

Matthew 24:37-51

Announcements:

- *Book or not yet?*
- *Facility Fund/Portables?*
- *Playground shade?*

Please open to **Matthew Chapter 24** (*Need a Bible? Raise your Hand...*) - **Mt. of Olives!**

- Last time: **Season is close** (*fig tree parable*), **promise is sure**, **timing is unknown**
- This time: Specifically talking about the **timing (when)** of **His return!** Warnings. “How”

Message Title: Ready or Not, Here I Come!

- **Warning of the Flood** (vv. 37-39)
- **Warning of the Workers** (vv. 40-42)
- **Warning of the Thief** (vv. 43-44)
- **Warning of the Servants** (vv. 45-51)

Four illustrations that all make the same points:

1. Christ is returning.
2. The world will be caught off guard
3. Christians should be aware and ready

Let's jump in...

Warning of the Flood (vv. 37-39)

V. 37 - But as... so also

- “Just as... in this way” = **Allegory alert!** Jesus is making a comparison (**four of them...**)
- What's He comparing things to...?

V. 37 - The coming of the Son of Man

- **Parousia** (*para: alongside + ousia: to be = “to be with”*) - “advent, arrival, or presence”
 - That's what this whole sermon is all about - the **2nd advent of Christ**
- **Son of Man** - *If you've been tracking* with us in the **Olivet Discourse**, you know that this is a **very official title from Daniel 7**. Has more to do with Christ's divinity than it does his humanity.
 - Jesus is referencing Himself **as this Messiah!**

V. 37 - The days of Noah

- This is the first comparison/ or picture Christ gives us in this section. **The days of Noah**
- An earlier teaching in the Gospel of Luke gives us a little more insight:
- **Luke 17:26-30** - “**As it was in the days of Noah**, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: *They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*”

- There are **two main take aways** from the times of **Noah and Lot**:
 - **(1) Normal** - **Eating, drinking, marrying...** (buying, selling, planting, building...)
 - **Business as usual.** Pursuing careers, planning their lives, buying houses... (wining and dining, gorging and guzzling)
 - **(2) Wicked** - **Genesis 6:5** - "The wickedness of man was great on the earth, and... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"
 - It was a **wicked, materialistic, humanistic, sinful, pleasure seeking world...**
 - Specifically, **SEXUAL PERVERSION (in both Noah and in Lot's day)**
- **A long reading section**, but gives us **NT commentary** on all this...
- **2 Peter 2:5-10, NLT** - "Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgment. God protected Noah when he destroyed the world of ungodly people with a vast flood. Later, God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people. But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him ...the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment. He is especially hard on those who follow their own twisted sexual desire, and who despise authority."
- **Three comments:**
 - The Flood and Sodom serves as **WARNINGS for a coming judgment (Christ's return)**
 - Both societies involved **Rejection of God and sexual perversion (modern LGBTQIA)**
 - God **saved the "Righteous" from judgment.** (He will do the same at His return)

V. 38 - In the days **before the flood**

- **Kataklusmos (kata: intensifier + kludon: "surging waves")** - "intense violent upheaval"
 - (cataclysmic/catastrophic) - **Evidence all around (sea fossils, Grand Canyon, cultures)**

V. 28 - **Until** the day

- **Until** = **an expression of time.** The **point of no return.** Judgment: **suddenly & swiftly**

V. 38 - Noah **entered the ark**

- **Salvation language** - **Jesus is the "ark of safety"** for the coming judgment on this world.

V. 39 - And [they] did not know until the flood came and **took them all away**

- **They did not know (were unaware)** - means they **ignored all the warnings.**
 - **They surely laughed at Noah, his boat; and his crazy preaching! (us too...)**
- **Took them all away** - This language is **important for later.** **Taken = judgment.**
 - **Luke 17:27** - "the flood came and **destroyed them all**" - Noah and his family were **"left"**
- Just **as the flood took away the wicked** in judgment, **so will Christ at His return.**

V. 39 - So also will be the **coming (arrival) of the Son of Man**

- We **see the comparisons, clearly.**
- This flood was **a worldwide event**, not localized. **So will the arrival of Christ be (not local)**
- Just as much of the **world was unprepared for the flood**, so will **they be unprepared for the return of Christ.** **Partying and going about life as if no judgment is coming...**
 - **They thought the Titanic could never sink, but it did...**
- **Just as the ancient world was judged**, so too the **future world will be judged.**

- **Heed the warnings, enter the ark of Christ!**

Warning of the Workers (vv. 40-42)

The text illustrates **two people groups**, both **doing normal things** (same point as Noah above!)

