

Masterwork of the Messiah

Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

The King And The Kingdom: Part 6

Matthew 24:26-35

Written By

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Woven through the fabric of the New Testament is the blessed hope of the believer (Titus 2:13): the return of Jesus Christ to establish His righteous, holy kingdom:

- “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).
- “I [Jesus] will come again and receive you to Myself” (John. 14:3).
- “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go” (Acts 1:11).
- “[At the Lord’s Supper] you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (I Corinthians 11:26).
- “Christ the first fruits [to be resurrected in a glorified body], afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (I Corinthians 15:23).
- “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (I Thessalonians 2:19).
- “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God” (I Thessalonians 4:16).

- “When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints” (II Thessalonians 1:10).”
- Yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:37).
- “The coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).

Inspired texts like these moved John W. Peterson, the lyricist and songwriter, to compose a plethora of moving, memorable numbers. One which always inspires me is *Jesus Is Coming Again*:

Marvelous message we bring,
Glorious carol we sing,
Wonderful words of the King:
Jesus is coming again!
Coming again, coming again;
Maybe morning, maybe noon,
Maybe evening and maybe soon!
Coming again, coming again;
O what a wonderful day it will be—Jesus is coming again!

In a world full of advancing ruthless armies, sabre rattling almost nuclear radicalized countries, weapons of mass destruction in the hands of those who just might use them if given the opportunity, EMP weapons which could send civilized countries back into the proverbial dark ages, fragile economic empires riddled with corruption, graft and greed, endless class warfare of the hot and cold varieties, relatively new diseases holding the potential to wipe out scores of innocent people, political leaders who care more about dictatorial power and prestige more than the timeless template of life-giving biblical governance, and the cancerous nature of the drug cartels, I'd dare say we, as Christians, should sing along with Mr. Peterson because it is true as we see in the Olivet Discourse ...

The Messianic King Will Bring The Kingdom (Matthew 24:1-25:46)

Though His teaching is ominous and spine-stiffening, Christ's made sure all of His disciples understood the clear answer to one of the most important questions in reality to biblical prophecy:

What Are The Signs Of The King's Arrival? (Matthew 24:4-35)

So far in our study we have covered six of those sovereign signs which will occur during the seven year tribulation, as denoted by the prophet Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27) and developed further by John, the last prophet of the New Testament, in his revelatory words about the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments:

- False Christs (Matthew 24:4-5)
- World-wide Warfare (Matthew 24:6-7a)
- Famine (Matthew 24:7a)

- Massive Earthquakes (Matthew 24:7b-8)
- Persecution (Matthew 24:8-13)
- The Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:9-24)

This last sign, which consists of the Anti-Christ desecrating the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem in the middle of the Tribulation, ushers in last three and half year period of the tribulation. During this time, great false teaching and crazed persecution against Jews and Christians will erupt worldwide as the Beast will attempt to get the whole world to worship him as God. His evil, blood-thirsty reign of terror will culminate in the final sign:

Cosmic Change (Matthew 24:26-35). Satan, the author of all false religion, the power behind the throne of the Ant-Christ, the ancient opponent of God, will pull out all the stops in the end of days to get saints to buy into false teaching so that his representatives can turn them into the authorities so they can be brought up on capital charges and then eliminated. Christ expands on this motif presented in verses 5, 11, 23 with these words:

²⁶ So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, *or*, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe *them*.

In Greek, there are four types of conditional clauses, with the first being certain and every other type beyond this less certain. Here Jesus employs what scholars call a third class condition, denoted by the “if” conjunction (*ἐάν*) wedded to an aorist (past tense) subjunctive, “to tell” (*εἰπωσιν*). Grammatically, this construction is hypothetical, meaning it may or may not occur, but if it does, then what follows is how Christ wants you to respond. Hence, in light of all of the demonic, angelic, and divine activity in the tribulation, when it gets toward the end and seemingly nice, caring, religious people say that Christ has finally returned and they know where He is, do not even believe them for one second, no matter where they say He has touched down. Interestingly enough, the command contains a negative particle (*μὴ*) wedded to an aorist subjunctive, to believe (*πιστεύσητε*) and this particular grammatical combination forbids an action not yet begun. Isn’t this just like Jesus, the Good Shepherd (John 10), to warn His sheep of activity which might be dangerous to them? Indeed.

Ostensibly, don’t think anything is different today in this age of grace. Speaking to the Corinthians about false teachers who had infiltrated their church, Paul warned:

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds (2 Corinthians 11).

