"THE DRAMATIC RETURN"

(The Drama of Christ's Second Coming)
Matthew 24:29-31
12/23/2018

INTRODUCTION:

***Three powerful events will be experienced when Jesus Christ comes back!**

I. **The Sky is <u>DARKENED</u>** (v. 29)
(The <u>lights</u> of outer space are turned out)

II. **The *"Son of Man"* is <u>REVEALED</u>** (v. 30)
(The <u>Shekinah glory</u> of Jesus Christ is seen)

III. **The Saints are <u>RAPTURED</u>** (v. 31)
(The <u>elect</u> believers are swept away to Heaven)

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The Disciple's question regarding the TIMING of the Lord's return (v.3) assumes that they already had an awareness of the FACT of His return. Prior to Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus indeed informed them of His return in John 14:1-3 where He said "I will come again and receive you unto myself"

Isaiah (in one verse of prophetic Scripture) predicted two aspects and two timings of Messiah's entry onto the human scene.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The Messiah's 1st Coming - *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: (Isaiah 9:6)*
The Messiah's 2nd Coming - *"…and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end…" (Isaiah 9:6b-7)*

Comparisons and contrasts between the two appearances to planet earth:

- Messiah's first coming was MEEK & HUMBLE; His return will be MIGHTY & He will be HONORED.
- His true identity was veiled (hidden) vs His true identity will be fully manifested

- Jesus came the first time to provide redemption and He will return the second time to rapture and resurrect those He redeemed.
- Jesus came the first time to "seek and to save that which was lost" and He will return the second time to remove from judgment and death those He has saved.
- His first coming paid for sin; His second coming removes us from sin's very presence.
- His first coming provided our justification; His second coming will provide our glorification.

The Disciples asked the question: "…what shall be <u>the sign</u> of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?" (v.3)

In verses 5 – 28 Jesus gives 9 clear signs showing the Beginning of the End of this Age:

1. **<u>DECEPTION</u> by false Messiahs** (v. 5)
2. **<u>DESTRUCTION</u> by furious Wars** (v. 6-7a)
3. **<u>DISASTER</u> by Famines and Earthquakes** (v. 7b-8)
4. **<u>DELIVERANCE TO PERSECUTION</u> by Foes of Jesus Christ** (v. 9)
5. **<u>DEFECTION</u> by Fake Christians** (v. 10-13)
6. **<u>DECLARATION</u> by Faithful Witnesses** (v. 14)
7. **<u>DESECRATION</u> of a Future Holy Place by Antichrist** (v. 15)
8. **<u>GREAT TRIBULATION</u> aimed at Israel & Christians** (v. 15-22)
9. **<u>LYING SIGNS & WONDERS</u> by False Messiahs & False Prophets** (v. 23-28)

The Key sign of His Return is described in verses 29-30

10. **<u>COSMIC DISTURBANCES</u> as the Sun, Moon, & Stars are changed** (v.29-30)

The second coming of Christ is no small, insignificant event.

It will be the most dramatic event in human history!

<u>Three Important Facts</u>

1. I Thessalonians 4:16-5:2 teaches that the Rapture of the Church are the Day of the Lord are tied together (the Rapture and the Day of the Lord begin on the same day).

2. Joel 2:31 (cp. Acts 2:20) teaches that the alterations of the sun and moon will occur <u>before</u> the Day of the Lord begins.

3. Therefore, the darkening of the sun and moon, the Rapture of the Church, and the beginning of the Day of the Lord <u>all happen at the same time</u>.

   (This is precisely what Matthew teaches in verses 29 - 31.)

***Three powerful events will be experienced when Jesus Christ comes back!**

I. **The Sky is <u>DARKENED</u>** (v. 29)
(The <u>lights</u> of outer space are turned out)

"<u>Immediately</u> after the Tribulation" - the Lord is going to do something to "cut short" those days of Tribulation. What is it? Answer: the Rapture of His Church.

And then, immediately after the time of Tribulation ends for God's people, He is going to turn out the lights of Heaven to announce the commencement of the Day of the Lord's wrath.

Those days of Tribulation will be "cut short" or amputated for the sake of God's people.

The Tribulation will <u>not</u> last a full 3-1/2 years for the Elect (Mark 13:20 - *"And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days"*; cp. Mt. 24:22)

Christ will Christ will "cut short" the bloodshed of God's people. When the last one to be killed is fulfilled, He will step in (Rev. 6:11).

The Great Tribulation will not run the full 42 months allotted to Antichrist.

While the 70th week will run its course and the times of the Gentiles (Lk. 21:24) will come to a full completion, God's people will *"escape"* via the Rapture.

How much will the Tribulation be cut short for the elect's sake? (No one knows for sure)

It would be safe to say that it will be amputated at least 5 months prior to the end of the 70th week [since the fifth Trumpet judgment (to occur in the Day of the Lord) will involve an army of demonic locust-like creatures inflicting torment on people for 5 months - Rev. 9:5, 10.]

