

Signs of the Times Matt 24:3-21

by William MacDonald

Jesus warns his disciples about the signs of the times, including wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecution, tribulation, the rise of false prophets, and the end of the age, and encourages them to be watchful and prepared for his second coming.

Duration: 34:33

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:51

Topics: "Signs Of The Times"

Description

In this sermon on Matthew 24, the disciples approach Jesus privately and ask about the signs of his coming and the end of the age. Jesus warns them to be cautious and not be deceived by false messiahs who will come in his name. He also mentions that there will be wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes before the end comes. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the details of the rapture, as described in the epistles, and warns that those who have heard the gospel but are left behind will not have a second chance for salvation.

Transcript

Portion of Matthew 24. We'll begin reading in verse 4. Now, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age? And Jesus answered and said to them, Take heed that no one deceives you. The many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many.

And you will hear of wars, and rumors of wars. See that you be not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and kill you. And you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, will hate one another.

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will wax cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. And then the end will come. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on a housetop not come down to take anything out of his house. Let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Woe to those who are pregnant, to those with nursing babies in those days. Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then will be great tribulation such as not been since the beginning of the world until this time no nor ever shall be.

I think we'll just stop there. When I go into the department store in October, and I see red and green bells and banners and special departments with gifts, I know that something is near. What is it? Pardon? What's coming? Christmas, of course.

That's profound. Well, I know that something else is closer than Christmas. What is it? That's right, Thanksgiving.

This is a parable. We see things happening today that are very much like things that are going to happen before the Lord Jesus comes back to reign. But his coming to rapture the church will be at least seven years before that.

And there are no signs for that. It makes me realize the coming of the Lord is near. No generation ever had as much reason to expect the Lord as we do.

And I just want to go over some of the things that are happening today that are similar to the things that will happen before his second coming. His second coming, that is, coming back to earth when he comes to the Mount of Olives. And that being so, we have such great reason to expect the rapture to come soon.

Of course, the most important thing that has happened in recent years was the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. The formation of the state of Israel. Israel.

Israel having such a prominent place in the world today. Listen, it's a very tiny piece of geography. Israel would fit five times into the state of California.

Can you believe it? It would. Israel would fit five times into the state of California. And yet, isn't it marvelous that the cities that the Scriptures speak about with regard to the last days are not London and New York and cities like that? Jerusalem.

And, as we shall see, Rome as well. We live in tremendous days today. What happened in 1948 when Jews streamed back to Palestine and took it over, largely? It's not the return of Israel that's prophesied in the Scripture.

It's a straw in the wind. It's a straw in the wind. But there are resemblances.

For instance, you read in Ezekiel that when Israel comes back to the land, they will come back in unbelief. Well, that's certainly true in Israel today. The vast majority of people in Israel today are in unbelief.

There are Orthodox Jews. There are ultra-Orthodox Jews. And they certainly are looking for the Messiah that most of the people could care less.

They just are not interested in that sort of thing. They're secular Jews. It's very interesting.

Some of the Jews said, I read this in the newspaper recently, if you're a Jew and you make \$25,000 a year, you're an Orthodox Jew. If you make \$50,000 a year, you're a conservative Jew. If you make \$75,000 a year, you're a Reformed Jew.

If you make \$100,000 a year, you're a Unitarian. Well, you know, it's good for a Jew to be a Unitarian. I mean, there's nothing in Unitarianism that he can't go along with.

The denial of the deity of Christ. And it gives him sort of a status in the community to be a Unitarian. That's why one Orthodox rabbi said that he often finds himself more in agreement with the average Baptist minister than he does with the average rabbi.

They have this in common. They believe the Old Testament scriptures. But Israel is going to return in unbelief.

That's going to happen at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes back to reign over the earth. And the first thing that happens when he comes back, of course, is judgment on the unbelieving nation. The Bible teaches the rise of nationalism in the last days.

The New Testament does. Luke chapter 21, verse 29. I think this is a fascinating verse.

Luke chapter 21, verse 29. He spoke to them a parable. Look at the fig tree and all the trees.

Notice that. The fig tree and all the trees. When they're already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.

So you, likewise, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. That is, that Christ is coming to set up his kingdom upon the earth. If Israel is the fig tree there, and we believe that it is, what are all the other trees? Well, we believe just of the nations.

If Israel is a nation, all the trees are nations as well. In the 1940s, there were 58 members of the United Nations. By 1993, there were 184.