Even today, we must not drop our guard where biblical truth is concerned. All of this makes you pose some serious, soul-searching questions: “Is someone speaking false theology into my life, causing me to question key articles of the faith?” “Am I reading a book which is resulting in me shifting my thinking away from the faith my parents gave me?” “Am I embracing part of God’s teaching I find palatable and acceptable and shunning and shelving doctrinal concepts which

make me uncomfortable and uneasy?” Remember, you only have to be a few degrees off with a given compass reading to be really lost if you travel down that line for one hundred miles. The Devil is devious, subtle, and crafty. Might you be devoted to studying, knowing, and standing by God’s truth no matter what, especially as we descend into greater theological, spiritual darkness.

For those future saints at the end of the tribulation who might be tempted to follow the wrong person to the supposedly secret location of Jesus, Jesus, adds this powerful proverbial saying:

²⁷ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The conjunction “for” (γὰρ) grammatically gives us the reason why a Christian shouldn’t follow these crafty spiritual charlatans:

²⁷ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Jesus says [according to a Martyr paraphrase]: “Think about lightning for a moment. When it flashes in a given region, everyone sees the celestial event. Nobody can miss it if they are outside. This is exactly how it will be when I return at my second coming. It will be public, highly visible, sudden, and highly luminous.” Interestingly enough, the word He chose for “coming” is *parousia* (παρουσία). Etymologically, this ancient Greek word originally spoke of the arrival of a king or an emperor to a province or people.¹ No wonder Jesus chose this term. Since it could

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature*: 780-781. **παρουσία, ας, ή** (πάρειμι; Trag., Thu.).

① the state of being present at a place, **presence** (Aeschyl. et al.; Herm. Wr. 1, 22; OGI 640, 7, SIG 730, 14; Did.; cp. Hippol., Ref. 7, 32, 8 ‘existence’) I Cor 16:17; Phil 2:12 (opp. ἀπουσία). ή π. τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενής *his bodily presence is weak* i.e. when he is present in person, he appears to be weak 2 Cor 10:10.—Of God (Jos., Ant. 3, 80; 203; 9, 55) τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ δειγμάτα *proofs of his presence* Dg 7:9 (cp. Diod S 3, 66, 3 σημεῖα τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ θεοῦ; 4, 24, 1).

② arrival as the first stage in presence, **coming, advent** (Soph., El. 1104; Eur., Alc. 209; Thu. 1, 128, 5. Elsewh. mostly in later wr.: Polyb. 22, 10, 14; Demetr.: 722 Fgm. 11, 18 Jac.; Diod S 15, 32, 2; 19, 64, 6; Dionys. Hal. 1, 45, 4; ins, pap; Jdth 10:18; 2 Macc 8:12; 15:21; 3 Macc 3:17; TestAbr A 2 p. 78, 26 [Stone p. 4]; Jos., Bell. 4, 345, Vi. 90; Tat. 39, 3).

ⓐ of human beings, in the usual sense 2 Cor 7:6f. ή ἐμῆ π. πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς *my coming to you again, my return to you* Phil 1:26.—RFunk, JKnox Festschr. ’67, 249–68.

ⓑ in a special technical sense (diff. JWalvoord, BiblSacr 101, ’44, 283–89 on παρ., ἀποκάλυψις, ἐπιφάνεια) of Christ (and the Antichrist). The use of π. as a t.t. has developed in two directions. On the one hand the word served as a sacred expr. for the coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power, or whose presence is celebrated in the cult (Diod S 3, 65, 1 ή τοῦ θεοῦ π. of Dionysus upon earth; 4, 3, 3; Ael. Aristid. 48, 30; 31 K.=24 p. 473 D.; Porphyry., Philos. Ex Orac. Haur. II p. 148 Wolff; Iambl., Myst. 2, 8; 3, 11; 5, 21; Jos., Ant. 3, 80; 203; 9, 55; report of a healing fr. Epidaurus: SIG 1169, 34).—On the other hand, π. became the official term for a visit of a person of high rank, esp. of kings and emperors visiting a province (Polyb. 18, 48, 4; CIG 4896, 8f; SIG 495, 85f; 741, 21; 30; UPZ 42, 18 [162 B.C.]; PTebt 48, 14; 116, 57 [both II B.C.]; O. Wilck II, 1372; 1481. For the verb in this sense s. BGU XIII, 2211, 5.—O. Wilck I 274ff; Dssm., LO 314ff [LAE 372ff]; MDibelius, Hdb. exc. after the expl. of 1 Th 2:20). These two technical expressions can approach each other closely in mng., can shade off into one another, or

culturally apply to a Roman emperor, it could and would certainly find its perfect and fullest meaning in His return to rule and reign as the great Davidic King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Isaiah 9:1ff; Revelation 19).

