

Truth Over Tradition

I Am Not Afraid series

by Chris Famisaran

All right, let's pray. God, we thank you for another day of life and the opportunity to come together and look at your word as we now dive into our lesson study lead and guide us in Jesus name. Amen.

I think it was in 2004, Mary Grams of Alberta, Canada was working in her garden. And as she was working, pulling roots up and digging and whatnot, her wedding band fell off into the abyss of the ground. And for I believe it was 13 years, she could not find that wedding band. Everyone tried to look, everyone tried to dig up, but thus the wedding band was gone. Perhaps they thought maybe during the rototilling or as they were digging out, it just disappeared. Now, of course, it's a wedding band. Guys, have you ever lost your wedding band and you tried to replace it unsuspectingly? I've never done that, that I can recall. But she went to the store, she got a cheaper looking wedding band. Hopefully her husband would never figure it out. And then I think it was in 2017, I think it was her daughter in law, Colleen was digging up in the same garden patch and lo and behold, she pulls a carrot up. It was the most ugly, weird looking carrot.

But as she inspected closer, what did she find? The wedding band. She goes to her husband, does this look familiar to you? And he started, I think he started to chuckle and he said, yeah, that's my mom's wedding band. So fortunately enough, they were able to give the wedding band back to Mary. And unfortunately, though her husband, I believe had passed some years ago, he was not able to see what had truly happened. She chose to wear it though, as a memory. Unexpectedly, what had happened? She had searched and searched, wondering, where could it be? Will I ever find it?

Today we're going over a sermon I've entitled Truth Over Tradition. And we're going to be talking about the second Coming. And I'm going to put a caveat, this topic alone we could spend a month on, right? So bear with me if I don't

get to your favorite passage. Today we're going to be focusing primarily here on Matthew 24 and a few other verses.

But what are some things that we kind of think over about the Second Coming? You know, We've tried to find exactly when Jesus is going to return, but Jesus never gave us a specific date. He gave us a Savior to follow. Amen.

And another thing is the signs are the most important thing. Other things, if things get bad, God has lost control. Some other thoughts that we've thought of as being ready means being scared. What's the theme of our series? I'm not afraid. Okay? I need to fix myself before coming to Jesus. We'll talk a little bit more about that today. Towards the end, we're going to. Readiness is information or the delay means Jesus isn't coming. Deception always looks obviously wrong. Watching means waiting passively.

So as we go through, let's open up the book. Let's go to Matthew 24. Okay, we're going to look at a couple passages. I hope. I hope we can get to the other two. Buckle in. But Matthew 24 is a verse where. Or chapter I should say, where Jesus actually intentionally talks about what did the second coming look like? And so we find ourselves... Jesus had been in the temple. Remember the series on the. The woes that we talked about a couple months ago? This happens right after. Okay, so Jesus finds himself in the temple, and he's walking with his disciples.

So actually Jesus, verse 1. Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him and called his attention to its buildings.

And so I'm guessing they probably thought, what a magnificent structure. That's awesome. It's amazing.

And then he says, do you see all these things? He says or asks. Truly, I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another. Every one will be thrown down.

Okay, so let's take a time out right there. The temple was the focal point in many respects for the believers there. In that time, you went there to worship, to take a sacrifice, and to think, how could this temple, brick by brick, be broken down? So some of them had to pause and scratch their heads?

Verse 3. As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. Tell us, they said, when this will happen and. And what will be the signs of your coming of the end of the age?

Have you ever had a question in class that you felt like you were too embarrassed to ask, so you got to wait until after so you don't look dumb in front of anybody else? All right, I've done that before. Okay, so you know, the disciples, they've been walking with Jesus for almost three years, roughly three years. And they figured, okay, I'm comfortable enough to ask this question in front of them, but not with anybody else. Right? And Jesus goes on, so he shares how. What is next? But he gives them an interesting answer and he says, watch out that no one deceives you. Okay? Watch out now kind of going back.

