

Matthew 24:36-44. "Prepare His Coming"

Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday December 3rd, 2023.

Matthew 24:36-44. [36]"But concerning **that day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. [37]For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [38] For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, [39]and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [40]Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. [42] Therefore, **stay awake**, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. [43] But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (ESV)

As **children** prepare wish lists, and **adults plan Christmas get-togethers**, this is an **exciting time of year**. Although it means **extra planning** and work, there is something exciting in the **anticipation** of Christmas. **"Ready or not"**, **Christmas celebrations** are coming soon.

The **familiar expression** "Here I come, ready or not" could well be applied to Jesus' **second coming**, because **He is coming** according to the sovereign plan of God, with **no** regard for worldwide or individual readiness. **Jesus is coming** when He is coming, because **the when and how of His return** have long since been predetermined in the sovereign wisdom of God. **In response to the disciples' question**, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mt. 24:3), **Jesus told them** of the **birth pains** that would immediately precede His coming (vv. 4–28), of the **abomination of desolation** (v 15), which would precipitate those signs, and of the **supreme sign of His own appearing** on the clouds of heaven (v 30). **Now He gives them a partial answer** to the "where" part of the question of His coming. Although **there will be observable, worldwide, and unmistakable indications** of His coming just before it occurs, **the exact time** will **not** be revealed in advance. Jesus says in **Matthew 24:36** **But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. Before we get into the elements of the Coming of Christ, we need to highlight what leads up to this point. The description of that day and hour plainly implies that a definite day and moment are fixed for this great appearing, but known only to God** (*The Pulpit Commentary: St. Matthew Vol. II. 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (441). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.*).

An important contrast exists between the (verses previous in Matthew 24) and **this ...section of Matthew 24 to which we now come. It is the difference between "you know" in verse 33 and "no one knows" in verse 36. What the disciples were to know is that "when you see all these things" the end will be "near, right at the door."** "These things" refer to the **terrible characteristics of their age, and ours—false messiahs, wars, earthquakes, famines, persecutions, apostasy, and false prophets. Having seen these things, we should know that the return of Jesus Christ is near, even at the door. That door could be flung open by Christ at any moment** (Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (514–516). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.)

The signs He had just been describing will be **conclusive proof** that His arrival is very near. **Once they have begun**, the *general* time period of His return will be known, because **one of the key purposes of the signs** will be to make it known. **As D. A. Carson writes**, **“The hour remains unknown until it arrives; and then the cleavage is sudden, absolute, and irreversible.”** (D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1985), 146.)

But **even during those sign-days the precise day and hour** of Jesus’ appearing will **not** be known, a truth He reiterates several times in this Olivet discourse (Mt. 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13). **“Day” and “hour”** are regularly used throughout Scripture for **“time” in general**, **not just twenty-four-hour or sixty-minute periods** (in Matt cf. 7:22; 10:19; 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13; 26:45). **“Day”** especially reflects the Old Testament **“Day of the Lord”** (cf. esp. throughout Zephaniah) as **a stock phrase for the end of the age** (cf. Matthew’s “day of judgment” in 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; and cf. also Rom 10:21; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 3:14; Eph 6:13) **Those who claim they can narrow down the time of Christ’s return** to a generation or a year or even a few day’s period, while still **not knowing** the literal day or hour, **remain singularly ill-informed.** (Blomberg, C. (2001). *Vol. 22: Matthew* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (365). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

The **supernatural world** does **not** know the **precise time of Christ’s return**, **not even the angels of heaven.** The **angels**, though standing in a very close relationship to God (Isa. 6:1–3; Matt. 18:10), and though intimately associated with the events pertaining to the second coming (13:41; 24:31; Rev. 14:19), **do not know the day nor the hour.** The **angels will be directly and actively involved in the end time** as God’s agents to separate the saved from the unsaved (see **Matt. 13:41, 49**), but for His own reasons God **the Father** will **not** reveal in advance exactly when He will call them into that **service.** (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew.* New Testament Commentary (869). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.)