Jesus's remark that His coming is from the east is probably instructive, too. The Shekinah glory of God left the Temple by heading due east prior to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (Ezekiel 10:19)², and Jesus ascended from the east on the Mount of Olives after His resurrection (Acts 1:9ff); therefore, theologically it is only appropriate for Him to return from the same direction of His departure(s). And, this is the direction of His return, as we shall see in just a moment, but first let's finish our analysis of the text to this point.

After Christ underscored the absolute magnificent nature of His coming, He added this seemingly cryptic saying:

²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

What does this mean? Good question. I agree with the synopsis of Michael Wilkins when he writes:

even coincide (Ins. von Tegea: BCH 25, 1901 p. 275 ἔτους ξθ' ἀπὸ τῆς θεοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ τὸ πρῶτον ἐς τὴν Ελλάδα παρουσίας).—Herm. Wr. 1, 26 uses π. of the advent of the pilgrim in the eighth sphere.

α. of Christ, and nearly always of his Messianic Advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age: Mt 24:3 (PSchoonheim, Een semasiolog. onderzoek van π. '53); 1 Cor 1:8 v.l.; 15:23; 2 Th 2:8 (on the expr. ἐπιφάνεια παρουσίας s. FPFister, Pauly-W. Suppl. IV '24, 322); 2 Pt 3:4; 1J 2:28; Dg 7:6; Hs 5, 5, 3. ἡ π. τοῦ υἱοῦ τ. ἀνθρώπου Mt 24:27, 37, 39 (cp. the suggestion of retribution SIG 741, 21–23; 31f). ἡ π. τοῦ κυρίου 1 Th 4:15; Js 5:7f. ἡ π. τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ 1 Th 3:13; cp. 2:19. ἡ π. τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ 5:23; 2 Th 2:1 (on the use in 1 and 2 Th s. RGundry, NTS 33, '87, 161–78); 2 Pt 1:16 (δύναμις w. παρουσία as Jos., Ant. 9, 55; cp. Ael. Aristid. 48, 30 K. [both passages also b above]).—This explains the expr. ἡ π. τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας *the coming of the Day of God* 2 Pt 3:12.—

β. in our lit. prob. only in a few late pass. of Jesus' advent in the Incarnation (so TestLevi 8:15; TestJud 22:2; Just., A I, 52, 3, D. 14, 8; 40, 4; I18, 2 ἐν τῇ πάλιν παρουσίᾳ; Ps.-Clem., Hom. 2, 52; 8, 5; Orig., C. Cels. 6, 68, 5; Hippol., Ref. 9, 30, 5) τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ σωτῆρος, κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὸ πάθος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν IPhld 9:2; PtK 4 p. 15, 33. But 2 Pt 1:16 (s. α above) can hardly be classed here.

γ. Sense α gave rise to an opposing use of π. to designate the coming of the Antichrist (s. ἄνομος 4; Iren. 3, 7, 2 [Harv. II 26f]; Orig., C. Cels. 6, 45, 5) in the last times οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ π. κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ *whose coming is in keeping with / in line with Satan's power* 2 Th 2:9. KThraede, Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik '70, 95–106.—New Docs 4, 167f. DELG s.v. εἰμί. M-M. EDNT. TW. Spicq. Sv.

² Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988): 1944. Transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “the one who dwells” or “that which dwells.” The term enters Christian theology from its use in the Targums and rabbinic literature to describe the immanent presence in the world of the transcendent Deity. Although the word is not itself used in either Testament, it clearly originates in OT passages which describe God as *dwelling* among a people or in a particular place (Gn 9:27; Ex 25:8; 29:45, 46; Nm 5:3; 1 Kgs 6:13; Ps 68:16, 18; 74:2; Is 8:18; Ez 43:7–9; Jl 3:17, 21; Zec 2:10, 11); God, whose dwelling is in heaven, also dwells on earth. In its narrower uses the term is applied to the “*shekinah* glory,” the visible pillar of fire and smoke that dwelled in the midst of Israel at Sinai (Ex 19:16–18), in the wilderness (40:34–38), and in the temple (1 Kgs 6:13; 8:10–13; 2 Chr 6:1, 2).

The rabbinic sources used the term more widely than with specific reference to this OT phenomenon alone. In the Targums “*shekinah*,” “glory of God,” and “word of God” are used synonymously. *Shekinah* became a comprehensive term for any form of the presence of God; it could be used as a designation for God or as a circumlocution for references to the face or hand of God. Only in the later rabbinic sources does the *Shekinah* become a separate entity created by God as an intermediary between God and man.