We live in a day of nationalism all over. New nations spring up all the time. All the time.

It's happening increasingly. I think that's all the trees that the Lord Jesus spoke about in verse 29. The rebuilding of the temple.

The Jewish people know that they cannot reinstitute the sacrificial system until there's a temple there in Jerusalem. Well, I have two videos at home put out by the Jews in Jerusalem, the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. It shows how they are already manufacturing, making the vessels for the temple.

They're making the clothing for the priests. It's all there. The trumpets are there.

The silver trumpets. I wouldn't say it's all there. The Ark of the Covenant isn't there.

But vessels for the temple are already constructed and waiting for the temple to be built. Even Time magazine says that the coming of the Lord is near. Here's an article from Time magazine.

It says, Time for a new temple? What is that amazing thing? A secular magazine like Time magazine. And here they have a picture of like a reconstructed temple in it. I tell you, when I read these things in the paper, it just sets my heart beating just a little bit faster.

I look up. I think my redemption draws nigh. The coming of the Lord is near.

I may very well be still alive when he comes again. The apostasy of Christendom. I can't go over all the scriptures there are that speak of the apostasy of Christendom.

We're living, we're watching it happen today. We're watching men who are, as I said yesterday, evangelical leaders. And it's absolutely astounding some of the things that they're coming across with right now.

And there is a wholesale desertion of the Christian faith in the day in which we live. We believe that the Roman Empire will be revived in a ten kingdom form. I've heard this from dear brethren down through the years since I was a child.

But they didn't see what I see today. The formation of the European community. Do you know what the European community is founded on? It's based on the, quote, Treaty of Rome.

Not the Treaty of Berlin. Not the Treaty of Moscow. The Treaty of Rome.

And it's really moving very, very, very fast. If you live in one of those European countries today, this is an enlargement. You all have that passport.

European community. It says right on it. European community.

And you can move from one country to the other. You don't have to go through customs. You don't have to go through immigration.

It's all moving very, very fast. They are just ready to start one currency for the whole European community. This is what is known as the ECU.

It's the dollar of the European community. I'll put it down here if you promise not to take it. I'll leave it down here on the platform.

What do you think they have as a logo on this? Of all the logos they could choose in all the world, I mean a beautiful eagle? No, it's not like that. A lion? No, it's not like that. Any other great creature like that? No, it's not like that.

If you look carefully, you'll find it's a woman riding a beast over the water. Turn to Revelation chapter 17. Revelation chapter 17.

Verse 14. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with him are called, chosen, and faithful. He said to me, The waters which you saw where the harlot sits are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

The ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and so forth. It's all there in Revelation chapter 17. Verse 7. The angel said to me, Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven

heads and ten horns.

Now, this beast only happens to have two horns. So what? That's not significant. Of all the logos they could have chosen, a woman riding a beast.

And if you look carefully, you'll see the waves of the water underneath her. Absolutely incredible. I should live in a day when I see this come to pass.

Posters that are coming out. Posters. Incredible.

The United Nations and disarmament. Our hope for a secure future. When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them.

There is a building of the United Nations in Vienna, Austria, and it has that logo on the front of it. Peace and safety. Those very words.

You'd think they had been studying the Bible, wouldn't you? They haven't been studying the Bible. It's just moving fast. I'm going to leave these things down here, if you're interested in coming out and seeing them afterwards.

Another poster. This really almost takes my breath away when I see it. This is a poster of the Council for the Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe.

What do you see? Can you see it? What? You're right. Somebody said it. It's the Tower of Babel.

It's the Tower of Babel. I thought, what are they doing? Well, it says down here, Europe, many tongues, one voice. It's almost a defiance of God, isn't it? Here's a defiance of God.

Europe, many tongues, one voice. That's amazing, isn't it? That you and I should live to see something like that. And it's moving fast, dear friends.

The Bible predicts a super church with headquarters in Rome. We see that. We see Protestantism, apostate Protestantism, and Rome coming together.

A great apostate church. And there are evangelical leaders today who are involved in that movement. I'll just put this coin down too so that you can look at it afterwards.

Matthew 24 gives us some of the characteristics of the time preceding the second advent. The rise of false messiahs. The rise of false messiahs.

Chapter 24, verse 5. 23 to 24 and 26. We live in the day when Reverend Moon came upon the scene. I don't think people are going to be deceived by Reverend Moon.

For one thing, he's not a Jew. I think the Jew, the Messiah, will be a Jew. David Keresh of the Branch Davidians.

