

# The Coming of the Lord

by Ralph Sexton

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*Ralph Sexton's sermon emphasizes the signs of the coming of the Lord and the importance of spiritual vigilance in the face of deception and apostasy.*

**Duration:** 28:41

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:1-3, Matthew 24:8, Matthew 24:14-15, Matthew 24:21, Matthew 24:29-30, Matthew 24:36, Matthew 24:42

**Topics:** "End Times", "Eschatology"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the signs of the end times as described in Matthew 24. The disciples ask Jesus how they can know when the end is near, and Jesus warns them about deception. He mentions that there will be wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes as signs of the beginning of sorrows. The preacher emphasizes the importance of studying the Bible and understanding its context in order to interpret these signs correctly.

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## Transcript

I'd like to go to Matthew 24 and just review with you for a moment. I teach out of this chapter probably more than any one slot. You'll never wear this out.

We could come here for 21 nights and I'd say, take your Bible, turn to Matthew 24, and when the 21 nights were up, we would not have scraped the surface. That's the good part about the book. You're not going to exhaust the Word of God.

Matthew 24, we have Jesus encountering the disciples. And it's important for you to note, if you have a red-letter edition of the Word of God, notice what the Bible says here in verse number 1. And Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him for 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.

Verse 3. Now, as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately. Verses 1 and 2 was a public encounter. Verses 1 and 2, a lot of people were around.

A lot of people were asking questions. And Jesus spoke. If you have a red-letter Bible, He's speaking in verse 2. 3, now we go back to a private meeting.

Jesus and these preachers. And here comes the private meeting. 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? They asked for three things in that question.

They said, Jesus, please tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming? And what shall be the sign of the end of the world? Now, human nature has not changed in 2,000 years. Every person under this tent wants to ask those same three questions. If we could get Jesus on a cell phone and we'd say, Jesus, tell me, what shall be the sign? When shall these things be? How will I know the end is near? Everyone would want to know that.

And many times people have attempted to determine that by studying the Scriptures. There's several phases of studies when you're assimilating the Word of God. One thing that you study in the Bible is you study the text in context.

You study the Bible. The greatest commentary on the Word of God is the Word of God. So, then you must understand, secondly, the Bibles have no private interpretation.

Thirdly, you've got to understand what I mentioned to you the other night. For everything that God has real, the devil has a mirror or a counterfeit. You have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

You have the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. The devil is anti-God. The beast is anti-Christ.

And the false prophet is anti-Holy Ghost. You've got to understand that. You'll never understand this world that you're in if you don't understand there really is a true church.

And there really is a false church. But Revelation calls it a harlot church. I didn't use that word.

God said that. God said there's a real church. Now, many times I'm in preacher's meetings, or I'm preaching at a Christian college campus, or I'm addressing seminarians or theologians, and they love questions and answers.

You know, they like to ask you things that trip you up. And, you know, if God is so great and powerful, can God create a rock that God cannot lift? And I always say, if He wants to, He's got Him to do anything He wants to do. You won't have a lot of questions if you just learn to love God and trust Him and His precious Word.

But one of the things that they are always asking me that I get a repeated question is, well, if you believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ, that means Jesus could come at any moment. And I believe that. That's why I wake up excited.

That's why I go to bed excited. Because I'm always getting out of bed, and I'm dragging these bones into the shower and say, something moved now, let's go. And nothing wants to work, everything, you know, and I'm saying, let's go.

This could be our last day. And we want to look sharp. We want to be sharp.

We don't want to hustle. We don't want God to show up. Must be sucking her thumb sound asleep or looking lazy.

Huh? If I give you some advice, I'd tell you to get busy. Jesus is coming. If you don't have something to do, act like it.

Okay? I mean, you need to be busy. Jesus is coming. And they say, if Jesus is coming and you believe in his imminent return, then how can you explain why you still preach on revival? Because the Bible says quite clearly that before Jesus comes, there will be an apostasy.

There will be a falling away. Is that not a conflict? Is that not the Bible rebuking itself? Are you not confused in your interpretation of the Word of God? If you're preaching revival still and you believe Jesus can come, and the Bible says clearly that there'll be an apostasy and there'll be a falling away. You know why they ask that question? They don't understand.

Everything real, everything counterfeit. God's got a look-alike. God's got a real church.

God's got a false church. And that false church is the form of godliness that denies what? The power thereof. Not everyone that says, Lord, Lord, read that book.

Not everyone says, Lord, Lord's going to go into the kingdom of heaven. Right? Why would anyone die? You follow this thought with me. Why would any person on planet earth die and go to the judgment seat, the great white throne or the judgment seat of Christ? But this particular text is talking about the great white throne judgment.

