Sermon for February 21, 2021 BMZ Church

Series: "HEAVEN and HELL"

Text: Matthew 24:1-14; 32-36; 42-44

Title: "Pack Your Bags: Part 1"

Introduction: GOOD MORNING, BMZ! Glad you’re WITH US as we BEGIN our SERIES about ***“HEAVEN and HELL: The NARROW ROAD”!*** THIS LIFE will END for EACH of us … WHEN? The PURPOSE of this SERIES is to give a BIBLICAL PICTURE of LIFE … HERE and ETERNITY.

Do you know WHO might have a pretty good idea about WHEN THE END is coming? JESUS! In THIS SERIES … What JESUS SAID about END TIMES and what The BIBLE (Specifically the NEW TESTAMENT) SAYS about The END TIMES. **We could listen to all those "experts" out there with their charts and graphs and private jets they use to fly all over the world and warn people about how many days they have left** ... BUT, I think we’ll listen to GOD’S WORD instead! TODAY … LISTENING to JESUS!

Today’s TITLE is *“PACK YOUR BAGS”.* Although we do NOT get to TAKE ANYTHING WITH US … we NEED to be READY!

IF you have your BIBLE … MATTHEW 24. JESUS talks about RETURNING.

Have you ever had one of those moments when you said, **"I Never Saw It Coming!"?** Maybe it was a surprise party or a car accident or an illness or an injury... For me, I was a senior in high school, and I was working at Burger King. It was a Friday night and I had to close the store. I was a shift manager, so I was the last one there and I left for home somewhere around 3:30AM. We lived out in the country outside of Neenah. As I was headed home, driving through a sort of neighborhood, I simultaneously felt a jolt, heard a crash, and saw the antlers... I watched the deer skid across the road; jump up and take off between a couple of houses. I never saw it coming! I had no time to react!

I'm pretty sure that is how it's going to be when Jesus comes again. That's exactly what we are going to say (BELIEVERS and NON-BELIEVERS) ... **"I never saw it coming!"** As we do this series, we are doing it under the assumption that the Bible is God's Word and that it's True. We believe, as developing followers of Jesus Christ, that Jesus died on a cross, was buried, came back to life, went to heaven and is COMING AGAIN! When Jesus COMES AGAIN, it WILL BE LIKE the DEER jumping out of that DITCH and in front of my CAR! That MIGHT BE our CONVERSATION in HEAVEN ... ***"WHAT were YOU DOING WHEN JESUS CAME?" "I was taking the KIDS to school..." "I was MILKING cows" "I was getting ready to take an EXAM and begging Jesus to come again before I had to take it!"*** AWESOME!

MATTHEW 24: We are going to START with verse 32 ... FROM THERE, we will BOUNCE AROUND the CHAPTER over the NEXT TWO WEEKS.

Here we go … MATTHEW 24:32-33 = *32“Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near.* JESUS SAYS, just LIKE WHEN you see a TREE BUDDING and REALIZE WINTER is OVER (I’m looking forward to that!), IN the SAME WAY … *33In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

“ALL THESE THINGS” is WHAT WE are going to SPEND MOST of our TIME ON THIS WEEK and NEXT. WHAT were "ALL THESE THINGS"?

JESUS TALKS about “ALL THESE THINGS” throughout MATTHEW 24. Jesus says He would GIVE SOME SIGNS for US to KNOW the SEASON was getting CLOSER … BUT He would NOT TELL the DISCIPLES (or anyone else) WHEN he was COMING BACK.

Skip down to verse 36… MATTHEW 24:36 = *36“However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. [[2]](#footnote-2)* SEE! Did you SEE what JESUS SAID? He said, ***"...NO ONE KNOWS the DAY or HOUR..."*** NO ONE KNOWS! That means, in the Greek, ***"NO ONE!"***

BOOK written in the 1980s titled, ***"88 Reasons Why the Rapture will Occur in 1988".*** It was a BEST-SELLER ... until 1989! STILL AVAILABLE in PDF!

