

Lesson 88 – THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN Matthew 24:23-31

(Matt. 24:23-24) – There has never been a time when clear, precise Gospel preaching is needed more than in the last days leading up to the second coming of Christ. We must be on guard against those who corrupt the Word of God by placing salvation conditioned on man and not on Christ alone. The false gospels preached in the vast majority of pulpits today are the equivalent of the abomination of desolation mentioned in Matthew 24:15. This is where the place set apart by God to preach His truth has been corrupted and left desolate by the abominations of false gospels.

We must make it clear what the doctrine of Christ is and is not, what the preaching of righteousness (the imputed righteousness of Christ – Rom. 1:16-17) is and is not. We must preach repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible (Php. 3:3-9). Here Christ warns us against false messiahs and false preachers who would deceive many people (Matt. 7:15). God's people are to be diligent to judge between God's preachers and Satan's ministers by their doctrine, not by outward appearance (1 John 4:1; Gal. 1:6-8; Rom. 16:9; 2 Cor. 11:15). These false preachers will "show great signs and wonders" (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9). The true disciples of Christ performed great miracles, but these miracles were performed only to confirm the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ. They were to be judged based on their doctrine (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11).

Some false preachers would come so close to the truth that if it were possible they could deceive the elect. We all by nature begin life being deceived until we are born again, but thank God it is not possible for His elect to be deceived finally. This shows why God's people must examine ourselves by His Word (2 Cor. 13:5) and become skillful in the "word of righteousness" so as not to be deceived. God will preserve all His children in Christ, but He will be glorified as He preserves us through our perseverance in the faith.

(Matt. 24:25) – The warnings are not legal threatenings but assurances of grace so that we would persevere in the faith, knowing that God is fulfilling His sovereign purpose and that we are sure to be glorified based on the righteousness of Christ.

(Matt. 24:26-27) – Christ had already told them that *"this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world ..."* (Matt. 24:14). The destruction of Jerusalem was a sad thing considering that it was God's judgment against them for their rejection of the Gospel that had been preached in Israel by the prophets for so many years and by Christ Himself. But a very great positive would come out of this destruction, and that was the fact that the Gospel would go out from the confines of Judaism and be preached to the Gentiles. In these verses Christ sets a contrast between the false preachers who would yet seek to confine, conceal, and restrict the kingdom of God to Judaism and oppose the spread the

kingdom of the Messiah far and wide. This expansion of the church would be sudden, unexpected, and viewed by all just as lightning flashes from east to west.

In those days many false prophets drew large followings of people into the desert, or into caverns and other places of concealment, trying to overthrow the Roman government by force. The meaning here then is that anyone who tries to collect his forces into a secret place in order to regain freedom for the nation by arms seeking to reestablish the Old Covenant is a false messiah or false prophet. The abolishment of the Old Covenant, along with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, were all well within God's purpose to establish the New Testament church and spread the Gospel around the world. So, the disciples were told that Christ's kingdom would not be an earthly kingdom established in Judea, that they must not seek a Redeemer for only Jews, because He will extend His kingdom to the ends of the world. Again, God has an elect people out of every nation.

(Matt. 24:28) – Out of all this death and destruction, in which it may seem to the world that the church is dead, would come a united body of believers, justified sinners, Jew and Gentile, all united under Christ their representative Head and Surety. They are all justified, sanctified, and will be finally glorified based on His righteousness alone, and nothing will be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:28-39).

(Matt. 24:29-31) – *“IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS”* refers to the entire New Covenant age leading up to Christ's return when the church on earth suffers persecution over the Gospel which condemns the world. In 24:37 the Lord describes this as being the same as in the days of Noah which were days of much evil. Noah's preaching and building the ark brought hatred from the world (Heb. 11:7; cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-17). Unbelievers are offended when the Gospel exposes them as being on the broad road of destruction and their deeds to be evil (John 3:19-20). The Gospel shows that all sinners who stand before God without Christ (without His blood to cleanse them from sin and without His righteousness imputed to justify them), will be damned. The sun being darkened and the moon not giving light, the stars falling from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shaken, all describe the final end of this sin-cursed world (2 Pet. 3:10).

This time of great trouble and destruction will be a time of glory for true believers, the elect of God. The *“TRIBES OF THE EARTH”* refer to all unbelievers who are alive at the time of Christ's return. They will all be judged for their sins. But the primary purpose of Christ's return is to gather all whom God chose before the foundation of the world, all whom Christ redeemed on the cross, all whom the Holy Spirit has given life and called to faith in Christ and true repentance. Christ is coming again to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). The only hope for sinners now and in that day is to be found in Christ (Php. 3:7-9; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).