comes a day when God's righteousness calls for judgment, and the judgment of God begins.

In the book of Hebrews, we are warned that once a person has rejected the knowledge of the truth, all they have to look forward to is that certain fearful judgment and the fiery indignation by which God is going to destroy his adversaries. For under the law, the writer said, a person was put to death if two or three people would testify that he hated the law of God. The writer said, how much worse do you suppose the punishment will be for those who have trodden under their foot the son of God, counted the blood of his covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and have done despite to the spirit of grace? For we know him who said, vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.

And again, the Lord will judge his people. And then the writer concludes, it's a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God. The book of Daniel is a very interesting book.

It's full of predictions of future events. Many of the predictions have already been fulfilled, and you can see in history, the fulfillment, as we will tonight in chapter 11, of so many of the prophecies of Daniel. But his prophecies have not ended as far as historically, they have not all been fulfilled.

There are other prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled and are in the process of being fulfilled today. He prophesied the major kingdoms that would rule over the world, beginning with the Babylonian kingdom,

the power then going over to the Medo-Persian kingdom, which would be defeated by the Grecian kingdom, which would be crushed by the Roman kingdom, and the final world-dominating power would be a federation of nations that were once related to the Roman empire, only joined now with treaties. But there would arise in the European Union a powerful man, blasphemous, speaks against God and against heaven, a man who will come on the scene peaceably, but then during his time of reign, all hell will break forth on the earth.

But he will begin by creating a covenant with the nation of Israel, giving them the right and the privilege of rebuilding their temple, which they are eager and anxious to do. And once the temple has been rebuilt and they start again the daily prayers and the sacrifices, after three and a half years from their permission to rebuild the temple, once the temple prayers have been reinstated, he will come to the temple and he will stand in the temple, declaring that he is God and demanding that they worship him as God. He will put him an image of himself in the holy of holies and demand that they worship that image.

This is the final sacrilege of man. This is what tips the cup where the wrath of God will be poured out upon the world, because man has gone one step too far. And from that time, the scripture says that desolation, tribulation will come.

As Daniel tells us here in chapter 12, a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation and will ever be again according to Jesus. When Jesus was talking to his disciples about the last days, the events that would precede his second coming, there in Matthew 24 15 as we read, when you see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, then flee to the wilderness. For then there will come a great tribulation on the earth, worse than anything that has ever happened from the beginning of the world up to that time.

No, nor ever shall be again. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would remain on the earth, but for the elect sake, those days shall be shortened. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened.

The moon will not give her light. The stars shall fall from heaven. The powers of the heavens shall be shaken and then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven.

And then shall all of the nations of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The second coming of Jesus Christ will take place right after this great period of tribulation. Jesus will establish God's kingdom here on the earth and will reign in righteousness and in justice.

But how long to the end? When will Jesus come again to reign? This is the very question that was asked here in Daniel 12 in our text. How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? When Daniel heard the answer, he was confused and he asked for clarification concerning the answer. And so he said, I heard, but I did not understand.

And I said, oh my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified and made white and tried, but the wicked will do wickedly and none of the wicked will understand, but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice will be taken away and the abomination that makes the desolation set up, there will be 1,290 days.

Blessed is he who waits and comes to the 1,335 days. So according to the book of Daniel at this time, when the antichrist, the beast comes, stops the daily sacrifices and the prayers, it will be 1,290 days until the Lord comes to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. It is interesting that in the book of Daniel, he gave the very day that Jesus would come in the first coming.

It was predicated on a yet future event. Daniel said, when the commandment goes forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, would be 483 years or 173,880 days. In the book of Nehemiah chapter two, we find that the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was on March 14th, 445 BC.

Counting from that day, 173,880 days would bring you to April 6, 32 AD, the very day that Jesus made his entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey to present himself as their Messiah. Daniel predicted the very day. It is interesting to me that he also predicts the day that Jesus will come again.

Again, it is predicated on an event that is yet future. That day when the Antichrist comes to Jerusalem, stops the worship in the temple, stands in the temple, declares that he is God, demands to be worshiped as God, and then sets the image of himself in the Holy of Holy and demands that they worship that image. From that day, it will be 1290 days until Jesus comes again.

Now I know that some of you object and say, wait a minute, no man knows the day or the hour. When Jesus said, no man knows the day or the hour, he was talking about the rapture of the church. It was after he began to give parables in Matthew 24 concerning the rapture of the church.

And he said, no man knows the day or the hour in which the Lord is going to come for his church. That could happen at any time. But he said, of the times and the seasons, you are not ignorant.