NO ONE KNOWS! NOT ANYONE who STUDIES END TIMES for YEARS and has CHARTS and GRAPHS from ANY PART of the WORLD. NONE of US. NOT JESUS or the ANGELS. JUST GOD! Jesus said, ***"ONLY the FATHER KNOWS!”***

That means I WILL NOT PREDICT the DATE of the END of the WORLD DURING THIS SERIES … or EVER! BUT what we WILL DO is STUDY our BIBLES to FIND OUT what JESUS SAID about the RIGHT “SEASON” for the END TIMES and WHAT to be DOING UNTIL THEN! Here's what I DO KNOW … my FEARLESS PREDICTION … **We are CLOSER right NOW to JESUS coming BACK than EVER BEFORE!**

MAYBE SOME of you are THINKING I’m going to ATTEMPT to SCARE YOU into BELIEVING what I BELIEVE. I WON’T. We are SIMPLY going after BIBLICAL TRUTHS. And I can NOT DECIDE FOR YOU what you will BELIEVE NOR HOW you will RESPOND in THIS LIFE. I WILL TELL YOU that ACCORDING to JESUS, this LIFE will END for EACH of US. NO ONE is EXEMPT. And JESUS SAYS we will ALL LIVE ON through ETERNITY. AND it is OUR CHOICE WHERE we SPEND FOREVER!

**LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 24:**

Okay, Matthew 24 … BACK to the BEGINNING of the CHAPTER. Let’s FIND OUT if what JESUS SAID would the SIGNS of the “SEASON” are HAPPENING NOW…

MATTHEW 24:1-3 = *As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings. 2But he responded, “Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!” 3Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, “Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?”[[3]](#footnote-3)* OK … Write this down…

**#1 = What Jesus Said WOULD Happen**

Remember, the TEMPLE was covered in GOLD and BEAUTIFUL. (PICTURE?) The TEMPLE BUILDINGS in Jerusalem were UNMATCHED ... NONE of those type BUILDINGS up in GALILEE where they were from. So, the Disciples ask, ***"When is that Temple thing going to happen, Jesus? And (bonus question), what will signal your return and the end of the world?"***

JESUS does NOT ANSWER the TEMPLE QUESTION, but He DOES MAKE STATEMENTS about the END TIMES ... JESUS makes SPECIFIC STATEMENTS to HELP us RECOGNIZE the SEASON of JESUS’ RETURN …

MATTHEW 24:4 = *4Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you,[[4]](#footnote-4)*

**5 Things Jesus Said Would Happen (1 for This Week 😊):**

* **DECEPTION** -

DECEPTION = MISLED. Been HAPPENING in the WORLD since GENESIS 3 **(*"Go ahead and eat the fruit EVE; you won't die."***EVE DIED!). WHO is Jesus TALKING TO? His DISCIPLES! His DISCIPLES were the ones Jesus APPOINTED to START the CHURCH!

Jesus is TALKING to THE CHURCH! ***"Watch out that no one deceives YOU, CHURCH / EKKLESIA!"*** That's US! JESUS TELLS US in The End Times there is NOT just going to be DECEPTION in the WORLD; There is going to be DECEPTION in the CHURCH!

MATTHEW 24:5 = *5for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many.[[5]](#footnote-5)* In the NEWS PERIODICALLY ... CLAIMING to be JESUS! **Nov 18, 2011 – The Idaho man charged with trying to assassinate President Obama claims he is the second coming of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus CLARIFIES later in the chapter… MATTHEW 24:23-27 = *23“Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it. 24For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. 25See, I have warned you about this ahead of time. 26“So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it! 27For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

IOW, Jesus says, *“WHEN I COME AGAIN; there will be NO DOUBT IT'S ME!”*

So, in the Church, there will be DECEPTION ... Today, What the Bible calls 'deception', the Church calls "tolerance"! We must be TOLERANT of everything and everyone... I've read the Bible / NT. God is NOT TOLERANT of SINFULNESS. GRACE-FILLED, but NOT TOLERANT of SIN. But the Church is trying to be!

