

EVIDENCE FOR THE PAROUSIA
Matthew 24:32-41

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In the past few weeks, we have been talking a lot about the parousia or the coming of Christ. The parousia is Greek and means a coming and a stay. It is the coming-presence of Christ.
- B. It has been suggested that there are two phases to the parousia. The first phase will be a secret coming of Christ for His Church before the Tribulation period. This first phase is called the Rapture of the Church. Christ will come for the Church but His presence will be in the Tribulation period but behind the scenes in an invisible sense.
- C. The second phase of the parousia will come after the Tribulation. Christ will make an open, dramatic, visible manifestation of Himself to all the world. This second phase is called the second advent. In His second advent, Christ will judge sinful men and will establish His kingdom over this world.
- D. An honest question might be, “How can we know that the parousia will take place?” Well, Christ has anticipated your question, and He begins in verses 32-41 to give some guarantees and evidences for both phases of the parousia.

II. SIGNS OF THE SECOND ADVENT -- Matthew 24:32-35

- A. **INTRODUCTION:** There will be definite signs that will precede the second advent. In these verses Christ gives three guarantees that all that He has said about signs in the Tribulation and the second advent will actually come to pass.
- B. “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (he) is near, even at the doors.” -- The first guarantee of the second advent is the initial putting forth of leaves by the fig tree. When the fig tree shows signs of leaves, the farmer knows that summer and full bloom is just a few months off. The fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. When Israel as a nation begins to show signs of spiritual life, which will occur in the Tribulation then the end is near. So when “these things” concerning Israel show up in history then that generation will know “it” is near. What is the “it?” This may be translated “he” and refer to the kingdom comes at the second advent of Christ. What then are the “these things?” All the signs that Christ has been speaking about in Matthew 24 -- 1) the Great Tribulation; 2) the abomination of

desolation (world dictator); 3) Jews fleeing to the hills; 4) cosmic disturbances before the second advent; 5) the Shikinah glory and other things. **POINT:** These signs will be proof that the second advent is near. **NOTE:** In 1948, Israel became a nation and has survived 23 years. She has not shown any signs of spiritual activity toward Christ, but Israel's very existence proves that God will again deal spiritually with Israel.

- C. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." -- Now the Lord gives the second guarantee for the second advent and the preceding signs. What is the meaning of "this generation?" For those Christians who believe that the Olivet Discourse is prophetic, there are two possible interpretations of "this generation." It could be the generation of Jewish-believers who will be alive when the signs of the second advent occur in the Tribulation period. That last generation of Jews shall see the fulfillment of the signs. However, a better interpretation is to see "this generation" as the Jewish race or people. The word "generation" (genea) primarily means "people," "race," "family," or "kind." Therefore it is a reference to the Jewish people or race. The Jewish race will not pass away until all these signs will be fulfilled. This is a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy. After two thousand years of dispersion, the Jews still continue to exist as a race. Despite the long centuries of hardship and cruelty, they have proved to be an indestructible people. There will be a Jewish people alive during the Tribulation period that will see the fulfillment of the signs preceding the second advent.
- D. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." -- The third guarantee of the signs and the second advent are the words of Christ Himself. He who created the world, who healed the sick and blind and who saves sinners, has said He is coming again. Christ said, "My words shall not pass away."

III. **EVIDENCES FOR THE NEARNESS OF THE RAPTURE** -- Matthew 24:36-42

- A. **INTRODUCTION:** At this point in the Olivet Discourse, there comes a definite break in thought. The chronological outline of the complex of events that will occur in the end time has been completed. Christ has spoken much about the last phase of His parousia but now apparently chooses to speak about the first phase which is the Rapture of the Church. Remember, the disciples are a representative group. They are Jews but soon will be part of the Church, so certain sections are directed toward the Church. **NOTE:** Some scholars think that this is a reference to the second advent. However, if the Lord is not describing His coming for the Church, then we would have no description from His lips of this tremendous event. All we would have would be His promise, "I will come again and take you to myself. (John 14:3) **NOTE:** While there are no definite signs that precede the Rapture of the Church, there are some evidence that the Rapture may be near. World

conditions may indicate that the Rapture is not too far distant in God's prophetic program.

ILLUSTRATION: While there are no signs that precede the Rapture, the shaping up of world events that will bring the Tribulation period and ultimately the second advent indicate that the Rapture may not be too far distant.

It is much like the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas. About a week before Thanksgiving we may see Christmas decorations being put up in stores and our streets. We know very well that the next event on the calendar is Thanksgiving but the Christmas decorations indicate that Christmas is not too far distant. So today we know that the next event on God's calendar is the Rapture but we see things happening today that tell us that the second advent is not too far in the future.

