



39

### **Inner Growth - Jesus 13**

**The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

**Matthew 1:1**

**Journey** - Luke 9:3

**Enlighten** - Job 33:30

**Saves** - Psalms 18:31, 1 Timothy 1:15

**Unity** - Ephesians 4:13

**Sinners** - Luke 5:32

Jesus continues His ministry from verses fifteen through twenty-eight, the second part of Matthew twenty-four, known as "the great tribulation." The beginning from verses twenty-nine through thirty-five, with "Christ's coming after the tribulation" section, where the sun shall become darker. In verse twenty-nine, immediately after the tribulation, Jesus teaches in verse twenty-nine that the spectacular cosmic signs will precede the appearance of Christ and give a clear warning of His return, as in verse thirty. Christ's return to earth with power and great glory will not surprise any tribulation believer who heeds the Word of God and observes the cosmic signs related to the sun, moon, stars, and the shaking of the powers of the heavens.

Jesus continues in verse thirty of His appearing in the sky after the tribulation and the cosmic signs. He will come to

judge the wicked, as in Revelation nineteen, verse eleven to chapter twenty, verse three, to deliver His faithful people and to establish righteousness on earth, as in Revelation twenty, verse four. All Christians, both the living and the dead, who came from the ground at the Rapture will return with Christ at His coming with power and great glory.

Jesus continues in verse thirty-one when the Son of God returns to earth after the tribulation, the following events will occur. God's judgment on the wicked, as in Revelation nineteen, verses eleven to twenty-one, the antichrist in Revelation nineteen, verse twenty, and Satan in Revelation twenty, verses one through three, the judgment and the separation of people on earth alive at Christ's coming. The Gathering of the saints of all ages, including saints already in heaven, as in Mark thirteen, verse twenty-seven, and those alive on earth at Christ's advent, and the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

Jesus continues in verse thirty-two, in the coming out of the leaves in the fig tree, as in Luke twenty-one, verses twenty-nine through thirty-one, which gives full detail: refer to the events occurring during the tribulation, as in verses fifteen through twenty-nine.

Jesus teaches all these signs to refer to all that will occur during the Great Tribulation, the pivotal sign being the "abomination of desolation. As the prophetic events unfold, the tribulation faithful who search the scriptures will "see all these things" and know that the Lord's return "is near, even at the doors."

Jesus continues in verse thirty-four that "this generation" may refer to the generation that begins to see the intensification of the general signs of the age, as in verses four through fourteen that consummate with the signs of the tribulation, or it may refer to God's chosen people as a race.

Jesus continues in verse thirty-six, speaking of the Father knowing the time of Christ's return. Believers should understand this referring to when Christ was on earth. Jesus has returned to His former glory, as in John seventeen, verse five, knows of His future return. Tribulation saints can tell the time of His final return by observing the signs of the tribulation that Christ has described.

Jesus continues His teaching in verse thirty-seven, concerning "the coming of the Son of man," have a double reference: to the first stage of His return at an unknown and unexpected time and to the second stage of His coming after the tribulation, when He will destroy the wicked and gather all the righteous into His kingdom, as in Revelation nineteen, verse eleven to chapter twenty verse four. We encounter this double reference when Christ describes three different categories of people in His illustration of "the days of Noe" from verses thirty-seven through thirty-four.

The three categories and their relation are as follows: The tribulation unbelievers, represented by the flood victims of Noah's day. They do not know the time of Christ's return, are unprepared, and are destroyed at the end time, as in verses thirty-eight through thirty-nine and forty-three, and Luke seventeen, verses twenty-six through twenty-eight. The second stage of His return is the one occurring after the tribulation.

The tribulation believers Noah represents: Because of the signs of the end time, tribulation saints know almost the precise time of the Lord's return and are prepared and saved. Christ returns for them at the expected time. Therefore, the second stage is Christ's return, referred to here. However, the present-day believers or church saints living before the tribulation are represented here by Jesus' disciples. They will not know the time of Christ's return to take them to heaven, as in

verses forty-two and forty-four. There will be no definite signs preceding the Lord's return for them, for Christ states that it will occur unexpectedly. Notice that Jesus likens the disciples (church saints) not to Noah (tribulation believers) but not the flood victims (compare they know not in verse thirty-nine with "ye know not" in verse forty-two). That is, the church saints will be like the flood victims in one sense: they will not know the time of Christ's return for them and will be surprised when He comes, just as the flood victims did not know the time of the flood and were surprised when it came. Therefore, the church saints must be ready at any time. Jesus continues in verse forty of Matthew twenty-four with the statement, "The one shall be taken, and the other left" come before His exhortation to church saints in verses forty-two to forty-four. Therefore, these words may refer to church saints taken out from among the wicked when Christ calls for the faithful to Him at the Rapture. He emphasizes the surprise element for the church believers. Jesus continues teaching in verse forty-two that "Watch" is a present imperative, indicating a constant observance. The reason for looking out today instead of only at the future is that present-day believers do not know when the Lord will come for them. There will be no warning signs, and they may never assume He cannot come today. They must be committed to the historical possibility of Christ returning at any time. In verse forty-two of Matthew twenty-four, Christ's warning that His disciples must always be ready must be understood as referring to His return from heaven to take church saints out of the world. Jesus explicitly states that the saints living before the tribulation will be at an unexpected time and without warning. He declares that they not only "know not" the time, but that He will return when they "think not when the Son of man cometh, as in verse

forty-four. This points to an element of surprise, amazement, and unexpectedness for the faithful at this particular return of Christ. This is sometimes referred to as the stage of Christ's second coming.

About Christ's coming with power and glory to judge the world after the tribulation, as in Matthew twenty-four, verse thirty, and Revelation nineteen, verse eleven through twenty-one, His coming will be expected, anticipated, and foreseen, as in Luke twenty-one, verse twenty-eight. The events and signs during the tribulation will create an attitude of surprise that the present-day church saints will have at the time of the Rapture.

Christ's coming after the tribulation is sometimes regarded as the second stage of Christ's second coming.

In verse forty-three, of Matthew twenty-four, Christ's coming at an unknown time is as unexpected as a thief who breaks into a house. The devoted disciple must be ready for the Lord's appearance.

Jesus further teaches in verse forty-four, that His return for the faithful of His churches at an unexpected and unknown time is not for the tribulation saints. The only way to harmonize Christ's teaching about His expected coming in verses forty-two and forty-four with His statements concerning His expected coming in verse thirty-three is to assume two phases to His second coming. The first stage involves Christ's return at an unexpected time to take believers from the earth, as in First Thessalonians four, verse seventeen, and the second stage is His coming at the end of the age at an expected time which is after the tribulation and cosmic signs, as in Matthew twenty-four, verse twenty-nine through thirty to destroy the wicked and begin His reign on earth.

This second coming of Christ is one event consisting of two phases paralleling

Christ's coming predicted in the Old Testament: The Old Testament speaks of one coming of the Messiah, but sees the fulfillment in two phases: His coming to die for sin and His coming to reign. Christ's urgent warning to be always spiritually ready for His unexpected coming (the rapture) applies to all generations of Christians before the tribulation, as in verses fifteen through twenty-nine. It is a motive for perseverance in faith.

Jesus continues in verse forty-eight concerning those within the church who are unfaithful to the Lord, Christ's unexpected return cannot be a motive for present vigilance if they believe Christ can't come now. Any professed believer living in sin who believes that Christ will delay His coming for a few years can be compared to the wicked servant. Such a person will feel no impending threat the Lord's return will overtake him or her. Significantly, Jesus associates unfaithfulness and hypocrisy with the belief and desire that Christ will delay His return.