Okay, Imagine being the disciples. And Jesus says, this temple is about to be destroyed. What if hypothetically, okay, what if this sanctuary, this church, just disappears? Or maybe a meteor just comes down and destroys it. Okay, what will we do next? We what? Rebuild. Okay, but what about the next week? What about the next Sabbath? We can't rebuild it overnight. Would we gather somewhere else? Okay, good. I like that answer. What else is the church? This building? No. Now, don't get me wrong. I think that this is a very spiritual sacred space. Okay, but where's the church? It's in here. It's in here. It's us. Okay? The church will survive, building or no building. Amen.

So Jesus then goes on and he says, don't be, What? Deceived. The Wall Street Journal, they came out with an article, and it said, would you invest with someone who guarantees a 50% annual return with no risk of loss? Okay, those of you who know a little bit about money. What are you doing? You're so skeptical right now. You're just chuckling. Okay. I've had to learn a little bit more about retirement because, well, I'm getting older, and I didn't realize it's kind of important as early on as much as possible. So those of you who are maybe young professionals graduating when you get retirement, put as much in as you can, okay? Because the more you put in earlier, the better return you will have. Unless, of course, you know, the stock market or whatever completely tanks again. But you'll get it back. So they said, would you reply to an offer of you sharing a lost treasure in a faraway country? Have you ever received an email from a Nigerian prince? And I got my first one of those,

maybe when I was 16 or 17. I thought, this is amazing. Fortunately enough, I didn't reply, nor have I ever replied. But scams, they come and go, they morph themselves, but they're roughly the same thing. Would you buy a Picasso or a Dolly from a late night infomercial? How many of you bought something from the GVC? Hmm. But many people do fall for scams like these. Why? Are the victims uneducated, unintelligent, or constitutionally naive? Unfortunately for all of us, the answer is no. Okay? Even people at the top of their professions can be taken in. For instance, several cabinet members several years ago were convinced to join the board of Theranos, whose founder, Elizabeth Holmes, you remember this. Was eventually convicted of fraud. Wealthy art collectors had bought phony pieces. You know, according to the FBI, phishing scams led to those losses of more than 43 billion between 2016 and 2021. And so researchers get took why can't we get? Why we get taken in and what do we do about it?

Two researchers wrote, frauds are ever evolving and can be complex and sophisticated. But even simple ploys can take us in. Most of the scams today people fall for today are not really new. There are remixes and mashups of tricks that have worked for generations. Taking steps in to avoid deception means we have to abandon the myth that only the gullible can be taken in. There are scams out there waiting for each of us, no matter how sophisticated we think we are, rather than it can't happen to me. Your mantra should be accept less and check more.

Don't raise your hands. But how many of you have been scammed? I will admit I've been scammed. Once there was a person who called. I can't remember exactly the circumstances, if they emailed or sent a bill or whatever, but they said that we owed. I think it was like 180, \$200. Okay? Which isn't a lot, but then it is. And I was arguing, like, when did you send this? When did you call this or that? And I finally sent the bill, or gave it to the bill to my treasurer, and she paid it and then realized, wait a minute, that wasn't real. So well done, buddy. You got us once.

And then a couple of months later, must have been from the same group. Maybe they tried to get us round two. But the way this person talked to me, it was actually creepy. This person kept calling me my pastor, my. My pastor, my pastor. And I'm thinking, I have no idea who this person is. And so I simply

said, I'm not interested, and just nicely hung up. Scams are out there. People are vying for your attention. They're trying to influence you. Have you ever been deceived? Hopefully not.

So Jesus is pointing out that we're all going to be influenced. You're being influenced, whether by your family member, by the news, whoever. Someone may try to lead us astray. Question I have for you is, who has influence over you? Who wants to influence you away from Jesus? What are the biggest influences in your life? Is it your family? Is it your spouse? Is it your job? Is it YouTube? Is it Instagram? Is it the news? Is it the Bible? Who or what has influence in your life? The biggest influence and the best influence that we can have is Jesus. Okay? If we choose to faithfully follow Jesus through scripture, through having conversations with others, with prayer, to know Jesus, and this is gonna be a focal point especially for Today and next week, no matter what, I pray and hope that above all things, may your eyes be resting on Jesus from now until, well, forever. Okay?

