

MATTHEW 24 – THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

1. Context – Matthew 23

- a. Jesus and His disciples had been in the temple where Jesus had heavily criticised the Jewish leadership – the scribes and the Pharisees. He condemned them because of their hypocrisy and the heavy burden they placed on the people. More than anything else He condemns them for not listening to the prophets and taking them seriously and thus missing the truth of who He is – the Messiah, the Son of God.
 - i He calls them blind guides, blind fools, hypocrites, whitewashed tombs, brood of vipers and so on. In particular he denounced them especially for their guilt in leading the nation to reject the Messiahship of Jesus.
 - ii He concludes by making two profound statements: first “See, your house is left to you desolate”. Up until now, Jesus has referred to the Temple as “My House” – but now he has disowned it, and he forewarns them that it is about to become desolate. The second thing he said to them was “you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”
 - iii Jesus said that He will not return until the Jewish leaders invite Him. As the Jewish leaders once led the nation to reject His Messiahship, a day must come when they will lead the Jewish people to accept Him as Messiah.

2. Jesus’ primary teaching on the end times

- a. Matthew 24 and 25 is the clearest teaching by Jesus on the end times. Both chapters comprise one teaching, and should be seen as one whole. We will look at chapter 25 separately next time.
 - i Together with Luke 21 and Mark 13, these 4 chapters give us a foundation for Jesus’ end-times teaching.

b. Outline of Matthew 24:

24:1-3	The disciples’ questions about the temple and Jesus’ return
24:4-14	Signs of the times indicating Jesus’ return
24:15-20	The saints will see the abomination of desolation
24:21-22	The Great Tribulation
24:23-28	Do not be deceived about Jesus’ return
24:29-31	The second coming of Christ
24:32-36	The parable of the fig tree
24:37-42	The command to watch: Most will not recognize the signs
24:43-44	The parable of the thief
24:45-51	The parable of the faithful and wise servants

- c. We can summarise Matthew 24 into its main constituent parts this way:
 - i The disciples question Jesus regarding the destruction of the temple and signs to look for connected to Jesus’ coming to establish the kingdom (v1-3)
 - ii Various signs of the times (v4-14)
 - iii Important warnings (v15-28)

- iv The rest of the chapter outlines the responses Jesus wants from his people told through 5 parables, continuing in chapter 25.

3. The disciples' questions

Matthew 24:1-3 *Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." ³ 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 close of the age?"*

- a. The disciples pursue Jesus and ask him to explain what he meant when he told the Pharisees their house was left to them desolate. He tells them that the destruction of the temple would be total, not one stone left standing on another.
- b. The Temple was still a work in progress at that time. Herod the Great had begun work on it about 50 years previously, and would not be completed for another 35 years.
 - i Some of the stones used were 40ft long, 12ft high, 12ft wide and would have weighed about 25 tons. It was certainly a magnificent piece of architecture – constructed of white stone with huge solid marble pillars, and inlaid with gold in such a way that it reflected the sunlight for miles around.
 - ii However, within the walls of the Temple there was corruption; read Matthew 23 to understand how far the Pharisees had strayed from God's ways, and so just as God had done previously in 586BC when the first temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, he would not allow this temple to remain as a symbol of Israel's greatness.
- c. The disciples approach Jesus and ask him two questions.
 - i When will these things be? (meaning the destruction of the temple)
 - ii What will be the sign of Jesus' second coming and the end of the age.
- d. At this time the disciples didn't expect Jesus to leave and then return at some point in the future. They asked these questions because Jesus had entered Jerusalem in exactly the way the prophet Zechariah had said Messiah would come.
- e. Their expectation was that Jesus was the Messiah that was coming to deliver Israel from the tyranny of Roman rule, who would defeat all their enemies and establish his kingdom with Jerusalem as the centre. In their minds they assumed that these two events occurred at the same time.
- f. The disciples would have had a good grounding in the Hebrew scriptures, so would be familiar with prophecies contained in Zechariah 14.
 - i V1-2 Jerusalem would be violently attacked
 - ii V3-8 At that very time the Messiah would come and deliver them
 - iii V3-11 Messiah would establish his worldwide kingdom in power and glory.
- g. Matthew 24 was partially fulfilled in context to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, but it was not a complete fulfilment. There remains a further and more complete fulfilment which is in context to Jesus' second coming and the great troubles that Jerusalem will experience during the Great Tribulation.

