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Sermon Notes

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The Second Coming of Christ

Matthew 24:26-31

Beauty and Majesty:

What is the most beautiful sight you have ever seen? When you consider your answer to that question, think of how

Jesus Christ is coming again... He will return to earth at the appointed time

Four times in this chapter, the Greek word “parousia” is used

Matthew 24:3 *As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"*

Matthew 24:27 *For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

Matthew 24:37 *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*

Matthew 24:39 *and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*

In addition, verse 30 teaches the Second Coming plainly as well:

Matthew 24:30 *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*

This doctrine is taught many times in the New Testament:

Perhaps one of the plainest is in Acts 1:

Acts 1:8-11 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside*

them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

So also the Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of the Second Coming of Christ:

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The Second Coming of Christ should dominate our daily outlook... we should be thinking about it, living for it, yearning for it, praying for it, excited about it, talking about it... the Second Coming of Christ should be an organizing principle to everything you do

The purpose of this sermon is to unfold Christ's plain teaching on His own Second Coming in Matthew 24:26-34... I want to

I. The Second Coming Will Be Obvious to All

Matthew 24:26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

A. No Secret Second Coming

1. In 1874, the founder of the cult known now as the Jehovah's Witnesses, declared that Christ would return to earth that October. When Christ did not return visibly, Russell declared to his followers that the return of Christ HAD taken place in October, but that it was an "invisible" Second Coming; he taught the same thing concerning 1914... in the months leading up to that fateful year, he predicted the visible Second Coming of Christ; when Christ did not return in 1914, he changed again and said the return had been spiritual... and that it had resulted in the 144,000 mentioned in the book of Revelation being translated up to heaven

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society published a book titled "You Can Live Forever In Paradise On Earth". On page 147 we read these words,

"In the same way, Christ's return does not mean that he literally comes back to this earth. Rather, it means that he takes Kingdom power toward this earth and turns his attention to it. He does not need to leave his heavenly throne and actually come down to earth to do this. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Bible evidence shows that in the year 1914 C.E. God's time arrived for Christ to return and begin ruling."

2. Dear friends, all of this is a lie by a cult leader
3. Jesus teaches that His return to earth will be obvious to everyone on the face of the earth

4. He particularly opposes false Christs and false prophets to try to mislead God's people
5. At the time of the Antichrist especially, there will be a much higher level of Satanic activity seeking to deceive the elect
6. As they "run for their lives", Satan will try to throw them deceptions to get them to come out of hiding
7. The thing they are looking for the most is the Second Coming... so Satan will seek to deceive them on this very point
8. Christ will come back in a very OBVIOUS way for everyone to see

B. Lightning Visible from One End of the Heavens to the Other

Matthew 24:27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

1. The Second Coming of Christ will be an event of cosmic proportions (more on that in a moment)
2. Christ likens it here to lightning that flashes across the sky, visible to everyone on the surface of the earth
- 3.

C. No Need for Faith

1. Faith deals with invisible things

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

2. The second coming of Christ will not be an invisible thing... no need for faith at all
3. The lightning is VISIBLE... so will be the Second Coming of Christ

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

4. Therefore, no FAITH will be required to see the Second Coming of Christ

D. No Opportunity for Salvation

1. We are justified by FAITH... by believing the Gospel of Christ

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

2. When Christ returns, the “Day of Salvation” will have ended
3. The Second Coming of Christ will NOT be an opportunity for salvation for lost people... the time will have passed FOREVER

E. No Secret Rapture

1. I believe this teaching RULES OUT the “secret rapture” theory that is so popular in evangelicalism
2. That doctrine teaches that, just before the Great Tribulation, Jesus returns secretly, like a thief in the night, and gathers His true church to Himself, leaving behind all the nominal Christians and unbelievers
3. This “secret rapture” theory was most powerfully popularized by the “Left Behind” series of Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins
 - a. In that book, Jesus silently, secretly returns and whisks away true believers
 - b. People just disappear from a commercial air flight, leaving their clothes in a rumpled heap where they were sitting a moment before
4. Casting Crowns did a song entitled “While You Were Sleeping” in which these lyrics are found:

United States of America
 Looks like another silent night
 As we're sung to sleep by philosophies
 That save the trees and kill the children
 And while we're lying in the dark
 There's a shout heard 'cross the eastern sky
 For the Bridegroom has returned
 And has carried His bride away in the night

America, what will we miss while we are sleeping
 Will Jesus come again
 And leave us slumbering where we lay
 America, will we go down in history
 As a nation with no room for its King
 Will we be sleeping
 Will we be sleeping

5. The idea of a Secret Rapture was first fed into the Christian mainstream by the Scofield Reference Bible... but the idea of a Secret Second Coming I believe is unbiblical, as is the idea of a rapture that does not occur when Christ comes
6. More on that in a moment

II. The Second Coming Will Purify the World of Evil

Matthew 24:28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

A. The Spiritual Interpretation: A Carcass is the Focus of Spiritual Infection

1. The great increase of wickedness will characterize the end of the world
2. Jesus has already described that increase plainly

Matthew 24:12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold

3. So also the Apostle Paul describes it

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power.

4. By this time, the reign of the Antichrist will be in full swing... all unbelievers will have received the Mark of the Beast... they will be openly worshiping the Antichrist and forsaking every other religion; they are those who have rejected the truth and followed evil... and it will show openly in their lives
5. The “carcass” is a rotting shell, living only with writhing worms and maggots... the spiritually filthy end of the human race
6. The “vultures” that gather will feed on the carcass and clean it from the surface of the earth
 - a. the vultures are those birds that do the world a great service by cleaning up the rotting carcass...
 - b. thus they will be the angels Christ sends out to clean up the world by gathering the rebels and casting them into the fiery furnace

Matthew 13:40-42 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They

will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

B. The Physical Interpretation: Dead Bodies Everywhere

1. Revelation reveals that Christ Himself will come in a bloodbath
2. He will return from heaven as a commanding general on a white horse for war
3. He will be riding in front of the armies of heaven

Revelation 19:13-15 *He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.*

4. And he will ride out against the Antichrist and his assembled army and destroy it with the sword coming out of His mouth

2 Thessalonians 2:8 *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.*

5. Then the birds of the air come and gorge on the flesh of the dead bodies everywhere

Revelation 19:17-21 *And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great." ¹⁹ Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰ But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹ The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

6. Perhaps this is the literal interpretation of the statement in verse 28

Matthew 24:28 *Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.*

7. In any case, after the Second Coming of Christ, the world is cleaned up... purified at last of the filth of human sin

III. The Second Coming Will Affect the Cosmos

Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

A. Copernicus's Revolution: The Earth is Not the Physical Center of the Universe

1. 16th century Polish astronomer, physicist, and mathematician Nicolus Copernicus studied the movement of the heavenly bodies and wrote in a secret notebook his findings... that the SUN not the EARTH was actually the physical center of the solar system
2. The earth revolves around the sun, not the other way around
3. He was afraid of being declared a heretic by the Catholic church and his findings were not published until his death
4. Unbelievers use his experience as proof that science trumps Biblical theology every time, and that true believers usually try to squelch true science to maintain their pathetic little superstitions

B. The Second Coming's Restoration: The Earth is the Spiritual Center of the Universe

1. We learned this already in Genesis 1: from the beginning of time, we learn that the heavenly bodies have an EARTHLY purpose

Genesis 1:16-17 God made two great lights-- the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth

Genesis 1:14 let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years

2. So also at the END of time, we learn that the heavenly bodies have an earthly purpose... when history on earth comes to an end, the heavenly bodies will fall to the earth... to make way for the New Heaven and New Earth
3. The sun and the moon will be darkened... and the stars will fall from the sky
 - a. Revelation likens the falling of the stars to the tumbling of ripe figs from a tree
 - b. How this will be, I do not know... I just think it shows God's absolute power over the universe
4. The sun's light will fail... but Christ's splendor and glory will be shining radiantly

C. The Powers of the Heavens Shaken

1. NIV “The heavenly bodies”... Greek word is “dunamis”... the POWERS of the heavens will be shaken
2. This could very well refer to Satan’s kingdom... the spiritual forces or powers of demons and arch-demons, or rulers and powers and principalities
3. Satan and His forces will have been dominating the entire earth openly for seven years by the power of the Antichrist
4. The time will come to defeat forever Satan and his demonic heavenly powers
5. The word “shaken” shows the immense power of the Second Coming... both in the physical AND the spiritual world... like an immense earthquake