Why would anyone die and go meet God? Now, here I am. I'm dead. I come to.

There's God on His throne. And Tim, he's going to look me over. He knows what's real, what's not real.

I'm not going to fool him. He knows church membership isn't going to save me. Water baptisms, sprinklings not going to save me.

Catechisms and candles not going to save me. Priest rabbis and preachers aren't going to save me. Hey, my name better be in that book when the big angel opens.

Right? Okay? Now, I'm going to walk up to him. Lord, Lord, have we not done many mighty things in thy name? And he says, depart. I never knew you.

How in the name of heaven could anyone die and go face God and put on an act and say, Lord, Lord? You know what I think? I don't think they're acting. Jay, I think they died deceived. I think they thought they were right.

I think they were ensnared by false religions and false gods and false cults. And they were doing their religious aerobics. And they thought that was salvation.

And they walked up to God this big as brass and said, Lord, Lord. Now, you say, well, Brother Ralph, that's scary. It's so scary.

God put in the Bible, make your election and calling sure. He said, don't you depend on what your grandmother said you said when you were nine years old. Don't you depend on what your Sunday school teacher said you said when you were six years old.

Don't you depend on what somebody said you got baptized or sprinkled or you joined the church when you were 12. He said, when you're an adult and you can think as an adult, you know right from wrong. He said, you make sure you know that you've got a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wouldn't it be embarrassing to walk in and say, Lord, Lord, and he'd say the part I never knew? That would be embarrassing. But embarrassment's nothing to the reality of hell. Some of you asked if I would get that entire message, and I didn't bring it all to tent.

But they have eight or nine copies over there where I deal with every issue in the hell, every attribute of hell, the reality of hell. And when you think about hell and its reality and what it means, the darkness, the bottomless pit, the suffering, the demons, the violence, the wickedness, all the things that we illuminate as we go down through that study. Then I'm going to tell you something.

There's one thing you know. You do not want to go to hell. No person in their right mind.

So why would I walk up to God and say, Lord, Lord? That proves there's going to be people deceived in the last days. And that's scary because I can be deceived and you can be deceived. So what did God do? Now, pastors, you listen to me right here.

If you're a pastor in a local church, here's where your fire ought to be in your bones. Right here. God said, if you believe all this stuff and you see that day approaching, He said to the church, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.

He didn't say have less church. He said have more church. He said, if you believe that all this is in the book and you believe that I'm going to, my son's going to come at any moment.

He said, then you go to church more, not less. Why? Because if it wasn't for the grace of God, the very elect would be deceived. That means the very people that are saved.

So God says spiritual warfare is going to increase. And the closer we get to the coming of the Lord, more and more people are going to be deceived. So therefore, I need to study my Bible more.

I need to pray more. And I need to go to church more. Just because I've done good all these years, it doesn't mean I'm going to finish good.

Because I've not met what is in the road in front of me. No one has ever encountered what we're getting ready to encounter. As a nation and as a world.

As the Holy Spirit of God begins that slow removal, restraining power. And we begin to see the effects of men and women without God. As they're turned loose as human predators.

And are we not already experiencing some of that? Are we not already experiencing that? The predatory walk of men and women that are literally consuming the children of our own society? Huh? I mean, you know what the FBI tell us, the statisticians? They say that when they arrest a child molester, a sexual predator, that it's usually his 30th or 31st episode with a child before he's ever caught. The normal is that it's not his first or second time that he's done this or she's done this 25, 30 times before they're ever arrested. So if we're seeing something on the news, then you think how much is out there 25 times or 30 times? We don't even know about.

Mom and dad, grandmother and grandfather. It ought to drive us to our knees to pray for our children, our grandchildren. Now, if I look at this passage, verse 3, as he said upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples said and came unto him proudly saying, Tell us all these things we've been talking about.

How do we know it's near? How do we know it's close? How can we tell? And if we go through here, let me just go ahead and read this so that when I get to telling you about it, I don't have to back up. Jesus answered him in verse 4 and said unto them, Take heed that no man what? Is that not what I was just talking about? God said people are going to be deceived. So out of the mouth of Jesus Christ, not a Baptist, Presbyterian or Methodist, not Ralph Sexton, not your pastor, your Sunday school teacher.

Jesus said, you take heed. Now you listen to me. This may be the last night, but don't let the devil distract what you take in the night.

You understand. Deception is coming and you need to know that you need to have a close relationship with God. Don't be deceived.

Why? Verse 5, For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall what? Deceive many. There it is again. Do you remember Waco, Texas? Do you remember David Koresh? Do you remember that story? Did you know after he was killed there in that house, did you know that the Houston, Texas paper wondered if there was anyone else claiming to be Christ? Was there any other person claiming to be Jesus? And they did a survey.

