

The End Times: Biblical Hope When Headlines Look Like Prophecy

Primary Texts

Matthew 24; John 5:28–29; John 14:1–3; Acts 1:9–11; Acts 17:30–31; 1 Corinthians 15:20–58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10; 2 Peter 3:1–14; Revelation 20:11–15

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this sermon, each listener should be able to:

- I. Distinguish the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24 from the final coming of Christ.
- II. Explain from Scripture that Christ is reigning now and that His return will be personal, visible, public, and final.
- III. Show that death does not end accountability, that Hades is temporary, and that the resurrection will be one general bodily resurrection.
- IV. Recognize that final judgment is fixed and universal, and therefore live in holy readiness instead of fear and speculation.

Thesis

Scripture does not call Christians to decode headlines like prophecy charts, but to trust the reigning Christ, read Matthew 24 in context,

understand death, resurrection, and judgment correctly, and live in holy readiness until the Lord returns.

Introduction

Every war, every treaty, every crisis in the Middle East, every shaking among the nations gets twisted into somebody's prophecy chart. Men stir fear, sell urgency, and act like they alone can read the headlines. They talk as if the Bible were given to turn Christians into nervous speculators. But Jesus did not give Matthew 24 to make His people panic. He said, "See that you are not frightened" (Matthew 24:6).

That cuts straight across a great deal of modern preaching.

The issue is not whether the world is unstable. The world has always been unstable. The issue is whether the church will let fear interpret Scripture or let Scripture interpret the times.

Too many people know prophecy charts better than they know the actual words of Christ. Too many are more interested in current events than in clear exegesis.

Too many talk as if Christ is waiting to become King, as if the kingdom is postponed, as if the resurrection is split into stages by a thousand-year earthly program, and as if the judgment is somehow delayed. None of that comes from the text.

The Bible speaks plainly. Christ reigns now. Jerusalem fell as Jesus said. The same Jesus who ascended will return. The dead will be raised. Judgment is fixed. The purpose of these truths is not obsession. It is holiness, steadiness, comfort, repentance, and readiness.

The church does not need another prophecy merchant. The church needs sober faith in the Word of God.

I. Matthew 24 Must Be Read in Context, Not in Panic

A. Jesus begins with the temple, not with modern geopolitics

Matthew 24 opens with the temple itself. Jesus says, “not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down” (Matthew 24:2). That matters. The whole discourse starts with a real building standing before the disciples. It does not start with modern Israel, Russia, America, the United Nations, or whatever men are panicking about this week.

If a man starts Matthew 24 in the wrong place, he will end in the wrong place.

B. The disciples ask a compound question

In Matthew 24:3 the disciples tie several things together: **the destruction of the temple, Christ’s coming, and the end of the age.** Jesus does not let their confusion govern His answer. He answers in a way that untangles what they had bundled together.

That means the entire chapter cannot be flattened into one single end-times event.

C. Much of the early chapter fits the fall of Jerusalem

The early language is local, immediate, and first-century in character:

- Judea
- housetops
- fields
- flight
- Sabbath concerns

That is not vague. That is concrete. Luke's parallel removes the fog even more: "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near" (Luke 21:20).

That is not a code for cable news. That is Jerusalem.

Jesus says in **Matthew 24:6**, "**You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.**" Men today say, "**Wars mean the end is here.**" Jesus says, "**Do not be frightened. That is not yet the end.**" **One plain sentence from Christ tears down a mountain of fear-based preaching.**

D. The major shift comes at the unknown day

Matthew 24:36 is a turning point: "But of that day and hour no one knows." Before that, Jesus gives local warnings and time-bound crisis language. After that, the emphasis lands on the unknown timing of the final coming and the necessity of readiness.

That destroys date-setting.

That destroys chart obsession.

That destroys prophetic arrogance.

The point is not prediction. The point is readiness.

