

Luke 12:54-59

"Interpreting the Times"

August 31, 2025

1. Intro

- a. Well, you may not be aware of it, but there is a growing speculation around the world that September of this year could very well be the year that Jesus raptures his church out of this world, and ushers in the Great Tribulation
 - i. Bjorn Korf, on his website, "The Prophecy Pulse," wrote these words just a couple of weeks ago...
 1. "In recent days and weeks, there has been a surge of videos on YouTube suggesting possible dates for the Rapture. What is striking is that people, independently of one another—for example in the USA and also in Korea—arrive at the same conclusions. Particularly noteworthy is that Christians in Korea usually have no connection to the Western evangelical scene, and yet they present exactly the same calculations and connections. One could interpret this as them being prompted by God Himself to these thoughts."
 - a. Korf goes on to present calculation after calculation...
 - i. Taking Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel chapter 9, and the one week of the Great Tribulation
 - ii. And then applying it to a Peace Treaty that is expected to be signed at the UN on September 23rd of this year
 - iii. And showing that, 7 years from that date, according to the Jewish calendar, lands exactly on September 15, 2032
 1. Which just so happens to be the day of the Jewish festival, Yom Kippur...
 - a. Or the Day of Atonement
 - i. That would indeed be a fitting day for Jesus to return and end the 7-year Tribulation, wouldn't it?
 - b. And is that the case, then get your life right, Church, because you're about to be taken out of this world!
 - ii. Other writers who also believe that 2025 is our year use the number 84 as their key to the prophetic fulfillment,
 1. Where Jacob was 77 years old when he married Leah, and then had to wait till he was 84 to finally get to marry the sister he REALLY wanted, Rachel
 - a. According to these writers,
 - i. Rachel represents Israel, who is patiently waiting for Leah, who represents the church, to get out of the way...
 1. Which again, didn't happen until Jacob was 84
 - ii. Coincidentally, the year 2032 is exactly 84 years from when the modern-day nation of Israel was reestablished
 1. So, if we count back 7 years from 2032, we again get 2025...
 - a. Which is the year that we, as the new "Leah" move out of the way so Rachel, or Israel, can have their chance
 - iii. Pretty convincing, isn't it?
 - iii. One of my favorite arguments, however, comes from one writer who reminds us that Psalm 45 is a wedding Psalm, that clearly points ahead to the wedding of Christ and his church

1. We're in the year 2025 right... so 20, plus 25, equals 45
 - a. Even better, 45 TIMES 45 equals 2025
 - i. I don't know about you, friends, but starting tomorrow morning, I'm wearing my NICE clothes for the rest of the month
 1. If Jesus IS coming back in September, I want to be dressed and ready, don't you?
 - b. Well, I hope everyone understands that I am speaking sarcastically in all of this
 - i. But the reality is, all of these growing number of end-times prophets, all around the world, truly do BELIEVE that what they're righting COULD be the truth
 1. And the reason why they are so passionate about trying to figure all this out is found directly in passages like our passage for this morning, starting in verse 54...
2. Luke 12:54-56
 - a. ⁵⁴*[Jesus] also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?*
3. So one of my favorite pastimes is sitting outside, watching our Oklahoma storms roll in
 - a. We have a covered porch in our backyard, that thankfully points to the west
 - i. So I know that, if I look out from the back porch, and I see big thunderheads starting to form from that direction...
 1. Then it is a good chance that we're about to get some good storms
 - ii. But if I look out from the FRONT porch, and those thunderheads are forming in the EAST...
 1. Well, there's a pretty good chance those storms are going to miss us, isn't there?
 - b. It's the same thing with the wind, isn't it?
 - i. If I walk out of my house and walk down to my shop in the morning for work, and the wind hits me in the face from the north...
 1. It's probably going to be a cooler day outside
 - ii. But if instead, the wind hits me at my back, coming from the south, I know that it's probably going to be a hot one in the shop today
 1. Being a weatherman in Oklahoma really isn't all that hard, is it?
 - a. That's true... but ONLY if I am expected to predict the weather for the next couple of hours, right?
 - i. If someone asks me what the weather is going to be like at the end of next month, I'm going to shrug my shoulders and say, "I don't have a clue!"
 1. I can give you a decent forecast for the rest of the afternoon, based on the clouds and the wind,
 2. But I can't tell you ANYTHING about what the weather is going to be like in a few weeks
 - iii. And this is a key part of what Jesus is saying here in this passage...
 1. Look again at verse 56
 - a. Jesus says, "You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the PRESENT time?
 - i. 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah prophesied,
 1. *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, 'God With Us.'"*
 - a. Immanuel was now with them, born of the virgin Mary
 - i. But the people of Israel failed to interpret their present times