He said, if the Bible is true, then I am Christ. When I read that, I thought, I don't think you're going to get the last word on that one, Mr. Keresh. Coming and saying something like that.

The Eastern Gurus that you read about. Here's an ad that appeared in the New York Times. The world has had enough of hunger, injustice, and war.

In answer to our call for help as world leader of all humanity, the Christ is now here. How will you recognize him? Look for a modern man concerned with modern problems. Political, economic, social.

Since July 1977, that Christ is emerging as a spokesman for a group or community in a well-known modern country. He's not a religious leader, but an educator in the broadest sense of the word, pointing the way out of our present crisis. We will recognize him by his extraordinary spiritual potency, the universality of his viewpoint, and his love for all humanity.

He comes not to judge, but to aid and inspire. His presence in the world will guarantee there will be no third world war. Peace and safety.

His message will be heard inwardly, telepathically, by all people in their own language. That's an interesting development, isn't it? From that time, with his help, we will build a new world. Without sharing, there can be no justice.

Without justice, there can be no peace. Without peace, there can be no future. But those things don't interest me.

When I see in the Jerusalem Post an ad like this announcing that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah and should be received. Of course, he's dead now. He died, I think, at the age of 92.

But listen to what it says. Out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The Lubavitcher Rabbi Menachem Schneerson is the King Moshiach, Messiah.

Listen, dear friends, you're living in a day when this ad appears in the Jerusalem Post. Now is the time to accept his kingship. And you say, well, he died.

What are they going to say now? Well, they say, well, look for somebody else who has the characteristics of the Messiah. And I think this is the type of thing, the more that the scriptures are speaking about the coming of a man like Rabbi Schneerson to be accepted by all the people. Famines.

Famines. We read about that, didn't we? In this chapter, verse 7. The World Food Bank estimates that by the end of this decade, one half billion people will die of starvation. That's one fourth of the world's population.

Incredible. Seems pretty distant to us here, doesn't it? In North Dakota. But there you have it.

We don't see the world as God sees it today. Plagues and pestilences. With modern medicines, with all the antibiotics, what's there to worry about? There's a lot to worry about.

With the introduction of jet travel, pestilences and plagues can move around the world faster than they ever could before. And it's happened, you know. It's happened here in this country, where people coming from another country with smallpox or something, there was the danger of that spreading.

AIDS. Where has AIDS been all these years? I want to tell you, I read somewhere that one half of the population of Africa will... No, a quarter of the population of Africa will probably die of AIDS. Some of our missionaries are there in Africa and they're breaking bread and they have a common cup and some of those dear converted Christians are dying of AIDS and all partaking of the common cup.

It's real. It's a problem throughout the world. Earthquakes.

I called the University of California, Berkeley not too long ago and finally got through to the department that manufactures earthquakes or records them. And I said to the man, I said, Sir, I just would like to know if the number of earthquakes is increasing. And he got mad.

He flared up at me. He said, Did you call a week or two weeks ago? I said, Sir, I never called this department before in my life. I think he was very edgy.

Maybe he knew a little about the word of God. And he said, No, they're not increasing. But listen, I have all kinds of statistics saying they are increasing throughout the world.

He said, Well, just that we have instruments to record them better than they had before. I don't believe that. I mean, we have instruments that are better.

But I believe that they're really increasing throughout the world. Martyrs. Many martyrs for the faith.

We see that today. They say that this generation has had more martyrs than any previous generation in the history of the church. And I believe it's true.

Many false prophets. Increasing wickedness and decreasing love for God. Multiplication of false cults.

And not only that, you know, we have the technology, as you know, for the Antichrist. I don't think there's anything more necessary than the technology for the Antichrist. Here's a commemorative card put out by Visa.

It's not out yet. But if you look carefully, there's a computer chip on it. You can have your whole history, friends.

Everything about you can be in that computer chip. Visa is spending billions of dollars developing this card for a cashless society. All they need to do is require 666 and that chip.

You go through the grocery line, it's got to have the 666 on it. I had an interesting experience recently in this connection. I went down to the post office one day and I bought a hundred stamps, 32-cent stamps.

I usually go home from the post office and put them at my desk there. This day I didn't go home, I went to Fairhaven Bible Chapel where I pick up my mail. I have never used the telephone at Fairhaven Bible Chapel.

Never used it. In fact, I couldn't even tell you right now what it is. I was no sooner in Fairhaven Bible Chapel than the phone rang.

