

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG62 – The Second Coming Of Christ

One question on the mind of believers today is, if these are the last days, will we experience and live through the tribulation? And as disciples, as the disciples asked Yeshua, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" These are good questions, and important questions for our generation. Let's look at several Scriptures and simply see what they are plainly trying to tell us.

First of all, we are going to go to Matthew, the twenty-fourth chapter, and we will begin at verses 1-3. "Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.' As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'"

So, this event is very clear, and the disciples are asking three questions of the Lord. The Lord had talked about the tearing down of the Temple, and so they say, "When will these things happen?" Also they ask Him, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" So I want to go through then the rest of these verses here in Matthew 24, and just very simply see what it is saying and what it is pointing to. We need to have a clarity with it; and I think they did not ask the question about the tribulation, but in a sense, they said, "What will be the sign of Your coming in the end of the age?" Whether they knew or understood that tribulation would come or not, when they asked this question, certainly Yeshua, as He is teaching them, explains the reality of the event of tribulation.

We will start in Matthew 24, verses 6-9. "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."

Here we get the first hint from the Lord addressing it, that if the question is, "Will we experience the tribulation?", the answer according to Christ is, "Yes, they will deliver you into tribulation. They will kill you, and you will be hated for My name." So that should be very clear to us.

Going on at verses 10-14, it says, "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." In other words, we must endure to the end. So if you are saying, "Well, there is a tribulation. Now my next question is, are we pulled out of the tribulation through the process of a rapture?" I would say He is saying that we must endure to the end of these things, so the answer would seemingly be no. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Again, if the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all nations and then the end comes, that means the saints are here in the earth preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom right up until the end.

I want to jump off of Matthew here and go to Revelation, and emphasize this point about the tribulation, because I know it is not the only question that was asked; but while He is answering it, I want to really thoroughly look at this answer to the question, will we, as saints, if we are here in the earth, if we haven't passed away, will we go through and experience what He is talking about as tribulation? Revelation 6:9-11, "When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also."

So, in other words, if we go that far into the Book of Revelation, we see, with all that is transpiring, that there are more saints, more brethren, that were to be experiencing persecution and martyrdom. Now I am going to Revelation 7, verses 9-17. "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.' Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?' And I said to him, 'My Lord, You know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.'"

Again, we see at this place in Revelation that there are many martyrs that come out of the process of the great tribulation. That means they had to have been in and gone through the great tribulation up to the point that they were martyred. So once again, I think just in very simple terminology, without trying to put a spin on it or tie it to this thought or that thought, it is very clear that in the great tribulation, there are those who will be martyred. That means they will be here in the earth at the time of that great tribulation.

I'm jumping back to Matthew 24 now, and at verses 15-19 it says, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"

Now He is addressing specifically their first question, about "When will these events happen surrounding the Temple?" And He is forewarning them, some of the signs that will accompany the destruction of the Temple; and He is saying there will be signs, and what you need to do is get out of town, because it is going to be a devastating situation. As we know, much of the Jewish population was destroyed at that

time in the assault against Jerusalem and in the destruction of the Temple. So, Christ was giving them some signs, telling them that they would see things happening, and that they should at that time leave. "Don't even give enough time to go empty your belongings from your house, just run." So we see this.

He goes on in verse 20 to say, "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath." He goes on in verses 21-22 to say, "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." Once again, He is saying that the elect will be in the earth at the time of this great tribulation; and it is so bad that unless He cuts the time short – God makes some preemptive strike during the time of the great tribulation in order to save the elect, because the elect are here in the earth and they need saving. So we see that those who are considered the elect will be here, and God will save them from utter destruction at the time of the great tribulation.

Verses 23-31, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is.'" Now see, He is jumping out of this idea of the tribulation time, and He is going to answer this question about what are the signs of Your coming; because now He is talking about His appearing or His coming. "Therefore, if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. 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. For just as the lightening comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. But immediately after the tribulation of those days" – again, positioning His coming – "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. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear." Remember what the disciples asked, what is the sign of Your coming? So now He is directly addressing that. "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."

In other words, the sign of the coming of the Son, the return of Christ, the second coming, is the second coming. That is the easiest way to explain it. He goes, "There is no missing it. You will see Me coming in the clouds. Don't worry about people saying, 'I am in the inner chamber,' or 'I am out in the wilderness,' or, 'Go here, go there.'" None of that. Nobody is going to miss the second coming of Christ. Everyone will see. He does position it as being after the tribulation of those days; but He is saying, "What is the sign of My coming? It is My appearing in the sky, and every tribe of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." "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."