The sequence of events is:

1) Tribulation

2) Cosmic signs, Rapture, & Day of the Lord

"The sun (will) be darkened" - These cosmic signs are frequently mentioned in Scripture:

Isaiah 13:9-11 - *"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."*

Isaiah 24:23 - *"The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."*

Isaiah 50:3 - *"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."*

Ezekiel 32:7-8 - *"And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD."*

Joel 2:10 - *"The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."*

Joel 2:31 - *"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."*

Joel 3:15 - *"The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."*

Amos 5:18, 20 - *"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness,a nd not light. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"*

Acts 2:20 - *"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come."*

Revelation 6:12 - *"And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."*

Luke 21:28 says, *"But when these things* (these signs) *<u>begin</u> to take place,*

straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Charles Hadden Spurgeon (who would be considered a proponent of the Pre-wrath Rapture view if living today) said in his sermon entitled "Joyful Anticipation of the Second Advent" - "When the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the heavens shall tell us, *'There will be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars'* . . . Now I come to THE REMARKABLE PRECEPT itself: *'Then look up, and lift up your heads'*. . . Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking up because you are going to rise from it; no looking down because the graves are opening; why should you look down? You will quit the grave, never more to die. *'Lift up your heads.'* The time for you to hang your heads like bulrushes, is over already, and will certainly be over when the Lord is coming, and your redemption draweth nigh. Wherefore, *'look up, and lift up your heads.'*" (cited by VanKampen, p. 275)

The darkening of the sun and moon and the dropping of the stars will <u>not</u> be a one-day event but will occur over a several-day period. *"But in those <u>days</u>* (plural) *. . . the sun shall be darkened. . ."* (Mk. 13:24)

"The moon shall not give her light" - Actually instead of reflecting the light of the sun, it will evidently reflect the bloody earth (perhaps depicting the blood shed of God's servants (Rev. 6, 20) and the coming blood bath of Armageddon (Rev. 14:20).

"The powers (*dunamis)* ***of the heavens shall be shaken" -***

Isaiah 24:1, 19-20 - *"Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. . . . The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and for like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again."*

The universe (now held together by Christ - Col. 1:17) will be unglued; normal orbits and rotations will be shaken; the tides will be drastically affected (Luke 21:25 - *"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring")*.

"The events will be so calamitous that men will <u>faint</u> (Luke 21:25-26) from absolute terror. The Greek term behind *"faint"* means to expire or stop breathing, indicating that people will literally die of fright" (MacArthur, p. 51).

People will hold onto their stomachs because of the nausea and upsetness caused by the dreadful terror.

II. **The *"Son of Man"* is <u>REVEALED</u>** (v. 30)
(The <u>Shekinah glory</u> of Jesus Christ is seen)

"Then" - At the same time as the cosmic disturbances, Christ appears!

The *"lights"* of the universe are divinely turned off to draw the world's attention to Christ's glorious entrance at His second coming.

"The <u>natural</u> light of the heavenly bodies will be shut off (darkened) and then the <u>supernatural</u> light (the glory of God) will be revealed" (Rosenthal, <u>Pre-Wrath Rapture</u>, p. 111).

"The sign" = (Remember the disciples' question - v. 3) The Shekinah or glory of Christ will be the sign of His second coming.

He is <u>not</u> pictured on a *"white horse"* (Rev. 19:11) at this point in time, but is in the *"clouds"* (Shekinah cloud). Just as He went away (Acts 1:11), He will come again for His own.

This ***"sign"*** of Christ's return is important especially in light of the false signs and false Christ's and prophets prevalent in the Last Days (v. 23-26).

In the Last Days many will say: *"Where is the promise of His coming?"* (II Pet. 3:4). They will mock such a return. And then suddenly (like *"<u>lightning</u>"* - v. 27) and unexpectedly (like a *"<u>thief</u>"*), the Lord will come with a spectacular brilliance, a brilliance that will be seen by every eye (even the "despicably evil eyes of Antichrist and his wicked hosts" - Robert VanKampen, <u>The Sign</u>, p. 268).

"Tribes" - Various nations all over the earth.

"Mourn" - Not a mourning of repentance, but of fear because of the wrath about to be outpoured.

(SEE: Rev. 6:12-17)

The ***"mourning"*** of one tribe will be that of repentance. That tribe is Israel! (Zech. 12:10 - *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."*)

"They shall see" - The Rapture will not be a secret event. Christ's coming will be undeniable and inescapable.

"Clouds" - not just any clouds (not the clouds covering the earth) - but clouds from Heaven.

Rev. 1:7 - *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."* Cp. Rev. 14:14

"With power" - Christ's coming will not be humble and lowly like His first entrance into the human race (He came then as a Lamb; He is coming again as a Lion. He came the first time to suffer and die; He is coming the second time to conquer and reign).

"Great glory" - His glory was veiled in His incarnation (Phil. 2), but His glory will shine at His return.

This is why Paul referred to the Rapture as the *"glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ"* (Ti. 2:13).

III. The Saints are <u>RAPTURED</u> (v. 31)
(The <u>elect</u> believers are swept away to Heaven)

"He shall send his angels" - The Son of man (Jesus) has authority over angels; they do His bidding.

"A great sound of a trumpet" - Not speaking of the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8-9) but of the trumpet to summon His elect (cp. Exod. 19:16; Zech. 9:14).

I Cor. 15:52 - *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

I Thes. 4:16 - *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."*

"They" - God will employ angels to seize away His people. This is how we will be *"caught up"* to meet the Lord in the air.

"Gather" = (*episunaxousin)* - to assemble together at one central location (cp. v. 28).

Many erroneously interpret this gathering as referring to the "regathering of Israel." This, however, is <u>not</u> the meaning as evidenced by Mark's parallel passage, which indicates clearly that the people taken are taken *"<u>from</u>...<u>earth</u>...<u>to</u>...<u>heaven</u>"* (Mk. 13:27).

The ***"elect"*** are those for whom the Days of Tribulation were cut short (v. 22).

Only the ***"elect"*** will be gathered. Who are the ***"elect"***? They are those whom God has chosen (selected) to be saved; and those who are chosen are those who <u>believe</u> the Gospel.

"...God hath from the beginning <u>chosen</u> you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and <u>belief</u> of the truth" (II Th. 2:13).

You can know whether or not you are one of the "elect" by whether or not your total faith and trust is in Jesus Christ and His finished work on Calvary (Jn. 3:36).

Did you come to Jesus for salvation? (Jn. 6:37) If so, you will not be put to shame (Rom. 10:11).

CONCLUSION: