

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 7 September 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Return of the King!

Matthew 24:27-31

During my growing-up years, there was a special time that my family spent together almost every evening. After supper, we took turns reading through a passage of Scripture, and then talked over what we had read, and spent some time in prayer. Now, from what I remember, my family read through most of the books of the Bible, oftentimes more than once; but the book that we re-visited most often was **Revelation**. I remember being wide-eyed and sober as we read about the judgments that God will pour out on the earth during the Tribulation. However, the part of **Revelation** that amazed me the most was the account of Christ's descent to earth at the Battle of Armageddon. My imagination ran wild as I pictured the Lord Jesus Christ riding on a white horse, shining like the sun, wearing a spotless white robe dipped in blood, and wearing many crowns on His head. I was fascinated as I envisioned crashing thunder, flashing lightning, the ear-piercing sound of trumpets, and a massive, shining army of saints and angels swooping down through the clouds on white horses, with Christ at their head, and filling the entire sky. As we read about the armies of the world being gathered to make war against Christ, and being slaughtered so miserably that their blood was gathered to the depth of a horse's bridle, I shuddered a little; and I remember being glad that that I will be in *Jesus*' army on that day, and not in Satan's army!

Folks, this event isn't a fairy tale, an allegory, or mere "poetic expression." It will happen just as surely as we are sitting here right now. For two thousand years, God has shown incredible mercy and longsuffering toward rebellious mankind; but one day, He will restrain His wrath no longer. Early in His ministry, when Jesus read from the book of **Isaiah** in the synagogue in Nazareth, He read the words, "***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.***" But then, He abruptly shut the book, and sat down. He didn't read the last part of the sentence, which says, "***and the day of vengeance of our God.***" Why didn't Jesus read that last part of the sentence? Because it wasn't the day of vengeance yet! It was the day of *grace*—the "acceptable year of the Lord." When Christ came 2,000 years ago, He came as the Lamb of God, to pay the price for our salvation; but when He returns to earth, He will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to tear His enemies in pieces. This future day has been foretold by many prophets, beginning with Enoch, who said, "***Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.***"

This morning, we have arrived at the most important passage in **Matthew 24**—the account of *the return of the King* to earth, to set up His Kingdom. Up to this point in **Matthew 24**, we have learned about the

horrible judgments that will unfold during the seven years of the Tribulation; but now, we are about to read about the event that will happen *immediately after* the Tribulation. This is an event that *no one* can evade. We *all* must reckon with it, and we *all* must know on which side we will be on that day. The title of this message is ***The Return of the King!***

Read Matthew 24:27-31.

I. The sign of Christ's coming (vv. 27, 30)

In **verse 27**, Christ compared His coming (or His “appearing”) to lightning as it is shining from the east to the west. What did Christ mean by this? Well, having grown up in the American Midwest, where we often had whopper lightning storms, I believe I can answer that question. More times than I can remember, I would see multiple lightning flashes fanning out over the horizon all at once; and the flash was so bright, that for a few seconds, the entire sky would be brighter than noonday. Then, about half a second later, there would be a clap of thunder so loud, that the entire house shook, and every windowpane rattled. I remember one summer night, in my late teens, when I was lying in bed, and reading my Bible; and as I was reading, I began to drift off to sleep. However, I was just conscious enough to be aware of the fact that I was reading from **Revelation 16** (although I was barely able to concentrate on what I was reading). My eyes had fallen on **Revelation 16:18**, where it says, “***And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake***”; and just as my eyes fell on the words “***thunders and lightnings***,” there was an ear-splitting crash of thunder! I jolted awake just in time to see the tail-end of a huge lightning flash through my window. (Needless to say, I was *very* awake now! My heart pounded for about a minute afterward.)

So, as a lifelong observer of lightning storms, what is my observation on this verse? What did Jesus mean? Simply this: ***no one will be unaware of Christ's appearing!*** When a huge bolt of lightning lights up the sky, you can't possibly miss it; and likewise, *no one* will be able to miss Christ's return. Jesus had just finished saying that during the Tribulation, there will be false prophets who will claim that Christ is in the desert, or in some other secret place; and He warned the believers who will be living during the Tribulation *not* to believe this lie. Christ's return will *not* be quiet or unnoticed, or in some secret place. *Everyone* on earth will see it!

