

**God's Prophetic Calendar**  
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We are in a sermon series called Signs of the Times. We are teaching on Matthew 24 where Jesus taught about the signs of the end times and what events would take place.

Last week we looked at those signs which Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24. They include:

- Widespread Deception
- Wars, Rumors of Wars
- Ethnic Conflict
- Famines, Pestilence and Earthquakes
- Betrayal and Hatred
- Increase in Wickedness and Lawlessness
- People's Hearts growing Cold Resulting in them Turning from the Faith
- The Gospel will be Preached to the whole World.

Then the end will come!

Immediately after saying this, Jesus revealed God's prophetic timetable. You find it in Matthew 24:15-35.

*So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

*Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!*

*Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again.*

*If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There He is!' do not believe it.*

*For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect — if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There He is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here He is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

*Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'*

*At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*

*And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*

*Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.*

*I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.*

My sermon is entitled God's Prophetic Calendar.

We need to realize that history is going somewhere because God is taking it somewhere! It's not random, it's not chance, it's not evolution – God is in control and He has a calendar of prophetic events that will happen!

Not might happen! WILL HAPPEN! All the prophecies of the Bible come to pass 100% and the words of Christ will come to pass 100%! Heaven and earth will pass away but the word of God will never pass away!

The Bible teaches that the world we live on will not last forever. Revelation 21:1 says:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*

Jesus said that no one knows the exact date the world will end.

Unfortunately, there's a long tragic history of date-setting for the end of the world. But Jesus said many times that we will not know the hour or the day. We'll talk more about that in another sermon. It's always amazing how people go against the words of Christ that no man knows or will ever know that date!

But here's what we do know: God has a prophetic calendar. In our passage from Matthew 24, Jesus prophesied about events that would happen in the future. We're going to look at those events today.

Let me say that there are many different interpretations of the passages about the end times. This is not something I argue about. Whether or not you believe in the rapture or when the tribulation will occur has no impact on your salvation and we should give each other grace in our interpretations.

I don't have time to get into all the events that will occur in the future – but I do want to cover the main ones that Jesus mentioned in Matthew.

I'm not usually into charts, but I found this one that shows the major upcoming major events on God's prophetic calendar. They are:

The Rapture of the Church  
 The Great Tribulation  
 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ  
 The Millennium  
 The Great White Throne Judgment  
 Followed by eternity in either heaven or hell

There are some differences among Bible teachers about when these events will occur – but I'm going to teach it in the order I believe it will happen. By the way – there are more than 1000 prophecies in the Bible – of which over 500 have already been fulfilled with 100% accuracy.

The remaining prophecies concern the end times or last days.  
 And since God is batting a thousand – we expect Him to continue to do so.

I believe that the next thing on the agenda of God's prophetic calendar is:

### **1- The Rapture of the Church**

You will not find the word "rapture" in the Bible. But what the Bible does say is that there will be a great "catching away" of God's people.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (Amplified)

*For this we declare to you by the Lord's (own) word, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall in no way precede (into His presence) or have any advantage at all over those who have previously fallen asleep (in Him in death).*

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we, the living ones who remain (on the earth), shall simultaneously be caught up along with (the resurrected dead) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so always we shall be with the Lord! Therefore comfort and encourage one another with these words.*

The rapture will remove all Christians from the world. Christians who have died will be resurrected and every Christian alive on the earth will be removed to heaven without experiencing death.

Jesus taught it in Matthew 24:40-42

*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.*

I believe that the rapture of the church could happen anytime!

So we need to be ready for it. After the Christians are “raptured” out of this world, a 7-year period begins on earth called

## **2- The Great Tribulation**

As its name suggests this will be a time of trouble and turmoil for those who remain on earth. It will be the worst time this world has ever seen or ever will see. Jesus talked about it in Matthew 24:21

*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

The book of Revelation deals with the tribulation in great detail in chapters 6-18. I encourage you to read it. It shows that the tribulation is the period of time in which the antichrist shows up. That is what Jesus meant by the abomination of desolation.

The Antichrist will talk of peace, but he will want to destroy Israel. This will be the time of the last great war on earth: the Battle of Armageddon.

I don't have time to go into detail about the Great Tribulation today. Let me just say this - you don't want to go through it!

The good news is, if you are saved, you won't be there, because the Lord will have taken you out of this world at the rapture.

The next event at the end of the Great Tribulation is:

## **3- The Second Coming of Jesus Christ**

Many people confuse the rapture and the second coming, but they are different. Or you could say the second coming of Jesus Christ takes place in 2 parts: part 1 is the rapture and part 2 is Jesus coming back to earth.

At the rapture Jesus comes *for* His saints; at the second coming He comes *with* His saints. At the rapture He comes down from heaven but doesn't come all the way to the earth. At the second coming He literally touches down on the face of the earth.

Zechariah 14:4-5 says:

*On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley... You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him.*

The second coming of Jesus Christ will usher in:

#### **4- The Millennium**

The word millennium literally means 1000 years. The millennium is a one-thousand-year period where Jesus Christ reigns on this earth in righteousness, peace and harmony.

It is the kingdom of heaven on earth and everyone will worship the Lord. This is when believers will rule and reign with Christ on the earth.

During this time Satan is bound in a bottomless pit so he cannot deceive. Revelation 20:7-8 says:

*When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth — to gather them for battle.*

He will once again attempt to overthrow Jesus Christ. He will once again be unsuccessful and this will be the end of the world.

After this 1,000-year reign on earth – the next upcoming event is:

#### **5- The Great White Throne Judgment**

Revelation 20:11-15 says:

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

All men will stand before God's throne one day. Everybody will be judged based on what they've done. But the key will be this: is your name in the book of life? If it is, you will be saved. If it is not, you will be lost forever.

That brings us to the final upcoming event:

#### **6- Eternity in Heaven or Hell**

After this world ends, a new one begins which will never end.  
 There will be a new heaven and a new earth!  
 And you will spend eternity either with God or separated from Him.

Since the Rapture is the next upcoming event – the question is this: are you ready for it or will you be left behind? Jesus talked about people who would be left behind.

In Matthew 24 Jesus told His disciples He was going away but that He would come back again. He said in verses 39-42

*That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

Jesus told His disciples He would be leaving – but that He was coming back for them. He said it would happen and we need to be ready for it.

That's why it is important that we be established in the truth of the second coming of Jesus Christ - It causes us to live ready to meet Jesus.

All of us will face Him one day – and it may be sooner than you think  
 We must live our lives as if every day could be the day we face God.  
 We must live our lives as if every day could be the end of this life.  
 We must live our lives as if every day could be the beginning of eternity.  
 We must live ready to meet the Lord.  
 Are you ready?

The Bible teaches that Jesus will come to earth again. It's very specific about how this will happen, but not about when this will happen. So, we must all live as if every day could be that day.

In every generation since Jesus died and resurrected, some Christians have thought they were the last generation.

We don't need to get caught up in when Jesus is coming back. All we need to know is Jesus could come back any day and we need to be ready for it.

Jesus taught in Matthew 24:30 what His Second Coming will look like.

*At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*

We see several things about the second coming of Jesus:  
 It will be a physical return that is visible to everyone.

Jesus will return with power and authority.  
 Jesus will return suddenly and expectantly.

Jesus said He is coming back and we must be ready. There are no second chances. In fact, the Bible ends with these words in Revelation 22:20

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

People in the time of Christ believed that the kingdom of God would come to the earth then and Jesus would rule the earth and they would rule with Him. They had their facts right – they just had the timing wrong.

They did not understand that Jesus came the first time as a suffering Servant – but He's coming back as a conquering King! Revelation 19:11-16 says:

*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns.*

*He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God.*

*The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.*

*"He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Jesus came to earth the first time as the Lamb that was slain – but He's coming back as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah!

He came the first time submitted to kings in earthly authority – but He's coming back as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

The first time Jesus was a baby dressed in swaddling clothes; the second time He's wearing a robe dipped in blood!

He came the first time to die; but He is coming back to raise the dead.

The first time He wore a crown of thorns; the next time He will wear a crown of glory.

The first time He died on a cross; He's coming back as a conquering King.

The first time He was the Savior of the world; the second time He will be the Judge of the world.

The first time He came in meekness; He is coming again in majesty.

The first time He came in poverty; the next time He is coming in power.

The first time He rode a lowly donkey into Jerusalem; when He comes back He will be a conquering King riding a white horse leading the armies of heaven.

His eyes will be a flame of fire and out of His mouth will go a sharp sword.  
His name will be written on His thigh: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

When He comes again every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Are you ready for that great and glorious day?  
Are you ready to meet your God?