- ii. Right around the same time as Isaiah, the prophet Micah prophesied,
 - 1. *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."*
 - a. The one who had come forth from ancient days had been born in the little town of Bethlehem
 - i. But the people of Israel failed to interpret their present times
 - iii. Around 200 years after Isaiah and Micah, another prophet came along – the prophet Malachi – saying,
 - 1. *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers..."*
 - a. A new Elijah had indeed come in the person of John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Lord
 - i. But the people of Israel failed to interpret their present times
 - iv. We could go on for hours – days even – talking about the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies that Jesus directly and indirectly fulfilled in his coming
 - 1. And yet, the Apostle John summarizes the response of the vast majority of Israel, when he writes in John 1:9-11,
 - a. *⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*
 - i. They could tell you if it was going to rain that day by looking at the clouds rising in the West
 - ii. They could tell you if it was going to be hot that day by feeling the South winds on their face
 - 1. But when the Son of Man long prophesied about throughout the Hebrew Scriptures finally arrived...
 - a. They did not receive him
 - b. For they failed to interpret their present times
 - i. And the failure of Jesus' own people to interpret the present times would reach its lowest depth when they would cry out to Pontius Pilate, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

4. Well, there you go...

- a. If the people in Israel in Jesus' day FAILED to interpret THEIR present times, shouldn't we learn from their mistakes?
 - i. Shouldn't we make every effort to study the Old Testament prophecies, so we don't miss their fulfillment in our day, as the Jewish people did in theirs?
 - ii. Shouldn't we keep watch on all the current events happening all over the world in our day, so we can discern how they show us when Jesus is coming back?
 - iii. Shouldn't we devote our time and our intellect and our attention to interpreting OUR present times, so we will KNOW when the last days are finally drawing near?
 - 1. All of the prophets and preachers and evangelists all over the world, who speak loudly and write boldly about the end times would say...

- a. ABSOLUTELY we should be focusing on these things!
 - i. Especially when these days could be arriving as early as next week!!
 - 1. We don't want Jesus accusing US of being hypocrites, like he did to the people here in verse 56... do we?
- b. Friends, I would argue that no... we DO NOT have to spend all our time and energy and focus trying to interpret our present times
 - i. For the writers of the New Testament have already done that for us!
 - 1. Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts, chapter 2
 - a. Acts 2 is of course the account of the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was first given to the believers in Jesus
 - i. As the Spirit fell upon them, the believers began speaking in tongues...
 - 1. Talking in all sorts of foreign languages about the wonderful works of God
 - ii. Many of the people who heard this were in awe, as they heard these Galileans all of a sudden speaking in their own language
 - 1. But there were others who mocked the believers, saying, "Ah, they're just drunk with new wine!"
 - b. So Peter stands up, and he says to the crowds, starting in verse 14,
 - i. *¹⁴"Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷'And IN THE LAST DAYS IT SHALL BE, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.'"*
 - 1. Joel had prophesied that these incredible things would happen IN THE LAST DAYS
 - a. And Peter says here Acts 2, "Men of Judea, the LAST DAYS have begun TODAY!"
 - i. The Spirit that Joel talked about... has been poured out
 - ii. Even upon us, the lowly servants of the Lord, the promised Spirit has come
 - 2. The last days began nearly two thousand years ago, brothers and sisters, when the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the Church
 - a. That is the POSITIVE evidence that the Church has ALWAYS been in the last days
 - i. But the Scriptures offer plenty of NEGATIVE evidences as well
 - 2. Turn over to 2 Timothy, chapter 3
 - a. 2 Timothy is believed to be the last of Paul's letters, possibly written around 60 or 61 AD
 - i. So this is about three decades after Pentecost
 - 1. The message of Christ has spread all throughout the Roman Empire, even into Rome itself

