

The Son of Man Will Come with Great Power and Glory

SUNDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2021 GOSPEL READING: Mark 13:24-32

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 32 "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 12:1-31 At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Meditation: Do you recognize the signs of God's kingdom - signs that point to his power and action in our lives and in the world around us? The Lord Jesus came to bring us the kingdom of God and to set us free from bondage to sin, death, and destruction and from the powers of the evil one who tempts us through lies and deception.

The Lord is preparing us for his return

Jesus told his first disciples that it was for their benefit that he return to his Father in heaven in order for the Holy Spirit to come (John 16:7) and fill the earth with the fire of God's love, truth, and glory. The Lord Jesus in every age fills his people with the power of the Holy Spirit so that each one of us can hear his voice, understand his truth, and sow the seeds of his word - the good news of the Gospel - wherever he sends us. The Lord Jesus is preparing his people for his return - for the day of "tribulation" and "shaking" when he will appear "coming in clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:25-26).

What did Jesus mean when he spoke about a time of tribulation, shaking, and the "Son of man coming with great power and glory"? The title Jesus most frequently used to describe his mission was the "Son of Man" (Mark 13:26). This title is a direct reference to the prophetic vision in the Book of Daniel, chapter 7:

13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, **with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And **to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him**; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The image of a "Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven" is taken from the vision of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:13-14). Daniel's vision is a royal investiture of a human king before God's throne. This king, whose authority comes from God, is given power to rule over "all peoples, nations, and languages" (Daniel 7:14). The kingdom which he comes to establish cannot be broken or destroyed because it is built on the foundation of God's justice, truth, and holiness.

The day of the Lord's return will be unlike any other moment in time, history, and destiny for the human race and our place in God's creation. Then the "stars of heaven will fall and all will be shaken" before the

presence of the Lord when he comes. Then the peoples of the earth and their rulers will know who is the true King and Ruler over all.

Jesus' first coming was a rescue mission - to free the human race from slavery to sin and Satan - the father of lies. His second coming will be the final completion of his mission when he will "make all things new" - a new heavens and a new earth - after he has put down the last enemy which is death and restores our lowly bodies to immortality when death will be no more (Daniel 12:2-3).

The sign of the budding fig tree

What lesson does the Lord Jesus want us to learn from the parable of the budding fig tree? The fig tree was a common and important source of food for the Jews. It bore fruit twice a year, in the autumn and in the early spring. The prophet Joel mentions its fruit-bearing as a sign of favour from the Lord (Joel 2:22). The Talmud (a Jewish commentary and instruction on the Torah or Five Books of Moses) said that the first fruit came the day after Passover. The Jews believed that when the Messiah came he would usher in the kingdom of God at Passover time.

This parable foretells the joy of God's kingdom - the joy of new life and the promise of a new age of peace and blessing. The signs of spring are evident for all who can see. Just so are the signs of God's kingdom. The "budding" of God's kingdom begins first in the hearts of those who are receptive to God's word. Those who trust in God's word will bear the fruits of his kingdom. And what are the fruits of that kingdom? "The kingdom of God ..is *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Romans 14:17).

The first-fruits of the kingdom in our present lives

The first coming of the Lord Jesus is inseparably linked with his second coming at the end of this present age. We do not know the day or hour when the Lord will return again in glory. But now in this present age we can experience the first-fruits of the kingdom of God - the abundant new life in the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, and the fruits of the Spirit - love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) and so many other qualities which the Spirit works within us - thus enabling us to love and serve others with tender-hearted mercy, patience, and goodness. Do you know and experience in your life the first-fruits of the kingdom of God?

OPENING PRAYER Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may radiate the joy of your kingdom and the fire of your love to all I meet and serve. Direct my life to the glory of your name and to the coming of your kingdom. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER:- Loving God, at this time of crisis when so many are suffering, we pray for our nation and our world. Give our leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people hope. Lead us through these difficult days to the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**