

Matthew 24:32–34 (NKJV)

³² “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. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

- Jesus spoke these words standing at Jerusalem’s Temple Mount – Ground Zero for Bible prophecy

When Jesus was questioned about the signs of His return, He told them this parable

- He said that all of these events would happen in a single generation
- **Joel 3:1-2** *in those days, at that time, I will also*
- Re-gathering and Armageddon will happen in the same time period

Approximately 30% of the Bible is prophecy and most of that centers around the end times and our generation

- When you understand Bible prophecy you can contextualize the events happening around the world
- While some are confused and frightened, we can be calm and comforted

Matthew 24:22 (NKJV)

²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.

Genesis 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years

- One of the main reasons God created the heavens was for “*signs and seasons*”
- “*Let there be lights*” – Lights – “*light things*”
- They are God’s “*things*” to tell us what He is doing
- “*signs*” – ‘*to signal, warn, or give an omen*’
- “*season*” – ‘*feast or appointed season*’

The sun, moon, and stars are signals to establish God’s time clock for the feasts of Israel and as signs of important events

- God used the stars to announce the birth of Jesus
- Just as He announced Jesus’ first coming He will also announce His second coming

Luke 21:25–27 (NKJV)

²⁵ “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Luke 21:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

- Apart from Jesus’ return, every part of this prophecy has taken place or is in the process of being fulfilled
- Again, we don’t want to exaggerate events or set dates
- We also don’t want to ignore the signs and miss what God is doing
- Remember the Jewish people had the prophecies concerning their Messiah and still missed Jesus

I believe the wisest approach is to point to the signs and evidence, but let God measure time and keep dates

- I don’t know when Jesus is coming but I want as many people to be ready as possible

Last week we talked about the significance of Blood Moons on Jewish holy days as related to Israel

This week we will talk about two other signs in the heavens that mark the season we are living in

- The Crossing Eclipses
- The Revelation 12 Sign

The Crossing Eclipses

In 2017 the US experienced two major natural events within a single week

On Monday August 21 a total solar eclipse crossed over the US in a band that spanned the entire nation

- Passing from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts
- This hadn't happened in 99 years
- It will happen again on April 8, 2024
- This event will mark an X over the US

Historically, Jewish tradition considers solar eclipses to be warnings to the world and lunar eclipses as warnings to Israel

The last full continental eclipse of this type was on June 8, 1918

- Most eclipses fall over water or other unpopulated areas
- World War 1 began on July 28, 1914
- The US joined the conflict on April 6, 1917
- Large numbers of soldiers arrived in France in the summer of 1918
- Remember the eclipse on June 8 cut across the entire continental US
- By autumn of 1918, the Americans had brought the allies closer to victory, but the fighting continued

Soldiers were hunkered down in trenches and deplorable conditions

As if that wasn't bad enough an epidemic that appeared at first to be the common cold began spreading through Europe

- However, it turned out to be much more than a common cold
- Over a span of two years, the Spanish Flu infected one out of every five people in the world
- It was most deadly for those between 20 and 40 years of age
- The age of fighting men
- It reached around the world and ultimately infected 28% of Americans
- Approximately 675, 000 died from this flu in the US alone
- The flu killed more people than the war itself
- Approximately 40 million
- Could this have been a sign?
- I believe so

Before 1918 the last time a solar eclipse spanned the entire US was November 30, 1776

- I don't think I have to remind us of the significance of that year

The eclipse in 2017 was the most viewed eclipse in human history

- It first made landfall in the continental US near the city of Salem, Oregon, at exactly sunset time in Jerusalem
- Remember Salem, or Jerusalem (*city of peace*) was the place where Abraham met Melchizedek
- On August 25, 2017, only five days after the eclipse, Hurricane Harvey made landfall along the Texas coast

Originally scheduled to hit “*Corpus Christi*” – “*body of Christ*” – Latin. It landed in Port Aransas “*our lady of thorns*” instead

- The hurricane missed the body of Christ but was in fact a “*place of thorns*” for the entire Gulf Coast
- Could God be trying to get our attention?
- Perhaps!

The next solar eclipse will cross the entire continental US on April 8, 2024

- The combined time of the eclipse will be seven minutes
- The exact crossing point will be in the little village of Makanda, Illinois, on Salem Road – Note Salem *again*
- This little town is also known by the nickname “*Star of Egypt*”

The Star of Egypt is also known as the Star Sirius and is believed to be the star the wisemen followed to Jerusalem

- Incidentally, this was also the crossing path in 2017

Perhaps all of these connections are mere coincidences

- How many coincidences signify that something is happening that has never happened before?
- Eclipses rarely cross in the exact same location, but this one will in 2024
- Right before the totality of the eclipse, the sun will look like a diamond wedding ring in the sky
- Is Jesus coming for His bride
- I don't know, but I'm paying close attention

The Revelation 12 Sign

Revelation 12:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ Now a **great sign** appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. ² Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

On September 23, 2017, viewed most clearly from Jerusalem, the constellation Leo was positioned directly above the head of Virgo “*the virgin*”

- This event coincided with the Jewish holy day Rosh Hoshana
- Also known as the Feast of Trumpets
- “*Great Sign*” – of great significance

The planets Mercury, Venus, and Mars joined the nine brightest stars of Leo to make the appearance of a 12-jeweled crown sitting atop Virgo's head

- Virgo was “*clothed with the sun*”
- As the sun stood at her shoulder the moon was also, “*under her feet.*”
- She is clearly a picture of Israel – 12 Jeweled Crown

