



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 24:1-31

"The Life of Christ: The Second Advent of Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] As we conclude our series on "Highlights of the Greatest Life", especially in the Gospel of Matthew, we're turning to Matthew chapter 24 and reading the first 31 verses of this chapter. Matthew chapter 24,

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, 'See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, 'There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (or age)?' And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:

and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, 'Lo, here is Christ, or there'; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert'; go not forth: 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers;' believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (The "for" of verse 28 is not in the Greek text) Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles (or vultures) be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and

they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

May God bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that we are able to gather in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that we are able to lift our hearts to Thee through him and we thank Thee for the Holy Spirit who has come to take up his residence in our hearts and point us to him.

We thank Thee for the blessed Trinity and we thank Thee, Lord, for the salvation that has come to us with the divine assurance and certainty given in Thy word. And we thank Thee that we are able to offer our petitions to Thee. And so, Lord, we bring them to Thee for each one of us. We need Thee, Lord, and we pray Thy blessing upon each one present this morning. May the ministry of the word be fruitful and helpful. May the fellowship that we enjoy with one another be edifying. Above all, may our Lord Jesus Christ be honored in the word and in our singing of hymns of praise.

We thank Thee for the day in which we live, for the tragedies of it, for the crises of it, and for the blessings and prosperity of it. And we pray that our hearts may look to Thee day by day throughout this week. We thank Thee for everyone present here and ask that the needs of their hearts may be met.

And for those who are unable to be with us, we commit them to Thee for Thy tender care. We thank Thee, Lord, especially for some how have been bereaved this week. We pray Thy blessing upon them in the ministry of comfort and consolation, which Thou alone canst give. We pray, Lord, for our young people who are here with us and pray Thy blessing upon them in a spiritual way and give them strong fiber in their hearts that comes from Jesus Christ and enable them to represent him in their school and among their friends.

And for us who are older, we pray, O God, Thy blessing upon us. May our needs be met and may, O God, if it please Thee, in this church of believers of our Lord Jesus Christ, may there be the sweet savor of his presence always in our midst and may his glory be seen and proclaimed. Now may Thy blessing rest upon this meeting we pray. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for this morning as we conclude our series of studies in "Highlights of the Greatest Life" is "The Second Advent of Jesus Christ." Nominal Christians often question the validity of prophetic studies. This chapter should forever silence them. The question of the apostles, which they ask the Lord Jesus, indicated their desire to look into the future and Jesus did not rebuke that desire that they expressed. And yet among those who think it valid, there exists confusion.

There is the error of the historicist, for example, who looked back at history and attempts to place all of the events of a chapter like this in past history. He begins back with early history after the time of the church and he attempts to insert in chapter 24 of Matthew, for example, all of the experiences which men have had, particularly in the western world, down through the centuries that have followed our Lord's delivery of this Olivet discourse. Inserted into this are the experiences of the great warriors of the middle ages, the Reformation is put here, Napoleon and the wars that are associated with his general time in human history. All of history is compressed into these verses which our Lord Jesus gave.

Also, all of human history is compressed into the Book of Revelation. This kind of historicist's method of interpretation, of course, is one that changes with the coming of new centuries. I have not yet seen any historicist's explanation of the Book of Revelation with World War I and World War II inserted in the book yet. But sooner or later, if we were able to live long enough and if Jesus Christ does not come, we would have some historicist interpreter who would attempt to put World War I, and World War II, and

World War III, on up *ad infinitum*, or however many we shall have, in the prophetic word.

Now that is one error and, of course, I don't think that many of us in this room who have even looked at the Bible very seriously would be in danger of falling into this trap. But there are many who do look at the Bible this way who still feel that it is proper to read the prophetic portions of the Scripture.

There is another type of error, which is really just as bad, but it's a different type. It's the kind of error that says, "Yes, this is prophecy and it has to do with the future and as I look out on the world scene, I see some evidences of the fulfillment of this portion." And so, we have had some of our great Bible teachers, who have identified, for example, the anti-Christ with Mussolini. We had some very interesting explanations and expositions of how Mussolini was the anti-Christ during the '30s when Mussolini was so popular. And then others, when Hitler came to his apex of popularity, expositors were looking at the Bible and finding Hitler all through the passages of the New Testament and Stalin, and so on, down the line.