The secretary answered it. She said, yes, he is here. She said, Mr. McDonald, it's just a telephone company.

I guess she thought it was MCI or Sprint trying to sell their services to me. She said, do you want to take the call? I said, yes, I'll take it. So, the lady said, Mr. McDonald, this is AT&T Universal card, your visa card.

I said, yes. She said, have you used it recently? I said, within the last hour. She said, did you make a purchase of \$32? I said, yes, I did.

A hundred stamps at 32 cents a stamp. She said, it didn't send back to us the information that we wanted. Now, get that.

A big company like AT&T Universal card and little me and within an hour they detected something. I said, well, it's a funny thing you should say that because when the clerk pushed the card through that machine it didn't register and she had to push it through the second time. She said, that's the problem.

She said, it didn't send back. It didn't send back the information we wanted. I got home and there was a message already on my answering machine telling me to call AT&T Universal card within an hour of the purchase.

Big brother's watching you, huh? Big brother's watching you. When I was still up at Fairhaven there was a young fellow came in, Mike Howe and I told him what had happened. You know what he said to me? Mr. McDonald, they know more about you than you know about yourself.

That's why I say the technology is all here. You don't need anything more. Jim and I know an elder in one of the assemblies out there and he wanted to sell his house and his address was 666 Billings.

He couldn't sell it. He couldn't sell it to worldly people. Get that? Couldn't sell it to worldly people.

He had to go down to the city and change the number of his house and finally sold. Even the world is conscious of these things and conscious of what is happening. It's really absolutely amazing to me.

New world order. You know, even Mr. Bush when he was speaking concerning the Gulf War or the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Washington, D.C. Listen to what he said. You know what is going on? You know what is going to solve all our problems? There's something new called the new world order.

When this comes in, it's going to bring peace like we've never seen. We're going to be able to lay down all our weapons. The new world order is the solution to all our problems.

But he didn't spell out the details of the new world order. And of course, there's no question in my mind that this is all shaping up to this reign of the Antichrist in the world. The world right today.

Have you noticed how human governments are weakening? It's really sad to see what has been happening. The moral decline in our country and the rule. You go around and you see bumper stickers that says defy authorities.

I wish it said something like that. Question authority. Question authority.

I tell you, it scares me when I see those bumper stickers. That's where we are. And governments are getting weaker and weaker.

Paul Henry Spock, one of the organizers of the European Common Market, described the kind of man who's needed. And then he said, send us a man and be he god or devil, we will follow him. That's the foundation of the European Common Market.

Send us a man and be he god or devil, we will follow him. Scharper's ridiculing the coming of Christ. What are you Christians talking about? You've been talking about this for centuries and nothing has happened.

All things continue as they were since the beginning of time. They're ridiculing it. Distress of nations.

You know, I think it's very interesting how just in the last years, the increase of the anti-Christian spirit in our country. Have you noticed it? I mean, the name of Jesus is the name that's banned. And who's that young fellow recently, I forget his name, he won the Heisman Trophy.

And when it was presented to him, he started to give his testimony. He had gone to Falwell's College. And he started to give his testimony on the national TV.

Just like that. Just shut it off. I don't want that.

I don't want any testimony to the name of Jesus. But God is greater than all of their efforts. And it's just, I sit and I just chuckle to see how God gets honor from men in places like that.

There was a young fellow named Mark Dewey, an athlete in our area, and he wouldn't participate in a big rally there at Kindlestick Park for AIDS, you know, for homosexuals and all. Everyone was supposed to wear a ribbon. And he shaped the ribbon into a fish.

And just a storm came down upon Mark Dewey. A storm came down upon that dear guy. And then he wrote a letter to the, and the San Francisco Chronicle printed it.

And he said in this letter, you know, I'm not, I have sympathy, I have compassion for these people that are suffering from AIDS. He said, that's not the point. But he said, this celebration was condoning that sort of thing.

And he said, I cannot be apart from them. He said, there's something worse than the plague of AIDS in the world, and that's the plague of sin. And he said, the only cure for it is the blood of Christ.

And I tell you, I don't expect to see that in the San Francisco Chronicle. But it was there. I cut it out at the time.

Terrible anti-Christian spirit in the world today. Increase of spiritism. You know, in the bomb we have the potential for destroying one third of the earth today.