- V. 40 - **Two men** will be in the field - This is what the guys did...
- V. 41 - **Two women** will be grinding at the mill - This is what the ladies did... (grinding grain)
- **The point:** People going about normal life **unaware of coming judgment**.

Vv. 40 & 41 - One will be taken and the other left

- This phrase has generated **some theological ideas** out there... (**Rapture or Return?**)
 - **The big question:** *which group* is **taken** and *which group* is **left behind?**
- I'm sure you're aware of the **"Left Behind Series"** starting coming out *in the mid-90's*.
- Let's look at the language... (*all words here have various usages*) (**technical section**)
- V. 39 - **Taken (Airo)** = to carry, lift, remove, or take - **mostly NEGATIVE!** (i.e. flood above)
- Vv. 40, 41 - **Taken (Paralambano)** = to join, receive, seize, or take - **predominantly POSITIVE!**
 - We have to acknowledge that this **word CHANGE may be intentional** - **HINTING to us**
 - This has caused many theologians to assign this to the **pre-tribulational rapture**.
- John 14:3 - "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and **receive/take (paralambano) you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also." - **very positive!**
 - Speaking to either the **Rapture or Return** - *when we're gathered unto Him...*
- But there are a couple times when this word **taken (paralambano)** is used **negatively:**
 - **Matthew 4:5** - the devil **"took"** Jesus up the the pinnacle of the temple to **tempt Him**
 - **John 19:16** - they **"took Jesus away"** to **be crucified** (*being taken in sinful judgment*)
- We've seen the words for **"taken"** can be *used in various ways*, but so can the word **"left"**
- Vv. 40, 41 - **Left (Aphiemi)** = let be, let go, depart, dismiss, or leave - **majority POSITIVE!**
 - **If going with majority usage**, then being **left behind** would be a **good thing!**
 - **Gen 7:23, LXX** - Noah being **"left behind"** after the flood (*opposite of rapture*)
- We know that **being taken** and **being left** *cannot both be good*, **one has to be in judgment**.
 - So, we have to **make an interpretational decision**. (*Which BTW - even the preterists don't agree on positive vs negative usage here...*)
- *We've done the word study*, let's now **consider the CONTEXT** (*remember, context is king!*)
- *In studying the entire Olivet Discourse*, we have both **positive and negative contexts:**
 - **Positive Context:** **The Great Gathering (v. 31)**
 - **Negative Context:** **The Flood Judgment (vv. 37-39)**
- **In studying other related broader contexts** (*cross-references*)
- **Rapture Merit:** - **Enoch & Lot: taken before** (*implicit*) - **do not know the day or hour** (*explicit*)
- **Return Merit:** - **Luke 17:35-37** - "Two women will be grinding at the mill: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." And they answered and said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' So He said to them, **'Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.'**
 - Where **taken?** **Eagles/vultures - carcasses** = **certainty of judgment** (*vague - majority*)
- **Pause. Are you confused?** *Welcome to the club.* **I also WRESTLE with these interpretations.**
 - **Rapture or Return?** There is **merit to both options!** **Which way do I lean in this?**
- Because of the **IMMEDIATE CONTEXT**, I believe we're talking about **the RETURN** *not the RAPTURE* (*though I do believe in the theology of the rapture from 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor. 15*)

- This is mainly due to the **contextual flow of judgment** and the **four illustrations** *all making the same point*. Also, consider the next chapter...
 - **The Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1–13)**: the unprepared are **shut out—excluded**.
 - **The Parable of the Talents (25:14–30)**: the unfaithful servant is **cast out**.
 - **The Sheep and the Goats (25:31–46)**: Jesus separates people for **final judgment**.
- A *plain, simple reading* of the text is talking about people being **taken away in judgment (i.e. the flood)** and *those remaining are saved to go into Christ's kingdom*. **The second coming**
 - You'd have to **reverse the metaphors** to insert the rapture here (though it's possible)

Either way! Whether it's **rapture before the tribulation** or **return after the tribulation**, the **point of the passage still remains the same**:

- **Christ will arrive suddenly in a world** when they are **not expecting Him!**
- Today, the **godly and ungodly are all mingled** together. *We live together, work together, and go to school together. We go to the same restaurants, and drive similar vehicles...*
- The **two people at the mill or in the field** *seem the same from afar... But some day, suddenly, they will be separated*. Some will be **taken**. Some will be **left**. There will be **a great sorting**.
- *Parents, siblings, friends* will be **separated** based on their *acceptance of rejection of Jesus*.