- i History tells us that it was the Romans under the leadership of Titus that destroyed the Temple – but we have to understand that the prime mover in causing this destruction was God himself.
- ii As we read through the text of Matthew 24 and Luke 21 we can see that there were many aspects of the prophecy that were not fulfilled in 70AD, indicating that Jesus is addressing in these chapters events that are yet future.

4. Signs of the times indicating Jesus' return

- a. In the next section, Jesus addresses the disciples' second question regarding the signs to look for concerning Jesus' coming to establish his kingdom.
- b. If you're going on a journey, what is the most important piece of information you need before setting out? To know where you are going — you need to know your destination. At the same time, a map will help you on your journey to know where you are at any given point on the journey, and how far away from your destination you are.
 - i Mankind is also on a journey — from eternity past to eternity future — there was a starting point and there will be a destination.
 - ii The disciples asked “what is the sign of your coming?” Signs are pointers, they point to where you are going, either to the next stage of the journey or to your final destination.
 - iii God is working to a plan which he has clearly revealed in the Bible. And this plan introduces us to an added dimension to this journey — time. As we study the signs of the times, we will become equipped so that we not only know **where** we are on the journey, but more importantly **when** we are.

Matthew 24:4-14 *And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

- c. In the three parallel passages, Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13, Jesus describes 22 different signs of the times, 20 of which are negative. He doesn't give us these signs so that we focus on them or live in dread of them – they are signs for us to watch for that serve as time-indicators. They are 22 important themes that Jesus wants his people to understand and proclaim.
- d. Out of these 22 signs, Jesus highlights 12 negative trends that he describes as “the beginning of birth pangs” that will increase both in frequency and intensity in the generation who are on the earth when he returns.
- e. Then he highlights an additional 5 negative trends that will escalate and increase during the final 7 years of this age – the Tribulation. After that, he identifies 5 signs that will occur during the last 3½ years of the Great Tribulation.

5. Do not be led astray

- a. He begins his response to the disciples' questions by warning them that deception was one of the enemy's primary tactics. Jesus' warning is that deception will significantly increase at the end of the age, and many will be led astray.
- b. Jesus tells us that many will seek to set themselves up as "the Christ. Some will offer political solutions, others will offer solutions through enlightenment, knowledge and science, still others will offer solutions by means of the occult and witchcraft.
 - i Satan will attack the truth of God's Word as being irrelevant, false, incomplete and even dangerous. They will try to persuade us that the Word of God is just a guide to live by, or that we can sin as much as we want because it is all covered by grace. Many will come in the name of Jesus, but they will lead people away from the real Jesus, luring them into lifestyles of compromise and comfort.

6. Twelve negative signs

- a. Jesus gives us 12 negative signs or trends that he describes as being like the beginnings of birth pains. Birth pains intensify as birth approaches. So it will be with these signs. Although we have seen many of these signs throughout history we are now seeing a great increase in both the quantity and the frequency.
 - i **Deception and false christ:** Many will come in Jesus' name and deceive many (24:5).
 - ii **Wars:** There will be military and political conflict (24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9)
 - iii **Rumours of war:** Rumours will stir fear that has many implications—financial, social, political.
 - iv **Nation against nation (Ethnic conflict):** Civil disorder and racism will occur, nation (ethnos) against nation (24:7).
 - v **Kingdom against kingdom (Economic warfare):** Economic-related hostility, aggression, and conflict (24:7).
 - vi **Famines:** Massive food shortages will occur (24:7) that will distress the nations (Luke 21:25).
 - vii **Pestilences (disease):** Diseases such as AIDS have killed over 25 million people worldwide, and we are seeing the increase in infectious diseases such as bird flu and MRSA. These diseases are unique in how rapidly they spread and how difficult they are to treat. Biological warfare will bring disease to a new intensity (24:7).
 - viii **Great earthquakes:** (Luke adds great) in destruction and loss of life (24:7; Luke 21:11).
 - ix **Commotions:** There will be chaotic events in society and creation (Luke 21:9).
 - x **Fearful sights:** Terrorizing happenings, or that which causes one to be struck with fear (Luke 21:11)
 - xi **Great signs from heaven:** Signs in the sky and related to the weather (Luke 21:11).
 - xii **Perplexity at the roaring of the sea** (Luke 21:25)
- b. In the midst of all this, in verse 6, Jesus seeks to assure the disciples. He says "See that you are not alarmed or fearful" – urging them to take heed lest fear induces them to fall away. God is in control of history and is purposefully steering it towards its conclusion.