So this is part of what happens as the sign, or in the time, of His coming. We see the angels gathering the saints, the elect, from the four winds of the sky. So I'll jump back to that; but I want to keep going with the story here, as He is telling it, by jumping down to Mark 13, verses 24-29. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. Now learn the parable."

Again, He reconfirms in Mark exactly the sign of His coming, and how His coming transpires. It is obvious, everyone sees it, and along with it, there is this gathering that takes place. But He does go on with the story: "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door." So what things is He talking about? when you see what things happening? He is talking about seeing things happening, because there is really no sign. They were asking, "What is the sign of Your coming?" And He said, "The sign of My coming is My coming. It's just, it's there. I am in the sky and you will see it. However, there is a prelude to it that you should be able to recognize." And so that is what He is alluding to, or talking about, that you will see. It is just like seeing the fig tree – when you see the branches are becoming tender and the leaves are coming out, there are certain signs. It hasn't started fruiting yet; it is not what you are waiting for; you are waiting for the fruit and that hasn't happened yet; but you know that it is very close, and that is what you need to be concerned about. You need to know where you are in the timing; and even though you cannot know the day or the hour, you can know the season. You can know that it is near, right at the door.

He goes on then with a parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13, that again talks about some of what we see. Starting at verses 24-30 of Matthew 13: "Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" And he said to them, "An enemy has done this!" The slaves said to him, "Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

We see what He is talking about here, and we know that when He does talk about it, that the wheat are the sons of the Kingdom. The earth is where they are planted, they live in the earth and on the earth; and the tares are the sons of the wicked one. And He is waiting for the wheat to become mature. So we could liken this to the end time, where they are saying, "Do we go bundle up the tares?" And He is saying, "No, My focus is not on the tares." I think we need to see that about the tribulation, about the Book of Revelation – God's focus is not on the negative things. He is not looking at what the devil is doing. He is not looking at what the antichrist is doing. He is watching very carefully over the planting of His wheat, His sons that are in the field, which is the earth; and He doesn't want anything to happen that destroys them in their coming to birth, their coming into full maturity. That is what He was saying in the parable of the fig tree. He was saying, "Look, you will know when these things are close to transpiring. You will know when the time of the coming is, not because of the sign of My coming, but because of the signs that are prelude to it, which is the maturing of this great crop."

So we see that he doesn't let the slaves go in and pull up the tares, but instead he says, "Wait until the harvest, the time of harvest has to come." Well, what triggers the time of harvest? It is not a day on the calendar; it is when the farmer goes into the field and he sees that the crop is now ripe. It is completed. It is finished growing and maturing. That is what brings about the time of the harvest. So He is saying, "There is not a moment in time when I can tell you, 'Hey, this is when My return is. This is the time of My coming, or the sign of My coming.' I can give you signs of what I am waiting for and looking for, but

there is not a moment.” That is one reason you can't know the day or the hour, because it is not necessarily set that way. What God is burdened about, what He is doing, is He is waiting for this crop to come forth; and when it does, and when He sees the maturity of His sons in the earth, then that triggers these events, that triggers the event of His coming.

In Revelation 14:14-16, it says, "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.' Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped."

The disciples had asked, “When will these things happen? What will be the sign?” And we know that no one can know the day or the hour. So Yeshua gives them this parable about the fig tree; He gives them the parable about the wheat and the tares; so that they know what He is looking for in order to trigger His return to the earth.

After Christ gives the parable of the wheat and the tares, which is the sign of these events being triggered by the maturity of the wheat, the plan of God is not triggered by the activity of satan, or tribulation, or the antichrist, or the beast. And I think we as believers a lot of times get caught up in all the things transpiring in the Book of Revelation; we get ourselves focused on the negative. We get ourselves focused on satan and the tribulation and the antichrist. See, those are the tares; that's the tares in the earth that are trying to destroy the coming forth of God's planting. God is not looking at that. He is not going to try to deal with them. He is waiting for the maturity, for the finish of the ripening of His planting; then His harvest will be triggered. And to prove that these stories that we are reading are about the end time, we have these verses in Revelation that directly tie this concept of the reaping to the harvest of the earth becoming ripe. So we know that this is what Christ was talking to His disciples about. Aren't these wonderful things – the preparation that He has given us to be able to walk with Him through these times, whatever it is that we face. And so He has given many answers.