They found 50 different men and women claiming to be Christ in just Texas alone. You say, well nobody. It's happening all around the world.

And people are following for that. No one would believe what he said. How could he tell them I'm Christ incarnate? Why didn't just somebody in Waco just say, hey, before I die with you, can I see the nail prints in your hand? Do you mind opening your shirt there and let me see your side? Right? You see, you know why people are deceived? Because they don't have the Word of God.

They don't have Bible doctrine to protect them and to keep them. And you've got to have that on the inside. That's why the devil tries to keep you out of church Sunday night.

That's why the devil tries to keep you out of church during special revival meeting. That's why he tries to keep you out of church on Wednesday night. Because if he can keep you away from the Word and the study of God's Word, then you're more vulnerable to be deceived.

If he says even the very elect can be deceived, then you know what that tells me? That a lot of saved people are not going to finish out the way they started. Doesn't say they're going to lose their salvation. He didn't say that.

But even Brother Randy, God's people. I'm going to tell you something. Over at Trinity in Asheville, there's some people sitting at home today not going to church that I never dreamed would not be faithful to the Lamb of God.

People that I started serving the Lord with. People that I got confidence in. People that I would have thought I would quit before they would quit.

But you know what happened? They got deceived. They either got their eyes on a man or a crisis or a situation or a personality. And the devil, they were up at the plate and he just hit them with a hat, a fastball or high on the inside.

And they went down swinging. And they're saved. They're going to go to heaven.

They're not going to have any crowns. They're not going to have any rewards. They're going to get in by the skin of their teeth.

That's no way to go to heaven. And they're going to go in and they got deceived in the last few days of their life. If we have any understanding, any intellectual ability tonight, we ought to be saying, God, I know that I need more of you and less of me.

God, I need to know that you are close and you could come. And God, I need to know that salvation is real. It's not just a religious hocus-pocus.

A dead man can be made alive. One day I was dead in my sin and now I'm alive in Jesus forevermore. You say, well, it's almost too simple.

It's almost moronic. It's so simple. I know God fixed it so even a child could believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he had it fixed up that the guy with the highest IQ over in the university, he could believe just like this child with simple faith and he could become a Bible believer. So Jesus warned them about deception. And he's warning you tonight.

He's warning me tonight about this deception. Now, notice this next phrase. Verse 6, And you shall have wars and rumors of war.

See that you be not troubled. For all these things must come to pass. Now, notice this next phrase.

But the end is not yet. For nations shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be famine and pestilence and earthquakes in diverse places.

Now, I believe the key verse is verse number 8. And what is the 8th verse? All these are what? The beginning of sorrows. All these are the beginning of sorrows. We didn't go from noonday brightness out there to midnight blackness.

We've just been through a transition. And the transition is called sundown. And we went from the brightness of noon to the darkness of night.

And the way we accomplished that transition was that we removed gradually light. As the light was removed, and right about dusk, we started losing color in our vision. Things started taking on gray.

And then we went to shadows. Till now, we can only see what is illuminated by artificial light. There's nothing to reflect back to my eye and take that image.

So, as light left, darkness came in. That transition is called sundown. Spiritually, you are in the sundown of the Word of God.

Now, listen to me. I believe that sitting under this tent tonight are people that will never experience the Undertaker. I believe there are people under this tent.

You will never be embalmed. You're never going to go to the Undertaker. You're going to go meet the Uppertaker, but not the Undertaker.

Now, some of us will have to go by the grave. And if we do, he said, I've already cleaned that out and made that a nice place until I come take you all home. But I believe under the tent tonight are people that will go out in the rapture of the church.

I believe it could happen tonight. Now, there are ten trumpets in the New Testament and Old Testament that are important for us to understand. I don't have time to go through these trumpets, but the ten trumpets of the New Testament is the first trumpet, the rapture trumpet.

And then we find there are seven trumpets in the Tribulation. And the last trumpet that you're going to find blown in the New Testament is Matthew 24, verse 31. And that's the trumpet for the final end-gathering when Jesus Christ is going to rule and reign on this earth.

Now, those are the ten trumpets. And if I had time, I mean, we could spend a whole week on those ten trumpets because the first trumpet is the sounding of the trumpet for the rapture of the church. The last one, we've been through the seven trumpets of judgment in the book of Revelation.

And that final and tenth trumpet is going to be in Matthew 24, verse 31, where God pulls Israel together. Now, I believe the key verse I told you is that eighth verse, all these are the beginning of sorrows. You can't have an end unless you have a beginning to the end.