7. Five negative trends

- a. Now Jesus highlights 5 negative trends that will increase after the beginning of birth pains, and which will have an impact particularly on the people of God.
 - i **Persecution:** including martyrdom of believers (24:9) Believers will be killed in all nations, even nations with a Christian heritage.
 - ii **Social anarchy:** hatred, betrayal and offence in society (24:10)
 - iii **False prophets:** social commentators who will deny and undermine God's word causing many to stumble or fall away. These lies will play on the human desire to engage in compromising, sinful pleasures. (24:11)
 - iv **Abounding lawlessness:** The rule of law will diminish, God's laws will be abandoned and people will choose a life of compromise and sin. Perversion, betrayal and cruelty will abound. Sin will reach its fullest expression. (24:12)
 - v **Love growing cold:** This lawlessness with its moral decay will create the context for hatred as love grows cold due to many having a seared conscience. People's hearts for others grow numb when they are battered with injustice and unrighteousness, and their capacity to love others will be damaged by misuse and abuse. (24:12)
- b. The one who perseveres to the end will be saved. In his word God has given us a full picture of the events of the end of the age. The scriptures tell us that there will be a great falling away before the end of the age, through deception and offence.
 - i The ones who will stand will not be fooled by the promises of the false prophets. They will have no interest in personal glory and this life will have no allure for them. Above all they are those who have encountered the glory of our Bridegroom God, partnering with him as he unfolds his battle plan for the end of the age.

8. The gospel of the kingdom

- a. In the midst of all the negative signs Jesus gives us one significant positive. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations.
 - i There will be a great falling away, but also in the last days there will be the greatest harvest of souls from every nation that the world has ever seen.

9. The Abomination of Desolation

Matthew 24:15-20 *"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.*

- a. Jesus quoted from the prophet Daniel more than any other Old Testament prophet. Daniel is one of the primary sources of God's revelation concerning the end times and should be read alongside these chapters in Matthew and the book of Revelation. They are all interconnected and together serve to give us the big picture.
 - i Specifically here Jesus is referencing Daniel 8:13, 9:27, 12:11 and 11:31.
- b. Jesus adds an emphasis here – "Let the reader understand". He is telling us that there are things to take note of here that may not be immediately obvious, and that this is a particularly

important point he is making. He is directing us to the book of Daniel and saying “You need to get hold of what Daniel has to say about these things”.

Daniel 11:31 *“And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”*

Daniel 12:11 *“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”*

- c. Until now Jesus has only given general signs that are observable globally and universally, now he gives us a sign that is both specific in terms of its location, and significant in its uniqueness.
- d. The abomination of desolation is the primary sign that the Great Tribulation has begun. The abomination of desolation is when the Antichrist breaks the covenant he has made with Israel, brings an end to the sacrifices and offerings; he enters the temple in Jerusalem, sets up an image of himself and declares himself to be God, and demands all the people to worship him as God.
- e. Jesus says “when you see...” indicating that this is a visible sign, also indicating that this sign is a future event. But there is no temple in Jerusalem, it was destroyed in 70AD. By the time-frame that is being referenced here, there will be a new temple built in Jerusalem.
- f. This is the act which sets in motion the Great Tribulation, the final 3½ years before the return of Jesus.
- g. The next 5 verses describe the conditions of those living in Judea, in the vicinity of Jerusalem at this time, who are urged to flee from the city into the mountains. There is no time to waste, not time to go home and collect belonging because their very lives are in danger.

10. The Great Tribulation

Matthew 24: 21-22 *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*

- a. Jesus describes what follows the abomination of desolation as the Great Tribulation, a period of 3½ years that will be the most difficult, yet most important 3½ years of the earth’s history.
- b. The tribulation of these days will be so severe that if they were allowed to continue indefinitely, no-one would survive.
- c. During this time there will be two severe waves of death. The first will claim a quarter of the earth’s population (Revelation 6:8) and the second will claim a further one-third (Revelation 9:15) – this adds up to 50% of the world’s population.
- d. The unique events of the Great Tribulation are fuelled by 4 forces coming into play:
 - i **The earth’s groan** – creation’s groaning producing volcanoes, earthquakes, storms and floods etc.
 - ii **Man’s sin** – the sin of man will reach its greatest extent of wickedness
 - iii **Satan’s rage** – Satan will be expelled from the heavenlies and will unleash his rage upon the earth, especially against Israel and the saints
 - iv **God’s zeal** – God is pursuing his plan to deliver the earth from the influence of Satan and the reign of sin, and Jesus will return to establish his rule and reign on the earth.