Still more amazingly, **not even the Son knew** at the time He spoke these words or at any other time **during His incarnation.** Although He was fully God as well as fully man (John 1:1, 14), **Christ voluntarily restricted His use of certain divine attributes** when He became flesh (**Phil. 2:6**). It was **not that He lost** any divine attributes but that **He voluntarily laid aside the use of some of them** and would **not** manifest those attributes except as directed by His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). **Christians who balk at the implications of this verse reflect their own docetism** (the early Christian heresy of **not accepting the full humanity of Jesus**) (Blomberg, C. (2001). *Vol. 22: Matthew* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (365). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

Therefore, **even on this last day before His arrest**, **the Son** did **not** know the precise **day and hour** He would return to earth at His second coming. **During Christ’s incarnation, the Father only exercised unrestricted divine omniscience.** That **the time of the Christ’s second coming** is **unknown** motivates most of **Jesus’ applicational teaching** in the remainder of the discourse (24:42–25:46). **He used the uncertain timing to challenge his followers** to be ready all times, in case He should return. (Weber, S. K. (2000). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, p. 405). Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

- It is **not** difficult to imagine some of the **problems** that **such knowledge** would cause. For one thing, **if unbelievers knew the precise time of Christ’s arrival**, they would be tempted to put off receiving Him as Lord and Savior until the last moment, **thinking they could make the decision any time they wanted** before He actually is scheduled to appear. But **even if they planned to wait until the precise date and hour of Christ’s appearing**, they would **not** know if

they would live until that time. Like the rich farmer (Luke 12:16–20), they will have **no guarantee of the length of their lives** and therefore have **no guarantee they will still be alive when Christ appears**. Even if they knew the precise time of Christ's appearing and were certain they would live until then, they would be **fooling themselves to think they could simply receive Him before that time**. The fact that they will have put off trusting in Christ for as long as they have will be certain evidence they have **no sincere desire to follow Him as Lord and Savior**.

As far as **believers** are concerned, **knowledge of that specific time** might also make them **careless**, causing them to withdraw and become spiritually **sedentary**, **thinking it would be pointless** to make plans for serving the Lord or to make further effort to win the lost. **No one**, believer or unbeliever, could think or function normally knowing the exact **day and hour** of Christ's coming. Although **we do not know** the precise **day and hour** of Christ's coming, in "Preparing for Christ's Coming" we must be: 1) Alert (Matthew 24:37–42) and be 2) Ready (Matthew 24:43–44).

In "Preparing for Christ's Coming" we must be:

1) Alert (Matthew 24:37–42)

Matthew 24:37-42 [37]For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [38]For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, [39]and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [40]Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. [42] Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (ESV)

The discussion of the "coming of the Son of Man" is a discussion of Advent. The word of for "coming" 'parousia,' can be translated advent. It is a time to consider the incarnation, the first coming of Christ in relation to His return (Mills, M. S. (1999). *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record* (Mt 24:37–44). Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries.)

In Matthew 24, Jesus used the Flood to illustrate the point He was making about the coming of the Son of Man, namely, that **the attitude that prevailed during the days of Noah ... before the flood will also characterize most people living during the end time just before Christ returns**. They will **not** be expecting His coming and will **not** care about it. **Despite the perilous signs and wonders, they will simply be unconcerned** about the things of the Lord, especially the prospect of His imminent return to judge them. The second coming of Jesus will **break into the ordinary activities of life** and **will cause disruption and division**. (Campbell, I. D. (2008). *Opening up Matthew* (p. 149). Leominster: Day One Publications.)

Jesus says in **Matthew 24:38, In the days of Noah before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**. While **Noah** built the ark, he also preached (**2 Pet. 2:5**), but **the people** were just as **unconcerned** about his preaching as about the ark he was building, **thinking both were meaningless and absurd**. **They laughed** when he spoke of the coming flood. They had **never** seen rain, much less a flood, because **until that time** the earth was apparently covered by a vapor canopy that provided all the moisture necessary for life to flourish. Because they had **never** seen such a calamity, **they discounted** the idea that it could happen. **They therefore went about their daily routines of eating and drinking and of marrying and giving in**

marriage. The question might be asked, “What is wrong with these activities, or with ‘buying and selling, planting and building,’ as in the similar days of Lot (Luke 17:28–30)?” The answer is, “Nothing at all.” In fact, by means of them people are able to glorify God (I Cor. 10:31). But when the soul becomes entirely wrapped up in them, so that matters such as these become ends in themselves, and the things of God are **neglected,** they are **no** longer a blessing but have become a curse. They have become **evidences of gross materialism, false security, and often cold selfishness** (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew.* New Testament Commentary (870). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.).