V. 42 - **Watch therefore** (stay alert) for you **do not know what hour** your Lord is coming (arriving)

- **Therefore** = **conclusion time**. *Not to disagree over "timing"* but to **be ready, regardless!**
- We need to be **watchful & active for Him until He comes to take us home** (rapture or return)

The next illustration *makes the same point...*

Warning of the Thief (vv. 43-44)

V. 43 - **But know this (be sure)**

- This **illustration** is pretty simple and *doesn't need much explanation*.

V. 43 - **If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come**

- One of a thief's greatest elements is that of **disguise and surprise**.
- *Wouldn't that be nice if he sent advance notice!? Tuesday evening at 7:14pm. I'd know exactly when to fortify my home and armor up! (and set pranks and traps like Kevin McAlister did!)*
 - Barricade doors, load up ammo, turn outside spotlights on, etc.

V. 43 - **He would have watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into

- **If we knew the exact date He'd come for us, we'd be lazy until He was at the door. (like a teacher leaving the classroom to go down the hall real quick!!!) - This is a great point!*

V. 44 - **Therefore**

- **Therefore** = **conclusion time**. *Same as earlier...*

V. 44 - **You also be ready**

- **How is one to: be ready?** In a couple ways:
 - **(1)** It's to **be at peace with God**. *If you don't know Christ, you are NOT ready...*

- (2) If you do know Christ, then **don't be a sleepy Christian!** *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand!"*
-
- **None of us know when the thief is coming**, and don't want to be caught off guard, therefore **always be ready to go** at any moment!

V. 44 - The Son of Man is coming (arriving) at an hour you do not expect

- The illustration fits the **contextual theme of coming judgment**. (He's not one - in a sinister use of the illustration, but He is one in the unexpected use of the illustration)
- The Lord does not come to His church like a thief, but to the world. He does come like a thief.
- **1 Thess 5:2-6** - *"The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief**. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."*
- Live every day with that **sense of urgency!**

A story of a man who had wasted his life and who at last, near the end, found peace in believing.

- A friend said to him, *"Are you afraid to die?"* He answered, *"No, I am not afraid to die; but I am ashamed to die..."* While his salvation was assured in Christ, **he was ashamed to go home, having wasted all his years** and having done nothing for the honor of his Master.
- That's the point of our final section...

Warning of the Servants (vv. 45-51)

The previous three illustrations emphasize maintaining **a state of alertness** regarding Christ's return.

- Now he shifts to focus on **"how"** we are to live in light of His return.
- This last illustration calls out the person who appears to be **Christian by name only**. And isn't living out what Christ has called them to. (*appearance of Christian?*)

Mark 13:34 - *"It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work..."*

- We all have **general areas of service** (giving, serving, praying, witnessing) and also **"to each his own work" areas of service** (*unique giftings, callings, and areas of influence*)

V. 45 - Mark and Matthew make sure to call them **"servants" in this parable (*Doulos: slaves by choice*)**

- **Three Characteristics:**
- **(1) "Faithful"** - *trustworthy & dependable. Consistent & committed (not lazy)*
- **(2) "Wise"** - *responsible & discerning. Mental & spiritual understandings (not foolish)*
- **(3) Diligent** - *"gave food at proper time" - helping, serving, teaching at the right moments*
 - *Do those definitions describe your walk with our Lord Jesus?*

Christ is clarifying what he means by **"being watchful/ready"** as He's said a few times in this passage.

- The **"watching"** Christ wants is not just us sitting on the sofa or staring out the window waiting for Him... No, He's asking us **to occupy, to do business** until He returns (*more on this in ch. 25*). He's not looking for us to hide away or bunker down, but to **be involved!**

V. 45 - Whom his **master made ruler (gave responsibility) over his household**

- We have been **given stewardship (prudence)** of another's belongings. **Ambassadors!**

V. 46 - The Master, **when he (arrives)**

- **The Master** has **not said how long** He'll be away, exactly. **But, He is coming back!**
- That's been **the theme of this whole sermon**. And, all his servants **will give an account.**
 - **In what condition** would He find you and I if He returned today?
 - **Is there any evidence** of our faith? **Only eating, drinking, and marrying? Is that it?**
 - **Have we been about his business** in any way?
 - **If so, by God's grace, press on. Don't lose heart.**
 - **If not, by God's grace, may a spark be lit in your soul today!**

