

The Day of Christ's Return

Matthew 24:29-44

“²⁹ 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. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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 His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 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. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. ³⁶ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ 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, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Let us here consider:

1. the *One* who is coming;
2. the *time* of His coming;
3. the *unexpectedness* of His coming;
4. the *separation* at His coming;
5. the *exhortation* regarding His coming.

I. The One who is coming: He calls Himself “the Son of Man”. He does so more than thirty times in Matthew’s gospel, six of these in this twenty-fourth chapter (vv.27, 30a, 30b, 37, 39, 44). This title speaks of three things regarding Him: His *humanity*, *humility*, and *Messiahship*.

1. The title “Son of *Man*” speaks of Jesus’ *humanity* – just

as His title “Son of *God*” speaks of His *deity*. Jesus is *God’s Son* – God’s “only-begotten Son” (John 1:18; 3:16, 18) – by an eternal generation, having been begotten of Jehovah from eternity, which means there was never a time when He was not God’s Son and God was not His Father (Psalm 2:7). But Jesus is *man’s Son* through His physical descent from the first man Adam (Luke 3:23-38).

2. The title “Son of *Man*” speaks of Jesus’ *humility*. He did not go about declaring Himself to be the eminent “Son of *God*”. Rather, He humbly identified Himself as the lowly “Son of *Man*”.

However, He acknowledged that He is God’s Son when others identified Him as such, as in Matthew 16:13-17: “¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, *the Son of Man*, am?’ ¹⁴ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ¹⁵ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I [“the Son of Man”] am?’ ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*’ ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood [i.e., human wisdom] has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*”

3. The title “*the Son of Man*” speaks of Jesus *Messiahship*. Note the definite article *the* in His title “*the Son of Man*”. Jesus is not merely “*a son of Man*”, as also is every physical descendant of the first man Adam. Rather, He is “*the Son of Man*” – a *very specific Son of Man*.

This *specific* “Son of Man” is the *Messianic* “Son of Man” prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14: “I [Daniel] was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like *the Son of Man*, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days [God as the eternal One (see vv.9f)], and they [Jehovah’s angels] brought Him [the Son of Man] near before Him. Then to Him [the Son of Man] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

Jesus declared Himself to be “the Son of Man” fulfilling the Messianic prophecy of Daniel at His trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:63-66): “⁶³ ... And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God [i.e., the Messiah]!’ ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! ⁶⁶ What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of

death.” (See the same account in Mark 14:61-64.)

These three points regarding Daniel’s prophecy and Jesus’ declaration are reasons why the Sanhedrin falsely accused Jesus of being a blasphemer worthy of death:

- Daniel prophesied of the Messiah as being “the Son of Man”; Jesus acknowledged Himself as the Christ/Messiah and identified Himself as “the Son of Man”.
- Daniel prophesied the Messianic Son of Man as “coming with the clouds of heaven”; Jesus spoke of Himself as “the Son of Man ... coming on the clouds of heaven”.
- Daniel prophesied the kingdom given by God to the Messianic “Son of Man”; Jesus spoke of Himself as “the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power”.

Jesus also spoke of His return to earth as this Messianic “Son of Man” (Matthew 24:30): “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth [who denied Him and refused to believe in Him] will mourn, and they will see *the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*” (Cp. Mark 13:26 / Luke 21:27.)

II. The time of His coming. He spoke of this in two ways:

1. It will be “after the tribulation of those days” (v.29a). This time of tribulation commenced after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD (vv.1f) and continues to this present day. Jesus called it a time of “great tribulation” (vv.21ff). John the apostle spoke of being in it about the year 100 AD. All followers of Jesus in these New Testament days go through it (Revelation 7:14). Christ will return when it is over.

2. It will be *at a time unknown by men* (vv.36, 42): “36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ... 42 ... you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.” Many people have proven themselves to be false prophets by claiming they had determined the day of Christ’s return or had been told by God when it would occur. Do not heed them!

III. The unexpectedness of His coming (v.44): “the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Jesus illustrated this truth in verses 37-39. But we here quote the expanded description recorded in Luke 17:26-30: “26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when

the Son of Man is revealed.”

All the deeds here described as being done by men in the days of Noah and Lot and in the day of Christ’s return are worthy. Indeed, one may glorify God in them (1 Corinthians 10:31).

But when people become so occupied in doing these physical deeds that they neglect spiritual deeds, the physical deeds become a curse and not a blessing. Christ will come at a time when they do not expect Him, thereby taking them by surprise and resulting in their doom.

IV. The separation at His coming (vv.31, 40f): “31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. ... 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.”

A foremost concern of Jesus at His return will be the security of His elect. He will send angels to gather them from all across the earth and usher them to a safe place so that they do not suffer any doom that will befall unbelievers on the Final Day.

V. The exhortation regarding His coming – *watch and be ready* (vv.42-44): “42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also *be ready*, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Our Lord will return as “a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10) – suddenly and unexpectedly, without giving prior warning as to the day and hour of His coming.

Therefore, always watch for His appearance, and ever be ready to greet Him when He comes.

– Daniel E. Parks