- There is **nothing** wrong with getting together with others and celebrations this time of year. But when such celebrations **overshadow** what this season ultimately points to, the return of Christ; and become the ends in themselves, then **we sin.**

It was **business as usual** until the day when Noah entered the ark and it started to rain. Even when his prediction began to be fulfilled before their eyes, the people did not take his warning to heart. Noah had built and preached for 120 years, yet **without** having the slightest impact on anyone outside his immediate family. The description of normal life in v. 38 underlines the **lack of any prior warning: things were carrying on** just as they had always done (as the “scoffers” observe in **2 Peter 3:4**). In all these ways the sudden and universal onset of the flood as described in **Gen 7:6–24** provides **a powerful analogy; people were caught unawares, no one could evade it,** and only those who had made advance preparation escaped (France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (940). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.)

The people as Jesus says in **Matthew 24:39** were so **untouched** by God’s truth that they were unaware/did not understand their perilous situation until the flood came and swept them/took them all away into a godless eternity. **Flood** translates *kataklysmos*, which means **deluge or washing away,** and is the term from which **the English cataclysm** is derived. Only after it was too late did the people of that generation become aware/understand their tragic destiny. The main point is the **unpreparedness** of Noah’s contemporaries. Whereas Noah and his family were ready, **everyone else** carried on **oblivious** to the **threat of judgment,** and so, while Noah was saved, they were **swept away.** The message is that the way prepare for the coming of Christ (Parousia), is **not** by calculating its date, but by a life of constant readiness and response to God’s warnings. There will apparently be **only two categories, the prepared** (and therefore saved) and the **unprepared** (and therefore **lost**) (France, R. T. (1985). *Vol. 1: Matthew: An introduction and commentary.* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (351). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.).

Notice the attitude and response that will prevail before the coming of the Son of man. The perilous signs, the abomination of desolation, the disruption of the heavenly bodies, and the preaching of God’s witnesses will have **no effect on the majority of people.** They will see God’s signs but attribute them to natural causes or to supernatural causes **apart** from God. They will hear His Word, in one instance supernaturally preached worldwide by an angel (**Rev. 15:6–7**), but they will respond with **disdain** or **indifference.** They will heed neither warnings nor appeals from God up until the very moment the Son of Man appears to confront them in righteous judgment. But this also points to **a world that will be largely unbelieving at the time of Christ’s return.** I emphasize this because **some hold** that Christ’s kingdom will eventually **triumph in the world.** This view is usually referred to as **postmillennialism.** The word **millennium** refers to the reign of Christ (for a thousand years, if interpreted

literally), and *postmillennialism* means that Jesus will return only after his rule has been universally established. According to this view, Jesus reigns in and through the church and will return only after the church's mission is fulfilled. Postmillennialism was popular in former centuries when the supposedly "Christian nations" were extending their colonial power. It is not as popular today, when the West is in evident decline. True, the mission of the church does not depend on Western Christianity, and a great growth of Christianity is taking place today in (regions of persecution and economically developing nations). But even when we turn from history and restrict ourselves to explicit scriptural teaching, not much encourages us to think in this falsely optimistic way. On the contrary, those who were taught by Jesus say that there will be terrible wickedness and even widespread apostasy in the church when Christ returns (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3-4; Jude 17-19). None of these passages teaches that we are to be pessimistic. We must preach Christ everywhere, knowing that all whom God has elected to salvation will be saved. Not one will be lost. But neither do these passages teach an increasingly successful expansion of the gospel, still less a triumphant expansion of organized Christianity throughout the world. Rather, they encourage a faithful adherence to and preaching of the gospel in spite of the fact that it will not be universally received and in spite of the fact that there will be increasingly entrenched unbelief (Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (516-517). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.).