Exegetical Force

The structure matters:

Temple prediction → disciples' compound question → local signs tied to Jerusalem → "not yet the end" → shift to unknown day → readiness

If a preacher ignores that structure, he will turn Christ's words into something Christ did not say.

OT Interlock

- **Isaiah 13:9–10**: Cosmic-collapse language is used in prophetic judgment against nations in history. That helps explain why apocalyptic imagery should not be woodenly turned into a modern headline code.
- **Joel 2:30–32**: Sun, moon, darkness, blood, and day-of-the-Lord language show how prophets speak in judgment contexts. The Bible's own use of imagery must govern interpretation.

NT Interlock

- **Luke 21:20–24**: Makes the Jerusalem setting unmistakable.
- **Matthew 24:34**: "This generation will not pass away" anchors a major portion of the discourse in the first-century setting.
- **Matthew 24:36, 42, 44**: The final day is unknown; readiness is the assignment.

Application

Stop reading the newspaper into Matthew 24.

Personally, stop letting fear disciple your heart.

Congregationally, stop letting sensational voices set the tone for the church.

Generationally, do not raise children on panic religion. Give them biblical ballast.

Gem: Christ did not give prophecy to make His people panic.

II. Christ Is Reigning Now and Will Return Once—Personally, Visibly, Publicly, Finally

A. Christ is not waiting to become King

The New Testament does not present Jesus as waiting for some future earthly throne in Jerusalem before He can really reign.

Peter preached that God had already made Him “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Paul said He “must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet” (1 Corinthians 15:25).

Colossians 1:13 says believers have been transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

The kingdom is not postponed.

The throne is not vacant.

The King is not waiting on politics.

Christ reigns now.

That alone shatters premillennial thinking. Any system that says the kingdom is still future, that Christ's rule is delayed, or that His reign depends on earthly arrangements stands against the plain teaching of the apostles.

B. His return will be like His ascension in reality, not in secrecy

Acts 1:9–11 is decisive. Jesus was taken up visibly. The angels said, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

The same Jesus.

The same personal Lord.

A real return.

This is not a secret event. It is not a hidden snatching away before a later public return. The text gives one return. Not two phases. Not a secret stage and then a later visible stage.

C. The coming is public and climactic

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 that the Lord will descend "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God."

There is nothing secret about that. Nothing private. Nothing silent.

2 Thessalonians 1:6–10 shows that this same coming brings two results at once:

- relief for the afflicted saints
- retribution on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel

That does not sound like a secret rapture followed later by judgment.

That sounds like one climactic return with final consequences.

D. His coming is final, not the start of a thousand-year earthly experiment

2 Peter 3:10 says the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and the present order will be brought to its appointed end. The New Testament does not teach that Christ comes back to begin an earthly thousand-year reign after which final judgment still waits. It teaches that His coming is tied to the resurrection, the end, and judgment.

Exegetical Force

The movement is plain:

Ascension → present reign → one visible return → resurrection → judgment → finality

That is Bible. The rest is system-building.

OT Interlock

- **Psalm 110:1**: The Messiah sits at God's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool. That is present reign language.
- **Daniel 7:13–14**: The Son of Man receives dominion and a kingdom. That speaks of enthronement and authority, not postponed failure.

NT Interlock

- **Acts 2:29–36**: Christ is already enthroned and ruling.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:16–17**: The return is public, loud, and resurrection-centered.
- **Hebrews 9:27–28**: One appearing yet to come, not a multi-phase secret program.

Application

Stop talking like Jesus is absent.

Stop talking like His kingship is delayed.

Stop talking like hope depends on geopolitics.

Personally, anchor your hope in the reigning Christ.

Congregationally, preach one Lord, one kingdom, one return.

Generationally, teach your children to expect a real King, not a prophecy chart.

Gem: Jesus did not fail in His first coming and He will not sneak in His second.