The reality too is Jesus did not give a clock that had a countdown of when Jesus was going to return. Jesus, he didn't share a specific plan with the disciples. He prepared them to face the coming days of adversity with faithfulness. Encourage. Okay. Jesus didn't automatically outline everything as far as what was to come. He gave them some general principles and as we're going to read, he shares some over high points that will help to encourage them in the coming days. That may be rather challenging. So let's go to verse nine. Okay, let's go to verse nine. And we're going to share a couple of things. These verses, there are certainly certain other passages throughout scripture that align with and share the same thing essentially.

Okay, Starting at verse nine, then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death. And you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time, many will return away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people because of the increase of wickedness. Love of most will grow what cold anybody knows, anybody who has a cold heart, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And I want to especially focus on this too. And this gospel of the kingdom will be what to where as a what to all nations or all over the world. And then the end will, what? [never end]. Okay.

And so some of us are wondering, God, you said this a couple thousand years ago, where are you at? In some ways while I think it's challenging because we want Jesus to return and to take us home. Because this world is totally messed up. Amen. Every day that Jesus doesn't come is also an opportunity for somebody also to return their life to Jesus. Okay, so it's a hard kind of bittersweet truth. We want Jesus and yet we want our family, our friends and people that we don't know that maybe we'll get to know and love and care for. Also we want them to be a part of the kingdom. And so verse 14 kind of helps us to have this framework of why has Jesus not returned yet? It's because he's also waiting.

But as for that day, okay, now let's actually jump to verse 36. What does this actually look like? Okay, verse 36. But about that day or hour, no one what we don't know, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but if only The Father.

Okay, let's jump to verse 42.

Therefore, keep what. Because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this. If the owner of the house had known at what time or night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you don't expect him.

The truth is, we don't know exactly when Jesus will come or when Jesus will return. But Jesus causes us to what, Wants us to be faithful, to be prepared. So number one, before you know anything, before I think, before we even search for the signs, is what? Know Jesus. Okay? Know Jesus.

And I say that because if we know Jesus, we can have trust and confidence that no matter what happens, we can have faith. Those of you who maybe have a family member that you love that you've known for years or especially your spouse, okay? When you get married, you think you know that person, and maybe you do. But guess what? As you get older and as you mature, does your spouse stay the same person? No. Okay. When Lisa and I got married, we weren't. We were not even. Our brains were not fully formed yet. And after many years, in a couple of weeks, I will have managed to keep married. I've managed to convince her to stay married for 19 years. Yes, we

change. My wife is not the same, nor am I, thank God. She's made me a better person. But I've also noticed that as she grows, she's changed. Well, but as life continues, you don't stay the same person. And I don't think God wants us to stay static. God wants us to learn, to grow, to be better informed. I would not be successful without her, that's for sure.

And the longer you spend time with somebody, the better you get to know them. So same thing. When you want to know Jesus, life gets better. Maybe sometimes challenging, but we have the confidence and the joy and the strength in Jesus that no matter what will happen to us, if we have faith in Jesus, we can overcome what? Anything.

So how many of you have been waiting for Jesus? How many have been waiting for Jesus for more than a year? 5 years? 7 years? 15 years? 20 years? 30 years? 40 years? 50? Anybody been waiting for 50? 60. Okay, we got one more. 60? 65. Okay, some of us have maybe been waiting for six months, a couple weeks. The point is, though, we're all waiting. And the beauty of this also is that as a church, we can wait together to bring comfort, to be Accountable and to strengthen one another. Okay, now I want to go back actually, though, to verse.

Okay, so we don't know exactly when Jesus is going to return, but let's go to verse. Let's go back to verse five and remember how Jesus said, don't be deceived. Okay, so let's.... From that context, verse 5. For many will come, come in my name, claiming I am what, the Messiah? And will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

Does that sound familiar? But see to it that you are not. What? Alarmed. Such things must happen. But the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All of these are the first beginnings of birth pangs.

