

God's Revelation of the Future

Community Baptist Church
Lesson 11

Adult Bible Fellowship
Fall, 2024

The Return of Christ

As seen in the Olivet Discourse

As recorded in Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus teaches his disciples about events occurring in conjunction with his return. Then Matthew records (24:32-25:30) a series of illustrations Jesus used to teach about the times leading up to his return.

- Jesus sets the time of his return as "immediately after the tribulation of those days." (24:29)
 - "Those days" refers to the days of the 70th week. This is the period covered earlier in this discourse (24:4-28) and in Revelation 6:1-19:10.
 - At the time of Christ's return there will be visible effects in the heavens, perhaps to make the return of Christ more spectacular.
- At that point "will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man." (24:30)
 - This "sign," whether Christ himself or something occurring at that time, will make his return evident.
 - This appearance will be visible worldwide as all see "the Son of Man coming." This is especially the case for God's chosen people.
 - See also Revelation 1:7 and Zechariah 12:10.
- One of the things taking place upon Christ's return is the sending out of "his angels" to "gather his elect." (24:31)
 - See also Matthew 13:39, 41, 49 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7.
 - The elect who are gathered include all who were saved during the 70th week and have survived to its end.

In Matthew 24:32-25:30 there are six illustrations. It is important to keep in mind that each situation is addressed to Israel and each situation applies to the period of the 70th week.

- The Fig Tree (24:32-35)
 - Jesus uses this illustration to indicate something of the timing of his return relative to the events he had just described (24:4-28).

- Just as the budding of a fig tree signals that summer is coming, so too the events Jesus just told them signal that "he is near."
 - "This generation" refers to those living in the 70th week.
- The Days of Noah (24:36-41)
 - Jesus uses the situation at the time of Noah's flood as a parallel to what will take place at the time of Christ's return. In both cases judgment comes on those who are unprepared.
 - Before Christ returns humans will be working at their jobs, going about life as usual.
 - When Christ returns some will be prepared and some will not be. Those "taken," as in the flood, are taken in judgment. Those "left," as in the flood, are left alive on the earth.
- The Householder (24:42-44)
 - Jesus uses the picture of a householder who is on alert for a thief as an illustration of watchfulness for the return of Christ.
 - Jesus reminds them of how we act when we are warned that something will take place soon.
 - This is a call for them to "be ready" despite not knowing the precise time that the "Son of Man" is coming.
- The Servants (24:45-51)
 - Jesus uses this illustration to contrast the actions of two servants (one prepared and one not) when their master is away and includes the idea of reward vs. judgment.
 - The first servant, who is "faithful and wise," pictures the believer who will be rewarded when Christ returns.
 - The second servant, who is abusive and wasteful, pictures the unbeliever who receive eternal judgment when Christ returns.
- The Virgins (25:1-13)
 - Jesus uses this lesson to focus on the actions of two "kinds" of virgins as seen when he returns. Those who are wise (prepared) versus those who are foolish (unprepared).
 - Their preparation or lack thereof during the delay of the return of the bridegroom is pictured by whether they take with them extra oil for their lamps.
 - Those wise, who are prepared, are permitted to enter the "marriage feast."

- Those unwise, who are not prepared, are not permitted to enter and are told by the bridegroom, "I do not know you."
- The Talents (25:14-30)
 - Jesus uses this lesson to focus on faithfulness and the reward for that faithfulness or punishment for lack thereof at the time of his return.
 - The servants "use" money entrusted to them in two different ways.
 - Two servants invested what had been entrusted to them and doubled the money.
 - One servant just puts the money into a "safe deposit box," so earned nothing.
 - Upon his return, the master "settles up" with the servants.
 - The two servants are commended and rewarded.
 - The one servant is condemned and punished.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, references in this section are to Matthew.

As seen in Revelation

Revelation 19:11-16 describes Christ, the white horse rider (not the rider associated with the 1st seal), as he returns to earth accompanied by "the armies of heaven."

- John sees a rider on a white horse. (19:11)
 - This rider is "called Faithful and True" and is understood to be the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who "in righteousness judges and makes war."
 - John describes this rider's appearance and his clothing. (19:12-13)
 - Nothing is hidden from the penetrating gaze of this kingly rider.
 - John sees his name, but it is a name only the rider can discern.
 - His "robe dipped in blood" pictures this rider, called "The Word of God," as one who has slaughtered his enemies.
 - This white-horse rider is accompanied with "the armies of heaven." (19:14)
 - Thought not stated, these armies likely include those saints already resurrected, namely, the Church.

- The instrument of his destruction is "a sharp sword." (19:15) See also 1:16; 2:12, 16.
 - This symbol pictures the effectiveness of the words that the Son will utter in striking down his enemies.
 - He will rule with a "rod of iron." See Psalm 2:8-9.
 - His "treading the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty" is strong language. God's day of reckoning has come. See also the grape harvest mentioned in 14:19-20.
- This second time the Son comes to earth, he manifests himself as "King of kings and Lord of lords," which is very different than at his first coming.

Revelation 19:17-21 describes the outcome of the defeat of the armies of the world and the capture of the Beast and False Prophet when Christ returns. This conflict between Christ and the opposing armies is referred to as "the battle of Armageddon." (Cf. 16:16 and the 6th bowl judgment)

- An angel, seen by John, commands the birds. (19:17-18)
 - The birds are to "gather for the great supper of God."
 - This "supper" will consist of the bodies of those in the armies opposing Christ, individuals of every rank.
- John sees the Beast and the armies who are gathered to make war on the white-horse rider. (19:19)
- The Beast and the False Prophet are captured and "thrown alive into the lake of fire." (19:20)
- Those comprising the armies are slain by the white-horse rider as the word comes from his mouth. (19:21)
 - These are the slain that the birds who had been called will consume.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, references in this section are to Revelation.