

# Righto.

We've been working our way through the Gospel of Matthew, for over a year now. And we've come to that part of Matthew, where Jesus is telling His disciples, about His second coming.

Before Easter, we began on this very same passage, and I realised then, that it was going to take 2 or 3 weeks to cover it properly ... And so today's our second Sunday on it.

And let's start with a little recap on what we learnt on the 6<sup>th</sup> April:

1. Firstly, history, is headed somewhere, and at the end of History, we meet Jesus Christ face to face. History is not meaningless. Nor is history eternal. It had a beginning. And it has an end, And a new history will begin, when Jesus returns.
2. Secondly, "Prophecy isn't intended to give us a detailed picture of the future... The purpose of prophecy, is to lift our hearts up in expectancy, so we can make ourselves ready for what **is** to come<sup>1</sup>."
3. Thirdly, today's reading is primarily about the end of the world's history. It is **like** the destruction of the temple in 70AD. It is like the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168BC, but it is

primarily about the end of the world’s history.

4. And so the fourth thing we learned is these events (earthquakes, wars, famines, devastation, persecution – disaster, upheaval) are like birth pains:

- Living as a Christian in this world, is a discomfort – we long to be with Christ now, but for now, we suffer trials; we suffer persecution; we endure hardship...
- And every now and then, like a sudden, painful stab of a contraction, something happens on a national or global scale – Earthquake; famine; wars; World Wars.... Are like stabs of pain .... These are not the end, but like the end....
- And when these things happen, they should remind us to be ready for when the big one does happen, and when Jesus returns.

5. And so the message was, “Get Ready” and “Stay Ready”. We get ready by getting right with God. We stay ready by continuing on in discipleship and not getting led astray.

OK??? So, as we finished up 3 weeks ago, I promised we’d come back to it, and that we’d be looking at “:

- What **do** we expect – what **are** the signs of Jesus’ return?

- We’d be considering “How can we be led astray?”; and
- thirdly, why would Christians fall away?

So, let’s see how far we get....

*When Robyn got pregnant, she bought herself a book, and it has become a very well read book. “What to expect when you’re expecting” ... If while we’re waiting for Jesus to return, there’s stuff like the beginnings of birth pains, well we need to know, what to expect when we’re expecting the return of Jesus... Well, what do we expect?*

## **1. Well firstly, we expect Him to be a long time coming.**

We don’t know the day or the hour. And so we have to be ready every moment of every day... The trouble is, when you’re being vigilant, and waiting to capture the moment, if it doesn’t happen in the first ten minutes, it can seem as if it’s never going to happen.

*A few years ago, our family were blessed to be able to go to the US, and while we were there, we found our way to Yellowstone National Park (in Wyoming). And at Yellowstone Park, there is a Geyser, named “Old Faithful”. Well actually there’s a whole bunch of Geysers and the biggest and best one is the “Steamboat Geyser”. But Steamboat isn’t very popular amongst the*

*tourists. It’s the biggest. But if you want to see it erupt, you’ll be waiting anywhere from 4 days, to 50 years.... Old Faithful is popular, because you only have to wait somewhere between 45 minutes to 125 minutes, to see it erupt....*

*When “Old Faithful” erupts, it spurts out somewhere between 14000-32000 litres of water, straight up in the air, to a height of over 50 metres. And eruptions are an average of 90 minutes apart...*

*So, if you want to see it, you’ve got to make sure you’re there 45 minutes after the last one...*

*Well, we got there about 40 minutes after the last one, and we had the camera ready, and we waited... And we waited... And we waited.... For what almost seemed like an eternity... I felt like giving up... It’s never going to happen... But then it did happen....*

*It seemed like it had been a long time coming, but we’d actually only been there 5 minutes...*

*45 minutes after the last eruption – 5 minutes after we got there, Old Faithful did its thing....*

*Now, imagine if you were waiting for Steamboat Geyser....*

*Now, how about waiting for Jesus?*

Jesus told us He was coming back... But it’s been a long time... It’s been nigh on 2000 years... And some people say “There you go – He’s not coming back”... But you know what? Jesus told His disciples that He would be a long time coming... And we’re going to see that in a couple of weeks, so I’m not going to say any more on that now...

Yep, it’s been 2000 years – that is a long time... But even though, we are ready. Stay ready. Keep waiting.

## **2. Secondly, we should expect persecution. We should expect trouble. We should expect BIG trouble.**

*My first car was a WB Holden ute. I had lots of stickers and lots of aerals all over it, like a real country lad... But on the glove box, right in front of the passenger seat, was a sticker that said, “Warning. You ride in this vehicle at your own risk. Driver may disappear at any moment.”*

And it was a good discussion starter – it’s referring to what we call, “The Rapture”.

The word “Rapture” means “Snatching away”. It’s not actually a word that’s used in the Bible – it actually comes from a Latin word “rapio”.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up (snatched away) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.

What an encouragement – that we will be snatched away, to meet with the Lord.

Now, that’s what we call “the rapture”. This instantaneous snatching away from where we are, to meet with Christ – and it’s right there in the bible....

But..... There is a new....., and very popular belief..., that the timing of this event, takes all of the Christians out of the world, before the big trouble begins... And this belief is called the pre-tribulation rapture. Pre – before; tribulation – trouble; rapture – snatching away... They believe the Christians will be snatched out of the world before the tribulation (before the big trouble) begins, and before antichrist is let loose upon the earth...

Now I’m going to be right up front and say, “I do not believe the pre-tribulation rapture is biblical.”

