

BC 37; Matthew 24:36-51; 25:31-46; The End Times I. The Timing of the End II. The Events of the End

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am not sure if this is true for everyone, but many Christians think more about heaven as they get older. It is almost like the Holy Spirit continues to mold the mind of these believers- so that the thought of glory, rest and peace becomes all the more pleasing as their bodies begin to wear out. But the fact remains, the end times and the hope of the future should be a constant source of joy and hope! A few weeks back we looked at BC art. 37 in regards to the glorification of the body. We saw that when Jesus returns, He will raise and perfect our bodies and souls so that we are made wholly like Him. This week we are returning to BC art. 37 to consider the end times in a more general way. Now when we consider the end times, we can only know what the future holds in a general sense. We look at history through the lens of Scripture and we can see the trajectory- we can see the broad outline and general direction. However, we must avoid speculation since the minute details remain unknown. So what is the general development of history- where is history bringing us? We do know how the story ends- we can wait for it with patience and faith- even in joyful expectation! This morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ is certainly coming back soon so be ready!

I. The Timing of the End

In our first point, we consider the timing of the end. We call the events connected to the closing of this age the end times. Now it may appear obvious- that the timing of the end is just that- at the end. What more needs to be said? But Jesus has much more to say about the end than just that. First of all, when speaking about the end, Jesus lets us know that it is coming- and its coming is soon! As He says in Rev. 22, behold I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. Or as the angels said to the disciples shortly after Jesus ascended, Jesus will return. He will come back in the same manner as you saw Him leave. So the first point we need to see is this- Jesus is surely coming back- and that return is impending. It is soon- or it is at hand. Now this fact is denied by almost everyone in the world today. What do you mean- Jesus is coming back? This world continues on as it

always has. If anything, humans will bring the end by way of their destruction of the natural resources or at the hand of the nuclear bomb. We might bring the end of the world- but certainly not this Jesus! He has nothing to do with end coming- or so modern man says. But Jesus makes it clear- I am coming back- and soon! And my return will usher in the end! But not only is the return of Jesus certain and soon, it is also unknown in its time. This is the point that Jesus makes in Mt. 24:36- no creature knows the day or the hour. Not even the angels- but only my Father in heaven. So the creatures- the created being- angels and man- do not have this knowledge. There is no man, prophet or wise man who walks on the face of this earth that will ever predict the timing of Christ return. But the Father knows- and the timing is in the Father's plan and decree. The end will come- it will surely happen at the Father's set time and schedule. So if God alone knows the time- and all creatures do not- that means that the timing of this event is unknown. But more than that- it will not be expected. As we read in Mt. 24:39 and again in 24:44- His return will be like a thief in the night. The return of Jesus will be unexpected- it will be surprise and shock to many! In fact, as the parable in Mt. 24 reveals, many people will be sleeping! They will not be ready! The return of Jesus will not be preceded by signs and wonders to mark the moment days or months in advance. There will be no fair warning- no call to get ready beyond what has already been recorded in God's word. In fact, everything will be going on like normal. That is the point of 24:38- people will be eating and drinking, going to work and getting married. It will begin just like any other day- normal in every way! People will be busy with their work- giving little thought to what might happen that day. And then suddenly- without warning- the end will come. Now here is where we find our first application, since the timing of this event is unknown, we must be prepared. Since His return is certain, at hand and could happen at any moment without warning- we as God's people are called to be ready always! As Jesus says in 24:42- therefore stay awake, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. And again in v. 44- be ready- for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect! So to apply this point, Jesus tells His disciples to be ready for His return at any moment. Do not be

caught sleeping or unprepared. Now what does it mean to be caught sleeping? How can we be prepared? Well, to be caught sleeping would be the caught living your life without any thought or preparation for the future. Those who are sleeping in this sense are those who are living their life on their own terms and according to their own desires and plans. At ease- living the good life- living for today! Being asleep means that you have forgotten about God- you think your life and your money are your own! Being rich towards yourself, but poor towards God! Those are the ones who are sleeping- these will be surprised when the end comes. Rather, God's people are to be awake- ready! To be ready is to be living a life of faith and obedience- to be looking up with expectation- even longing for and praying for His return! As I Thes. 5 puts it- living with self-control- with an eye on the sky and a plan for the future! In their work- they are working with the knowledge that their master is watching and may return at any time! But there is one more marker- one more event that must take place before the end can come. Although the timing remains unknown- Jesus does tell us that He will not come back until all His people have heard the gospel and come to faith. In other words, the gospel needs to go forth to all nations, all His sheep need to be gathered, and only then the end will come. Not one of His sheep will be lost- and He will not come back until every one of them has been brought into His fold. Jesus makes this point in Rev. 6:11- where He tells the saints in heaven to wait a little while longer until the number of the elect- or the number of the fellow saints is complete! So we could say, that the church not only prays for and desires Jesus to return, we are also hastening His return as we bring the good news to all people! What a wonderful privilege we have!