It may indicate the sphere of operation from which people can see high circling vultures converging on the carcass of a dead animal, so will be the visibility of the return of the Son of Man when he comes to bring judgment on the deadness of this corrupt world.³

Once again, just as you can't miss where the vultures are circling a dead animal, you won't miss the aerial appearance of Jesus to deal with sin and sinners.

Just what this coming of Jesus will be like is described by him in the ensuing verses:

²⁹ But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Five cosmic events are detailed here:

- One, the darkening of the sun (v. 29).
- Two, the darkening of the moon (v. 29).
- Three, stars falling from their ancient cosmic positions (v. 29).
- Four, heavenly powers shaken (v. 29).
- Five, the glorious appearance of the Messiah (v. 30).

Bear in mind, as Jesus says, this all transpires very rapidly after the tribulation, or during its closing days (v. 29). "But immediately" is really reversed in the Greek text with the adverb, "immediately" (Εὐθέως) coming first in the sentence for eye and ear grabbing emphasis. No sooner will wicked mankind get to the end of the twenty-one divine judgments, as revealed in Revelation, than Jesus, the Creator of the complexity of the cosmos (Colossians 1:16-17), begins to cause it to wind down and act in a most peculiar and disheartening fashion. Stars wouldn't be available anymore for nighttime illumination, causing the world to be plunged into the chaos of absolute cosmic darkness. All of this is most interesting and instructive, isn't it? Evil, Christ-rejecting mankind, who loved spiritual/religious/political/economic darkness more than light, is enshrouded in inescapable literal darkness (John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:46; Ephesians 5:8, 11; Colossians 1:13). Can you say ironic, poetic justice?

As a sidelight, I would add the dimming of the stars is also theologically instructive and highly ironic as well. Satan, prior to his fall was called the Day Star (Isaiah 14:12), thereby being divinely equated with Venus which rises before dawn to usher in a new day. His prideful problem was he wanted to rise above all the stars, viz., angels and be God. Interesting. He who wanted to be brilliant like God, sees his ultimate demise here as God turns off astral luminaries which speak of him. Jude also reminds us that false teachers are denoted as "wandering stars," or meteors which appear so brilliant for a moment but then plunge into absolute eternal darkness

³ Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004): 782.

(Jude 13). Once more, the loss of physical stars points to the darkness awaiting all those who've bought into the unenlightened and devilish teaching of the Anti-Christ and the plethora of false teachers. Historically, stars were also intrinsically tied to false worship, false gods, and astrology, all things which God found reprehensible and repugnant (Deuteronomy 4:19). Israel, however, didn't listen to God (2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; Jeremiah 10:2; 19:13). God now judges, once and for all, the historical object of false worship: stars and the astrological belief system. His words in Isaiah 47, at this time, will be completely fulfilled:

¹³ You are wearied with your many counsels; Let now the astrologers, those who prophesy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you. ¹⁴ Behold, they have become like stubble, fire burns them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame; there will be no coal to warm by nor a fire to sit before! ¹⁵ So have those become to you with whom you have labored, who have trafficked with you from your youth; each has wandered in his own way; there is none to save you (Isaiah 47).

The failure of the stars as nighttime luminaries will be but a taste of the eternal divine judgment against those who would adhere to and passionately embrace the study of stars for supposed divine guidance, while at the same time rejecting the true divine One.

The shaking of the heavenly powers, which was prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 13:6ff), is a future passive verb (σαλευθήσονται) denoting an outside power, God, will act upon them causing them to function in an erratic, unpredictable fashion. Magnetic, solar, gravitational powers, for instance, will not function properly anymore causing complete chaos on earth and in the heavens, as planets will probably spin out of their orbits, satellites will not stay aloft to give man guidance and information down on earth, and so on and so forth. What used to be energy constants man depended on and prided himself in understanding from a scientific perspective will, at the end of time, go completely haywire.

In the mix of all of this darkness, dismay, disruption and chaos Jesus arrives in a glorious, brilliant fashion:

³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory (Matthew 24).