2. In the early days of the Church, the Christians were mainly just persecuted by the Jewish religious leaders
 - a. But now, the Roman Empire had decided that they'd had enough of this new sect
 - i. So they began to crack down hard upon all the followers of Jesus
 - ii. In just a few short years, Paul would be executed in Rome, as would the Apostle Peter
 - b. But now, Paul is writing a last letter to his young disciple, Timothy
 - i. And he says to him in chapter 3, starting in verse 1...
 1. *¹But understand this [Timothy], that IN THE LAST DAYS there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power...*
 - a. Well that all sounds an awful lot like today, doesn't it?
 - i. But what does Paul say to Timothy at the end of verse 5?
 - ii. "Avoid such people!"
 - ii. Paul isn't talking about a time that is going to happen some two thousand years in the future
 1. In Paul's mind, these kinds of godless people were there, NOW
 2. In his mind, they were very much IN the last days that he was warning Timothy about!
 - c. So the last days began at Pentecost
 - i. And they were already being felt by the church in a negative way, just thirty years after the church had started
 3. In Peter's last letter to the Church, he affirms these things as well, as he writes in 2 Peter 3, verses 2-4...
 - a. *²... You should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come IN THE LAST DAYS with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."*
 - i. Peter warned the churches in this letter that IN THE LAST DAYS, these scoffers would come
 1. And the clear implication from the rest of the chapter is that Peter believed these scoffers were ALREADY there
 - a. They were ALREADY in the midst of the believers
 - b. They were ALREADY seeking to cast doubt about the return of Jesus Christ
 - c. They were ALREADY sowing seeds of division in the churches
 2. And so Peter goes on to encourage the believers...
 - a. Stay steady in your lives of holiness and godliness

- b. Be diligent to be found by the Lord without spot or blemish, and at peace
 - c. For you are IN the last days, my friends
 - c. Brothers and sisters in Christ, there is no need to spend our days trying to interpret our present times, to figure out whether we are in the last days
 - i. We ARE in the last days
 - 1. And we have been in the last days for the last two thousand years
 - a. Jesus himself affirms this in Matthew, chapter 24, when he is speaking to the disciples about the coming destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem
 - i. The disciples ask him when it is going to happen, and he gives them very specific signs to look for...
 - 1. False messiahs will rise up
 - 2. There will be wars and rumors of wars
 - 3. There will be famines and earthquakes
 - a. History tells us that all of these things happened between Jesus' death, and the destruction of the Temple in 70AD...
 - i. And at the eventual destruction of Jerusalem after the final Jewish Revolt in 135AD
 - ii. Jesus was warning his disciples that they themselves would experience the pain and devastation of the last days
 - 1. But then he goes on to expand his prophetic word into a far greater context
 - a. In the future, the church will be hated by ALL the nations for his sake
 - b. In the future, the Gospel must go out into the whole world as a testimony to ALL the nations
 - c. In the future, there will be a Great Tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be
 - 2. And Jesus says that if it were not for the sake of the elect... if it were not for the sake of THE CHURCH...
 - a. These days would not have been cut short, and NO ONE would be saved
 - iii. The disciples would endure the hardship of the last days
 - 1. The church must endure as we CONTINUE in the last days
 - d. So again, Church, trying to figure out when the last days will come is a pointless exercise, for we have ALWAYS been in the last days
 - i. What the Scriptures tell US to concern ourselves with... is the last DAY... singular
 - 1. There will be a Day when the Son of Man will come like lightning from the east and shine as far as the west
 - 2. There will be a Day when the Son of Man will return on the clouds of heaven
 - 3. There will be a Day when Jesus returns once again, and he will send his angels out, and they will gather his elect from the four corners of the earth
 - 4. And on that Day, the heavens will pass away with a roar...
 - a. The heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved
 - i. And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed
 - e. So our great concern friends, should be, what will be our condition on THAT Day?
 - i. In John 6, verse 40, Jesus says to us...

1. *⁴⁰This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up ON THE LAST DAY."*

f. So if our great concern is not the last DAYS, but the last DAY...

- i. And if Jesus says that it is ONLY those who BELIEVE in him who will be raised to eternal life on the last day...

1. Then our most pressing question must be, "What does it mean to BELIEVE in him?"

- a. Does it mean calling yourself one of Jesus' followers?

- i. Well, Judas did that, and he was consumed by the Devil

- b. Does it mean being a part of the church, and giving money to the church?

- i. Well, Ananias and Sapphira did that, and the Lord struck them dead for lying to the Holy Spirit

- c. Does it mean confessing with your mouth that Jesus truly is the Son of God?