It's interesting to me how God made those great deposits of oil in the Middle East. And that's the cause of great difficulty, isn't it? And you know that every time you go and fill up your car. But they think the next war won't be fought about oil, it'll be fought about water.

It's interesting, you know. The scriptures teach us, Revelation 16, 12, that in a coming day, the Euphrates is going to dry up and the hordes of the east are going to come across the Euphrates and they'll come across without any difficulty. Listen, the Turkish people are building an Ataturk Dam today.

It's an enormous dam, and it's fed by the Euphrates River. It can hold 50 billion cubic meters. For several weeks in January 1990, the Turks interrupted the flow of the Euphrates on its ancient course down into Mesopotamia.

To fill it completely, Turkey would have to stop the Euphrates for nearly two years. And if they stopped the Euphrates, the hordes of the east could just come over and dry it up. I'm not saying that's the way it's going to happen.

But the potential is already there for it to happen. And these are just a few of the things. They're straws in the wind.

They're not fulfillments of prophecy. They're straws in the wind. This type of thing has to happen before the Lord Jesus comes back and sets up his kingdom on earth.

And at least seven years before that time, the Lord Jesus is going to come and take the church home to be with himself. We call that the rapture of the church. Don't look in the Old Testament for the rapture of the church.

You won't find it. There was a mystery, a truth hitherto unknown, but then revealed to the apostle Paul and the other apostles. Don't look for the rapture in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

You won't find it. Even in Matthew 24, you won't find it. I know a lot of our brethren do find it there.

But, you know, two shall be together, sleeping calm and still. One shall be taken and the other left behind. Will you be ready when Jesus comes? It says, verse 40, Matthew 24, 40, Then two men will be in the field.

One will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill. One will be taken and the other left.

Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord will come. This is not referring to the rapture. The whole context here is the coming of the Son of Man.

Whenever you get that expression, the coming of the Son of Man, it's referring to Christ coming to reign. He's coming back to the earth, not to the air. The people that are taken here are taken away in judgment.

And the people that are left behind here in Matthew 24 are left behind to enter the millennium with Christ. To enter the kingdom with Christ. It's the very opposite with the rapture.

The people that are taken at the time of blessing. Taken home to be with Christ. And the people that are left behind are those that are left behind for the tribulation period.

For the terrible time of tribulation. The worst time that the world will ever know. So I say don't look for the rapture in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

The first mention I find of the rapture in the New Testament is in John where Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

There he said there will be two classes of people. Two types of people on the earth when I come again at the rapture. He that believeth in me, though he were dead.

That's the man who's died in faith. Yet he shall live. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me.

He's living at the time of the rapture. He'll never die. It's kind of an intimation of the rapture.

And then of course Paul spells it out in greater detail. First Corinthians chapter 15. Behold, I show you a mystery.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in the moment of the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. The trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised into a row. We shall be changed.

Wonderful, wonderful truth. So then in the epistles, First Thessalonians 4, First Corinthians, John 14, First Corinthians 15, you have the details of the rapture spelled out for us. So what should this do? It just makes my heart beat a little faster.

I am looking for the imminent return of Christ. The pre-tribulation rapture is the only view you can hold and believe in the imminency of Christ's return. I don't make prophecy a ground of fellowship, a basis for fellowship, but I am looking for the Lord.

The Thessalonians were. They turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to what? Wait for His Son from Heaven. They were living in the expectation of the Lord's return and you and I should be living in that expectation too.

What about those that are left behind? Oh, that's just it. They're left behind. You know, a dear mother, I think she was a young Latino mother out our way the other night.

She had several foster children plus her own children. They went down to Burger King for a treat. And when she bottled them all in the car she got home and had left the little one down there at Burger King.

The police finally came and retrieved the little one. And of course, the poor mother, she's in deep trouble now, although I think she's quite innocent. With a family the size... Have you ever gone off and left some of your children somewhere? Well, with a family her size it would be easy for her to do.

But I tell you, it'll be no fun to be left behind when the Lord Jesus comes to take the church home. No fun, because there's no second chance. No second chance.

Those that have heard the gospel, those that have had a bona fide presentation of the gospel, now, if the Lord should come today, they won't be able to be saved. Because God will deliver them over to believe the lie. And the lie is that the Antichrist is God.

And they'll accept him on that basis. You're here unsaved. Once again, I plead with you.

Make your calling and election sure. Come to Christ while it's still time. He could come tonight.

I believe it with all my heart. I'll just leave these things here in case any of you are interested in coming up and seeing any of them.

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