When I was a young Christian, in Birmingham, Alabama, still in the insurance business, I went down to a tabernacle in the midst of town to hear a man speak on prophecy. He was going to tell us who the next anti-Christ was. And after all, I would like to know who the anti-Christ is going to be and so, I went down to hear him. We went down into a place where the word of God was preached, I must say, sawdust was on the floor. I had heard of the Sawdust Trail and there I saw it. And I heard a man get up who had been a former Presbyterian missionary in the Near East and he told me about King Cecil [phonetic] and how King Cecil or rather one whose name was Cecil was to be the anti-Christ. And he told us of all the mighty miracles that he had already performed and wondrous things, remarkable. And he also told us that along about nineteen fifty he would make his appearance as the anti-Christ and we could expect the things of the Book of Revelation to begin to transpire at that time.

Well, of course, it's nineteen hundred and sixty-six and we haven't heard from Cecil and I doubt that we will. And at least it surely was an evidence of ignorance of the teaching of the word of God to attempt to be able to identify or to think we can identify the prophetic things that our Lord said with things that are happening today.

I often find today that even good Christians look out on the world and they see certain things, which are indeed significant, and indicate trends, and indicate great movement in the program of God. But they take the next step that one should never do and that is to identify things today with things in the word of God, which are, as a matter of fact, to be fulfilled at a future time.

Now if I were to try to outline for you human history from the standpoint of the Christian and if I had something on the board besides "Let Freedom Ring" and "The Broken Bell" above me here. If I were able to plot a kind of time graph of human history beginning with the cross, we could, of course, have our sections and indicate the centuries down to the present time, nineteen hundred and sixty-six. And we could draw a cross over here and then a solid line from the foot of the cross on to nineteen hundred and sixty-six. And we would have a solid line and this would represent from the time of our Lord through nineteen hundred and sixty-six.

Then we would have a dotted line to represent the future, the future of this age in which we are living, because you see the age of which we are living is of indeterminate length. The Bible does not tell us how many years there are between the time of the first coming of Christ and the time when Jesus comes in the air to catch the church up to be with him.

But then, the Bible is very specific about the time that is to come to pass upon the earth after the church, the true believers, are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And so, I would, on my diagram, after the dotted line, which is of indeterminately, we could put a question mark by it. We could again resume our solid line with the rapture of the church making an arrow up to show that the true believers are caught up to meet the

Lord, an arrow down for Jesus to come, and then we could start that solid line again for a period of approximately seven years at the conclusion of which Jesus shall come to the earth. Now that line is a solid line, that approximately seven year period of time, because the things that have to do with it are set forth very plainly in the word of God.

Now this particular chapter, the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is a chapter that has to do with that seven year period of time. A definite period of time, more or less, as we shall see in a moment, which has to do with the things that shall come to pass after true believers have gone to meet our Lord Jesus in the air and before the Lord Jesus comes back to the earth. We do not know when that period of time is going to begin, because we do not know when the shout from heaven shall come and we shall meet the Lord in the air. But we do know the things that are going to come to pass upon the earth when our Lord Jesus calls us up. So we can be definite about these things if we recognize that they do not have to do with this present time in which we are living.

Now, of course, as I said a moment ago, we should recognize trend. And if, for example, that during the Great Tribulation period this seven year period of time or this period of Israel's seventieth week, if we know that the nation Israel is going to back in the land of Palestine according to the word of God. Then, of course, if we see that since nineteen hundred and forty-eight there has been a nation Israel in the land, we can surely say that here are some trends and here are some movements in human history that MAY, and I would put that in capital letters, that MAY signal the fact that God is getting ready to fulfill those things that are set forth for us in Israel seventieth week.

In other words, the stage may be being set, but as far as we are concerned, we do not know when Jesus Christ is to come for us. He may come tonight. Now that would be a wonderful thing or he may not come for one hundred years. Does that shock you? Well, perhaps it does shock you. You, of course, as you analyze human history, you might think that a hundred years is too long, but he may not come for a hundred and fifty years, but he may come next year. In other words, we do not know and we must leave it

that way and we must be very careful not to suggest that we know when Jesus is coming. We must never be guilty of setting dates in the study of prophecy.

