

The Cost Of Being A Christian

Matthew 24:3 [NIV] *“As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’”*

When we study the prophetic scriptures and the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ that He will return, we must examine the kind of love we really have for Him in our hearts.

Matthew 24:12 [NIV] *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,”*

Note it says “*most*” will lose their fervent love for their Saviour.

We should also ask ourselves, *‘what am I doing to prove that love for my Saviour?’*

What is my faith and witness of Jesus Christ actually costing me in my daily life?

It is impossible for us to dismiss the explicit teaching of our Lord Jesus concerning the end of this age and His return to the earth.

It is impossible to dismiss the emphasis of the entire Christian Bible concerning God’s plan for this earth and the consummation of all things.

A large percentage of Bible truth is actually predictive in nature, telling us what will come to pass.

Some of these passages of scripture have already been fulfilled, others remain to be fulfilled in the future.

There are many churchmen and church organisations that reject any kind of prophecy because of those who have made themselves ridiculous by insisting upon their own wild speculations and by going far beyond the bounds of interpretation set in the scriptures themselves.

Acts 1:11 [NIV] *“‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’”*

Confirmation from heaven of the return of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ when on earth taught about His return.

The apostles taught that the Saviour would come back to earth.

For centuries the Church emphasised that Jesus Christ would return to earth. As a final and ultimate hope and consolation of the persecuted Christian Church.

Matthew 24:36-39 [NIV] *“No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”*

Jesus Christ clearly states that no-one but God the Father knows the day and hour of His Second Coming. All we do know is it will come suddenly in a time we least expect it.

Despite what some think, the Christian Bible does not give us a timetable for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, only confirmation that it will happen.

The world leaders in most nations make a great deal of their desires for world peace, mostly on their terms.

But such hopes for peace are fleeting.

The leaders who call for peace and tranquillity have **not** done their homework in the study of God's Word, the Christian Bible, and what it has to say about the future.

World leaders as a rule do **not** possess spiritual insight.

Even the so-called diplomats and statesmen have little knowledge and even less control over day-to-day incidents that bring tension and violence among the nations.

In that sense, the world scene is like a game of chess among the nations. You **cannot** sit down and think the whole game through ahead of time. You do what you are forced to do one move at a time according to the moves the other person, nation, makes.

Well, there are **no** certainties, but it is sobering to realise that this present world, with its great store of bombs and weapons, is a powder keg. It would take only greed, lust for power or thoughtlessness on the part of some leader to toss the match that would set off World War Three.

Where will the blame fall, on politics, religion or morals?

All are intertwined in society, but it follows that the moral life and standards of a nation will also follow the pattern of religious instruction.

Political decisions will very likely follow the national pattern seen in the religious moral teaching and standards.

The words of Jesus Christ do give us a more sure word of prophecy, concerning His Second Coming.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's gospel account, we can see several characteristics in human society in the days just before His return.

A growing pattern of Messianic delusions.

Matthew 24:4-5, 11 [King James] *"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." ... "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."*

Many false prophets who will deceive **many**, an open season for false proclamations.

Many of these, both secular and religious, will call themselves "*saviours*."

Matthew 24:6-7 [King James] *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."*

There will be indications of increasing dependence upon military powers being used among the nations.

It is the military leaders who now hold the power behind nearly every government in the world today.

The United Nations came into being to assure that humanity had really learned their lesson after two worldwide wars.

Jesus Christ is cautioning us about the complexities of international relationships in the final years before His Second Coming.

Matthew 24:8 [King James] *“All these are the beginning of sorrows.”*

This will be the beginning of the sorrows that humans will have to face.

Matthew 24:9-10 [King James] *“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”*

An important part of totalitarian states and nations to control and regimentation of the people is the employment of disloyalty, hatred and betrayal within the family unit, [**Luke 13:12**].

Jesus Christ is making the emphasis that when this worldwide “season” for betrayal happens it will indicate that His return is near. [**Matthew 10:32-36**]

Persecution is linked with this philosophy of totalitarianism.

John 16:1-3 [King James] *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”*

The example of this is Saul [who later became Paul the apostle]. [**Acts 9:1-2; Acts 26:9-11**]

Matthew 24:12-13 [King James] *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”*

Jesus plainly links the increase of evil in the world with the spiritual falling away and coldness among God’s people. Again it is a “season” for sin and lawlessness.

I believe that Jesus meant to prompt us to personal action in our lives by all that he had already mentioned.

Brethren, what has your Christian faith and witness really cost you this last week?

You have been to church where you met your friends in pleasurable fellowship – that did **not** cost you anything.

You may have given your tithe but you still had some to put into your retirement fund – that did **not** cost you anything.

We say we believe in such things as prayer and fasting but we do **not** practice them unless it is convenient.

We are very willing to let Jesus Christ do all the suffering and all the sweating, bleeding and dying. It seems a great bargain that simply by faith we may gain the benefits of His agony and death. Then we with peace of mind go along with our own affairs and habits.

To most Christianity it is a pleasant time of fellowship with a little Biblical devotional material thrown in for good measure – what does this cost?

Matthew 24:14 [King James] *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”*

What have we done this week for this job assigned by Jesus Christ?

Revelation 12:11 [King James] *“And they [Christians – verse 10] overcame him [Satan – verse 9] by the blood of the Lamb [the sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ] and by the word [often unspoken example] of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death?”*

This is something that is really costly!

Psalms 46:9-11 [King James] *“He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”*

This is the confidence that all Christians can have in our Creator God and Saviour. [Selah – means pause and meditate on what has just been said.]

Luke 12:29-40 [NIV] *“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**”*

Very good advice for all true Christians in every generation that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples after a parable that should be read with it.

Luke 12:16-21 [NIV] *“And he told them this parable: ‘The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ **‘This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.’”***

We are not “rich towards God” unless we are preparing ourselves and all we can reach with the Gospel Message before our personal death or the day of Jesus Christ’s Second Coming.