

48. Jesus Taught About His Return to Earth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus taught about the tribulation, so they can explain to others what Jesus taught. In this topic, we are going to see what Jesus taught four of His disciples about His return to this earth to rule on the earth for one thousand years.

In Mark 13:24-27, we read, “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.” The previous verses described some of the events of the Great Tribulation, which will be the last half of the tribulation. As a result, these verses are speaking about the things that will happen as the world moves toward the end of the tribulation. We see that there will be several signs in the heavens.

The word translated “after” is translated “*with*” in most uses in the New Testament (three hundred and forty-five times). Revelation 8:12 says, “Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.” Various passages tell us that the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. Joel 2:10-11 says, “The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it?” The “Day of the Lord” is used to describe the times when God brings great judgment, particularly the final judgments, beginning with the tribulation. In the New Testament, it will begin with the tribulation and extend through the final judgments. 2 Peter 3:10 says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

We also see that the stars of heaven will fall and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Matthew 24:29 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Both verses talk about the same event and mention the same things that will happen as the tribulation comes to its conclusion. Here, we see that both the heavens and the earth will be affected by these events.

The entire world will see the coming of the Lord to earth to rule. For those who have rejected Him, this will be a day of judgment. This judgment is illustrated in a very important way from the time of Noah. Matthew 24:38-39 says, “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” All unbelievers will be taken off the earth in judgment. In contrast, for the elect, who have come to Him in repentance and faith during this time, it will be a time of re-gathering from all of the

places where they have been scattered, including both the farthest part of the earth and the farthest part of the heaven.

Jesus went on to give the disciples the parable of the fig tree to illustrate what the time of His coming to rule on the earth will be like. Mark 13:28-31 says, “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Jesus explained, to His disciples with Him, how people will be able to recognize when His coming to rule on the earth is close. Jesus used the fig tree as His illustration.

Like many fruit trees, in the spring of the year, a fig tree gets buds on it. Those buds will become figs. At the same time, the branches become tender, and the tree starts to form new leaves for the coming season. Jesus said that when the disciples saw these things happen to the fig tree, they knew that summer was very close. In the same way, Jesus said that when the earth sees the things happening in Mark 13:6-23, especially the things in verses 14 through 23, people can know that the coming of Jesus to rule on the earth is very close. In fact, Jesus said that it is right at the doors. The events, in verses 14-23, will only last three-and-a-half years (one thousand two hundred and sixty days). Revelation 12:6 says that God will feed Israel in the wilderness for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. That verse says, “Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” Then, Revelation 13:5 tells us how long the antichrist will rule after he sets up his image. That verse says, “And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.” This is why Jesus said His coming would be right at the doors.

Jesus went on to say that the generation living at the time in which the events of the tribulation will take place will not pass away until all these things have taken place. This is a reminder that the tribulation is actually a very short period of time, because it is only the seventieth week of Daniel (seven years). Daniel 9:27 says, “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.” Daniel 9:24 promises, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” Since the Messiah was cut off (Jesus died and rose again) after the sixty-ninth week, the time of the church, which was not mentioned in the Old Testament, is happening before the seventieth week (the tribulation).

Then, Jesus gave His disciples, and all future followers, a wonderful promise when He said, in verse 31, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Revelation 21:1 says, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” After Jesus rules on the earth for one

thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6), there will be the final judgments of Satan and all unbelievers (Revelation 20:7-15). Then, 2 Peter 3:10 says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Through these events, the world, as we know it now, will pass away. However, the words spoken by Jesus will not pass away. Everything He said will happen exactly as He has said it.

Jesus then told the disciples, in Mark 13:32-37, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. *It is* like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” Jesus said, that no one, including the angels, knew when in the future these events would happen, except the Father. Since Jesus set aside some of His relative attributes when He came to this earth, He had even set aside His knowledge of the time of these events until He returned to heaven.

Jesus told the disciples that since they did not know when these events would happen, they were to watch and pray. If Jesus told the disciples to watch and pray at that time, it is even more important that we watch and pray today, since we are much closer to that time. Then, Jesus gave an illustration. Jesus compared Himself to a man going to a far country. Jesus started that trip to that far country in Acts 1:9, where we read, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, because Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Jesus then gave instructions to the disciples. These instructions apply to all who become His servants. Jesus said that He has given each of His servants work to do before He returns. As followers of Jesus, we are to be busy doing His work which He has prepared us to do. As Christians, we know that Jesus is going to return and take us to heaven at the Rapture. However, none of us know when that day will be. That is why we are to be watching and ready at all times for His coming. The same will be true for all who become tribulation saints during the tribulation. They are also told to be ready at all times for His coming, because no one knows the exact time at which Jesus will return. The time of His coming, at both the Rapture and when He returns to rule, will be sudden. There will be no advance warning. It could happen at any time of the day or night.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children be ready and watching for the coming of Jesus. It will be sudden, so we want to show them by our attitude to be ready at all times. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to realize the importance of being ready when Jesus comes.