

I've given today's message the title: Redemption drawing near.

When it comes to "end times", there's lots of theories/speculation/fear...

But for a Disciple of Jesus, what Bible Scholars refer to as "the parousia" (what we call the appearing of Jesus or the 2nd coming of Jesus), this isn't something to be fearful of.

Jesus said (v27) ²⁷ **And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**
²⁸ **Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."**

I want you to catch the distinction here. There is a "**they**", and there is a "**your**". The general populous **will** be fainting with fear and foreboding, with all that's happening in the world, but not the Disciples of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus will be straightening up; We're not going to be downcast, because the coming of the Son of Man – the return of Jesus, is our redemption drawing near...

So, what is "redemption"? To redeem something, means "to buy it back".

For a short while, my dad owned a Leyland P76, even though it was never his ambition to buy one.

His employee at the time, asked Dad if he would go guarantor for him, so he could borrow the money to buy this car. And Dad agreed. So, he bought this car, but then it wasn't long

before the worker did something silly and got sent to jail, and so as guarantor, my dad was responsible for making the future payments on the car. But he didn't want to be shackled to the exorbitant interest rates of the finance company, so he paid what was owing, and he "redeemed" the car. It now belonged to Him.

Now, for us, we were captives of sin and death. But Jesus redeemed us, when He gave His own life on the cross. **My** sins deserved the punishment of death. **Your** sin, deserved the punishment of death. But the perfect, once and for all sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, paid the debt that was owing. He now owns us. He has redeemed us, **but the final** redemption, is yet to happen. There is nothing more to be paid, but a **collection** is to be made.

Did you know you can do a click-&-collect at Mitre10 here at St George? If you walk into the shop, the price (on some items) might be 10-20% higher than the online price (because the online price is the price people can get it in the cities). And so, you can go online, find the item you want, do a click-&-collect, pay for it online. And at that point, the item (in a sense) is yours. – it's paid for – it belongs to you, but the final part of redemption, is to do the collect part of the click-&-collect. And so you can confidently walk into Mitre10, and say, "I'm here to collect my item". You have redeemed it – You've bought it. But the final step of that redemption, is the collection.

So, Jesus has paid the price of our redemption. Nothing is owing. All He's gotta do, is pick us up. V²⁸ **Now when**

these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Jesus has done the clicking (only it wasn't the clicking of a mouse. It was the sound of a hammer, driving a nail into His wrists). Now He's collecting...

Alright, so when it comes to end times, Disciples of Jesus have nothing to fear, because this is our redemption drawing near.

But when it comes to the end times, how many of us are prepared for it? And prepared for what? What's going to happen?

Within Christian circles, I generally come across 2 different types of people. Some folk are what's known as "End-time-junkies". They just focus on the end times. Most of their Bible remains in mint condition, while the pages of Daniel; Revelation; and a couple of chapters of the Gospels, the pages wear thin, as they read them over and over again...

And some folk like to map it out step by step: This is going to happen, and then this.....

And they are fully confident in their own analysis and "This is the way it's all going to unfold"...

But then many others of us, will just look at it and go “Oh, this is just all too complex. I don’t ‘get’ it. I see all of these analysis of how it all fits together, and it’s too complex for me....”, and so we just skim over those bits in the Bible, and we may remain largely illiterate, about the return of Jesus, and what we expect...

Here’s 4 reasons why the end-times seems so complex:

1. God doesn’t want us to know the exact timeline. If He did, He would have told us. And so, the complexity increases because people are not happy with that. They are wanting to know information that God has not revealed. In fact, in the Book of Revelation, there is a time where Jesus says to John “Don’t write that bit down”. He doesn’t want us to know everything..
2. The return of Jesus is meant to be a “surprise”. If God made the order of events very clear, the nature of man would be to leave it until the last minute – to keep living in sin, right up to the point that Jesus is about to return, and then decide, “Well, I’d better get right with God, because it’ll probably be the day after tomorrow”.

But the word of God reveals enough, so that we know the desire of the Lord. The will of God, is for His people to “be ready” at **all** times. Living faithfully (as Disciples of Jesus), so that we’re not caught out when He **does** return.

3. When Jesus taught about end times, He touched on events where many will “feel” that the world as we know it, is about to end, but He clearly says “This is not the end”. And yet it seems like the end. And some world events will be minor versions of what things **will** be like

at the end...