III. Death Does Not End the Story: Hades, Resurrection, and the Defeat of Death

A. Death does not erase accountability

A lie many men live by is this: if I can get through this life, the grave will silence everything. Scripture says no. Luke 16:19–31 shows conscious existence after death. The rich man remembers. He suffers. He recognizes. Lazarus is comforted. A great gulf stands fixed.

Death does not erase a man.

Death does not cancel accountability.

Death does not move anybody outside the reach of God.

B. Hades is real, but temporary

Acts 2:27, 31 says Christ was not abandoned to Hades. Revelation 20:13–14 says death and Hades give up the dead in them and are then cast into the lake of fire. That means Hades is not the final state. It is the intermediate state.

So Scripture gives this sequence:

death → intermediate state → resurrection → judgment

That rules out annihilation.

That rules out purgatory.

That rules out a second chance after death.

Death ends opportunity, not accountability.

C. The resurrection is one general bodily resurrection

John 5:28–29 is devastating to theories of separated bodily resurrections spread over long ages: “all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth.” One hour. All the dead. Two outcomes.

Some rise to life.

Some rise to judgment.

But all rise.

That does not fit a scheme where righteous and wicked bodily resurrections are split by a thousand years. It fits one general

resurrection.

Paul confirms it in 1 Corinthians 15:23–24: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end. Not Christ's coming, then a thousand-year earthly kingdom, then later the end. The sequence is tighter than that.

D. The resurrection is bodily, not symbolic

1 Corinthians 15:51–54 says the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality. Christianity does not teach mere survival of the soul. It teaches victory over death in bodily resurrection.

Christianity does not end at the cemetery. It walks out of it.

Exegetical Force

The chain is powerful:

Christ rose → therefore His people will rise → therefore death is defeated → therefore labor in the Lord is not in vain → therefore stand firm now

OT Interlock

- **Daniel 12:2**: Speaks of resurrection and two outcomes—everlasting life and shame. That matches the one general resurrection pattern of John 5.
- **Job 19:25–27**: Job speaks with bodily hope beyond death. Hope reaches beyond the grave.

NT Interlock

- **John 5:28–29**: One resurrection scene, two eternal outcomes.
- **1 Corinthians 15:20–58**: Christ’s resurrection guarantees ours, and ours is bodily.
- **Revelation 20:13–14**: Death and Hades give up the dead and are then abolished.

Application

Do not live as if the grave solves your rebellion.

Do not comfort yourself with the lie that accountability ends at death.

Do not treat your body as disposable trash.

Personally, purity matters because God will raise this body.

Congregationally, comfort the grieving with resurrection, not clichés.

Generationally, teach the young that the grave is not an escape hatch from the eye of God.

Gem: Death ends opportunity, not accountability.

Gem: Christianity does not end at the cemetery—it walks out of it.

IV. Judgment Is Fixed, and Therefore the Right Response Is Holy Readiness, Not Obsession

A. The day is fixed

Acts 17:30–31 says God “is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.” That is not poetry. That is a sentence of divine certainty.

The day is fixed.

The Judge is appointed.

Repentance is commanded now.

B. All will appear before Christ

2 Corinthians 5:10 says “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Revelation 20:11–15 shows the dead, great and small, standing before God. The books are opened. The judgment is public, righteous, and final.

No purgatory.

No probation.

No second round.

No appeal after the sentence.

Every soul in the room is already traveling toward this day.

C. Biblical eschatology is meant to produce holiness

Peter does not say, “Since all these things are coming, build charts.” He says, “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). Paul says, “comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Jesus says, “See that you are not frightened” (Matthew 24:6).

So what is biblical eschatology for?

- to steady the saints
- to comfort the grieving
- to warn the careless

- to call sinners to repentance
- to produce holiness and readiness

Prophecy that does not produce holiness has already gone bad.

D. The great contrast: obsession or obedience

There are two chains.

False chain:

Headlines → fear → speculation → obsession → distraction → instability

Biblical chain:

Scripture → understanding → steadiness → holiness → hope → readiness

A man can know prophecy charts and still not know Christ.