53% of AMERICANS BELIEVE if a person is GOOD, they will go to HEAVEN. For whatever reason, people THINK GOD GRADES on a CURVE, and we have a RELATIVE or friend who is REALLY BAD, so I should be OK! I DO some RIGHTEOUS ACTS / GODLY STUFF, BUT the Bible says our ***"righteous acts are like filthy rags!"*** Jesus says, ***"No one is good except for God!"*** GOOD people do NOT GO to HEAVEN. SAVED PEOPLE go to HEAVEN! NOT very TOLERANT, but it's TRUE!

43% of "Born Again Christians" do not believe it matters what faith you follow because they all teach close to the same thing about LIFE and ETERNITY. FALSE! It sounds good, but it's deceptive! If you believe that, you believe that out of ignorance... You have NOT STUDIED The BIBLE nor WORLD RELIGIONS.

**BUDDHISTS** = The GOAL in life is to CEASE to EXIST! Hmmm ... that's NOT in the BIBLE. The BIBLE TEACHES we LIVE FOREVER!

**MUSLIMS** = Sura 4:34 in the Koran says if a WIFE does NOT OBEY her HUSBAND, loosely translated, he CAN and SHOULD BEAT HER. Again, NOT FOUND in the BIBLE.

**MORMONS** = If you’re a woman, you DESIRE to go to HEAVEN ... BTW, ONLY IF your HUSBAND ALLOWS you IN ... and, you will be ETERNALLY PREGNANT and POPULATE your OWN PLANET TOGETHER! Women? Sign up for that? NOT in the BIBLE!

**HINDUS** = REINCARNATION ... If you are GOOD in LIFE, you MOVE UP from MOUSE to DOG to HUMAN to COW! Any move down, you become a CAT! In INDIA, people won't eat COWS! They Worship COWS! They DRINK the PEE! That is NOT in the BIBLE!

You can NOT SAY ALL RELIGIONS are TEACHING CLOSE to the SAME THING. Someone's RIGHT and someone's WRONG ...

**57%** of EVANGELICAL CHURCH MEMBERS say MULTIPLE RELIGIONS lead to ETERNITY with GOD. BECAUSE ***"Pastor Stan, isn't a little ARROGANT to say Christianity is the ONLY WAY to heaven?"***

I GUESS you COULD call it ARROGANT ... But THINK of it LIKE THIS ... *“STAN, HOW do I GET to LACROSSE?”* ANSWER: Go NORTH on HWY 61. *"Well, I think that's ARROGANT to tell me I CAN’T GO SOUTH and get to LACROSSE. WHAT IF I SINCERELY BELIEVE I can GO SOUTH and GET to LACROSSE?”* It does NOT MATTER if you are “SINCERE” in your BELIEF. IF you go SOUTH, you will *"SINCERELY NEVER GET to LACROSSE!”* **57% of PEOPLE who CLAIM a FAITH in JESUS!**

JESUS is the ONLY WAY to get to HEAVEN! *"That's ARROGANT!"* Yep! ALL the OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS CLAIM THEY are the ONLY WAY as well. Let's ask THEM to be TOLERANT! IF you BELIEVE there are MANY WAYS to get to ETERNITY in GOD’S PRESENCE / HEAVEN … MY QUESTION is: ***What do you do with JESUS and the NEW TESTAMENT?*** Christians? BECAUSE JESUS was CLEAR …

JOHN 14:6 = *6Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.[[7]](#footnote-7)* Is JESUS a LIAR?

ACTS 4:12 = (PETER) *12There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.” [[8]](#footnote-8)* Is the NEW TESTAMENT / NEW COVENANT … THAT which we FOLLOWERS of JESUS BASE our FAITH ON … IS it FULL of LIES? I DON’T THINK SO. TOO MUCH PROOF! STICK around for this SERIES!