When the Son of Man finally appears in His second-coming judgment, Matthew 24:40-41 describes then two men will be in the field; one will be taken, and one left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one left. Both men are involved in the same work in the field, both women in the same grinding at the mill. It is not a difference in work or situation which causes the separation, but a difference in readiness. (Cf. 13:30 for the idea of a coexistence of the 'saved' and the 'lost' until the final judgment.) (France, R. T. (1985). *Vol. 1: Matthew: An introduction and commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (351). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

- We should not think of holy and unholy work. We are not called to quit our jobs to some sacred vocation. The co-existence is actually one of the best avenues for evangelism. Excellent work side by side with the lost, gives a great opportunity for evangelism of the coming realities. We often don't spend enough time befriending the lost in order to call them to the truth.

Jesus in this passage is giving a figure parallel to the unbelievers of Noah's day being taken away by the judgment through the Flood. When He returns, one will be taken to judgment and the other will be left to enter the kingdom. The term translated "taken" (*airō*) usually has overtones of violent action in Greek, and commonly means to remove, destroy, or kill. More telling still, we notice that 24:39 says that those who did not listen to Noah "knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away." ...after the flood, Noah and his family were left behind on the earth. So the evil were taken away and the covenant family was (blessedly) left behind. (Doriani, D. M. (2008). *Matthew & 2*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (Vol. 2, p. 383). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.)

Please turn to Matthew 25 (p.780)

About half of Matthew 24 deals with signs ... of Christ's return (vv. 4-26, 32-35). A very small section describes the return of Christ itself (vv. 27-31). But a third of chapter 24 (vv. 36-51) and all of chapter 25 (vv. 1-46), a total of sixty-two verses, warn us to get ready since we do not know when that day of final reckoning will be.

Or to put it yet another way, **Jesus stresses this single essential point with seven historical references, verbal pictures or parables**—four in (Matthew 24) and three in the next. **The application is clear: Are you watching? Are you ready for Jesus Christ's return?** (Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (516). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.)

This is how it is explained in Matthew 25

Matthew 25:32-46 [32] Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33] And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. [34] Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' [37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' [40] And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' [41] Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. [42] For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, [43] I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' [44] Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' [45] Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' [46] And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.' (ESV)

- **The picture in Matthew 24-25 should encourage serious soul-searching.** For one thing, **it demolishes any fond hope of universalism**, the idea that in the end everyone will be saved since God could never send anyone to hell. When Jesus says that **“one will be taken and the other left,”** he means that **not all will be saved. Many will be lost. Be sure** that you are **not** among those who **perish** when Jesus returns. And there is this point too: **No one will be saved simply by being close** to or even related to another person who is a Christian. **Salvation is not a hereditary matter.** On the contrary, **you must believe on Jesus, and you must be ready** (Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (519). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.)

To "Prepare for Christ's Coming", Jesus warns in Matthew 24:42: Therefore stay awake/be on the alert, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. The phrase stay awake/be on the alert translates a present imperative, indicating a call for continual expectancy. "Being ready" is to be understood more ethically than intellectually. It demands a continuously acceptable lifestyle, not an attempt to calculate the timing of the parousia so as to "prepare" specifically for that event (France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (939). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.)

- **Keep watch does not mean “look for” or “anticipate immediately,” but borrows the image of a night watchman at his post** (Mt 24:42; 25:13; Ladd 1974b:208): **the believer must remain prepared for the Lord's coming, remaining alert and awake** (26:38, 40–41, 43–46). (Keener, C. S. (1997). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, Mt 24:36). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.)

Successful readiness (expressed in **staying awake/being on the alert/watching**) involves at least three important things. First, **Familiarity**. You **cannot** watch unless you know something about that for which you are watching. **In the military, those with binoculars** assigned to watches were instructed regarding that for which they were to watch. **To watch successfully for the return of Christ** means one must know the Word of God well to know for what to watch. Second, **Fervency**. To watch means you must be earnest and make this a high priority in life. **When a person was on watch in the military**, he was to concentrate on his watch. He was to be very fervent about watching. Finally, **Faithfulness**. **A successful watch is faithful**. It does **no** good to watch for awhile then **quit**. **You must watch faithfully** or you will **not** be successful in your watching. (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Matthew* (401–402). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.)