And so looking ahead to the future, when the Antichrist stops the daily prayers and sacrifices here in Daniel, it'll be 1290 days until the Lord comes to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. Now, I hope you won't be here to count the days. Because as Jesus was talking about this great tribulation in Luke 21, he said, pray always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things that are coming upon the earth and to stand before the Son of God.

And thus, by the grace of God, I don't plan to be here when the Antichrist comes and does this sacrilege to the rebuilt temple. So I trust that you won't be here either. But we do have a period of 45 days.

He said, blessed is he who continues to the 1335th day. 45 days between 1290 and 1335. What is this 45 day period? In Matthew's gospel chapter 25, it tells us that when Jesus returns, Jesus said, when the Son of Man will come in his glory and all of the holy angels with him, then he will sit upon the throne of his glory.

And before him will be gathered all of the nations. And he will separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.

And then shall the saying to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me meat. I was thirsty.

You gave me a drink. I was a stranger. You took me in.

I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison.

You came to me. And then the righteous shall answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you thirsty and gave you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and took you in or naked and clothed you? Or when did we see you sick or in prison and came unto you? And the king shall answer and say unto them, verily, I say unto you in as much as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me. Then he will say to those on the left hand, depart from me, you cursed into everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry and you did not give me meat. Thirsty, you did not give me a drink. I was a stranger.

You didn't take me in. Naked, you did not clothe me. Sick and in prison, you did not visit me.

And then they will ask him, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you? Then he will answer them, verily, I say unto you, in as much as you did not do it unto one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And they shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. When Jesus comes again, it would seem that there are a small percentage of people who somehow did survive the great tribulation and all of the cataclysmic judgments of God that will be poured out upon the earth at that time.

They will be brought before Jesus as he returns to be judged as to whether or not they will be able to live in the kingdom of God that he will set up when he returns. It would appear that this period of judging the nations to determine those that would enter into the kingdom and those that would be cast out of the kingdom will take 45 days. Thus, blessed is he who comes to the 1335th day.

It means that they have made it in. They will be able to live on the earth during the reign of Jesus Christ as the kingdom of God will come to earth. We will come with Jesus to establish the kingdom, but they have lived through the great tribulation.

But don't think, well, if I miss the rapture, I'll just try to survive. You know, you better read about what's going to happen in Revelation 6 through 18 and you'll read your chances of surviving are very slim indeed. Better to get right with God now.

Better to go up with the church. As Jesus said, talking of the great tribulation, pray always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things that are going to come upon the earth and to stand before the son of man. And so my prayer is, Lord, I want to be worthy to escape the judgment, the great tribulation that is coming.

I want to be with the church in heaven as we are declaring the worthiness of the lamb who was slain, who has redeemed us by his blood to receive the glory and the honor and the power and join with that heavenly choir in worship of our Lord. Where will you be? It all depends on what is your relationship with Jesus Christ. He came to save you from the corruption of this world.

He came to give you the power to live the right kind of life. He came that you might love God with all your heart and mind and soul. He came that you might have love for your neighbor in order that you might have his power to keep his commandments and thus to be with him in his kingdom, which will never end.

Your choice. Father, we thank you for the promises that we have in your word and the sure word of God whereby we stand. And Lord, we do pray that we will be accounted worthy to escape the great tribulation

and all of the catastrophes and cataclysmic judgments that will take place here upon the earth.

Lord, we want to be with you standing there before you in heaven in that glorious assembly of those that are worshiping and declaring the worthiness of the lamb to take the scroll and to loose the seals. And so help us, Lord, this day to love you with all of our heart. Help us, Lord, to love our neighbor as ourself.

Help us, Lord, to receive Jesus Christ as king and as the Lord of our lives now, accepting the salvation that he has offered by dying for our sins, dying in our place, that we might be washed and cleansed and become a part of your eternal kingdom. Thank you, Lord, for the word of God, alive, powerful. And it is true, as Daniel prophesied and said, these are the true words of God.

And help us, Lord, to believe and to follow in Jesus' name. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to pray for you who want to be a part of God's kingdom.

You realize that you haven't really loved God first. A lot of things have crowded into your life and have sort of pushed you away from the things of God. You don't have a love for your neighbor, loving him as you love yourself.

But you like God's love to begin to work in your life. They're here to pray for you that you might come to know the power of God working in your life, enabling you to be what God wants you to be, to live as God wants you to live. So as soon as we're dismissed, we would encourage you, come on down and just ask them, pray for me.

I want to get right with God. I want to live like God wants me to live. I need help.

I need prayer. They'll be happy to pray for you. And you can go away from the church today transformed, new life, new relationship with God, and as a result, a new relationship with your fellow man.

So may the Lord be with you. May the Lord strengthen you, guide you in his path, keep you in his mercy and in his grace. In Jesus name, the Lord bless thee and keep thee.

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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