And so, end-times prophecy is a bit like looking through a telescope. There is no 3rd dimension. You see all of these events – some close; some far away... But you can't tell how far away they are from each other...

And sometimes we view the same event, but from a different angle/perspective – we see a re-play, but it's not a separate event – it's a different perspective of the one event...

4. And the fourth reason why end times prophecies seem complex, is because of the nature of Apocalyptic literature. Such as Revelation and Daniel, where it uses word-pictures and signs/visions and symbols and numbers, to indicate certain events and lengths of time...

And lots of people guess at what these things mean, but until they actually happen, we're not going to be sure. It's the sort of thing that when the end times **do** come, and it all unfolds, it's going to dawn on us: "Ahh, that's what that image meant... God knew this was going to happen. Praise God." It'll be an assurance that, "Hey, nothing's out of control. God is in control of His history."

Alright, and so that's why it's complex. But what we **need** to know, and what Jesus **wants** us to know, is **not** (at all) complex.

I am really grateful, that somebody taught me a long time ago, that when you want to understand end-times, start with the teaching of Jesus. And if a certain interpretation does not fit with what Jesus clearly taught, then that interpretation is wrong. And even with the teachings of Jesus, some of them we **clearly** understand. Others of them are a little more 'abstract'. And so we begin with the bits that are very clear and with which there is no ambiguity, and that helps us to understand everything else. Are you with me???

Righto:

With today's Bible reading, we've got several events happening. We talked about this a few weeks ago: The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70AD. Jesus foretold this terrible time, and it **was** truly awful. And for those who were there, it would seem like it was going to be the end... But Jesus clearly said, "It is **not** the end"...

And then He talked about natural disasters and stuff...

- International wars;
- Earthquakes;
- Famines;
- Pestilences (pandemics – international diseases);
- Terrible sights;
- Cosmological signs in the heavens...

And we talked about this a few weeks ago. All of these things happened; do happen; will continue to happen...

All of these things that people get caught up in, and “Oh, it could be the end...” But it is not the end. These things happen...

And in this period, there is going to be severe persecution of the Christian church. It has happened; It is happening; it will continue to happen. And 3 weeks ago, the message was: That Disciples of Jesus gain life by endurance. Through all of these uprisings/terrors/persecutions, even if we are killed for our faith in Jesus, we shall live. We gain life by endurance...

But now today, Jesus takes it all a little bit further.

From V20-24, Jesus again foretells the destruction of Jerusalem that happened in 70AD. And we talked about that 3 weeks ago, so I'm not going to spend much time on it now. But basically, Judea rebelled against Rome, and so the super-power of Rome, crushed Judea.

But Vv 22&23, give us some fresh insight. This, was the judgment of God. Jesus said: **22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.**

Was it the vengeance of the Roman military? Yes it is, but the spiritual insight that Jesus is giving us, is that it was the vengeance of God. The Old Testament prophets had warned, that if Israel were not faithful to God, and if they rejected God, Jerusalem, and the Temple itself, would be destroyed...

And so, what we learn in V22, is “The rejection of Jesus (Son of God), brings judgment”. The Son of God came to His own people/Temple, and the whole religious establishment, roundly rejected Him.

Back in Luke 19, on Palm Sunday, Jesus is entering Jerusalem, and He looks down upon Jerusalem, and His eyes fill with tears: ⁴² “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Why did those horrible things happen to Jerusalem? It was an expression of the vengeance of God. They did not recognise the time of their visitation. Jesus came. He visited them from on High, and they rejected Him.

And so, it puts the **coming** Day of Judgment into context for us. It **also**, will be a day of vengeance, upon all who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. But for those who receive Him – for those who remain faithful to Him, it’s a day of Redemption.

And the **second** thing that Jesus reveals, (and be in no doubt, it's not a popular thing to say today), but Jerusalem will be continue to be trampled upon by the nations, **until the times of the [nations] are fulfilled.**

The Bible translation we used today, talked about “the **gentiles**” trampling on Jerusalem until the times of the **gentiles** are fulfilled. The Greek word here is actually the word ἐθνῶν, (ethnōn) (from which we get our word “ethnic”) – it simply means other nations/nationalities.

And how true it is, what Jesus said. Out of all of the people-groups in the world, who are the most hated and reviled across the world, and are trampled upon??? It's the Jewish people who cop it.

*Even in our own nation – often those who **claim** to be the most tolerant & accepting and loving people, right now, they revile the Jews, and **hate** the nation of Israel...*

Who could possibly believe, that following the October attacks in 2023, the United Nations would stomp all over Israel, and their right to national defence against war-mongering neighbours...