Now this section of Matthew 24 is unique not only because it is our Lord's great prophetic discourse, but also because it is the longest answer that he ever gave to any question that was asked him. He had just pronounced a doom upon the theocracy of Israel. He has said in the 38th verse, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." But he has also concluded with a gleam of hope, "For I say unto you, 'Ye shall see me henceforth, till (Till, there is the gleam of hope. There is the evidence that we shall see him again. That is, the apostles in the context) Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

Now in the answer of chapter 24 to the query that the disciples gave him, he unfolds the "how" and the "when" of Israel's reception by God again into the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. There are three approaches that we could take to Matthew chapter 24. We could say everything in it is past like the historicists, but we should not explain this chapter. This chapter that ends with the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus in power and great glory would have no meaning at all. So we dispense with that. It is not according to the word of God. It is impossible to fit history into the things that are set forth here.

We might say this has to do with the present time and find the church all in Matthew 24 and 25. We who believe in this age are members of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, but unfortunately, the word church is not mentioned once in Matthew 24 and 25. As a matter of fact, Matthew 24 and 25 does not have to do with this period of time in which we are at all. It has to do with that period of time on my imaginary diagram up here, which begins at the conclusion of the dotted line and goes for an approximately seven year period of time, a time known as Israel's seventieth week, to use Daniel's terminology. The time when God winds up human history preparatory to the establishment of his kingdom upon the earth, the kingdom that he will establish. It is the

kingdom of God not the kingdom of men. So here we have then a section that has to do with that period of time after we have been caught out to meet our Lord in the air.

Now the rapture of the church is the great event for which we look. As many of you know, I've mentioned this so many times, Donald Grey Barnhouse was the one who led me to the Lord. In one of his books, he tells of a visit to one of the great automobile manufacturing plants in the city of Detroit. And he had a very close friend who took him from the beginning of the automobile when there was just scrap iron at the end of the assembly line all the way through until the finished product rolled off of that assembly line. He said one thing that amazed him was the electromagnetic crane. And he said he saw that these freight cars of scrap iron were brought by rail up to near where the process began and then a man in this gigantic electromagnetic crane took the magnet over the top of that scrap iron in the midst of the railroad cars and then he would press a button and the current would go on and he said, "Literally every piece of iron in that car would leap up to the giant magnet" and then the crane would take it over and put it somewhere else.

Dr. Barnhouse said that he noticed that once when the crane did this that a couple of pieces fell out on the ground. And he spoke to his friend and he said, "What was the matter?" and the man said, "Well, I don't know, but you can be sure of one thing that those two pieces of material are not iron." And so, they went over and looked at them and he said sure enough one was an old piece of a broomstick and then there was a piece of copper tubing. Everything else that had the genuine metal was attached to that giant magnet.

When Jesus Christ comes and calls for those who have truly believed in him, every single person who has truly believed in the Lord Jesus will be caught up to meet him just like the scrap iron meeting the magnet. And, you know, if anybody is left in Believers Chapel, they are the broomsticks and the copper tubing of Christianity, Christendom. And I have no doubt whatsoever that there may be someone like this in our midst. I hope, I

pray that it may not be so, but it may be so. But every man who is of the true metal is drawn to our Lord Jesus Christ. Now that's the event for which we look.

The apostles and disciples did not know this great truth. They had not yet been taught it. They looked forward to the completion of the promises that had been given to the nation Israel in the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth. The rapture of the church is the subject of later revelation. They are looking to the time when the promises are fulfilled to Israel. And so, they ask the question, "Tell us (verse 3), when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" In other words, the end of this period of time that begins after the dotted line and concludes with the Advent of Jesus, not in the air, but to the earth.

Two questions actually are asked here in Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" The things that he'd just been speaking about in chapter 23 of judgment that shall come upon this generation, notice the 36th verse of chapter 23, "Verily I say unto you, 'All these things shall come upon this generation.'" And then, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" An example of which is the destruction of the temple. That is, that's a kind of example ahead of time of that which is to come. That question then is asked. Jesus does not answer that specifically, because you see, he does not know the time the Father has kept that in his own hands. But he tells us the characteristic of the times so that we can know the time by its characteristic.