It’s a very popular belief, but popularity has never made something right.... The whole fictional book series and movies, written by Tim LaHaye – The “Left Behind” series, are all based on a pre-tribulation rapture (taken out of the world before the trouble begins). Do not let these books, influence what you believe about the second coming of Christ... - That’s the Bible’s job – not fictitious books...

Pre-trib teaching has become **very** popular in North America, and consequently in Australia (because, sadly we’re more inclined to listen to the yanks than we are to the bible).

Very prominent charismatic and evangelical bible teachers, teach it as undeniable fact. The Dallas Theological Seminary, is one of the most influential bible colleges in the world, And it teaches “dispensationalism”, (that means there’s different stages in the world’s history) And part of this teaching is the “Pre-tribulation rapture”. ...

(Charles Stanley; Chuck Swindol; Chuck Missler – they all teach pre-tribulation rapture [must be a chuck thing])  
Now, I’m not saying these blokes are no good – they

teach a lot of good stuff, but I’m convinced that **this** is not biblical...

Pre-trib rapture theory, is very popular today, but 200 years ago..., it had never been heard of. For 1800 years, Christians were taught – “Expect persecution”. “Be prepared for the big trouble”... “You’ll go through a lot of pain, persecution, trouble,.. be ready, but don’t worry about it, because Jesus is coming at the end” So we stand firm through it all....

If you go to the Bible **without** pre-conceived ideas, and read God’s word as it is, you will find, time and time again, Jesus Christ and His apostles, telling us to be ready for persecution – telling us to be ready to endure hardship – telling us to hold on through the time of trouble....

Even in today’s reading:

**Verse 9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death**

Who’s He talking to? Disciples. Christians. **they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death**

Now you tell me, have Christians been taken out of the world before this happens??? No!

you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

Who will??? Christians.... Where are they? Have they been taken away? No...

<sup>15</sup> "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, <sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>19</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

<sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. <sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Now, what do we see here? Disciples are **in** the tribulation – they haven’t been taken away. God will cut short the time of the tribulation for the sake of the elect – for the sake of the disciples. If they’ve already been snatched away, why does He need to cut those days short??? I’ll tell you why – it’s because they’re still there.

Nowhere in the bible, does it say that Christians will be taken out before the trouble happens.

A lot will be taken out during the tribulation – do you know how they get out??? They’re martyred – they’re killed. When you turn to Revelation, you find Christians being martyred during the great tribulation<sup>iiii</sup>. We’re told Anti-christ makes war on the saints<sup>iv</sup>... Where are the saints? Right there, in the middle of the tribulation...

**That’s** what the bible says. **That’s** what was taught for 1800 years. Why did it change???

In 1830, a prophetess by the name of Margaret MacDonald, prophesied there was going to be two comings of Jesus. An earlier secret visit, in which Christians would be snatched away, and then 7 years later, the more recognisable visit, when He comes back to stay...

Among those who knew Margaret MacDonald, was a fellow by the name of John Darby, from the Plymouth Brethren, and that became part of his teaching. John Darby was one of the founders of the belief of dispensationalism (which I’m not going to explain now)... He was also the founder of the Exclusive brethren church.

Pre-trib rapture began to become popular when Schofield wrote his reference bible. It was one of the early study bibles... And in this study bible, he taught dispensationalism, futurism, pre-tribulation rapture.... Etc...

Now let me just tell you, that Study Bibles are great, **if** you primarily read the bible, and know that the Bible is God’s word... Study Bibles are great, provided you treat the notes of men, as fallible notes of men...

The trouble is, most of us don’t. We take the notes of men, and go “Ah, that’s what it means”...

And that goes for what I tell you too. The important part of today, is the bible reading – not Michael’s sermon. The Bible reading is God’s word... The sermon is me – fallible me – sinful me, trying my best to help you, to engage with God’s word... Now, I pray that the Holy Spirit will work through me, to help you to know and learn and understand God’s word better...

I put my sermons up on the web, hoping that you and others might learn more about God's word... But I'd rather you read the bible...

To me, the Bible is just so clear, that Christians should expect big trouble. And I fear, this modern, popular idea, means millions of Christians will not be ready to endure it.

So, expect big trouble.

Well, we didn't get very far, did we????  
But I feel that's far enough for today.

So, that's 2 things to expect when we're expecting Jesus to return...

- Expect Him to be a long time coming. Don't lose vigilance because it's been 2000 years – He could come any day.
- And expect big trouble...

Next week, we'll see some more things to expect.

Let's pray;

Lord Jesus Christ, we Long for your return.  
Help us to fix our eyes on you.

You have been a long time coming, but you told us you would be...

Lord, help us to stay vigilant – help us to stay ready.

And Lord, prepare us for the big trouble.

You’ve told us to expect these things, before they happen,

so we go into it with our eyes wide open.

You never promised your disciples a bed of roses –

You promised us a cross of nails.

Lord, when the time of persecution comes – when the big trouble begins,

Give us courage to stand

Give us strength to endure

Give us love to overcome

And grant us your mercy, to hold on...

Come Lord Jesus Christ.

Come and claim Your throne.

We long for the day, when you will snatch us away from this world,

To meet with you, and those who have gone before, in the air.

Come Lord Jesus Christ,

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Michael Green, The message of Matthew, Page 252

<sup>ii</sup> Revelation 6:9–11<sup>9</sup> When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. <sup>10</sup> They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” <sup>11</sup> Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

<sup>iii</sup> Revelation 7:13–14 (ESV) <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” <sup>14</sup> I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

<sup>iv</sup> Revelation 13:7 (ESV) <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,