11. Do not be deceived

Matthew 24:23-29 *Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.*

- a. These will be days when there will be many who claim to be the messiah. We know from the book of Revelation that the False Prophet will be able to perform miraculous signs which will no doubt deceive many. These signs will be so powerful and seemingly authentic that even those who know the Lord and his ways are in danger of being deceived.
- b. But although there will be much deception at this time we are told that "Immediately after the tribulation of those days" the signs that are from the Lord will be very clear. His appearing will be as lightning (very clearly visible), that the whole earth will see it (not hidden or secret in any way) and that a trumpet will sound (clearly audible) and that we shall be gathered up to meet with him.
 - i The reference to the vultures, which appears to be a proverbial saying of the time, probably means simply that, just as people from far away can see vultures circling high in the air, Jesus' return in judgment will be visible to all. There are other interpretations but this seems to me to be the one that fits the context best.

12. The second coming of Jesus

Matthew 24:29-31 *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

- a. Jesus now gives us another sign as a timing marker. He says "immediately after the Great Tribulation" something remarkable will happen – God will put the lights out. Jesus is not the only one to refer to this blackout, it is also described in Isaiah 13:9-10 and Joel 2:31 and 3:15.
- b. What Jesus is describing here is his second coming, and in one short sentence he tells us two things – the timing of his coming and the manner of his coming – the **when** and the **how**.
- c. **When** – immediately after the days of the Great Tribulation. Immediately in the bible always means immediately, there is no time gap between two events.
- d. **How** – He is coming on the clouds of heaven. Jesus is here pointing us again to Daniel, chapter 7 where he is described as "one like the son of man who came with the clouds of heaven to be presented before the Ancient of Days." Once again Jesus is validating the prophecy of Daniel.
- e. Then in verse 31 he describes the rapture of the saints, when all those that are still alive who are in Christ will be caught up to meet him in the air. Jesus tells us here that we are gathered up by the angels and carried to be with him.

- i And then it's at some point as we gather with Jesus in the sky that we will receive our resurrection bodies, as Paul says we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and our old corrupted physical bodies will be exchanged for a new and glorious incorruptible one.

13. The parable of the fig tree

Matthew 24:32-35 *From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁶ But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*

- a. In Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus gives us five parables, three of which are included in this chapter, the other two are in chapter 25. They are all parables concerning the end times. The first is the parable of the fig tree.
- b. In this chapter has been answering the question that the disciples asked concerning the sign of his coming. He has been encouraging them to learn how to understand the signs of the times.
- c. The lesson of the fig tree is easy to understand. A fig tree loses its leaves in the winter, and does not sprout new leaves until the late spring. So when we see the leaves of the fig tree begin to sprout we know that summer is near.
 - i So when the prophetic sign events and trends that Jesus has been talking about make global headlines, then we know that the end of the age is near. Once again, Jesus is giving us a timing indicator.
- d. The other significant thing about this parable is that the fig tree is often used figuratively in the scriptures as an illustration of Israel. So for us, this is also a prophetic sign. God always uses Israel as his prophetic time-clock.
 - i Between 70AD and 1948 there was no Israel. Then in May 1948 through a series of miraculous events, the nation of Israel was reborn back in her own land. What we are seeing in our own lifetime are the leaves of the fig tree sprouting and flourishing, again giving us a clear indication of where we are on God's end-times timeline.
- e. There is only one generation that will see all of the trends and events that Jesus outlines in this chapter making headline news on a global scale. For the first time in history, most of these trends are happening with greater frequency and intensity, pointing us to the compelling conclusion that we may well already be in the generation in which the Lord will return.
- f. There is an alternative translation of this phrase, because the Greek word "*genea*", often translated "*generation*", can equally mean "*race*". So the idea here is that Israel as a race will not pass away, which is confirmed by many prophetic scriptures concerning their continuing role in the purposes of God both through the end times and into the Millennial Kingdom.
- g. Many misinterpret Jesus' statement that we will not know the day or the hour to mean that we cannot know when He will return. This is not what Jesus was saying. We can know the season by watching for the signs in the same way we know when a tree is about to bear fruit by seeing the leaves appear and know that it is approaching summer and the time for harvest.
- h. Now what did Jesus mean when he said "no-one knows the day or the hour"? He was actually quoting a well-known saying that every Jewish person would understand. Last Sunday night

was the beginning of Yom Teruah, which is one of the feasts of the Lord as outlined in Leviticus 23.

