

“Be ready!” Jesus had just shut down the temple and exposed the hypocrisy of the authorities. He was done with the temple and its leaders. As we were walking out of the temple complex, we couldn’t help but marvel at the magnificent structures. We pointed out these beautiful and immense buildings to Jesus. He stopped and looked at us. Jesus said, **“Do you see all these buildings? Not one stone will be left on another. All of it will be torn down!”** We were stunned. Some of the largest stones were 10 feet high, 15 feet thick, and 45 feet long, weighing 1.2 million pounds—that was one stone. How on earth would such stones be torn down?! These giant walls felt so safe, secure, and permanent.

When we got to the Mount of Olives, we paused and looked back at the temple across the Kidron valley. We asked Jesus, **“When will all this happen? What will be the sign of your presence and the end of the age?”** Jesus looked at us and said, **“Watch out so you are not deceived.”** He warned us that many political leaders would arise pretending to have the answers and the solutions to all human problems. He said wars must not alarm us—nations would fight with each other, food shortages would devastate cities, plagues and diseases would make people sick, and the foundations of human civilization would be shaken. Jesus said, **“All these things are just the beginning of the birth pains.”** These were merely the earliest signs that the end was coming and a new time was around the corner. He said that in the midst of all this that we would be betrayed, oppressed, and even killed. **“All nations will hate you because of me.”** This hatred and oppression would lead some of us to stumble, turning to betrayal and hatred ourselves—lawlessness would increase and love would grow cold in many. But Jesus said, **“The one who patiently endures to the end will be saved.”**

Jesus then told us the final signs leading up to this end. The final sign was something detestable occupying the holy place that is reserved for the Creator alone. This would reveal that the Creator had removed his protection from a person, people, nation, or city and its end was at hand. As soon as we saw this sign we must flee the cities and all human solutions and head to the mountains, not going back for our possessions or anything. For great oppression and suffering capable of destroying **“all flesh”** was coming. The only hope was that the Creator himself would intervene and make it stop, bringing his protection back upon his creation. False christs and messiahs—political leaders promising to fix everything—would arise. But we must **not** trust in them. The collapse of our lives, nation, and civilization was at hand and those leaders would **not** be able to stop it, despite their efforts and promises. The collapse would be so devastating that it would feel like heaven and earth itself were being destroyed. But then in the midst of the collapse of human endeavors and projects, the Son of Man—the faithful people of the Creator—would be elevated and lifted up above the chaos. And then finally, all those chosen by the Creator would be gathered into his care.

This was the pattern and Jesus told us, **“Learn from the trees!”** We could watch the signs in the trees and know that summer was coming, likewise, we could watch these signs—that he had just given us—show up in our lives, nation, and civilization and know that the end was coming. Jesus told us that **“all these things”** would happen in our generation. The end would come in **our** generation—to us, to **our** nation and civilization. But Jesus insisted that his words would **“never pass away.”** Therefore, this pattern would continue to play out in every generation and nation to come. Jesus told us, **“No one knows the day or hour, except the Father himself.”** He said these times of the in-breaking presence of the Son of Man would be like the days of Noah. In Noah’s time, people were just living their selfish lives—**“eating, drinking, and marrying”**—and then suddenly the flood waters came and destroyed everyone. The presence of the Son of Man would follow the same pattern. Two people would be working together and then suddenly one would be taken and one would be left. Therefore, Jesus said to us, **“Be ready!”** We could not know the exact day or hour this would happen. We needed to stay ever vigilant and watchful. Like someone breaking into our house to steal, this could happen at any time. Again Jesus told us, **“Be ready!”**

Jesus sure was right this was happening in **our** generation. In fact, we saw one manifestation of it unfold that very same week. The authorities went to war against Jesus. Jesus had already revealed to us that the detestable things of men were residing in the holy place reserved for the Creator alone—the temple had been abandoned by the Creator and his protection had been removed from our people. So Jesus fled to the mountains, to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. There he **prayed** diligently, telling us to **“be ready”** and to pray ourselves. Instead we fell asleep. Then the betrayal happened. Judas, one of our own, showed up and handed Jesus over to the authorities. We weren’t **“ready”** and we fell into fear. We first tried to fight, then we fled into the darkness, all abandoning Jesus. But Jesus did not let his love grow cold as we had. He was **“ready.”** He had fled to the refuge of the Creator’s Word in prayer and was filled with faith, hope, and love. The crowds turned on Jesus and followed after false political leaders and false political hopes. Jesus was whipped, beaten, tortured, and then nailed to a cross—it was horrible oppression beyond belief. But Jesus stayed the course. He refused to let the hatred change him. He refused to listen to those urging him to come down from the cross. Jesus continued to stay **“ready”** and faithful, trusting in his heavenly Father. He died and was buried. And then on the third day the Creator intervened and raised Jesus from the dead, lifting him up on the clouds. And then the Lord sent out his messengers to gather us back into the fold. **This** was the pattern and it would strike again like lightning. We needed to **“be ready.”**

“Be ready!” You do not know the day and hour that difficulties are going to strike. It will happen to you—probably many, many times in your life. It may be as small as a conflict with family or friends. It may be a betrayal at work. It may be the loss of something precious to you. It may be the collapse of this city and nation. Big or small, these moments are coming. Jesus has given us the signs to watch for and they are already happening all around us—conflicts, struggles, diseases, traumas, upheavals, and abandoning the Creator. So whether it is a tiny flood at work or in your family, or a giant flood that takes down this whole nation—**“be ready!”** It is **all** going to collapse and be destroyed—your life will be destroyed, your family will be destroyed, this nation will be destroyed. **“It will all be torn down.”** The greatest danger is being led astray by your ego, by the people of the world around you, and by political leaders making promises to avoid the collapse, fix things, and make it better. We must trust in our heavenly Father alone and follow the word of his Son Jesus alone. He alone can bring us through the flood.

Noah was **“ready”** with his ark and so he was saved when everyone else was destroyed. We need to be **“ready”** and on our ark through prayer, through clinging to the Creator’s Word in our hearts or we will be destroyed. We have to endure patiently in love to the very end. If our love grows cold we will be lost. If we allow the hate around us to make us hateful we will be lost. **“Be ready!”** Wars and conflicts are coming. Food shortages and hard times are coming. Earthquakes and upheavals are coming. Pandemics and sicknesses are coming. Persecution and oppression are coming. Rejection, betrayal, and hatred are coming. Seductive political leaders with many promises are coming. How will you handle these things? Will you stumble and fall away? Will you meet hatred with hatred? Will you meet betrayal with betrayal? Or will you stay faithful and strong in **love**, turning to your Father like Jesus? **“Be ready!” “The one who patiently endures to the end will be saved.” Amen.**