Read Revelation 1:7.

Read Zechariah 12:10.

God's Word is clear: Christ's coming will be like lightning. *No one* will be able to miss it! With that in mind, let's read **verse 30** again. **(Read Matthew 24:30.)** What exactly is the "sign" of the Son of Man in Heaven? Well, centuries ago, there were some Christians who thought that the "sign" might be a shining display of the cross in the sky. However, the Bible doesn't give any indication that there will be a cross, or any other Christian symbol, in the sky. The "sign" will be Christ Himself! In **Daniel 7**, Daniel recorded a vision that God had given him of the Messiah; and in this vision, he saw "***one like the Son of man*** [coming] ***with the clouds of heaven.***" No cross, no fish symbol—just the Son of Man! Christ won't need a Christian symbol to prove who He is: *everyone on earth* will know who He is! *No one* will have the slightest doubt as to His identity. As we saw in **Zechariah 12:10**, the *house of Israel* will mourn when they see the one whom their forefathers "pierced"; and, as we saw in **Revelation 1:7**, "***all kindreds of earth will wail for him,***" as well. Both Jews and Gentiles all over the world will see the Lord Jesus Christ, and will wail and mourn, because they will realise that they are about to face the great Judge against whom they have rebelled.

Now, there are plenty of scoffers out there who would ask the question: "*How* will everyone on earth be able to see Christ's return? The earth is a sphere; so how would people on the opposite side of the earth, or even a few hundred miles away from Israel, be able to see beyond the curvature of the earth?" The answer is: "Nothing is impossible with God!" This will be no problem for Him. The Lord won't need the assistance of T.V. cameras or internet in order for every eye to see Him: He will do it by His own divine power. God might give everyone a real-time *vision* of what is taking place at Jerusalem; or, He might physically *gather* every soul to Israel, so that everyone can see His return in-person. Of these two options, I believe it will be the latter. Why so? Because Christ specifically said, in **verse 31**, that He will send forth His angels to gather His *elect* (all the saved people living on earth) to view this battle; and we know, from several prophecies in **Zechariah**, that these re-gathered saints will actually *participate* in the battle. Now, if God will gather all the *saved* people from every corner of the earth to participate in this battle, why wouldn't He also gather the *lost* from every corner of the earth, as well? We know that the lost *will* be gathered only a short time later, because Jesus said so later in this discourse. Let's skip over to **Matthew 25**, and get a "sneak preview" of what will happen just after Christ's return. **(Read Matthew 25:31-32.)**

Folks, if every soul on earth (both saved and unsaved) will be gathered by angels, and brought before Christ to be judged, it seems only reasonable that they will gathered to see the Battle of Armageddon, too! After all, this will be the showdown of the ages, which God has been telling us about for millennia. One way or another, God the Father will see to it that *everyone* will see His Son coming in power and glory, and destroying His enemies.

Brethren, we needn't be embarrassed by this passage, or worried that it isn't "scientific." We don't need to "spiritualise" it, or allegorise it away. Christ *will* literally, visibly, physically return to earth one day; and *every soul* in Heaven and on earth *will* see Him!

II. The slaughter of Christ's enemies (v. 28)

(Read Matthew 24:28 again.) Brethren, I cannot emphasise enough that the event we're reading about here is *real*, and *literal*. **Matthew 24 and 25, Zechariah 12-14, Daniel 9, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 4-20**, and many other prophetic passages, are *not* giant allegories, or parables: they are prophecies of real future events that will happen around the time of Christ's return. They foretell of a *literal, physical* snatching away of believers in the Rapture; of a *literal, physical* return of Christ to earth; and of a *real, physical, 1,000-year Kingdom*, in which Christ will literally reign over the whole world from Jerusalem. Most professing Christian denominations claim that God is done with Israel forever, and that "the Church" is the new "Israel": however, when you try to plug "the Church" into all those Old Testament prophecies about Israel, you end up having to spiritualise and allegorise almost everything—including the Second Coming of Christ, and the 1,000-year Kingdom. And when you do that, you end up with some *really* strange ideas.