So how do I start the end? I start taking out the light. Now, if you will follow me for the next minute or two, I'm just going to merge two or three messages and just give you some high points to think about. In Matthew 24, let me first outline the chapter for you.

If you have your paper and your pen or if you write it in the margin of your Bible, this will help you understand, rightly divide the Word of God. Because you can't take these last days apart and understand them if you don't know the context of the text. Okay? Matthew 24, we have God's Word dealing with the Gentile kingdoms of this world.

The Gentiles. And that occurs from verse 1 to verse 14. Now, when God talks to the Gentile, what is He talking to? He's talking to every non-Jew that is not saved.

Do you understand that? If you're making a definition, Gentile equals, okay, non-Jews, someone that is not a Jew. Do we have anyone of Jewish heritage here tonight? Huh? Do we have anyone here that is not a Jew? Would you raise your hand? Okay. Is there any non-Jew here tonight that is not a believer? I don't want you to raise your hand.

But if you are a non-Jew and you're not a Christian, you're not a believer, then Matthew 24, verse 1 through 14 is written for you. Okay? Does that make sense? You with me so far? Verse 15. Now, we're going to go to verse 15 and we're going to follow it.

And remember, all this is coming out of the mouth of Jesus. Verse 15, we go down to verse 31. What did I just tell you? Matthew 24, 31.

That's that last and final trumpet where He's calling the Jew home. All right, Matthew 24, 15 through 31, we have God dealing with the Jew. He's dealing with the Jew.

Okay? You say, well, where's the church in Matthew 24? Oh, it begins in verse 32. And from verse 32 to verse 51, we have God dealing with the church. Okay? Now, you've got three groups of people.

That way, God can deal with the church and He can deal with the false church. He can deal with the chosen, the seed of Israel. And we know that God's Word is talking about there is going to be an end time and Jesus is coming.

Now, if I look at verse 36, 37, 38, and 39 in this same chapter, all right? But of that day and hour knoweth no man. No, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Who said those words? Who said those words? Jesus.

And what did Jesus say? He said, nobody knows when the trumpet of God's going to sound. Now, I just told you a lot of things about Bible prophecy. But the one thing I can't tell you is when Jesus is coming back.

And He did that on purpose because He knows our makeup. He knows our temperament. He knows our nature.

And if we could figure out that Jesus is coming on September the 10th, just a few weeks, He knows that we would not be worth anything until September the 9th. I might as well fess up. If I can figure it out, He's coming on the 9th, on the 10th, then on the 9th, I'm going to have me a revival.

I'm going to get in this thing. I'm going to go to church. I'm going to write a tithe check.

Pastor, me and Mama are going to catch up our tithe. The Lord's coming in the morning. Oh, we can't hardly wait.

And while I'm here, I've chased a CD. We're going to put 25,000 in missions. Oh, praise God.

It feels good to give. Oh, and we want to help Brother Ralph with that old tent. Here's another 25,000.

I love that old boy. He's precious. They know that check's not going to clear.

Right, Hawk Man? It ain't going to clear. So what did God do? God said, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm not going to tell you.

I know how you're wired. If you could figure it out, you wouldn't be worth anything. So I'll just hide that.

And He said, what? Watch such an hour as you think not. Behold, the Son of Man is coming. So He said, I'm going to tuck that away, and that way we'll have to live every day like it's our last day.

So I get up every morning looking for the Lord because it could be my last day. And I live every day, and I treat other people like it's my last day or their last day. And by the way, it could be physically, right? It not only could be the Lord coming, it could be my last day or your last day.

So we ought to live for the Lord. We ought to act like Jesus Christ. And we ought to treat other people like we'd want to be treated, as the trumpet could sound at any moment, or they could die and we could die.

Okay? Now, here's what you need to remember. He said, no man knows the day or the hour. So He said, well, I can tell you guys are sincere.

Go back to the first part of this. They're sitting down having a little pow-wow. It's Jesus and the disciples.

And He said, you guys are sincere. I can tell that. So if you and your followers want to know, whatever time, if I come back in a year, or if I come back in a thousand years, whenever I come back, it doesn't matter.

When I come back, if you want to know when I'm coming, I'm going to give you the two clues that you can study and know I'm not even at the door. I'm not going to tell you the day or the hour, but when you see certain events, you'll know I'm here. And what are those? He said, study Noah days, study Lot days, and when you see in your culture and in your lifetime the things of Noah and the things of Lot, and they merge.

See, if it was just Lot days, that wouldn't be enough. If it was just Noah days, that wouldn't be enough. But if you see Noah and Lot in your culture, your society, at the same time, and they're merging, then He said, you might ought to get ready to go to heaven.

Because I'm not even at the door.

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