- i Yom Teruah is celebrated on the first day of the month of Tishri, the 7th month. However, the actual first day of the month could only be determined by physically observing the appearance of the new moon, and the new moon of Tishri has a 42-hour variance of when it could be seen.
- ii So they knew it could have been one of two days, but they didn't know which day or at which hour the new moon could be seen. Hence the saying, no-one knows the day or the hour.
- i. So there are clues – the generation that is alive during the tribulation and the great tribulation will clearly know the year and the season of the Lord's return. They will even know the month, but they will not know the day or the hour.

14. As in the days of Noah

Matthew 24:37-42 *For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.*

- a. In the end times, as in the days of Noah, the “wickedness of man will be great in the earth and every intent of the thoughts of his heart will be only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5)
 - i Like Noah those who are walking with the Lord and understanding what is happening will be prepared and ready. Those who are not prepared will be washed away and destroyed. Jesus expects us, like Noah, to be prepared.
- b. The main message in this passage is that people who could have understood the prophetic significance of the generation they lived in, did not.

2 Peter 2:4-5 *[God]...did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah...a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly...*

- a. The surprise of Noah's flood proves the widespread problem of lacking prophetic understanding and faith in a significant history-changing generation. The people in Noah's day were caught totally by surprise as they went about the ordinary activities of daily life.
 - i Noah and his family prepared for an entire generation without knowing the specific day or hour.
 - ii This serves as a warning to the church to prepare for what lies ahead. Many in the church today have a “head in the sand” attitude to the end times, focusing only on the “here and now”.

15. The parable of the thief

Matthew 24:43-44 *But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

- a. We need to be faithful during the time of Jesus' delay. Watch the signs of the times so that we will be ready to respond faithfully to Jesus during the escalating crisis of the end times.
- b. Being prepared means that we will not be caught out or taken by surprise. In the parable it appears that the master of the house was unprepared and suffered loss. Being prepared for the end times means investing time and effort into knowing and understanding what the Bible has to say so that our hearts do not become offended or fearful and cause us to fall away.

16. The parable of the faithful and wise servant

Matthew 24:45-51 *Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

- a. Jesus knew there would be a delay between his first coming and his second coming and didn't want this to lead to his followers living ungodly lives. If we are walking with the Lord then we will not be taken by surprise; we shall be expectant, prepared and equipped and ready to join in the great celebration on the Day of His Return.
- b. Readiness will always promote faithfulness. Having focused on our state of preparedness for the end times, Jesus now shifts his focus to highlight how we should then live in the meantime. If the previous parable was about uncertainty, this one is about certainty.
- c. We are to be faithful and wise servants seeking to live holy and righteous lives. We are to be those who feed on the word and "give food" to others (v.45) by sharing the gospel of the kingdom and the message of Jesus' return. Then we will rule and reign with Him in the Millennial Kingdom and see the "restoration of all things".

17. Conclusion

- a. The return of Jesus is part of the gospel message. If we only speak of the first coming without the second coming, our gospel message is incomplete. We have to view the cross correctly. The cross is the ultimate revelation to humanity of who God is. The cross is often thought of as the climax of the redemptive story, but in reality it sets the stage for the climax of history.
 - i The cross does not fulfil the promises of God – it secures them.
 - ii Because the first coming did not fulfil all the promises of God, the gospel is not just about what Jesus has done; it is also what Jesus will do.
- b. Throughout the day you check your watch or mobile phone to see what time it is. Based on what time it is, you know what to do next. If you never knew what time it was you would never be able to make the right decisions or take the right actions. If this is true of your life individually, is it not true for the Church globally? It is imperative that we rightly discern the scriptural signs of the times and know our place at this stage of human history.