What kind of strange ideas do you end up with? Well, this verse is a perfect example. You see, if the Church *were* the Kingdom (as preterists, amillennialists, postmillennialists, reconstructionists, and "Kingdom Now" people say), it would mean that we are *already* living in the Kingdom; and if that were the case, then a literal, physical return of Christ to earth, and a Battle of Armageddon, wouldn't be needed. (After all, "the Church" is fixing this world, and "christianising" it through moral reforms, and making it ready-to-hand for Christ. Why would we need Christ to come back and slaughter people?) And so, if there *won't* be a literal Battle of Armageddon, with literal armies gathered around Israel, and loads of people dying in battle, then this statement about "eagles" and "carcasses" shouldn't be taken literally, either. How would you interpret this verse, then? One well-known amillennialist pastor put it this way: "How [will] the saints be gathered to him[?]; as the eagles are to the carcass by natural instinct, and with the greatest swiftness and alacrity imaginable. Saints, when they shall be fetched to glory, will be carried as on eagles' wings. *They shall mount up with wings, as eagles*, and, like them, renew their youth."¹ In other words, this pastor didn't believe that there will be a literal Battle of Armageddon. He took this gruesome picture of eagles *swooping down on carcasses*, and tried to make it into a beautiful picture of God's people *flying up to Heaven*. (Do you see a problem with this thinking?)

Clearly, Jesus is *not* using eagles in any good sense here. He is talking about *real* eagles swooping down on the carcasses of God's enemies, who will die in the Battle of Armageddon.

This is the awesome battle that **David** foretold in **Psalm 45**, when He wrote, *“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.”* It is the battle that David also foretold in **Psalm 110**, when he wrote, *“The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.”* It is the battle that **Zephaniah** foretold when he wrote, *“The day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.”* It is the battle that **Isaiah** foretold when he wrote, *“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”* It is also the day that **John** foresaw in his vision. Let's take a look at that Scripture.

Read Revelation 19:11-21.

Folks, this isn't a pretty picture: however, the Bible doesn't always contain “pretty pictures.” As a holy God, God *must* judge sin and rebellion; and the Battle of Armageddon, and the judgment of the nations that will follow immediately after it, will be the greatest outpouring of God's wrath in the history of the world. Even the Flood, terrifying and decimating as it was, must take second place to the Battle of Armageddon and the Judgment of the Nations. Why? Because in the Battle of Armageddon, *Christ Himself* will personally appear to destroy His enemies! Christ's brilliant, holy face will absolutely terrify His enemies. At one point during the Tribulation, when God will briefly roll back the heavens like a scroll, and allow men to see Christ sitting on His throne, people will flee in terror into dens and holes of the mountains, and will say, *“Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* How much more will sinners be terrified when they see Christ riding down through the clouds in all His glory, with all the saints and angels of Heaven, to judge them?

Now, why am I focusing in on all this carnage? For the same reason that *God* does! The point is this: if you're not sure whether you are on the Lord's side, then you'd better *get* on His side while you can! You'd better make sure that *you* will be in the right army in the day of God's vengeance! If you have not been saved, *now* is the day of salvation. Stop thinking you're a good person, because you're *not*. You are a sinner in need of Christ's one-time, all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross. Repent of your sin and believe on *Christ alone* to save you, so that you will be caught up to meet Him in the Rapture, and so that you might return with Him to earth

in this battle, and take your part in judging and ruling the nations. Jesus said, ***“He that is not with me is against me.”*** Are you for Him, or against Him?

III. The shaking of the cosmos (v. 29)

(Read Matthew 24:29 again.) When we were studying the Abomination of Desolation in last week’s message, we saw that the midpoint of the Tribulation (the 1,260-day mark) will be an extremely eventful time. Multiple events of monumental importance will be happening on earth and in heaven, all within a day or so. Well, so it will be on the day of the Battle of Armageddon—except on a much grander scale. As Christ is descending from heaven, many of the fearful phenomena that happened at various points during the Tribulation—such as the sun and moon being blackened, asteroids falling to earth, and the whole earth and heavens shaking—will happen all at once! Haggai foretold of this when he wrote, ***“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.”*** Who is this ***“desire of all nations”***? It’s Christ Himself! He *will* return to this earth in person, to set up His Kingdom. Yet, before He sets His feet down on the Mount of Olives, the entire cosmos will be shaken, and the entire earth plunged into gross darkness. Isaiah foretold of this when he wrote, ***“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.”*** Yet, this day will *not* be without light, because Isaiah goes on to explain, ***“But the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”*** Let’s see what **Zechariah** said about this incredibly important day in God’s calendar.

Read Zechariah 14:1-7.

The day when Christ returns to earth will be unique. It will be a day like none other in history, because the sun and moon will be supernaturally obscured. A frightening, murky darkness will cover the whole earth. The day when Christ returns can neither be classified as ***“day, nor night,”*** because in every part of the world (in the half facing the sun, and in the half opposite the sun), there will be no natural light from either the sun, moon, or stars.

Now, this is the way it was on the day of Christ’s crucifixion, as well. The whole world was covered with darkness on *that* day, too. However, there will be one difference. Even though the whole world will be covered with darkness, there will, nevertheless, be *light*, even in the evening time. What does this mean? Where will the light come from? The light will be provided by *the LORD Himself*, and by all His shining saints and angels! Just as a massive bolt of lightning makes the night sky look much brighter than mid-day for a split second, so the brilliance of Christ, His angels, and His people, will brighten the skies of the whole world

with resplendent glory (and not merely for a split second)! The Lord will literally “turn out the lights” of the heavens so that everyone will be able to see the “light show” of His glory!

Now, you’ll notice that Jesus said that all these fearful phenomena in the heavens will happen ***“immediately after the Tribulation of those days.”*** Why does Jesus say that the sun and moon will be darkened *after* the Tribulation? Won’t this event be *part of* the Tribulation? No. Many similar things *will* happen at different points during the Tribulation; but when the Battle of Armageddon happens, the seven years of the Tribulation will have just expired, and the Tribulation period will be officially over. These phenomena in the heavens will be happening *as Christ is descending to earth*. It will be a show of Christ’s glory such as the world has never seen before. When Jesus came the first time, He came in poverty, quietness, and obscurity, with only a few shepherds to observe it; but when He comes again, He will come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, in resplendent glory!

IV. The summoning of Christ’s people (v. 31)

(Read Matthew 24:31 again.) In this verse, Jesus reveals yet another incredibly important event that will be happening while He and His saints and angels are descending to earth: He will send out His angels to gather His ***“elect”*** (the saved) from ***“the four winds of the earth.”*** All who believed on Christ during the Tribulation will be literally, physically gathered by God’s angels, and will be transported to the land of Israel, so that they can take part in the Battle of Armageddon, the Judgment of the Nations, and the setting up of the Kingdom.

Now, many Christians these days misunderstand this verse. They assume that this gathering of the saints by angels is the same thing as the Rapture; and since the Rapture won’t happen until *just after* the Tribulation (so they think), they conclude that the church-age saints will have to *go through* the Tribulation. Brethren, this teaching is becoming very popular these days; but it is false. This verse is *not* talking about the Rapture of church-age saints at all. Christ is talking about the gathering of all the believing Jews and Gentiles who were saved during the Tribulation, *and who are still alive* at the end of the Tribulation. At the very same time when Christ is descending to Jerusalem, He will send out the angels to gather all the saved Jews and Gentiles who are scattered all over the earth. God’s angels will literally snatch these believers up, carry them to the land of Israel, and assemble them together in Jerusalem—just in time to meet the King of Kings, as He is descending to Mount Zion. As their great Captain, Christ will then “break forth” from Zion, destroy the armies of the Antichrist that are encamped all around the city, and will lead His people out from Zion—just as **Micah** prophesied in **Micah 2**. By the way, Isaiah prophesied, in **Isaiah 59**, that “the Redeemer shall come **to** Zion”; whereas Joel and Paul say that “there shall come **out of** Sion the Deliverer.” Which of these two statements is true? Both! Christ will first come *to* His re-gathered saints in Jerusalem;

but then, like an enraged Lion, He will break forth from *out of* Zion, and will lead all His saints out to battle, to destroy the armies of Antichrist.

Now, as I said a minute ago, the angels will be sent forth to gather the Tribulation saints who are “still alive.” Why did I emphasise that these saints will still be “alive”? Because at the very same time that these living saints are being gathered by the angels, *another* incredibly important thing will be happening. All the Old Testament-age saints, *and* all the saints who died during the Tribulation, will be resurrected from their graves! The *spirits* of these believers will descend with Christ from heaven; and as they are descending to earth, their *bodies* will be resurrected from their graves, and reunited with their spirits. They will then have glorified bodies, just like the ones that we *New Testament* saints received seven years earlier, in the Rapture. Then *all* of us—the Old Testament saints, the New Testament saints, *and* the saints who died during the Tribulation—will be prepared to rule and reign with Christ on earth, in real and physical (yet *immortal and glorified*) bodies, for 1,000 years.

Read Daniel 12:1-2. [The resurrection of Old Testament saints, just *after* the Tribulation.]

Read Revelation 20:1-6. [The resurrection of martyrs who died during the Tribulation.]

Brethren, the stage for Antichrist's kingdom is being set up at this very moment, before our very eyes. All around us, we see evidence that politicians and religious leaders in virtually every nation are erecting the infrastructure for a one-world government, one-world economy, and one-world apostate religion. That's probably at least part of the reason why many Christians today are now buying into the belief in a “post-Tribulation Rapture” (the idea that the Rapture will happen just *after* the Tribulation, and not before it). Many Christians, as they see these alarming events unfolding, are beginning to believe that the Rapture won't happen until *after* the Tribulation—and that we will therefore have to *go through* the Tribulation. In fact, many Christians now think that it is a “cop out” to believe in the pre-Tribulation Rapture. Some blogger or You-tube preacher has convinced them that those who believe in the pre-Trib Rapture are looking for some kind of “escape hatch” from suffering. But friends, this simply isn't so! It isn't “wishful thinking” to believe that Christ will rapture us out of this world before the Tribulation begins: it's simply trusting in Christ's promise. Jesus guaranteed that every believer *will* experience “tribulation” in this world. Tribulation (to some degree or another) *is* a standing promise for all believers throughout this church age. However, that doesn't change the fact that we believers in this church age have been given a “blessed hope.” We've been given the promise that, although we will suffer for Christ in this life, we will nevertheless be spared the wrath of the Tribulation period. **First Thessalonians 5:9** says, **“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”** This is an incredible privilege, brethren: but with that privilege comes great

responsibility. Until Christ appears for us in the air, we must do all in our power to warn people that judgment is coming, and that they must repent. Work, for the night is coming!

Conclusion: It has been forty years since I sat with an open Bible at my parents' dining room table, and saw, in my mind's eye, the appearing of the Son of Man in glory. Yet, no matter how many decades slip by, I never get tired of talking about it. In fact, I *must* talk about it, because Christ *commands* us to warn people that He is coming back to judge the world. The world mocks the Bible's teaching that Christ will return to earth one day; and even many Christians are living for things of this world, as though this event will never happen. Christian, don't be like that! Don't be a lukewarm believer. Hold the things of this earth very loosely; and keep serving the Lord faithfully, and looking for the appearing of Christ in the clouds. One day, Christ *will* descend to this earth to set up His Kingdom; and if you will serve Him faithfully now, you will have great rewards in His Kingdom. If you have never received Christ as your Saviour, stop putting it off! Christ wants you to be in *His* army when He returns to earth; and He wants you to reign with *Him*, in *His* Kingdom. ***"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"***

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5 (United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), p. 289.