A church can have charts on the wall and worldliness in the pews.

That is not biblical hope. That is religious distraction.

Exegetical Force

The end-times passages consistently move from truth to duty:

Christ is coming → therefore repent

The dead will rise → therefore live holy

Judgment is fixed → therefore do not delay obedience

Hope is certain → therefore endure faithfully

OT Interlock

- **Habakkuk 2:3–4**: Calls God's people to faithful endurance while waiting.

- **Ecclesiastes 12:13–14**: Brings life under the certainty of final judgment.

NT Interlock

- **Acts 17:30–31**: The fixed day demands repentance.
- **2 Peter 3:11–14**: Final truth demands holy conduct.
- **Titus 2:11–13**: Waiting for the blessed hope is tied to sober, righteous, godly living.

Application

Quit postponing repentance.

Quit substituting curiosity for obedience.

Quit treating final things like entertainment.

Personally, get right with God now.

Congregationally, the church needs ballast, not hysteria.

Generationally, hand the next generation sober confidence in Christ, not panic religion.

Gem: Prophecy that does not produce holiness has already gone bad.

Conclusion

The Bible does not give us end-times truth so we can become prophecy hobbyists. It gives us end-times truth so we will become sober saints.

Read Matthew 24 in context.

Do not confuse Jerusalem with every modern crisis.

Believe that Christ reigns now.

Reject every doctrine that postpones His kingdom or splits His coming into stages.

Know that death does not end accountability.

Know that Hades is temporary.

Know that the dead will be raised in one general resurrection.

Know that judgment is fixed.

And know that these truths were given to make you holy, watchful, steady, and hopeful.

The church does not need another chart nearly as much as it needs another dose of sober faith.

Invitation

If you are outside of Christ, you are not ready.

You do not need another prophecy update.

You need the gospel.

Jesus Christ died for sinners.

He was buried.

He was raised on the third day.

He reigns now.

He will return.

So hear the word of God.

Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Repent of your sins.

Confess His name before men.

Be baptized for the remission of your sins.

Then live faithfully, endure steadfastly, and do not be frightened, because your King is on the throne and your future is in His hands.

If you have fallen into fear, worldliness, compromise, or doctrinal confusion, repent now.

If you have obeyed the gospel but have not endured faithfully, come back now.

If you are outside of Christ, obey now.

Truth is not negotiable.

The day is fixed.

Come while the invitation stands.

Greek / Hebrew Word Study Table

TERM	GREEK / HEBREW	MEANING	RELEVANCE TO THE SERMON
Coming	παρουσία (<i>parousia</i>)	arrival, presence, coming	Christ's return is a real arrival of the reigning Lord, not a secret phase
Alarmed	θροέω (<i>throēō</i>)	disturbed, terrified, panicked	Jesus forbids fear-driven eschatology
Hades	ᾅδης (<i>hadēs</i>)	realm of the dead	Describes the temporary intermediate state, not final punishment
Resurrection	ἀνάστασις (<i>anastasis</i>)	rising again	Shows the bodily nature of Christian hope

TERM	GREEK / HEBREW	MEANING	RELEVANCE TO THE SERMON
Judgment	κρίσις (<i>krisis</i>)	judgment, verdict, decision	Every life moves toward divine evaluation
Sheol	(<i>sheol</i>) לִישׁ	realm of the dead	OT background to the dead awaiting God's judgment
Day	ἡμέρα (<i>hēmera</i>)	day	Stresses the fixed and appointed day of final judgment

Lexical Notes

- **παρουσία** points to a real arrival and presence. It does not support a vague invisible visitation.
- **θροέω** exposes panic preaching. Christ explicitly forbids terrified agitation as the controlling posture of His people.
- **ἄδης** helps keep the intermediate state distinct from the final lake of fire.
- **ἀνάστασις** guards bodily resurrection against symbolic reduction.
- **κρίσις** reminds us that judgment is judicial, moral, and final.