Please turn to 2 Peter 2 (p.957)

How then does staying awake/being on the alert/watching all tie in together with the flood, the angels and being taken in Judgment:

Peter declared:

2 Peter 2:4-9 [4]For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; [5]if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; [6]if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; [7]and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked [8](for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); [9]then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, (ESV) **"KEEP YOUR PLACE IN PETER"**

- **To "Prepare for His Coming", Christians must be alert**, even though they will be secure and have **no cause** for dread. We are to **watch** for Christ's return. **God can guide expectant Christians**. They are open to direction, ready for the unexpected. But those **devoid** of expectancy are **very hard** to shift. (Green, M. (2001). *The message of Matthew: the kingdom of heaven* (p. 259). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.)

It is good that we **not know** exactly when Christ will return. **If we knew the precise date**, we might be tempted to be **lazy** in our work for Christ. **Worse** yet, we might plan to keep **sinning** (planning to) turn to God right at the end. Heaven should not be our only goal; **we have work to do** here. And **we must keep on doing it until death** or until we see the unmistakable return of our Savior. (Barton, B. B. (1996). *Matthew* (p. 483). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.) **Our 'readiness' for the coming of Jesus** is not in excited speculation **but in faithful stewardship** (France, R. T. (1994). *Matthew*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 937). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.)

Illustration: "Urgent Message"

During the Revolutionary War, a loyalist spy appeared at the headquarters of **Hessian commander** Colonel Johann Rall, **carrying an urgent message**. **General George Washington** and his Continental army had secretly crossed the Delaware River that morning and were advancing on **Trenton, New Jersey** where the

Hessians were encamped. The spy was **denied** an audience with the commander and instead wrote his message on a piece of paper. A porter took the note to the Hessian colonel, but because Rall was involved in a poker game he stuffed the unread note into his pocket. When the guards at the Hessian camp began firing their muskets in a futile attempt to stop Washington's army, Rall was still playing cards. **Without** time to organize, the Hessian army was captured. The battle occurred the day after Christmas, 1776, giving the colonists a late present-their first major victory of the war. (Today in the Word, MBI, October 1991, p. 21)

- Being alert now is part of being ready.

Finally, in "Preparing for Christ's' Coming" we must be:

2) Ready (Matthew 24:43–44).

Matthew 24:43-44. [43] But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (ESV)

Jesus now makes a statement of fact as a reminder. Know this/ Be sure of this, "As everyone knows," He was saying, "if the master/head of the house had known in what part/at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake/been on the alert and would not have let/allowed his house to be broken into." **No** sane thief would announce his intention of robbing a house, and **no** sane master/head of the house who knew in advance in what part/at what time of the night the thief was coming would **failed** to have stayed awake/be on the alert in order to prevent his house from being broken into. The image of a thief adds the matter of value, since the thief comes to steal what is worthwhile. Almost everyone values his or her possessions. **No** one is sensibly **careless** with money, cars, or jewelry. That is why we lock these things up. We have safe-deposit boxes. We install antitheft devices and alarms on our cars. We insure especially valuable possessions. If we take such great care about these items, things that will all be lost to us or decay over time, shouldn't we take at least that much care about things that are eternal? Jesus here was not comparing Himself in character to a thief but was comparing His coming to the stealth and unexpectedness of a thief's coming. The New Testament frequently compares the second coming to a thief's coming (Luke 12:35–40; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15), for the obvious reason that, as Jesus here points out, a thief never tries to rob a place where he knows he is expected, and certainly not at the exact time he is expected. (Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (519). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.)

Please turn again to 2 Peter 3 (p.960)

In one sense, however, Jesus will come in the role as well as with the unexpectedness of a **thief**. As far as the ungodly are concerned, He will come and **take away** everything they have, all the things they have cherished and trusted in **instead of Him.** Christians are to watch: **not** like astronomers through a telescope, or guards watching a CCTV screen, but like lovers who can't wait for another glimpse of the beloved, or captives in a labour camp longing for the day that will allow them home. (Green, M. (2001). *The message of Matthew: the kingdom of heaven* (p. 259). InterVarsity Press.)