And then, secondly, the second question is "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" Now that is one question. Now Mr. Scofield has at the bottom of the page, it is two questions and, occasionally, Mr. Scofield is wrong and this is one place where he is wrong. He happens to be uninspired as I am uninspired. But in the Greek text, this is one question. The second question is, "What is the sign of Thy coming, and the consummation of the age?" In other words, the coming is the consummation of the age. So there are two questions then that are asked. And now the Lord Jesus in very logical fashion, you know, I think that when we teach the word, we

should try to be logical in our presentation of it. Almost all the writers of the New Testament are logical in their presentation of the truth and our Lord Jesus certainly is. So he takes these two questions, "When shall these things be?" That is, the period of judgment, "How can we know that it will be here?" and then he takes the second question, "What's the sign of Thy coming, which signals the end of the age?" and he answers that.

The first question he expounds in verses 4 through 28 and I want to try to kind of show you the chronology of the second section for your reading. The first section, verse 4 through verse 14 is a kind of summary of this seven year period of time. Then in verse 15 through verse 28, we have the details. Just as if I were to say to you, "Next week I'm going to California. I'm going to take my wife. We're driving. I don't know whether we'll make it or not in my '61 Plymouth, but we're going to try. Now we've been studying this trip and we've determined to go by Route 66. And so, we're going up and meet Route 66 and then we're going out Route 66 to California."

Now that is my general overall plan, but I may then say, "When I meet Route 66, we're going to make a little side trip right there and we're going to see such and such. Now when we get to Albuquerque we're going to stop there and we're going up on Sandia Mountain and we're going to see the snow and we're going to look out at the Rio Grande. And we're going kind of visualize how the Indians must have felt when they were there and also how the white settlers must have felt when they got there and so on." In other words, I may give you lots of details that I'm going to do on my trip, but basically, I'm going out Route 66.

Now in these verses 4 through 14, he gives us the overall picture of the seventieth week. Then in 15 through 28, he fills in a few details in order to warn us about certain things, primarily. But let's now look very briefly at the seventieth week in its broad overall picture and just single out a few things that kind of strike our attention. Now remember, Jesus does not tell us when these things shall be. He just says this period is

going to be characterized by certain things and if you'll observe the signs of the times, you'll be able to be prepared when the Second Advent does take place.

Now, of course, since we're not going to be here, we look at this with a little different attitude from someone who is, of course. But it's very interesting for us, because you see; some of these great trends may be beginning in operation now, "Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ'; and shall deceive many." Now isn't that horrible just think of that somebody saying, "I am Christ." Surely no one would dare do anything like that.

Now I don't have a lot of time this morning, of course. I'd like to have about an hour and a half on this section, but I have in my notes here, you may see the outside of it, a little communication from a man named Jesus Christ. He was here in Dallas not long ago. He attempted to gather some followers. His name was Lightfoot. He said he had died and now Jesus Christ had come to indwell him and his movement was the movement of Jesus Christ. And you could join that movement if you sent him ten dollars and asked for his three pages of instruction on how you might be a help to humanity and bring in his Father's kingdom. I have no doubt whatsoever, though I didn't send in the ten dollars and go to the meeting, that he gathered a few followers down there.

When Dr. Dwight Pentecost of the great Bible church was preaching in the Church of the Open Door a few years ago, he had an experience very much like what I had. When I finished preaching one time in the Church of the Open Door, a nice looking man came up to me, shook my hand and said, "You are great! You are terrific! You are the great Holy Ghost!" [Laughter] I was quite pleased at his first two remarks, [Laughter] but at the last, it was confirmed that he was crazy [Laughter] and, therefore, I began to doubt the truth of the first two remarks too [Laughter]. Well, Dr. Pentecost had an experience just like that in the same church.

By the way, Dr. McGee's church is not filled with people like this [Laughter]. They come over from Pershing Square about two blocks away from his church and they go in

and they listen to Dr. McGee and then they go out on the square and then they preach. And they say, Dr. McGee said this, and Dr. McGee said that, and Dr. McGee said the other thing. I'm sure he turns pale when he hears their accounts of what he said too [Laughter]. But Dr. Pentecost finished a message one time and a woman came up to him in the church and said, "I am Jesus Christ" and he was very quick to reply. He said, "Let me see the nail prints in your hands" and she beat a hasty retreat.