The planet Jupiter takes its name from the king of the Roman gods

- Jupiter is also associated by the Jews with the Messiah
- The planet entered the constellation's “*womb*” on November 20, 2016
- It retrograded from February through July of 2017
- It exited the “*womb*” on September 9, 2017
- Jupiter spent 41 weeks inside Virgo
- Roughly the duration of a normal human gestation period
- Jupiter exited through the east end of Virgo, as if leaving between her feet

Before Jupiter's retrograde, the Comet Borisov, “*the conception Comet*” traveled from the “*loins*” of the constellation Virgo on November 17, 2016

- This is the only trip Borisov will make through our Solar System

Revelation 12:3-5 (NKJV)

³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. ⁵ She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

- Satan is most often referred to as serpent or dragon
- This is clearly a picture of the anti-Christ's kingdom that will be established in the end days
- See **Revelation 13** and **Daniel 7**
- At some point Satan and his powers are cast out of heaven again – **Revelation 13**

He is still the accuser of the brethren and we wrestle with powers and wickedness in high places

– **Revelation 12:10, Ephesians 6:12**

- The male Child is clearly Jesus “*who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.*”
- He is caught up into heaven – the ascension
- **Revelation 12** ushers in a series of events that will bring about the millennial rule of Christ

The women in **Revelation 12** speaks of the remnant of Israel who has responded to the word of God throughout history that will be persecuted by the anti-Christ in the tribulation

Unless you've been living in a cave, or somewhere off the grid you would recognize the moral changes taking place in our nation and around the world

- We are seeing a dramatic “falling away” from traditional values and biblical morality
- This falling away is described in the bible and a clear sign of the end times
- In the book of **1 Thessalonians**, the apostle Paul addresses the return of the Lord in every chapter
- In the fourth chapter he gives the Bible's clearest description of the “*rapture*” of the church
- The term “*rapture*” is not used but a taking away or gathering of the saints at the appearance of Jesus is clear

1 Thessalonians 4:15–18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- In an instant believers will go from here on earth directly into the presence of Jesus in the skies

In **2 Thessalonians** Paul writes to comfort the church and assure them that the catching away hasn't happened yet

- Paul describes three distinct scenes of the end times in his second letter

A Falling Away and the Arrival of the Antichrist

2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 (NKJV)

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

- For Jesus to return there must first be a worldwide falling away from Biblical truth
- This will be widespread rejection of biblical Christianity
- Both theology and morality
- Only the apostle John uses the term “*antichrist*” for a person, but he has many names throughout scripture
- In all of the terms one thing is consistent, deception
- Here the term used is “*man of sin*”

Here we can see that the “*man of sin*” will present himself as an alternative to Christ, and through this deception, many will believe and follow him

- Paul also calls him the lawless one – **2 Thessalonians 2:8**
- This term, lawless means someone who opposes God’s word as we know it in the Bible
- This man will be Satan incarnate and offer himself as a counterfeit messiah

Everything he will do will be in partnership with Satan himself, including presenting himself at Jerusalem’s Temple Mount

- He will have a strategy to pour out his deception and prepare the world for an all-out rebellion against God
- Very similar to the way John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance

Satan is doing the opposite by deceiving people with the ideas that sin is not real and there is no need to fear God

- **Psalm 2** describes this worldwide rebellion against God

Psalm 2:1–12 (NKJV)

¹ Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*, ³ “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.” ⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision.

⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: ⁶ “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” ⁷ “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ” ¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish *in* the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

- As the world’s people rage against God and scoff at the Lordship of Jesus Christ, God laughs at them
- He declares that His Son will inherit the earth from Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, Mount Zion
- Jesus will hold in His hand a rod of iron and rule for a millennium – **Revelation 20**

Here we see that God is warning the people and rulers of the world to submit to His rule or face His wrath

- As believers we are not appointed to wrath but salvation – **1 Thessalonians 5:9**
- We will be delivered before the wrath of God is poured out on the world

One of the reasons I believe the end is so close is the moral and spiritual condition of our society

- When I was growing up we prayed to Jesus in public school and the Ten Commandments were posted on the walls of the classrooms

On June 25, 1962 the United States Supreme Court ruled that prayer for use in schools was a violation of the First Amendment, and constituted an establishment of religion

- The next year the Court disallowed daily Bible reading
- These two landmark decisions ushered in a “new normal” in our public-school systems
- In 1980 posting of the Ten Commandments in school was deemed unconstitutional

We are living in a postmodern, post-Christian, and post-Bible culture

- Today many people declare that the Bible contains “hate speech”
- A 2013 Harris Poll found that 23% of Americans have forsaken religion all together – that number was only 12% in 2007
- A 2015 Pew Research Poll found that 34-36% of millennials claim no religious affiliation
- 55.8 million Americans see no purpose for religion in their lives
- 71 % of Americans claim to be Christian but that number is shrinking

We are witnessing a worldwide shift toward apostasy that started fifty years ago picking up steam

- There is a clear rejection of both Jewish and Christian morals

Jesus was asked what would be the sign of His return and He replied, “*Take heed that no one deceives you*” – **Matthew 24:4**

Matthew 25:1–13 (NKJV)

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. ³ Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. ¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ “Watch therefore, **for you know neither the day nor the hour** in which the Son of Man is coming.

He said we wouldn’t know the hour; He didn’t say we wouldn’t know the season