Before the coming of the Lord, there are events which according to the Scriptures must take place. And many writers discuss this point of focus, and they look at the events of the tribulation; they look at the apostasy; they look at the son of destruction, exalting himself against God. And although these things are true, these end-time events are not what God's people should be focused upon. I believe we are to be watching and waiting the process of the maturing and the ripening of the seeds that Christ has planted in His field, the earth. He confirms this in Matthew 13:36-38. "Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' And He said, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one.'" It doesn't get any clearer, and it doesn't get any more simple. He is waiting for the harvest of the earth to ripen; and that is not dictated by satan or his plans. It is dictated by sons of God that had been planted in this earth coming to maturity.

There are Scriptures that confirm this. In Ephesians and Romans we see two great examples, and I'll read some of it just so we get the idea. In Ephesians the fourth chapter, starting at verses 11-14, it says, “He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be

children." See, we are waiting. What are we looking for? What are the signs in our generation? We are looking for these sons to come to maturity, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ, to no longer be as "children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." And also, let's not forget what He says here – there is a unity of the faith that is coming. There is a oneness of the Body of Christ that will happen, and that will be one of the signs that you see and know that the time of maturity is close.

Let's go to Romans 8. I'll start with verses 14-17: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." And he talks about the fact that the sufferings of this present time aren't worthy to be compared with what we will go through; but he also speaks about the fact that, in verses 19-21, "The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God," waiting for the mature harvest of the earth. "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

So we know these things will happen, and we know that they will happen in our day. And we recognize for us these are signs that we can watch, as the fig tree, knowing that it is part of the maturing process of the planting of the Lord in His great field of the world, so that He might bring forth His Kingdom in the earth. Before we are caught up to meet the Lord at His coming, we will see sons that He has planted on the earth grow and mature. We will see the building up of the Body of Christ into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We will see the unity of faith in the Body of Christ. We will see the creation being set free from futility. We will see the adoption of sons as they cry out, "Abba! Father!" These are included in the signs of His coming. These are the things that God is doing, and that He is focused on. They should also be our focus.

Now I want to go back finally to the one question that we jumped over back in Matthew 24. He was talking about, in Matthew 24, verses 30 and 31, "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. 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."

Let's look at the coming of the Lord and study the event that is known as the rapture, which is simply an event that is part of His coming. Is this gathering of the saints to the Lord some strange concept? I don't think so. I think it has a very important part and purpose in His coming. It is merely an event of His return to the earth. In Mark 13:26-27 it says, "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven." This gathering together is part of His coming as He is coming. We know the sign of His coming is Him returning, and in the sky all nations will see Him. But also we have this event along with it that the saints are gathered, that those who are with Him are gathered together to Him in the sky as He is coming. This is not some strange thing; there is a purpose and a need for it. When He is coming, He is returning to the earth. And yet His saints, the wheat of the field that has become ripe, are scattered through all the earth; according to the parable of the wheat and tares, it is planted through the earth. The field is the world; it is the whole earth, and the sons of God are planted through all of the earth. It is not limited to one people or one place or one denomination or one church. It is His sons that were planted and have matured in the

earth. So, we are scattered all over, and yet He is coming and returning to a specific place in the earth. We believe that to be Jerusalem, to the Temple Mount, where He will set up His throne and begin the reign of His kingdom on this earth. Therefore, we have to be gathered to Him. We are His, He has been waiting for us. We have been likewise waiting for Him. Therefore we are caught up to be with the Lord. And after we are caught up to be with Him, then we descend with Him from the heavens to return to the earth.

Remember 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." So the resurrected dead and the saints who remain in the earth at His coming will all be caught up together with Him, and they will return with Him to where He is coming on this planet Earth; and therefore we will all be together with Him. Isn't that beautiful?

Some final points. Will the Body of Christ experience the tribulation? I believe the Lord clearly teaches that we will. Are there signs His coming is near? Yes. The final maturing of His wheat, the sons of God, is a sign that His coming is near. Will the saints be caught up to be with the Lord at His coming? I believe the Scripture is clear that we are caught up to meet Christ in the air; and I also believe that as He descends to earth, we return here with Him to rule and reign, to be part of His great Kingdom on this earth. Lord bless us all that we be together in the days of His Kingdom. Amen.