- i. Well, even the demons believed and confessed that, and they trembled in fear before him

- ii. So what then does it mean to TRULY believe in Jesus, in such a way that you will be raised to eternal life on the last day?

5. I believe that Jesus has been giving us the answer to that question all throughout this entire chapter

- a. I believe that, from the very beginning of this great discourse before the crowds, all the way up to our passage for today...

- i. Jesus has been speaking to the people about what it truly means to BELIEVE in him

- b. In verses 1-3, Jesus reminds us that there will come a Day when all will be revealed...

- i. So, in light of that coming Day, avoid the leaven of the Pharisees... which is HYPOCRISY

1. The Pharisees were the model churchgoer of their days

- a. They were always in and out of the Temple and the synagogues

- b. They were always faithful in their tithing and their fasting

- c. They knew the Scriptures inside and out

- i. If ANYONE knew what it meant to believe, surely it was the Pharisees!

1. But Jesus would call them a brood of vipers

2. He would call them a bunch of whitewashed tombs

3. He would call them HYPOCRITES...

- a. For their hearts were FAR from the love of God

2. So in light of the coming of the last Day, do you TRULY love the Lord your God?

- a. I'm not asking if you love Him perfectly in every way... none of us are capable of doing that

- i. But do you truly love Him, to the extent that your frail and finite body can love him?

1. Jesus says that the way we prove that we love him is by obeying his commandments

- a. Not in a cold and legalistic way like the Pharisees,

- b. But in a joyful and humble submission to his rule and reign over your life

2. Like the Apostle Paul said in Romans 7, do you DELIGHT in the law of the Lord?

- a. This is an essential part of TRUE belief in Jesus...

- i. That you love him, and you delight in obeying all of his commands

3. So Jesus tells us to examine our hearts, and beware of the leaven of hypocrisy... for on the last Day, ALL will be revealed

- c. In verses 4-7, Jesus reminds us that there will come a day when every soul will be brought before the Lord in judgment
 - i. So don't live your lives in the fear of man – live your life in the fear of the Lord
 - 1. As we've already established, we are in the last days
 - a. And in these last days, it has been promised to us that we will face persecution for our faith
 - i. We might be accused before governors or presidents
 - ii. We might be reprimanded before company managers
 - iii. We might be ostracized by our very own families
 - b. And in those moments, we have a choice to make
 - i. Will we remain silent?
 - 1. Or will we acknowledge Christ before men?
 - 2. True belief in Jesus Christ MUST manifest itself in our words, my friends
 - a. It's not enough to just "be the church" as we're so often taught in our day today
 - b. As followers of Christ, we must be willing to acknowledge our belief in Jesus, with our words...
 - i. No matter what it might cost us
 - 1. What can man do to us anyways?
 - a. As Jesus says in verse 4... the worst they can do is kill us!
 - c. But if we TRULY believe, then we will walk in a holy and reverent fear of the Lord...
 - i. Understanding that He is the only one who has the authority to cast our souls into hell after our bodies are destroyed
 - 3. So are you willing to stand before men, and acknowledge Jesus Christ before them, no matter what it might cost you?
 - a. This is what it means to believe in him
- d. But Jesus reminds us in the following verses that we may not even make it to the last Day
 - i. Our soul might be demanded from us this very night
 - 1. So in verses 13-34, he tells us to be on our guard against all kinds of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions
 - a. You can SAY that you believe in Jesus, but if you spend your days chasing after the American Dream...
 - i. The American Dream will be the only treasure you ever receive
 - 1. And all of that Dream will be burned up when the heavens and the earth dissolve in fire
 - b. True belief in Jesus and in the Word of God will not be characterized by the pursuit of earthly treasure
 - i. It will not be characterized by chasing after all the same things that all the rest of the world is chasing after
 - ii. It will not be characterized by being worried and anxious and fearful about everything that the world is worried and anxious and fearful about
 - c. True belief in Christ is shown by understanding that you have ALREADY been given the Kingdom of your Father
 - i. This is not a Kingdom of scraps and leftovers – it is an inheritance that far exceeds anything you could even imagine