This passage, does this sound familiar? Are we at war right now? Are there earthquakes, famines, pestilences? Now, to be fair, though, have these things been always happening? I sometimes wonder, has the world really changed with all of this? Or is it just because we're able to capture and record things better? I don't know. I know, though, that these were things. These instances

were also occurring, even for the disciples. And imagine their frustration or maybe their sadness. I don't know. When they passed, at least they had the hope of Jesus, but they did not see the return of Jesus. An opportunity that I hope that we will be able to experience in our lifetime.

Now, the last part. All of these are the beginning of birth pains for moms out there. When you gave birth to your child or your children, I'm not going to ask you to relay that experience again. But you knew that you were going to bear a baby eventually, right? You didn't know when exactly. Unless, of course, you planned a C section, I'm sure. But when your baby came, did you have indications? The baby shifted, your water broke, you had contractions, and you knew it would be soon. And you should do what either a get to the hospital or home, if you're gonna have a home birth. Amen. And so you knew something was happening. Sometimes it's faster. Sometimes your kid may make you wait a whole day like some people. Sorry, Mom. Or it could be quick, we don't know. But when you laid eyes on your child, what was that experience like? Was it utter exhaustion? Probably. Or was there joy? And imagine all of the pain that you experienced. Was it fun? Absolutely not. But the joy that you received as you saw your baby, how did that make you feel? It made you feel great. And I'm sure you knew a love that you had Never experienced before. Amen. There's something about seeing your child for the first time. A love that you will die for your child.

Now, as we're living in this time, it feels like there's birth pains, there's contractions. We don't know when, but we know it's soon. What does the second coming look like? Okay, I want to jump over now to Matthew.... Sorry. To First Thessalonians, chapter four. First Thessalonians, chapter 4. It's going to be to the right. Okay, first Thessalonians, chapter four. And I want to look at verse 13. Okay, verse 13.

So also view the signs as markers. We look at these things around us, we see them as markers. When we hear of wars and rumors of wars, when you hear of famines and earthquakes, people trying to be deceived, we see them as signs, as markers.

Okay, verse 13. Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be. What? Uninformed. About those who sleep in death.

For as Adventists, we believe that when we die, we simply rest. We go to sleep so that you do not grieve like the rest of who? Mankind. If you don't have the hope in Jesus, what hope do you have? Okay. It's the end. It's the end. Who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again. And so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him according to the Lord's Word.

We tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will encourage. Sorry. Will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise.

What? Oh, you mean we don't get the first dibs? All right. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. That's beautiful.

How many of you have a loved one that has passed either recently or a long time ago? You miss their smile, their warmth, their hug, how they showed up for you, how they cared for you, the joy that they brought you. I long for that day. I long to be able to see some of my family, some of my closest friends, and they get to go first, praise the Lord.

But the last part here, though, is verse 18. Therefore, what? Encourage one another. I want you to turn to your neighbor, and I want you to encourage them right now and say, Jesus is coming soon. Okay, go ahead. Turn to your neighbor. Continue to do that. I want you. I want you. Sometimes just to surprise somebody, Jesus is coming soon. Encourage one another. Encourage one another when they're having a bad day and remind them, this is not the end. This is not everything. This too will pass.

One of my favorite songs from one of my favorite bands, Switch Foot, is this. The Shadow proves the sunshine. And sometimes a shadow or a cloud or something of darkness or of rain may be dumping pouring rain on you, but on the other side of that cloud is sunshine. Or maybe you go to bed and it's dark and dreary and you wonder, how am I going to make it? The sun will rise in the morning, and until that day have hope that when Jesus returns, it will be worth

it. But encourage one another. The other thing that we can take from this passage is that the Second Coming, is it going to be confined to a couple of places? No. The Second Coming will be a global event that you cannot miss. I hope that it will be the best fireworks show ever. It will be real, it will be literal. It will be personal. Everybody, as scripture also says, every eye will see and every knee will bend. It will be visible. It will be audible. You will not be able to escape it. I cannot understand the science behind that, but God is God. God will work that out.