Hebrews 12:26-27 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

The coming Kingdom of Christ CANNOT be shaken... everything else WILL BE shaken

The stage is now set for the glorious Second Coming of Christ: the heavenly bodies will bow and get out of the way... their light will be extinguished like tiny candles blown out... the vast, immense powers of heaven and earth will be shaken... everything is ready for the glorious Second Coming

IV. The Second Coming Will Be Powerful and Glorious

Matthew 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

A. The Sign of the Son of Man

1. The word “sign” usually refers to miracles, supernatural displays of Christ’s power over disease or demons or the weather
2. Remember that the Antichrist and other false spiritual messengers have been doing great signs and wonders on the earth
3. Also remember that, in the days of Moses and the plagues on Egypt, the magicians of Pharaoh’s court were able to do some of the same signs... but there came a point at which Moses did a sign they could not imitate... at that point the false wonder-workers were forced to confess with awe

Exodus 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God."

4. How much more when the “sign of the Son of Man” appears in the sky!!
5. The whole world will be forced to admit, “this is the Son of God!”
6. What IS the “sign of the Son of Man”?

they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

A direct reference to Daniel 7

Daniel 7:13-14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.

A precursor to what Christ will say to get Himself condemned by the Jewish leaders

Matthew 26:64 In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

B. Will Appear in the Sky

1. Everyone will stop what they are doing and look up
2. The coming of the Son of Man will be in the middle of their lives... people will be marrying and giving in marriage, shopping, working, laughing, playing... and suddenly the Son of Man will appear in the sky
3. The CLOUDS and GLORY are mentioned in so many different passages
 - a. Imagine the most awesome display of clouds you've ever seen
 - b. Cumulus nimbus... or a tower of thunder clouds... piled as high as the eye can see, lit by electrical flashes and the glows of the setting sun
 - c. That will be as nothing compared to the cloud displayed at the Second Coming
 - d. Power and GREAT GLORY is mentioned... Christ's blinding radiant brightness will fill the sky
 - e. Behind Him will be the armies of heaven

C. Sights and Sounds

1. The voice of the archangel... the trumpet call of God

2. The appearance of glory
3. The majesty of the clouds
4. The sight of the armies of heaven

D. All Nations will See It

1. This will unite a fractured world
2. Every single nation or tribe or people group or language on the face of the earth is descended from one man, Adam... we all share a common origin
3. So also every nation on earth will share a common ending... the Second Coming of Christ
4. The events of all nations will come to a sudden close
 - a. The buying and selling will end
 - b. The scheming of organized criminals will end
 - c. The plans of military personnel will end
 - d. The hopes of bride and bridegroom will end
 - e. The plowing and reaping will end
 - f. ALL OVER THE WORLD

V. The Second Coming Will Result in Judgment on Sinners

Matthew 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

A. Why Will they all MOURN?

Revelation 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

B. This Can Only Be the Mourning of Terror at the Glory of God

1. The light makes the cockroaches run and hide
2. The glory of the pure light of Christ means instant judgment for the sinners of the earth

3. It is light that makes everything visible... the glory of this supernatural event strikes terror in the hearts of sinners
4. They will mourn
 - a. because judgment is coming on them forever and ever
 - b. because their fleshly pleasures are ended
 - c. because the bible-thumpers were right after all
 - d. because they will spend eternity in torment
 - e. because they will spend eternity in regret that they refused to trust Christ

C. The Second Coming of Christ Will Result in Final Judgment on Sinners

VI. The Second Coming Will Result in the Gathering of the Elect

Matthew 24:31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

A. This, Dear Friends, is the Rapture!!

1. The word “rapture” is not found in the English Bible
2. However, it comes from the passage on the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

3. The “rapture” is Latin for “caught up” ... the “catching up” of the church

B. The Lord’s Deep Desire: To Be With Us Forever

C. The Elect Under Great Distress are Rescued

D. An Angelic Ride Ending in a Glorious Meeting

VII. Applications

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

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