

*“And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” 2 And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”*

*3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” 5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. 7 And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.*

*9 “But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. 10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*

### **Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

Anyone who has been to Jerusalem and seen the foundation stones for the ancient Temple can understand this disciple who said, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” The stones that are left today are truly unbelievable. Some of the foundation stones weigh over 500 tons. The smallest ones weigh between 2 and 5 tons. Let’s just get a little perspective. 18 wheel semi-trucks can’t legally weigh more than 80,000 pounds. That includes the truck itself. That’s only 40 tons. An 8 axel B-Train with two trailers can weigh up to 140,000 pounds. That’s still only 70 tons. One single stone in the temple weighs more than 8 times that. The biggest mining dump truck in the world, (they’re the size of a house) couldn’t even carry one of those stones. So yea, we can understand that disciple being impressed with the stones of the Temple complex. How in the world could they cut those large stones, transport them to Jerusalem up to the top of the temple mount and maneuver them into their precise place.

That was when Jesus dropped a bombshell on them all. “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” That great temple was going to be utterly destroyed, large stones and all. A little later when Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives looking back across the Kidron Valley at the Temple, four of His disciples asked Him: “Tell us, when will these things be?” The Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans, so we don’t need signs for that. But Matthew tells us that they also asked, “And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Matt. 24:3 That is a question we do need to know.

### **Jesus Is Coming Again**

People today mock the idea of Jesus’ return to judge the world, just as Peter described it. He said, “Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” 2 Peter 3:3-4 Worse yet, many believers are being lulled to sleep spiritually because it doesn’t seem like Jesus is coming, and there are so many other things to do. We need to

#### **-I- See the Signs**

The first sign Jesus mentions is the false christs and false teachers. He says, “See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.” False christs and false teachers began already during the lives of the Apostles. Cerinthus and the Gnostics were some of the first. The Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church has risen to claim to be Christ’s Vicar on earth. He claims to be Christ’s sole representative and what he says is to be believed as if Christ Himself said it. Today there is such a proliferation of false teachers and they have led many astray just as Jesus said. It has gotten to the point where people choose a church based on what they want to hear, rather than on what God says.

These are dangerous, Jesus says later in this chapter, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.” vs. 22 Their deceptions will be very great. That is why Jesus warns, “See that no one leads you astray.” The only way to do that is to make sure you know what God’s word says and follow that alone.

Jesus gave another sign in verses 7-8: “And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be

earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.” More and more people are asking in dismay, “What is going on in the world?” The war in the Ukraine continues to rage. War has broken out again in Palestine and the Gaza strip. There was the devastating earth quake in Nepal a week ago killing hundreds. Hurricanes are ravaging the coastlines. Tornados wreaking destruction. Here in BC they say this last summer was the worst wildfire season on record. There have been serious droughts in some areas, often followed by floods. What is going on?

Jesus tells us exactly what is going on and why in our text. Jesus said all these things MUST happen. They are “the beginning of birth pains.” Let’s think about that a little. Birth pains tell you that something is about to happen. Even though they may not be pleasant, they are a good thing. They are telling you, it’s time to get ready, this baby is coming. Can you imagine if there was no warning at all. The baby was just born, suddenly wherever you are and whatever you are doing? That could be disastrous.

That is exactly what all the troubles and disasters in the world are doing. They are warning us that Jesus is coming to judge the world and bring it to an end. They are telling you you need to be ready. If we are not ready for Jesus coming, it will be disastrous. Jesus will say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. 25:41

The other thing about birth pains is that they get more intense and closer together as the actual birth gets closer. Isn’t that what we see in the world today? These troubles are becoming more intense and more frequent. Why is it that almost every summer is a bad forest fire season, destroying homes and businesses? And every few years we seem to have a new worst fire season? The world blames it on global warming, but these are signs that the day of Christ’s return is drawing closer. They are telling us to

### **-II- Be Prepared!**

Jesus said, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Matt. 24:44 Jesus is coming! Just as surely as the fires and earthquakes and wars today are real, so the final day of judgement is very real and it is coming soon.

Our Epistle reading from Hebrews 10 shows us the only way we can be ready. It is only through that one single sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf. That

one sacrifice has perfected us forever by taking away our sins. Therefore God urges us to do three things to make sure we are ready for Christ's return.

1. Verse 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." That is we are to come before God in repentance with the full assurance that He does forgive us for Jesus sake and makes us worthy of heaven.

2. Then He adds in vs. 23 "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." Jesus already warned us about the false teachers who will seek to deceive you and lead you astray. At the end of our text Jesus warns us that there will be many enemies who hate us and persecute us. He says, 9 "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. 10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." Yes, you can expect opposition and hatred in the world. But "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering," and you will be saved.

3. Finally God urges us in vs. 24, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." That is why we need to continue coming together to worship, so we can encourage each other to continue in the faith. The hatred and persecution we may face in this world is another form of the "Birth pains" reminding us that Christ is coming.

But the thing about birth pains is however unpleasant they may be, they are exciting because that means your baby is coming soon. You know the pain will have a joyful end in an amazing gift from God. So any persecution we may face is a reminder that Jesus is coming and we will have a joyful end when Jesus comes in all His glory and receives us into our eternal home in heaven. We certainly don't want to back out now when our final goal is so close.

So yes, hold fast, continue in true repentant faith and encourage each other to do the same. For Jesus is coming and it will be glorious. Amen.