Now, of course, these things are not the fulfillment of our text here, but I think you can see how that a man who has the personality and the intelligence might be able to fool people,

"Many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ'; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."

Famines, earthquakes, in divers place; when I was in Charleston, South Carolina in May for a series of meetings there, I was rather struck by a heading in the *Charleston News and Courier*. This is not the fulfillment of the text mind you, but this is what I saw. Earthquake reported on three continents in one day. I don't know whether you've noticed it or not, but there does seem to be a growing incident of earthquakes, perhaps it's because we have better instruments to detect them. This is not the fulfillment of this Scripture. It only indicates, you see, that there is a kind of divine parallel between the moral judgment of God upon our civilization and how at times its expression in physical judgment. And the more corrupt we become, the more we shall see physical destruction; they go together.

We read on, verse 10, we missed the persecution section, "Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets (like Bishop Pike) shall rise, and shall deceive many." Pike, a man who doesn't even have a degree in divinity, but who stresses theology in his utterances, a man who gained his B.D. degree by handing in a few papers from a book that he wrote, together with his law degree and was given by Union Theological Seminary a B.D. degree. This is the man who makes pronouncements on theology such as "I do not believe the virgin birth. The Trinity does not speak to me; it speaks of a kind of committee God, etc. etc.," *ad nauseum*. A man who never has studied a single course in theology to get that degree, by the way, and it's amazing how our public can be misled by a man like that.

Now Bishop Pike is no problem to us. We can easily see him, but suppose you have a man who has had lots of courses in theology with a personality and who has characteristics that the Bishop does not have and who makes similar statements? Even the elect of Israel shall be in danger of being deceived. Verse 13, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." That means that he that endureth unto the end of the great tribulation judgment. He shall be delivered from them. This is not the way of salvation. Salvation is by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ not by endurance to the end, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." And so, it shall be climaxed on the spiritual side by a great teaching of the word of God by the hundred and forty-four thousand Israelites that we studied when we went through the Book of Revelation. And out of that great period of judgment and deception and evil and moral corruption, there will be the greatest revival in the history of humanity. When one hundred and forty-four thousand Apostle Pauls go out and, as a result of this great campaign during that time of terror in an innumerable multitude, which no man can number, shall come out of the great tribulation and shall have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Talk

about revival. The greatest revivals are yet to come, but not in this age, in the age that is to come.

Well, now we look at the details very briefly, "When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet." Now you have to know prophecy to know these things, of course, and if as you read them you say, "Well, I'm a little confused" the reason is that you're not as acquainted perhaps with the Book of Daniel as you ought to be. So go home this afternoon and if you haven't read Daniel, don't look at that pro football game, but read the Book of Daniel.

If you've read Daniel a couple of times, then look at the pro football game, of course, [Laughter] but when our Lord speaks about the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, he means the time when the anti-Christ, false prophet shall set up the image of the anti-Christ in the temple and he shall make himself to be God. That's the abomination of desolation that signals the beginning of the great tribulation period, the last part of that seventieth week of Israel, "Whoso readeth, let him understand: Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." This, by the way, has to do with those who are in Judaea.

Some years ago when I was in theological seminary, one day I didn't have to go out to do my practical work because a worker from Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on my door. And we began a theological discussion and finally in the midst of the discussion, I didn't seem to be getting anywhere with him, and he surely wasn't getting anywhere with me. And so, I said, "Pardon me, let me ask you a very simple question, 'Just how may I get to heaven?' that seems to me to be the first step in getting to know God, to know him and how to know that we belong to him." He said, "Well, the thing to do is to flee to the covenant, flee to the mountain of God's covenant." I said, "Where is that text?" He said, "Well, I don't know exactly where it is, but there's a text somewhere about those that are in Judaea fleeing to the mountains." I said, "Well, that's no help to me because I'm not in

Judaea, I'm in Dallas." And he seemed very peeved with me that I was reading the text [Laughter] as it was stated here.

