

Signs, End Of The Age
And The Tribulation

Matthew 24:3-28

MEMORY VERSE

MATTHEW 24:13

"But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many photocopies of a picture of a suitcase as the number of children in your class, magazines or catalogues, crayons and paste or glue.

Two suitcases and two piles of things to pack in them with some added toys and small prizes (pencils, stickers, etc.).

Construction paper, crayons, glue and staples.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Get Ready!

Prepare enough photocopies of a picture of a suitcase as the number of children in your class. Have your students cut out pictures of things they would like to take on a trip from a magazine or catalogue. Instruct your students to paste the pictures to the suitcase.

When your students are done, have them cross out the things they have pasted that are not really essential for a trip or have them circle the things that are absolute necessities.

Explain to your students that **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return**. It's important to have our priorities straight and prepare for our trip with Him. Ask your students how they might prepare to be ready for Jesus' return (i.e. prayer, Bible study, helping others, sharing our faith, etc.)

LESSON TIME!

In our lesson today, Jesus has just left the temple and His disciples came to Him marveling about the great buildings. Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Jesus was declaring that the Temple would one day be destroyed. His disciples were amazed at the things Jesus was saying and it meant that they had more questions for Jesus. We are going to look at those questions and how Jesus answered in our lesson today. And we will learn that **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

MATTHEW 24:3

Now 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?"

Mark 13:3 tells us that it was Peter, James, John and Andrew who came to Jesus. They wanted to know when the Temple would be destroyed as Jesus had said. They also wanted to know what sign would tell them that Jesus was coming to rule on Earth.

There are a lot of things for us to understand when we look at what the Bible teaches about the end times. First of all, the disciples believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The Messiah was the one promised in the Old Testament who was to be the "anointed one" who has come from God to take away their sins. The Old Testament talks about how the Messiah would first come and suffer (as Jesus did on the cross in His first coming), then rule and reign over this earth (as Jesus will do in His second coming).

This is where it gets a little bit confusing. The disciples, as well as most of the Jewish people were looking for the Messiah that would come to set up his kingdom on this earth. They thought He would

be king and remove the Romans out of Israel. Then he would rule and reign the world from Jerusalem.

Well, it happened a little bit differently than they expected. Jesus is the king of kings and He did come and establish a kingdom. But His kingdom is spiritual, not of this world. He came to suffer and die for all of the sins of mankind. Then He returned to heaven for a time and will return soon. It is upon this return, His second coming, that He will establish His kingdom on this earth and rule and reign here. This is what Jesus is explaining to the disciples in our lesson today.

So we today are looking for Jesus' return, His second coming. When He returns He will come as a conquering king to put an end to wars, disease and all the bad things that come from fallen mankind. It will be a wonderful time for all of us who know Jesus as our savior. It is something very important for us to study.

Have you ever wondered when Jesus will return? Jesus has promised to come back one day and take us to be with Him forever. Let's look further at Jesus' answer and learn about the time when Jesus will return and what we should be doing to get ready. **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

MATTHEW 24:4-8

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows."

Jesus began to explain to His disciples what it would be like on Earth before He returned. He told them these things so that others would not come and mislead them. Jesus warned that others will come claiming to be the Savior, and that many people will be fooled by them. We need to listen to Jesus and read the Bible so that we are not deceived.

Many people believe that we live in the end times today. The reason for that is because there are so many things in the Bible that describe the end times that we see happening all around us. Like false messiahs who are trying to deceive people. There are many false teachers in the world today who claim to speak for God, but are really trying to lead people astray.

Get Set!

Bring two empty suitcases and two piles of things that a person might pack for a trip. Include in each pile things that are not essential like candy and toys.

Put the two open suitcases on one end of the room and the two piles on the other. Divide your class into two teams and have them race to see who can pack the fastest for their trip. You may deduct points for things packed that are not essential (i.e. the candy and toys, etc.).

Again, reinforce that **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return**. Explain to your class that the essentials for Jesus' return include our prayer life and Bible study.

Jesus also explained that there would be great wars involving nations and kingdoms. There would also be food shortages, called famines, widespread disease, called pestilence, and earthquakes. These things are the beginning of the trouble that will happen on Earth.

Jesus said that these things are just the beginning of sorrows. The time just before Jesus' return will be a very bad time. A lot of bad things will be happening in the world. It is so important that we place our trust completely in Jesus. **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

MATTHEW 24:9-14

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

"But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Here Jesus was talking about the great tribulation. This is the seven-year period when the Antichrist will come into power. The antichrist will be a world ruler who wants to be worshipped like God. He will fool a lot of people into following him. He will do a lot of things during these seven years, but at the end of these seven years, Jesus will come back to rule the Earth.

The great tribulation will be a very terrible time, but those that are Christians will not be on Earth to go through it. Jesus will take up the Christians to be with Him in heaven before the tribulation starts. This is called the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

People that become Christians during the tribulation will be hated and killed. False teachers will come and tell lies and people will not obey laws; but Jesus promises that those that endure to the end will be saved. The gospel will be preached to all people so that everyone has a chance to believe and have eternal life. Then Jesus will come and defeat the Antichrist and his followers.

MATTHEW 24:15

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)... "

Jesus is talking about the prophecy given in the book of Daniel. Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist will come into the rebuilt temple and say that he is God and demand that people worship him. This will happen right in the middle of the seven-year period.

MATTHEW 24:16-21

"...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

"Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

"And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

When the Antichrist declares himself God, the tribulation gets worse and the Jews will flee to a place where God will protect them. This will be a very scary time to live. Just the normal things of life like working or taking care of children will be very difficult. There has never been a time on the earth as bad as this time will be.

MATTHEW 24:22

"And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."

The Tribulation would be so terrible that everyone would die. But the days will be shortened for the sake of Jews and Gentiles that they might turn to God and be saved. Even as God is pouring out His wrath on this earth, he is merciful and kind to those who are His.

MATTHEW 24:23-26

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

"See, I have told you beforehand.

"Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it."

People will come trying to convince others that they are the Messiah. They will even do great signs and wonders, but Jesus warned not to believe them. Today people may do signs and wonders, but if they contradict the Bible we should not believe them. Jesus told us these things because **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

MATTHEW 24:27-28

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

"For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Jesus will come quickly when no one knows or expects Him, but when He comes everyone will know it is Him. The great tribulation will be a terrible, violent time when God pours out His wrath on those that deny Him. Those of us that are Christians can rest in the fact that we will not have to go through the tribulation because God has not appointed us to wrath. **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

We should live our lives as though the rapture could happen any minute. This means serving Jesus, telling others about Him, and obeying His word. For us we can look at this time, not with fear, but with a strong desire to tell more people about Jesus because if they don't know Him they might be the ones to go through the tribulation. Our hope is in Jesus and we know that we will be with Him when He returns for us. Let's make sure we are ready for His soon return. **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

Go!

Cut out suitcases from construction paper. You will need enough suitcase cutouts to give each student two. Next, have the children cut out of construction paper a shirt, a pair of shorts, and a pair of shoes. Paste these to one piece of the suitcase shaped construction paper and have the children write on them "prayer," "Bible study," "serving," "sharing." Staple the other piece of suitcase shaped construction paper over the first piece so that the suitcases open and close.

Explain once again that **Jesus wants us to be ready for His return.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to live lives ready for the return of Jesus. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them a chance to do so.