And the last thing especially I want to take from this is encourage one another. Now, if we love Jesus, should we be scared of Jesus coming? No. Let me ask you this now. If Jesus were to come in, let's see, I got about three minutes. If Jesus were to come in three minutes, how do you feel right now? Does that feel extremely petrifying or extremely like you just can't get out of here? You're trying to restrain yourself in your seat, right? We all have a beautiful opportunity to meet our Lord and Savior. And if you're feeling like I'm not ready, guess what? We all start somewhere. Do you go to the gym fit or to get fit? You go to get fit. Okay. Do you come to church because you want to know Jesus? Do you go to church because you're saved and you're good to go on your own accord? No, no, it's nonsense, okay? We go to church because we want to learn more about Jesus, to know and to be a part of a body who is waiting patiently? And maybe you're wondering, well, I don't know how I'm going to give you an opportunity later, okay? So the last thing is, just because we are watching and waiting doesn't mean that we should be passive. Okay, as we talked about in verse 14, where is the message supposed to go throughout the world? How is that supposed to happen? Jesus has called us, as Paul says in second Corinthians 5, to be ambassadors. So we'll talk more about that next week. But just because we're waiting doesn't mean that we sit silently and just wait and twiddle our thumbs up. God called us to love God with everything and to love our neighbor as what? Ourselves. We don't give that up just as we're waiting. The world ending soon, why bother? No, Jesus wants us to be faithful towards till the end. So be proactive in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

I take that back. I have one more passage I want to share. Okay, after Jesus returns, let's go to First Corinthians 15. So if you're in Thessalonians, jump a little bit over to the left. It's after Romans and Acts.

Okay. First Corinthians, chapter 15, First Corinthians, chapter 15.

All right, we all there? Okay. I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Meaning those broken body of ours and everything. We're gonna be changed. God's gonna give us an upgrade to our bodies.

Verse 51. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We're all not gonna sleep, but we will be changed. Meaning not all of us are gonna die when Jesus returns, but we will be changed. Verse 52. In a flash and a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we, we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. Meaning God's going to renew us.

God's going to change us. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory. You remember in the Garden of Eden, Genesis chapter three, There's a promise in verse 15, death will be defeated. Jesus not only did that on the cross, but also in the future where he will change those who have died and give them, breathe into them new life. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Verse 55. Whereof death is your victory, Whereof death is your sting. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, he gives us victory through who Our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

So, kind of going back to the fact of the promise that we'll be reunited with our loved ones. I cannot wait to be reunited with my loved ones, my friends, the ones that I miss the most. And this broken down body is going to get an upgrade. Praise the Lord. Death does not have the final answer. And so question right now, are we watching for the signs of Jesus return or are we watching for the Savior? Which one's more important? That's a trick question. We should be number one. Watch and know the Savior and as you do so, you'll be able to see the signs. Does that make sense?

Reflect on this. Okay. Are you more interested though in looking for the signs, or are you more interested in being shaped, informed and developed by the Savior? Is maybe another way. I could also ask that. This week I want you to draw closer to Jesus. Get to know Jesus, fall in love with Jesus and encourage

one another, as scripture also tells us to do. And while we wait till Jesus returns, steward what God has blessed you with and steward it well.

Father in heaven, thank you for your graciousness, for your love and your soon return. Lord, we don't know exactly when you will return, but we know that we have a promise and a future in you. And Lord, where there are days that may be challenging, where God, if it might be, if our faith is going to be called into question, give us the strength to stand firm, to be faithful and honor you. And may your will be done. Until that day, Lord, help us to be beacons of light, of hope. May the smiles that we share with others inform others and that they desire to follow you. Thank you for your goodness. In Jesus name, everybody said amen,

Grace and peace, everyone.