II. The Events of the End

Now that we understand the timing of this end, in our second point we consider the events connected to this end. Now we are not going to be considering wars and rumors of war, earthquakes and famines because those are simply signs of the current age. They are not to be used to help us date the timing of His return. But today we are going to focus on what actually happens when He returns- what will take

place when the last day- the last hour arrives? When the age of this world is over- the age of the church and the number of the elect is complete. Then and only then Jesus will return. He will come back on the clouds of glory- coming with His angels and He will sit on His glorious throne at Mt. 25:31 states. As a church, we live our lives trusting in this promise! Our labor is not in vain- or hope is not empty- our faith is not futile! Jesus is coming- we hold on to this promise! This return will be a literal, physical return. It will not be some secret, silent return that could be missed. Everyone will see it- everyone will know what is going on. Every eye will see Him- we will perceive Him in His glory as He parts the clouds and descends! And our ears will hear it- the sound of the trumpet- the call of the archangel. The sign of the Son of Man will be visible in the clouds and the earth will quake at His presence! The creation itself with rock and shake at his coming! And then, all flesh will be gathered. 25:32- before him all the nations will be gathered. Every man, woman and child- those born during the OT- those that died in the flood- those whose bodies were burned in the flame- everyone will be called up and gathered together. We will all stand before Him- none will escape His gaze. And then Jesus will perform His work as the Judge- to judge the living and the dead as we confess. Two books will be opened. The book of man's conscience and the book of life. In the book of our conscience there is recorded our lives and our desires! The entirety of our lives will be put on display for all to see- our lives will show living faith or abject rebellion. In the book of life is written the names of all the elect- those who have been chosen since the foundation of the world. If your name is not written in the book of life, you will be removed from God's presence. So He will separate people- as goats and sheep are separated by their shepherd. There will be swift separation- a division that is made. Those who hated Christ and His people- those who scoffed at His word- will be placed on the left. To these Jesus will say- away from me you wicked rebels. As 25:41 puts it- depart from me you cursed one- depart from my presence and go into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. These will be cast out into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Upon seeing Christ, these wicked rebels will know that

their time is up. They will try to run and hide- they will cry out to the rocks- asking for them to fall on them to hide them from the presence of the just judge as Rev. 6 reveals. But there will be no escape- no where to hide! The day of salvation will be passed- for these there is only judgement and wrath! You cannot escape from God- which is a warning us all! Kiss the Son, or be terrified when He returns! But for His people- those who are the sheep of His pasture- those who have loved Him and longed for His appearing. These will hear as v. 34 states, come you who are blessed by my Father. Come inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for you. So God's people- those joined to Christ by faith- those who are ready for His coming- will be ushered into eternal bliss and lasting happiness. Upon seeing our savior's face, we will be filled with get joy and happiness! On the face of our Savior is a known and loved smile! Although you have not yet seen Him, you do know Him! And when you see Him, you will be made like Him- you will recognize Him and you will see love in His eyes! This is the comfort and joy that God's people look forward to! The Righteous will be filled with unimaginable joy! Delight, comfort and lasting peace! All tears having been wiped away! Knowing what is coming for God's people is what motivates us to pray- Come Lord Jesus! We look forward to this day with great expectation. Our article puts it like this- we look forward to that great day with longing in order to enjoy the full promises of God in Christ Jesus! Remember that the One who is coming is Jesus- your Savior and your friend! If you trust in Jesus- He has already died for you! The one who is going to judge the nations has already been judged and condemned in your place! That is the hope- the joy- the comfort of God's people! Jesus is coming back with healing in His wings! What God has promised to us- Christ will come to deliver and apply the full extent of God's blessed promises! The good news is that the return of Jesus ushers in the final blessing of God's people! The New Heavens and the New Earth, the glorification of our bodies and the vindication of our cause- will all be carried out by the hands of Jesus! Looking around us today- we see inflation and impending recession. Money has a shrinking value- and my possessions slip through my fingers. Nothing is certain and nothing lasts! But I have good news- if you believe in Jesus you have

something to look forward to! Not a cushy retirement here below- but a blessed eternity up above! Your provision- your hope is not found in the sinking stock market- but by faith you do have a lasting inheritance waiting in heaven for you- an inheritance that cannot diminish or decline! That is the lasting hope of God's people- and this is what we look forward to! So trust in Jesus and get ready- for those who look to Him will be blessed by Him for all eternity!

To conclude, the end of time is an event that applies to all mankind and even all created things. This world will be burned up and purified- the elements tested- and the stars will fall from the sky. Nothing will remain unmoved or untested. It will be like the time of the flood that covered the world in the days of Noah- people will be saying peace and prosperity only to have death and destruction rain as fire upon them. Every source and sin and stain will be removed from this world- and the New Jerusalem will come down. And then, God will dwell in the midst of His people forever! As our theme states, Jesus Christ is certainly coming back soon so be ready!