So I went on to kind of try to point to him that that text didn't have anything to do with me in Dallas, but it had to do with those in Judaea who were in Judaea when these great things were happening on the earth. Well after a while, if he had been biblical he would have kicked up the dust and condemned me to perdition, but he finally said, "I see that I am not getting anywhere with you so I'm going on down the street." We had a very good discussion, I assure you, but it was obvious that he didn't know the first thing about reading God's word.

This has to do with those who are in the land when these judgments are being poured out. We are to take Jesus seriously and to take his word seriously, "Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." And Dr. Chafer used to love to say, "You have to know how to distinguish the ages to know where we are in the reading of the word of God."

For example, we are living in the period of the solid line up before the dotted line of the indefinite unknown future and the time pray that our flight be not in the winter nor on the Sabbath day is not now. How ridiculous it would be if I were to stand up here next Sunday morning and say, "Now today we're going to pray Jesus' prayer, 'O Lord, let our flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.'" What sense would that make? No sense whatsoever. We have to learn to distinguish the things that differ in God's word and to know the ages in which the truth is to be set and it's all set forth in the context for us, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

I have some friends who say, "We're in the tribulation now." Well, we may be in A tribulation, but we are not in the THE tribulation. This tribulation is the greatest thing

that has ever come to pass upon the earth so far as divine judgment is concerned and it's well to remember that. And in the debate over the rapture question, it's good to remember that the tribulation is the most terrible time.

I spent last week in Albuquerque and, as you know, that kind of is a little subordinate division of Washington with so much nuclear work going on out there. I was with one of the outstanding scientists in the United States. He just won the Nobel Prize of the western United States. As we went along to the airport yesterday morning, he said, "Over there in those mountains over there, are enough nuclear bombs to pulverize this whole part of the United States if it ever went off."

I heard a comedian said, "There are three size nuclear bombs now. Medium, large, and where's everybody gone?" [Laughter] "Then shall be great tribulation," to talk about today being tribulation is ridiculous. This is not tribulation today. We may be having a difficult time, we think, but this is not the great tribulation. Just put here Revelation chapter 6 through Revelation chapter 19 and go home this afternoon, after the game, and read that, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, (verse 24) and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

May I remind you, because some of you were here when I expounded the Book of Revelation, that one of the things that the false prophet is going to do is to do mighty miracles. One of his powers is going to be call down fire from heaven the identical thing that Elijah was able to do, which enabled him to authenticate the fact that he was the true God prophet. And you'll remember, he said, "The God that answereth by fire would him be God."

But the false prophet is going to have authority to call down fire from heaven and it's no wonder that even the very elect may well be deceived by this man if such were possible. "Behold, I have told you before" the Lord Jesus said. Don't you know that when the hundred and forty-four thousand and the Christians of that age are here, they're

going to pour over Matthew chapter 24 because this shall be the text that has to do with them.

We read the epistles today, these are texts that have particularly to do with us, but here are texts that have particularly to do with that group who are here on the earth at that time and they shall pour over these things, "Behold, I have told you before, Wherefore if they shall say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert'; go not forth: 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers'; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

In other words, when Jesus comes it's going to be a universal self manifestation and you won't go off in your closet and find the Lord Jesus; he's going to be seen by everybody. So when they say to you, "Christ is here and Christ is there" over in somebody's little church or over in somebody's little community, don't you dare go. For when he comes, everybody will know that he's coming.

Fifty years ago, men looked at this passage and said, "Ridiculous. How is it possible? Impossible for someone to see someone coming in bodily form everywhere." We know it's imminently possible now. We know it's even possible on the human plane. I spoke to my scientist friend about this and he said, "You're absolutely right." He said, "You know, I looked at the Bible a few years back and wondered how this was possible. In fact, even after television (he said), speaking of the two witnesses, I wondered how it was possible because of the problems of the cable. But he said, "Now we've thrown a satellite up into the sky." Those were his exact words, I don't that's not kind of my language I use, but he said, "We've thrown a satellite up in the sky" and now he says, "It's very possible."

And, furthermore, he went on to say he says, "You know, Lewis (he said), people are always talking about the agreement of science and Scripture." He said, "If science ever agrees with Scripture then I'm beginning to get worried, because (he said) if eighteen

hundred and seventy-five agrees with Scripture, what about eighteen hundred and eighty? If nineteen hundred five agrees with Scripture then what about nineteen hundred and twenty-five? He said, "I never expect, I never want, I'm not looking for science to ever agree with the Bible.

He said, and this man has written a hundred and fifty papers accepted in our most scientific journals, I mean most scientific. I could not understand one page of the articles that he wrote; nothing but mathematical formulas one right after the other. I can't even describe them to you. It just looks like a lot of jottings on paper. He understands them all. This man went on to say that all we as scientists know, and he knows, he says, "We know what we know." I said, "Yes, I remember a great scientist said seventy-five years ago, if we're ever went twenty miles an hour our blood vessels would burst and other things would happen." He said, "Yes, that's true" [Laughter] but he said, "We know what we know, but Lewis; we don't know anything but a sliver of the truth here and a sliver of the truth here and a sliver of the truth there."

So don't worry about our Lord manifesting himself. He shall, "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles (or vultures) be gathered together." And this is a proverb, of course, which meant that wherever there's moral corruption, wherever there's physical corruption, the vultures will come and so wherever there is moral corruption, and this earth is full of it, you can expect the angels to execute divine vengeance to come and gather out of God's kingdom all things that are sin, to use Matthew's own terminology, which is the exposition of this verse.

Well, the text concludes and I just want to give you a kind of general survey this morning, anyway. The text concludes with the answer to Jesus' second question,

"What's the sign of Thy coming, and the end of the age?" (Immediately after, verse 29,) Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken: (This is the world's greatest blackout. This cosmic agitation before Christ's coming) And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of all the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming."

The sign apparently, the Shekina glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; the kingly advent in glory; the last great triumph of the Son of God over Jewish unbelief and the nation shall turn to him when they see him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and shall mourn over the one whom they have crucified. And then our Lord shall engage in a final assembling of Israel into the land to have the promises that God gave to Abraham centuries ago, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the end of heaven to the other." And, thus, shall begin the kingdom of God upon the earth.

I began by suggesting that often nominal Christians question the validity of prophetic study. Experience has shown that not only is prophetic study valid, but it is vitalizing to the true Christian. And if, when you see the word of God, and the promises that are in it, if we do not respond with a more definite Christian experience then we are not open to God's truth.

Many years ago, William Anderson, was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church here in Dallas. He was a man of God, but he didn't believe in the pre-millennial coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had a prophetic conference in his church. That's a dangerous thing if you don't believe in the prophetic word and at the First Presbyterian Church here, George Gill spoke. At the conclusion of one of the meetings, he said to Dr. Anderson, he said, "Dr. Anderson, do you love the Lord's appearing?" He said, "Oh, yes, (he said) I often speak on the Second Coming of Christ." He said, "I didn't ask you if you spoke on the Second Coming of Christ, I asked you, 'Did you love the Lord's appearing?'"

And Dr. Anderson that night went home and that question kind of burned into his heart and he began to open up the Bible, because he realized he really didn't love the

Lord's appearing. As a result of it, he came to understand the pre-millennial coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and he began to love the appearing of Christ, but then he had a great problem. You see, his family had held the pastorate of that church before and they had a tradition of not being pre-millennial. So he called all of his elders together and he told them what had happened to him. He said, "I'm awfully sorry. I believe in the pre-millennial coming of our Lord Jesus Christ now and I don't know what to do. The church does not accept this doctrine and so I'm prepared to resign."

One of the elders said, "Will, does the Bible teach this that you're talking about?" He said, "I am persuaded that the Bible teaches it." He said, "Well, then teach it. We want to know what the Bible says." And he became a great supporter not only of the truth of the Lord's return, but of the gospel of our Lord Jesus in this community and the influence of Will Anderson still abides today in Dallas. He later became vice president of the Dallas Theological Seminary and the Dallas Theological Seminary is in this city because of the influence and experience of that man. It is vital.

Do you have this hope that the Lord Jesus is to come and to catch you up to meet him in the air so shall ye ever be with the Lord? Do you look forward to the time of his kingdom upon the earth? May God speak to your heart. Shall be stand for the benediction.