V. 46 - Blessed is that servant whom [He] **will find so doing**

- **So doing** - Jeus is looking for **action for faithfulness** from His people.
- Genuine faith is always **evidenced by faithfulness**. **Fruit should follow.**
 - **Works is evidence of faith! (more in Matthew 25)**
- **Luke 6:46** - "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and **not do** the things which I say?"
 - **Matthew 7 - Rock vs sand** = "He who hear and **DOES / DOES NOT DO**"

V. 47 - Assuredly, I say to you that he will **make him ruler over all his goods (possessions)**

- **Rewards for faithfulness** in the kingdom to come... **(with an UPFRONT "AMEN!")**
- **All his goods - co-heirs with Christ**. Wanna see one of the **craziest verses in the Bible?**
- **Luke 12:37, NLT** - "The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat!"
 - Not only will we dine with the Lord, but the text says **He will serve us**. I cannot fathom that. **It seems wrong**, but that's what it says. **How unworthy we are... Amazing grace!**

V. 48 - But if that **evil servant**

- **But** = a **term of contrast** here.
- **Servant** - A nominal (**in name only**) believer whose **behavior does not reflect Christ as Lord**.

V. 48 - Says in his heart, 'My master is **delaying his coming**'

- Some would think the Lord is delayed. **It's taking a long time**. **Maybe he won't even return at all.**
 - **This attitude will increase in the last days...**
- **2 Peter 3:3-7** - "Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, **"Where is the promise of His coming? ...all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."** For this they willfully forget: ... the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."
- **The attitude**: "Boss isn't here so I'll just slack off... he won't be back (for a bit)... I've got time."
 - This attitude leads to **apathy, brutality and worldly living.**

V. 49 - Begins to: **(present active)**

- V. 49 - **Beat his fellow servants** - If Christ isn't returning, you might as well. **Dog eat dog world.**
- V. 49 - **Eat and drink with the drunkards** - If Christ isn't returning, you might as well...

- *A prideful, self-centered life full of personal indulgence - no sacrificial living.*
- This man is angry and godless because he believes in a cheap grace.
- We all know people like this outside the church, but this man seems to be inside!
(*"servant," "fellows servants," my master"*)
- Babysitter neglecting the baby - *parents are coming home to ask account*
- Days become weeks, weeks become months, months become years, years become decades...
(*2,000 years now!*)

V. 50 - *The master... will come on a day when he is not looking... at an hour he is not aware*

- Day and hour - Hebrew parallelism emphasizing the Christ's return - not on our timetable.
- The master returns when He chooses, and there will be a day of reckoning. (*Mt. 5 parables*)

V. 51 - *And He will: (the faithful servant was rewarded, yet so was the evil servant rewarded...)*

- V. 51 - Cut him in two - *severe punishment...*
- V. 51 - Appoint him his portion with the hypocrites - *hypocrites = actors (wearing a mask)*
- V. 51 - There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth - *conscious, eternal regret & anger...*
 - All descriptions of eternal condemnation = HELL
 - *This message is not to be taken lightly...*

So what are we to think about all this?

How should we respond in light of everything we've heard today?

- I'd like to answer that by quoting from Luke's parallel Gospel account (*and then make a couple closing remarks*)
- Luke 21:34-36 - *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

CLOSING:

This entire passage (all four illustrations) has everything to do with the return of Christ.

- And, here's' what we glean:
 - This day will surely come...
 - It will come upon the whole world...
 - It will come unexpectedly...
 - The warning is not to dismiss it. Don't be caught off guard... Don't delay

[Worship team come up]

There's an old tale about the devil and three of his evil servants scheming how they can trick man...

- He asked the first one how he proposed to deceive people. *"I will tell them there is no God."*
"That will never work," Satan replied, *"for everyone knows there is a God."*
- The second one volunteered that he would tell people there is no hell. *"That won't work either. Everyone knows there must be a place of punishment"*

- Then the third apprentice devil spoke up. **"I will tell them there is no hurry."** Satan smiled and said, **"You will deceive millions."** And that has indeed been **one of Satan's chief tactics...**

If you don't know Christ - don't stay there. **You will be swept away. Taken away into judgment**

If you don't know Christ - and are **living for Him**, by His grace, **Press on. Don't lose heart.**

If you do know Christ, but **in name only** and have **not been living for Him**, **Stop playing church.**

- **Judgment begins in the house of God (1 Peter 4:17)**
- **Don't be that deceived servant... Repent... Start living for Him!**

Give opportunities for both groups - please with the souls of men!

PRAY