- ii. Nor is it a Kingdom that the Father begrudgingly gives to you, as if He is saying,
 - 1. “Well, I guess I’ll give you a part of my Kingdom, since you’ve done an OK job at being a good person”
 - a. NO! The Scriptures tell us that, by His own wisdom and purpose, God decreed before the foundation of the world that this Kingdom would be given to you...
 - i. And it brought Him great DELIGHT to do so!
 - d. Friends, true belief in Jesus considers that incredible reality, and it says in response, “Jesus, you can have my entire life!!”
 - i. You can have all my finances...
 - ii. You can have all my worries and anxieties...
 - iii. You can have EVERYTHING
 - 1. For because of YOU, the Father has given me the Kingdom!
 - a. True belief is a willing and joyful surrender of everything in this life to the one who surrendered everything for you!
- e. And so, Jesus reminds us that we are to put off our old selves...
 - i. And in verses 35-48, he reminds us to put on the clothing of our NEW self
 - 1. We are to stay dressed and ready for action
 - a. True belief in Jesus understands that we are living in the last days, and the last DAY could come at any moment
 - i. So stay dressed, and be ready for the Master’s return
 - b. What does that look like?
 - i. Paul is extremely helpful for us in answering that question in Colossians 3
 - 1. We are to take off the old rags of sexual immorality and impurity and unrestrained passion
 - 2. We are to burn our old garments of our evil desires and greed and idolatry
 - 3. We are to destroy our worn out clothing of anger, and wrath, and malice, and slander, and obscene talk from our mouths
 - a. True belief in Jesus is absolutely disgusted by all the filthy things in our old wardrobe
 - ii. But we don’t just get rid of all that and then walk around unclothed, do we?
 - 1. Paul goes on to say, “Now, Christian, clothe yourself in compassion and kindness...
 - a. Put on the beautiful garments of humility and meekness and patience
 - b. Cover your brothers and sisters in the robe of forgiveness and peace, just as Christ has done for you
 - c. And bind ALL OF IT together in LOVE
 - 2. This is what it means to stay dressed and ready my friends
 - a. This is what it means to truly believe that the Master WILL return
 - i. It is when we DO NOT believe in his return that we begin to speak to our brothers and sisters in anger, or slander, or gossip
 - ii. It is when we DO NOT believe in his return that we turn back to the world, and we indulge ourselves in all the desires of our flesh

1. Jesus warns us that all who are not dressed in HIS righteousness, and who are ready for his return,
 - a. Will be beaten and thrown in with the unfaithful
 3. True belief in Jesus means we stay dressed and ready for his return
 - f. For as Jesus reminded us last week in verses 49-53, he has come to cast fire on the earth...
 - i. And that fire has indeed been kindled
 1. It has been kindled in the hearts of those who TRULY believe, as we remain united in the Holy Spirit
 2. It has been kindled as we undergo the fires of affliction TOGETHER, as even our own families become divided against us
 3. And it has been kindled as the LAST Day, the day of God's judgment, draws near
 - g. Do you believe that Day is coming, my friends?
 - i. Does the way that you live your life SHOW that you believe that Day is coming?
 1. This is THE most pressing question for all of us, as we continue to live in the last days
 - a. Do we TRULY believe in Jesus?
 - b. And does our life bear the fruit that grows OUT OF that belief?
6. Well, Jesus ends chapter 12 with a bit of a strange passage
 - a. It's possible here that he might actually be looking back at the man who had spoken to him earlier in verse 13...
 - i. Demanding that Jesus settle an argument between him and his brother over their inheritance
 1. Whatever the reason, Jesus says in verse 57,
 - a. ⁵⁷*"And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."*
 - ii. My friends, now is the time for you to discern what is right
 1. From the Day of Pentecost up until this very hour, we have been living in the last times
 - a. But those last times will not last forever
 - i. There is a Day coming when each of us will be brought before the judge
 - ii. Peter tells us that judgement will begin at the household of God
 - b. So what will be your defense, friend, when it is your turn to stand before Him?
 - i. Your religious behavior? Your attendance at church? Your tithing?
 1. The Pharisees did all these things, and Jesus branded them all as hypocrites
 - ii. Your only hope on that day will be to settle with your enemy now
 1. Surrender EVERYTHING to Jesus
 2. Confess that you are a sinner, and surrender EVERYTHING to him as Lord
 3. Offer up your entire life as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God
 - iii. If your belief in him flows out of THAT kind of heart, then you can know without a doubt that on the last Day, you WILL be raised to eternal life in him
 1. You will have no need to interpret the times that we are in,
 2. For as David sang in Psalm 31:14-15,

a. ¹⁴*I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."* ¹⁵*My times are in your hand!*