This is how Peter explains it:

2 Peter 3:2-18 [2] that you should remember **the predictions of the holy prophets** and the **commandment** of the Lord and Savior through your **apostles**, [3] knowing this first of all, that **scoffers** will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They 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.**" [5] For they **deliberately overlook** this fact, that **the heavens existed long ago**, and **the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God**, [6]and that by means of these the world that then existed was **deluged** with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist **are stored up for fire**, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. [8] But **do not overlook this one fact**, beloved, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years**, and a **thousand years as one day**. [9] **The Lord is not slow** to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but **is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then **the heavens will pass away with a roar**, and **the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved**, and **the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.** [11] Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness**, [12] **waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God**, because of which **the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved**, and **the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!** [13] But according to his promise **we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells. [14] Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.** [15] And count **the patience of our Lord as salvation**, just as our beloved brother **Paul** also wrote to you according to the **wisdom** given him, [16]as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are **some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction**, as they do the other Scriptures. [17] You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** [18] But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (ESV)

- **The difference between the flood and the Last Day** is that **God used water** the first time, but **he will use fire** at the end. It is interesting that **when John the Baptist contrasts himself with Jesus**, in **Luke 3:16** says, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire**" (Luke 3:16). **It seems impossible that most people in that day will not be expecting Jesus' coming.** In light of the **absolute destructiveness and horror of the signs of the end time** they will witness, **how** could they **not** turn to God for help and mercy? **How** could they possibly attribute those things simply to natural causes? **Yet most of them will be so overwhelmingly blinded by sin and self-will** that **no** amount of evidence will cause them to seek God. Instead, **hostility toward God** will reach a fever pitch **never** known before on earth, **not even during the times of Noah.** (Albrecht, G. J., & Albrecht, M. J. (1996). *Matthew. The People's Bible* (354). Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House.)

Jesus ties this all together in Matthew 24:44. Therefore/For this reason, you also must be ready. This phrase is **PRESENT** (deponent) **IMPERATIVE** (cf. Mark 13:5, 9, 23). We are **commanded by Christ** to be **ready now** for His coming. **In this context, being ready seems to refer primarily to being saved**, of being spiritually prepared to meet Christ as Lord and King **rather than** as Judge. **As Jesus had already warned (Matt. 24:37-42), everyone in the end time should be expectantly alert for His**

appearing, and as He mentions in verses 45–51, **faithfulness to Him** by those who are already saved is commanded. But **the indispensable preparation for His coming**, apart from which expectancy will be pointless and faithfulness will be **impossible**, is **the preparation of salvation**, of being redeemed through the blood of Christ. **Otherwise a person will be ready only for judgment and damnation.** **The Lord reemphasizes the fact that no one on earth will know exactly when He is coming, not even by an accidental right guess.** **He proclaims categorically: The Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect/think He will.** In divine fury and glory, **the Son of Man will come in total surprise to every human being.** (Utley, R. J. D. (2000). *Vol. Volume 9: The First Christian Primer: Matthew. Study Guide Commentary Series* (203). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.).

- **Are you ready right now to meet Christ?** Are you **putting off** calling someone to repentance? We must **not wait for some perceived future time** that may or may **not** come. Jesus calls us to **leave nothing undone.**

Please turn to Luke 12 (p.818)

Even believers who are expectantly and faithfully ready for His coming will nevertheless be astonished when He actually arrives. **Their readiness** will enable them to meet the Lord with gladness and **without** shame, but it will **not** provide advance knowledge of His precise arrival time.

Luke reports a similar warning Jesus gave on another occasion

Luke 12:35-40 [35]"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, [36]and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. [37] Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. [38] If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! [39] But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. [40] You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (ESV)

- **When the Lord returns, those who "Prepare His Coming" and are ready** not only will find themselves in their Lord's gracious presence but will be served personally by His own divine hand.

Closing Hymn: "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"

Prayer Room Invitation

Benediction: Let us now go in the praise and encourage of the Apostle Paul as recorded in Ephesians 1: **Ephesians 1:15–18** ¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, (ESV)

(Format note: Outline & some base commentary from MacArthur, J. (1989). *Matthew* (Mt 24:36–43). Chicago: Moody Press).