Matthew 24:29, 30: Immediately after the Tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

- B. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." -- Now Christ begins to speak about a phase of His coming that no one knows when the day and the hour will be. His coming will be completely unpredictable. Notice verse 42. Our Lord exhorts believers in Christ to be constantly watching for the return of Christ. Christ coming is imminent and can occur at any moment and Christians are to be watching for this event. **NOTE:** Christ must be speaking about the Rapture or the first phase of the parousia. There are no signs that precede the Rapture of the Church. It would be impossible for Jesus to use these words if He were referring to the second advent in power and great glory, for the second advent will be preceded by all kinds of signs. (Matthew 24:29, 30). An astute Bible student in the Tribulation period will be able to predict the day and perhaps the hour of the second advent, but the day Christ is talking about is unpredictable. The believer in the Church is to be constantly watching for the Rapture, for it can occur at any moment.

ILLUSTRATION: God is absolutely silent about the time when Christ shall come for His Church. We must be careful about setting any kind of dates, for this is contrary to the Bible. Of course, we have always had radicals who were date-setters and they have without fail been proven to be wrong. Every so often you hear of folks who go up on a mountain and wait for the Lord. About two years ago a group of fanatics sat up on top of a building in togas and bare feet absolutely sure that the Lord would return according to their interpretation of the Bible. He did not return and they said they were off 10 years or so and would be back. The

whole idea of date-setting has brought the genuine study of prophecy into bad light.

- C. "But as the days of Noah were, so shall the coming (parousia) of the Son of man be." -- Now Christ begins to compare the days preceding the Flood and the days preceding the Rapture of the Church. World conditions will be similar and these will be evidences (not signs) that the Rapture is near, but there will be no way to predict this event.
- D. "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." -- A care study of Genesis 6 will show that the world conditions before the Flood were 1) spiritual apostasy; 2) ignorance of spiritual truths; 3) corruption of morals and 4) social injustice. But Christ picks out one condition of pre-flood days to make a comparison to pre-Rapture days. He speaks about materialism and indifference to God.
1. Many Bible teachers try to sensationalize the words "eating, drinking and marrying" by making them something evil or immoral. "Eating" refers to gluttony, "drinking" refers to alcohol and "marrying" and "giving in marriage" to the sky rocketing divorce rate, but our Lord does not mean evil things at all.
 2. In the days of Noah men were carrying on normal activities (there is nothing wrong with eating, drinking and marrying) but it was a civilization that had no time for God. Before the Flood men were engrossed in earthly and materialistic pursuits. They knew about God but did not want to retain Him in their thoughts. They were totally indifferent to God and His program. **NOTE:** Materialism and indifference to God will be the attitude of the world just prior to the Rapture of the Church. The present world we now live in is rapidly moving towards being 1) totally indifferent to God as He is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The condition of the world should concern us and excite us, for we know that the Lord's return may not be too far distant. **NOTE:** Again, these must be conditions that precede the Rapture of the Church, for during the Tribulation period there will be too much human suffering for men to carry on consistent materialistic pursuits. Furthermore, there will be signs that will precede the Second Advent.
- E. "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." -- The world of Noah's day had no sense of coming disaster, Noah preached faithfully for 120 years that catastrophe was imminent but the people of that day were indifferent to the Word of God. Noah built the ark and men must have thought him crazy, for there were no signs of impending judgment. **NOTE:** Life went on as usual, 1) men ate and drank, 2) went to work, 3) rose up to play, 4) lovers strolled hand in hand and 5) people got

married. The first indication of any impending disaster went by almost unnoticed, for God took a select company (Noah and his family) and told them to enter into the ark. Seven days went by and then it began to rain and the Flood came. All those who lived in the world died through drowning, and only Noah and his family were preserved from the judgment. They were taken out before the judgment began. **NOTE:** So in the Rapture Christ will come quietly for His Church, a select company, and remove them from the judgments of the Tribulation. Then the Tribulation will begin. Just as the judgment of the Flood took the pre-Flood world by surprise, so the judgments of the Tribulation will take the pre-Rapture world totally unprepared for judgment.

- F. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." -- At the Rapture, the Lord Jesus will be highly selective, distinguishing even between two people working side by side. When the Rapture occurs, those who have trusted in Christ will be immediately taken to be with the Lord. However, multitudes will be left on this earth, proving that they are unbelievers. Those left will face the terrible judgments of the Tribulation, and if they die without receiving Christ, they will face the eternal judgments of perdition. **NOTE:** The work "taken" is paralambano and means "to take along" or "to take to." Those believers who are alive at the Rapture will not have to face physical death. They shall be swept into the presence of Christ. This will be the day the Church meets her Lord face to face (I Thess. 4:16, 17).

IV. **CONCLUSION:**

- A. When most of us contemplate human existence, we conclude that we enter life through the door marked "birth", and we will leave it by the door marked "death." But there is another way that some men will leave this life. Those Christians who are alive when the Rapture occurs will be transfigured and translated into the presence of Christ without experiencing physical death.
- B. The Rapture is only for believers in Jesus Christ. If the Rapture is only for believers in Jesus Christ. If the Rapture were to occur right now, would you be snatched away to be with Christ or would you be left on this earth to face the horrible judgments of the Tribulation?
- C. Christ is coming! Are you ready to meet Him? If you are not, then you must accept Him as your personal Lord and Savior. The Rapture is for those who have received Christ and no one else.