

# UNTIL HE COMES

Matthew 24:1-14

Flipping channels the other day I caught the tail end of a prophecy show as the speaker declared, "Jesus is coming back much sooner than most of you think!" Unfortunately, he was signing off and I didn't get to hear his explanation.

A lot of people are wondering if Jesus is coming soon. With the pandemic, wildfires, violence, division and hatred in the U.S., a lot of American Christians are wondering if these are signaling that Jesus is coming soon.

Is Jesus coming soon?

To answer this question we need to ask, which coming are we talking about? Jesus is coming twice. The first coming of Jesus is for the Church. The second coming of Jesus is for Israel. These are two distinct, separate events.

## JESUS COMING FOR THE CHURCH

## = THE RAPTURE

First, Jesus is coming for all Church-age believers to take them to heaven. This is the Rapture. The Rapture has always been **IMMINENT**, meaning, it could happen at any time. As you read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, notice the Rapture could have happened in the days of the Apostle Paul.

### **1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18 (ESV)**

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Rapture could have taken place any time between 33A.D., when the Church was born, and today. The Rapture is **IMMINENT**, it could happen at any time. There is no other prophetic event that needs to occur before the Rapture takes place. What happens in the United States is irrelevant to the timing of the Rapture. In fact, the Rapture could have occurred before the United States was even founded!

We do not look at circumstances in the U.S. to determine the timing of the Rapture. The Bible tells us the timing of the Rapture. The Bible tells us the Rapture could occur at any time. For this reason, we should live for Jesus each and every day!

When people ask if Jesus is coming soon, they usually have in mind His second coming even though they do not have a clear understanding of the purpose of His second coming. Do these days of turmoil, hatred, violence, corruption and persecution in America indicate that Jesus' second coming is soon?

## **JESUS IS COMING FOR ISRAEL = THE SECOND COMING**

Jesus is coming *to the earth* a second time to save the nation of Israel from the Antichrist. Technically speaking, Jesus does not come *to the earth* at the Rapture. He comes to the earth's atmosphere where we will be "caught up" to meet Him in the air. Again, technically speaking, His first coming *to the earth* was when He was born of Mary and came as the "Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." His second coming *to the earth* will be when He comes as the "Lion of Judah" to rescue Israel from the Antichrist.

Sometime in the future, Israel will sign a seven-year covenant with the Antichrist. The signing of the covenant begins the seven-year Tribulation period. The Bible tells us that at the end of those seven years, Israel will accept Jesus of Nazareth as her Messiah and Jesus will come *to the earth* to rescue the nation of Israel from the persecution of the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27, 12:1-13; Rev. 12:5, 19:11-21). If we know when the covenant will be signed, then we know when Jesus will come.

When will the Antichrist sign the covenant with Israel?

We don't know.

But it is soon.

Am I saying this because of what is happening in the U.S.? Not at all. You need to understand, nothing is prophesied in the Bible about the United States. Nothing.

The United States is not the point of reference for end time events; Israel is the point of reference. All end time events are related to God fulfilling His covenant promises to the nation of Israel; the promises of the LAND, the SEED, the BLESSING and the NEW COVENANT promises of forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Bible that tells us the signing of the covenant between Antichrist and Israel is soon, not events in the U.S.

*Soon* is a relative term. When a woman finds out she's pregnant, she knows she will carry her child for about nine months. She also knows her due date is a best guess, not a guarantee. At six months the baby's coming is sooner than when she was at two months. Eight months is sooner still. But what event indicates the baby is coming *very soon*?

Birth pangs.

Genuine contractions.

It's no longer months, weeks, or days; the baby is coming in hours. The baby is coming *soon!*

This is where we are on God's prophetic timeline; we are in the birth pains. We look not at circumstances in America, but at the Word of God and the nation of Israel to know we are in the birth pains.

Please turn to Matthew 24:1-14.

**MATTHEW 24:1-14 (ESV)**

1 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you

are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

In verse 3, the disciples asked Jesus three questions the third of which was “What will be the sign of the end of the age?” The prophets pictured the last days as a series of birth pangs before the birth of the New Messianic Age. According to Jesus in verse 7 the first birth pang and the sign that the end of the age has begun is when nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

This worldwide conflict has been fulfilled by World Wars I & II. World War II led to the miraculous reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948.

The end of the age has begun; the first birth pangs have occurred.

How close are we to the beginning of the Tribulation?

We don’t know. But based on the authority of God’s Word, not what’s happening in America, we know that the Rapture is *IMMINENT* and the second coming of Jesus is *CLOSE*.

As we turn now to celebrate communion realize that one of its effects is to keep us ever mindful of the coming of Jesus at the Rapture. Whenever we read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, one of the main passages on communion, we are reminded of the *IMMINENT* coming of the Lord Jesus for the Church. If Jesus could come at any time, what sort of lives should we be living?

**1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26 (ESV)**

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new

covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.