How can we forget the holocaust of Hitler's Germany and the execution of around about 6M Jews...

And it continues today. And I may offend some folk with this, but this also, is God's judgment... It wasn't only 70AD.

Jesus said: **and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot**

by the [Nations], until the times of the [Nations] are fulfilled.

But the lesson is, “The times of the Gentiles/Nations, **will come to an end**. And the great hope and prayer of all Christians, is that before Jesus returns, there will be a great turning toward Jesus, as God’s chosen people receive their Messiah.

So, that’s how the fall of Jerusalem fits into the return of Jesus.

It’s a reminder that it’s a Day of Judgment. It’s a reminder that to prepare for the Day of Judgment, and to avert getting caught up in “Judgment”, is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be faithful to Him and Him alone.

Now, when we get into vv25&26, some folk will conclude: “Right, well, **this** bit is the sign of the coming of Jesus”.

²⁵ “**And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,**
²⁶ **people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**”

And some folk will say, “Right, when we see that happening, that’s the time to get ready.”. And they’re right, but they’re

also wrong. And I'll tell you why. Remember I said, "Start with the Words of Jesus". Well, these are the words of Jesus. But I also said, "Start with what is really clear, and understand the rest from that."

So, let's go back to Luke 17. In Luke 17 Jesus taught us, that when He returns, it's going to be entirely unexpected. Things are going to be continuing along (as per normal), and then all of a sudden, the Son of Man will appear. Just like the Flood of Noah. Everything was continuing along (as per normal), and then the door was shut and it started to rain.

Eating; Drinking; Marrying; Being given in marriage....
Planning for the future – living for the future... And then all of a sudden, destruction arrived...

That's what it's going to be like when Jesus returns.
Everything's going to be continuing along (as per normal)
And then the Day of Judgment arrives (or the Day of Redemption if you are a Christian).

And in Luke **12**, Jesus talks about how when He comes, it will be like the unexpected appearing of a thief in the night.

⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Jesus is very clear about this. Be ready, because I'm going to come when you don't expect.

So, are all these cosmic signs and cataclysmic upheavals an indicator that Jesus is about to return? Yes and No. **No!!! Do not wait** for something so outstanding that you'll be convinced "It's about to happen. I'll get ready now.", because by then it's too late....

But "Yes, they are signs", because every time we see these things happening, (which have been happening for the last 2000 years), - every time we see them happening, they are a reminder, to be ready. Jesus is coming. And there will be no "special" indicator. These **are** the indicators.

But wow, when we read this, doesn't it describe our world right at this moment in history?

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth" We have never seen better images of what's happening in our world, and in the cosmos. And whenever something happens, it is captured in images and videos, and streamed across the globe. We see it, in almost real-time. And think of the amazing images that are captured by Hubble and the James Webb space telescope...

There **are** ²⁵ **....signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth**

And when has the world ever been more fearful? And it is a collective, world-wide fear. And what's more, it's a fear that assumes for man, the power of God. The whole climate-change band-wagon... "We have the power to change the climate", And it's driven by fear...

I don't know about you, but I am sick to death about hearing the fear of weather and climate...

I see that happening in the world, and then I turn to the Scriptures and I read:

and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,
²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.

Is not this happening right now???? Is it a sign? Yes, and No. We see it happening, so be ready. Jesus is going to appear, at a time when we do not expect.

^{V27} And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

You see "they", meaning those who have rejected Jesus, will see the Son of man appear in a cloud with power and great glory. But it's too late for them. The Appearance of Jesus is the cut-off.

But when we see the world filled with fear; When we see the distress of nations.... Don't be afraid. Don't get caught up in a fear that does not belong to the people of God... Perk-up.

“Yeah. I see these things happening. Our redemption is drawing near”.

Do you regularly read the Bible? I hope you do. If you don't, maybe that'd be a good thing to begin, in 2025. Just dwell in the Word; Take it in; Learn from the Word.... And over and over again, as we read the word of God, we will hear the command to God's faithful people, “Don't be afraid; Do not fear; Don't be anxious...”

You see, the world has every reason to fear, but not for the reasons they think.

But when they try to make you and I afraid that the climate is going to destroy the world as we know it, just remember, the climate **is** going to change alright. The world is going to be judged with fire. And there will be a new heaven, and a new earth... But this is not the domain of man. It is God's domain.