HEAR ME … IF you go to the GRAVES of BUDDHA, MUHAMMAD, JOSEPH SMITH … there are BONES! GO to JERUSALEM where JESUS was BURIED ... EMPTY … AND, they have been LOOKING FOR THOSE BONES since the THIRD DAY AFTER Jesus’ CRUCIFIXION! MANY throughout HISTORY have WORKED HARD to PROVE JESUS NEVER came BACK to LIFE. They CAN’T PROVE He DIDN’T! Do you KNOW WHY? BECAUSE He DID! He RESURRECTED! AND HE is COMING AGAIN … as PROMISED!

NONE of the OTHERS are COMING BACK. They are DEAD! FOLLOWERS of JESUS are NOT the SAME! JESUS is ALIVE and COMING AGAIN! YES, we are called to LOVE PEOPLE of OTHER RELIGIONS. That does NOT MEAN we are the SAME.

Listen … Jesus said … MATTHEW 7:13-14 = *13“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it. [[9]](#footnote-9)* Do you know WHY? Many have been DECEIVED by this WORLD / SATAN. Next week … MORE SIGNS / Lessons from JESUS (Matt 24)!

Let's Pray!

Next Steps:  *I will memorize Acts 4:12*

*I will read Matthew 24 and/or John 14.*

*I will sign up for a Growth Group.*

*I will INVITE a friend to worship at BMZ Church (online / parking lot) this month.*

**Hosting (Closing)**

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ… Glad you’ve been here with us!

NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD ***(FULLY FILLED OUT!!)***

You can drop that card in the offering basket.

***IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today …*** We are so glad you joined us … And we have a GIFT for you. It’s this book ***“UNSHAKABLE”*** and it’s at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS…

all you need to do is **HIT “SEND”** your COMPLETED Connection Card

+++++++++++++++++++++++

I just want to remind … STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP … we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it’s BIBLICAL … it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!

STEWARDSHIP VERSE … MATTHEW 24:35 = *35Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear. [[10]](#footnote-10)*

NOT JUST LIP SERVICE … FULL WEIGHT! FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the 1st place! That’s why WE/I do Automated Giving! … the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!

God’s plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!

As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING … NOT just what we THINK it should say.

***MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.*** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?!

Next Week: ***HEAVEN and HELL … PACK your BAGS: Part 2!***

“God **whispers** to us in our pleasures, **speaks** in our conscience, but **shouts** in our pains: it is His **megaphone** to rouse a deaf world.” — C.S. Lewis

*“Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy).”*

*Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegram for outlines and ideas for this worship series.*

1. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.32&off=0&ctx=earth+and+heaven%E2%80%A2.+%0a~32%C2%A0%E2%80%9CNow+learn+a+less) (Mt 24:32–33). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.36&off=0&ctx=l+never+disappear.+%0a~36%C2%A0%E2%80%9CHowever%2c+no+one+) (Mt 24:36). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.1&off=31&ctx=s+about+the+Future%0a%E2%80%A2~As+%E2%80%A2Jesus+was+leavin) (Mt 24:1–3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.4&off=0&ctx=nd+of+the+world%3f*%E2%80%9D+%0a~4%C2%A0%E2%80%A2%E2%80%A2Jesus+told+them%2c) (Mt 24:4). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.5&off=0&ctx=anyone+mislead+you%2c+~5%C2%A0for+many+will+come) (Mt 24:5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.23&off=0&ctx=God%E2%80%99s+chosen+ones.+%0a~23%C2%A0%E2%80%9CThen+if+anyone+t) (Mt 24:23–27). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Jn14.6&off=0&ctx=+we+know+the+way%3f%E2%80%9D+%0a~6%C2%A0Jesus+told+him%2c+%E2%80%9CI) (Jn 14:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Ac4.12&off=0&ctx=the+cornerstone.%E2%80%99*+%0a~12%C2%A0%E2%80%A2There+is+%E2%80%A2salvat) (Ac 4:12). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt7.13&off=16&ctx=s.+%0aThe+Narrow+Gate%0a~13%C2%A0%E2%80%9CYou+can+enter+Go) (Mt 7:13–14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nlt?ref=BibleNLT.Mt24.35&off=0&ctx=+things+take+place.+~35%C2%A0%E2%80%A2Heaven+and+%E2%80%A2eart) (Mt 24:35). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)