



Time to Reflect

- When we think about the Second Coming of Jesus, how do we feel? What speaks to us most profoundly about the Second Coming of Jesus?
- Read 2nd Timothy 4:3-5. What are some of the spiritual deceptions that exist in today's world?

Since Tuesday 5th September we have been looking at the gospel of Mark and we have undertaken twenty-seven study sessions. We also focused on the final three chapters of Mark during Holy Week. There has been much for us to engage with and reflect upon. This week our journey concludes as our attention is drawn to the Second Coming of Jesus.

“Examination of the Scriptures reveals that the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the greatest themes of the Bible. There is no other topic more persistent in the 260 chapters of the New Testament in which more than three hundred references are made to the Second Coming of the Saviour.”

(Victor Maxwell, *The Authentic Servant In Mark's Gospel*, p130)

Specifics

- Throughout history significant numbers of books have been written about the Second Coming of Jesus. A specific area of theology that focuses on the last things is called eschatology. There are so many questions that can be asked and issues to explore.
- Many people are, primarily, focused on when the Second Coming of Jesus will occur. Victor Maxwell offers a very helpful teaching. **“I appreciated hearing Dr Warren Wiersbe say that he had ‘long since resigned from the planning committee of the Lord’s return and was now a member of the welcoming committee.’¹”**
- The final few verses in our passage are indeed a call to be ready (v33-37). We are consistently instructed to be on our guard (v33), be alert (v33), and keep watch (v35, v37).
- Did you ever notice that the Nicene Creed says **“...he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead..?”**
- In our passage Jesus spoke about signs of the end times and his words highlight the importance of attentiveness. There is to be no idling, no distraction, just clear focus.
- We need to be ready for Christ’s return and this means that we need to listen to his teachings, apply them to our lives, and commit ourselves to him.
- When we focus on this passage, which is often referred to as the Olivet Discourse, we can discern three key reasons to explain why Jesus offered this teaching.
 - a) To offer eternal hope and comfort to believers. See Revelation 21:1-5.
 - b) To call believers to **“...holy living, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”²**

¹ Victor Maxwell, *The Authentic Servant in Mark's Gospel* (Belfast: Ambassador Productions, 1996), p130.

² Ibid, p131.

c) To challenge believers to be active in offering dedicated service to God.

- Our passage is a record of the greatest exposition that Jesus gave outside of what we refer to as the Sermon on the Mount. There is much contained within these verses.

1. Be Sure Of Sudden Destruction (v1-4)

- The passage begins by indicating that Jesus was leaving the temple along with his disciples. One of them expressed amazement at the grandeur of the building (v1).
- The temple was an impressive structure, made out of large white stones. Its sanctuary is said to have been over one hundred feet high.
- Jesus responded to this by making an incredible announcement (v2). This prediction was fulfilled in 70AD when the Roman armies, under a general called Titus, destroyed Jerusalem.
- Even in this opening declaration, Jesus indicated that the things of earth are temporary. Victor Maxwell writes, “...we are to keep our eyes on the things which are not seen, for the things we see are temporal, but the things we do not see are eternal.³”

2. Beware Of Spiritual Deception (v5-6)

- There is a clear warning relating to the emergence of false prophets and people who claim to be Jesus. We can, perhaps, recall examples from recent history where this has occurred.
- Maxwell reflects, “Under the cloak of evangelicalism many arise with a false Christ in the gospel of the new prosperity of health and wealth. Jesus said, ‘Take heed lest any man deceive you.’⁴”
- This is why it is so important to be a biblical people and that we know the true teaching of Scripture.

3. Behold Coming Developments (v7-28)

- The largest part of the passage records a series of events and developments that were yet to come. These have been set in God’s calendar and reach their fulfilment in God’s time.
- National developments are mentioned (e.g. wars) and physical events are referenced (e.g. earthquakes and famines). In (v6-10) there are seven different ‘coming developments’ listed and these are signs of the end times.
- The persecution of believers is explicitly named (v9) and worldwide evangelism is highlighted (v10).
- Maxwell also draws our attention to what he calls ‘developments in the church.’ He observes, “The church will be marked with a departure from the truth – the great apostasy, and the doctrine of demons which will be acceptable to many. (1 Tim. 3:1; 2 Tim. 4:3) The love of many saints will diminish, and faith will be greatly tried.⁵”

4. Believe In Sure Deliverance (v29-32)

- The passage makes very clear that the end times will be challenging (v20). But there is the assurance of deliverance for God’s people.
- Maxwell concludes, “The Bible teaches us that first Christ will come for the saints in the great day of the rapture of the Church when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.⁶”
- The reality that Jesus is coming again is central to the Christian faith (v30) and it offers eternal hope to believers. This brings us right back to where this study started, with the challenge to be ready.

³ Maxwell, The Authentic Servant, p133.

⁴ Ibid, p133.

⁵ Ibid, p134.

⁶ Ibid, p134.