Anyway, the lesson Jesus is giving us, is “be ready”. The Kingdom of God **is** near.

When you see a tree budding after winter, that's an indicator that Summer is about to arrive. When you see all this stuff happening, it's a reminder to be ready, because the Kingdom of God is about to come.

And the words of Jesus are true – He can be completely depended upon. **Creation** is less permanent than Jesus' teaching on end times.

Investors talk about how there's no safer investment than real estate (safe as houses). But even real estate comes to an end.
33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But let's pick up V³² **Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.**

What does that mean? Some thought it meant that Jesus would return before the first generation of Christians died of old age. Well, that obviously didn't happen.

Some see "this generation" as "the human race". Humans, are not going to become extinct before Jesus returns. And "Yep, there's sense in that."

Others see it as "the **signs** of the coming of Jesus, will begin to transpire right from the beginning". And, so in the first generation of Christians, they saw and experienced catastrophes and signs that may be identified as signs of the end... And they did.

Or it could mean that when the **final** signs happen, (this generation – the generation who the final signs) is going to be around when Jesus comes. It's not going to take hundreds of years after that...

And I'm not going to pretend that I know the answer. What I **do** know, is the main message of Jesus:

- Be ready;
- Don't be afraid;
- Your redemption is drawing near;
- This isn't a time for fear and trepidation. Perk up;
- "My word is true", Jesus says. It will happen.

So, if the return of Jesus is near (and every generation should view it as if it is), what do we do while we wait?

And here, is the difference between a speculator and a Disciple.

A speculator wants to research and speculate and nut-out all the steps to the coming of Jesus... Whereas a Disciple, faithfully gets on with living for Jesus as the time draws near.

A speculator searches for hidden answers;
While a **Disciple**, faithfully trusts in their Saviour, as they serve the Lord.

Jesus said:

³⁴ "But watch yourselfs lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

Now remember, He's talking to Christians here (Disciples)... And His warning is, "Don't get weighed down by *succumbing to the intoxicating attractions of the sinful world*ⁱ. And don't get weighed down by the **cares of life**..."

BTW, This isn't a new teaching. Remember the parable of the sower... Some of the crop got up and got going, but the weeds grew up among it, and choked it out. And Jesus said, "That represents those who **are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature**ⁱⁱ."

But you might say to me, "But hang on a minute, Michael, I'm not in danger of being caught unawares, because I've already said the sinners prayer. I'm a Christian. There is no trap for me. I'm already saved..."

And we may say that, but to do so, we have to negate the power of the warning, that Jesus gives here...

Jesus very clearly says here: ³⁴ "**But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.** ³⁵ **For it will come upon ALL who dwell on the face of the whole earth.**

Except for Christians? No, not except for Christians... And that's why He says, so many times, in so many of His

teachings, and He says it again here: Stay awake!!! Watch yourselves!!!

36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

There is a relatively new teaching, which has now become the dominant teaching (coming out of the United States), and that's the teaching that "Before the big trouble, there's going to be a secret return of Jesus; and all of the Christians are going to be snatched out of the world, and people are going to be going "Oh, I wonder where they went."...

And it might be a popular teaching, but apparently Jesus didn't get the memo...

Jesus said: The day will come upon ALL who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

And we are told to pray for strength to escape/flee from these things... .

The clear picture, is **not** one of Christians getting snatched away from hard times.

It's a picture of Disciples of Jesus who endure; Praying for strength to flee from temptation – to not get caught up in the sins of the world, or the worries of the world.

It's a picture of faithfully waiting for Jesus, and faithfully living for Jesus,,,

It's a picture of perking-up — Lifting our heads with expectation...

You know, sometimes Christians just get cranky when they see the world, and the state that the world is in, and the turmoil... Don't get cranky. Perk-up..., because these are all signs of the return of Jesus. And the return of Jesus, is our redemption...

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we long for the day of Your coming.

Give us faith, to endure;
Give us hope, to fill us with joy;
Give us a watchful, prayerful expectation.

Lord,
it is evident that there are **no** signs
to indicate that Your return is far off...
Let this not be a source of fear,
But of Joyful expectation...

Our Saviour is coming.
Our redemption is drawing near.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Amen.

ⁱ Marshall, I.H. (1978) *The Gospel of Luke: a commentary on the Greek text*. Exeter: Paternoster Press (New International Greek Testament Commentary).

ⁱⁱ Luke 8:14