What is "the sign of the Son of Man?" First of all, who is the Son of Man? This is a phrase from Daniel 7, verse 13, a verse which relates this person to the Messiah. Second, while the sign could be a luminous divine banner of some sorts, emblazoned with Christ's messianic/Davidic insignia (Isaiah 11:10-12; 18:3), it is contextually more probable it is simply a reference to Christ, who is the absolute focus of the passage before us. Pragmatically, then, when the world is divinely plunged into complete darkness, when the forces of the world unite to attack Israel and wipe them forever off the face of earth, thereby coming up with the final solution to the Jewish "problem" (Daniel 11:44; Revelation 16:12; Ezekiel 39) ... this is when Jesus appears in brilliant glory in the heavens descending to earth as the ultimate Davidic warrior ready to destroy His ancient enemies, protect His chosen people, and erect His long-awaited Davidic empire. Clouds, which typically engulf Him to shield man from His blinding presence (Exodus 19:9; 24:16; 33:4-15;

Numbers 10:34; I Kings 8:10), will billow and glow around Him as He descends into our dimension. Yes, the same type of massive white cumulus clouds which received Him into glory at His ascension will, in fact, be present to usher Him back to fulfill His prophesied role as the Davidic King of Kings (Jeremiah 23:1-9; 30; 31; 33; Ezekiel 34:1-10; Daniel 2:24-45). Talk about a sign! Who can miss seeing this event of all events!

All of this, of course, leads to two questions.

How will Israel respond? They will mourn and claim Jesus as Savior, as prophesied in Zechariah 12:13ff. Why do I focus on Israel here? Because God does. When Jesus says “all the tribes of the earth mourn” He isn’t speaking of all of mankind. Had He meant this He would have used the Greek word *ethne*, as Matthew does in 24:9; 28:19. Jesus uses the Greek *phylai* (φυλαι) which can mean Gentile or Jewish tribes; however, since the only other use of this word in Matthew references Jews (Matthew 19:28), I think it is quite clear Jesus speaks of Israel here. When many of them have fled to Petra and ancient Bozrah for protection from the wrath of the Anti-Christ among the deep ravines and innumerable, similar-looking canyons (Isaiah 34:6), the Messiah will descend to this eastern position first, they will be mourn unto repentance and be saved, and then He will fight His way up the Jordan rift valley, taking on the Devil’s armies in the Valley of Armageddon (Joel 3:1-21 ; Revelation 16:13-21), and consummating the final battle on the Mount of Olives, whereby He will be the ultimate victor over sin and Satan (Zechariah 13-14).

In light of this, I have to stop and ask you: Have you mourned over your sin unto repentance and salvation yet? I pray that you will because Jesus is coming back to judge sin and erect His kingdom and you will either be with Him or barred from His glorious presence. What will it be? Will you embrace the Savior by faith, or will you shun Him, opting to hold onto your vain, vacuous arguments you employ to steer clear of saving faith? We see the importance of this eternal decision when we read what happens next after Christ vanquishes sin and sinners:

³¹ And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

How utterly interesting. When God revealed Himself to Israel at Mount Sinai, a loud trumpet grabbed their attention after a whole lot of thunder, lightning, and thick billowing clouds (Exodus 19:16). The divine trumpet sound simply served to gather Israel around God’s holy mount so they would be prepared to receive His holy law (Exodus 20). At the end of the tribulation we encounter what is possibly the same trumpet now used to call all Christians together who survived the tribulation to stand before the Lord in Jerusalem, the headquarters of His new empire. Why are they drawn here out of hiding? So they can be rewarded for their service, which is a concept He will develop in Matthew 25, and so they can also be prepared to rule and reign along with Him (Luke 19:13ff, the Parable of the Minas).

Again, I must ask you, “Will you be with Christ in the kingdom?” “Will you rule and reign with Him?” This calling of tribulational saints out of hiding merely demonstrates that the last shall be first and the first shall be last, and that the righteous will be rewarded for their allegiance to Jesus as the Savior and Lord.

Jesus closed this passage of eschatological consummation with one of His intriguing and instructive stories:

³² "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁴ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

We can't possibly miss the import, can we? The leafing out of a fig tree in Israel in the spring in Israel merely denoted that summer was imminent. Likewise, that generation which sees all the judgments He has just taught about in this chapter will know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the Davidic kingdom's arrival is about to break forth upon the earth as prophesied. Don't you know these words will give the saints in that day deep, abiding hope as they wait for His arrival during the Lord's pitched and perfect battle to depose sin and Satan and all those who are against Him. Isn't that just like Him? In the middle of wrath He always remembers mercy ... and hope.

And just in case the faith of some in that day might waver in the wicked wind, Jesus tacks on this saying:

³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Translated into our vernacular: You can bank on my words being fulfilled to you to the letter, so don't worry. Have hope.

This kind of teaching is why I love Him. This clarity about what is going to happen, coupled with the nurturing tone of a beloved father for a son is one of the reasons I can't wait for His arrival. That's, also, why I love to sing:

Marvelous message we bring,
 Glorious carol we sing,
 Wonderful words of the King:
 Jesus is coming again!
 Coming again, coming again;
 Maybe morning, maybe noon,
 Maybe evening and maybe soon!
 Coming again, coming again;
 O what a wonderful day it will be—Jesus is coming again!