**Ready for Christ’s Coming**

Matthew 24:33-44

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Kingdom Come! (Gospel of Matthew Series)

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**livinghopechurch.net**

“Christ will come when He pleases, to show His sovereignty, and will not let us know when, to teach us our duty.

~ **Matthew Henry**

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pen your Bible to **Matthew 24**.We are getting back to our series in the book of Matthew entitled “Kingdom Come.” This morning we are looking at a message entitled: “Ready for His Coming.”

**Proposition**: We need to be on the alert and be ready for Jesus to come at any time.

**He is Coming: How should we BE?**

In the previous section, Matthew 24:1-31, Jesus told his disciples that He would come back, and that His second coming would be visible for all to see. He, the Son of Man, would come on "the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30). On that day— it could be today, tomorrow, or a thousand years from now— the angels will gather Christ's elect from the ends of the earth (v. 31). These are grand and glorious truths to bank our futures on; but what do they mean for our lives now, at this moment? How does the reality of Christ's return affect the way we should think and feel right now? The answer to these questions begins in Matthew 24:31, and it runs all the way through the end of Matthew 25.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In this section of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gives three lessons for our attitudes. How should we BE as we wait? What ought our attitudes BE? How can we love the Lord as we wait?

We should wait for him with an attitude that is:

* HOPEFUL
* PREPARED
* ALERT

Next week we will look at the four parables He gives that teach us what we should DO. How should we serve the Lord as we wait?

**Couldn’t Wait to See Jill**

You know what it’s like to see someone you love. Some of you who are married might understand even more what I am talking about. When I was engaged to Jill we were in two different states. I would get so excited when I would drive in my car, rain or shine, to see her.

I prepared much. I would write her every other day. I would give my all to her. How much more should we prepare for Jesus’ coming! We need to be ready while we wait: 3 lessons, Mt 24:32-44.

1. Be **Hopeful**: the Lesson of the Fig Tree, Mt 24:32-35.

**Be HOPEFUL for the Kingdom - every year will be wiped away!**

**Matthew 24:32-35**, “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

**The Fig Tree: the Harbinger of Summer**

The fig tree was the harbinger of summer. It was somewhat unusual among trees of Palestine in that it lost its leaves when winter hit. That makes it easier to note the change in spring when the sap begins to flow and the branches become “soft” or “tender” and ready to sprout leaves. Since this is easy to see with the absence of leaves, fig trees were one of the primary signs of the approach of summer. As the leaves began to unfurl, people’s hearts surged with joy because the warm days of summer were around the corner.[[2]](#footnote-2)

When you see all these things taking place:

* false teachers and false christs (vs. 4-5, 11, 23-26),
* international rivalries (“kingdom against kingdom”), “wars and rumors of wars” (vs. 6-8),
* persecution of the church (vs. 9),
* a falling away of some who profess Christ (vs. 10-11),
* a time when lawlessness and wickedness increases in society (vs. 12),
* a time when “the love of many will grow cold” (vs. 12)
* the worldwide preaching of the Gospel
* the destruction of the Temple

Don’t get discouraged! Get excited. The summer of God’s kingdom is near. We are in the late winter, early spring of His kingdom. Summer is near saints. The cold nip is about to give way!

**Mincaye and the Supermarket**

Some of you know the story of Nate Saint and Jim Elliot who evangelized the **Waodani** tribe. In our generation, Nate Saint’s son Steve Saint went back and worked with the tribal chief who killed his father. The tribal chief’s name is Mincaye.

Several years ago, Steve Saint got to bring Mincaye back to the United States. Mincaye was born in the jungle and could not believe his eyes when he went to a well-stocked supermarket. He said they don’t have gardens here, but houses grow with food! And to get the food all you have to do is give the person a plastic card and smile. He said if you smile big they will give you all the food for free!

Mincaye saw a little bit of prosperity in our country, but this broken world is nothing compared to the world that is coming!

The Bible says in **1 Cor 2:9**, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

**Be hopeful!**

There’s coming a day when…

* **Isa 11:9**, “They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”
* **Dan 2:44**, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.”
* Paul says in **1 Cor 15:24**, There is coming a day when “when the end comes, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.” The Kingdom will come in its fullness!
* There is coming a day when “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (**Rev 21:4**).

**At the Very Gates**

**Mt 24:33**, “So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.” **All these things** can only refer to what He has been talking about-the birth pains (vv. 4–14):

* the destruction of the temple
* the worldwide preaching of the Gospel
* persecution, natural upheavals, international rivalries (vv. 16–28),
* the catastrophic upheaval of the universe (v. 29).

Those **things** will indicate that **He is near**, just as the budding fig tree indicates that summer, the harvest time, is near.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Jesus is Knocking at the Door Ready to Come in**

The supreme event of the last day, and the event about which the disciples had queried Jesus (v. 3), was the Lord’s personal coming to establish His kingdom.[[4]](#footnote-4) He’s knocking at the door, ready to enter in and reclaim the earth as His own.

**Thy Kingdom Come: Already, Not Yet**

We are living in a time when Christ has inaugurated the Kingdom. His reign has begun, but it is a contested reign.

We pray “Thy kingdom come.” Has the Kingdom come? Aren’t you a part of His kingdom? Haven’t you entered into the kingdom.

**Romans 14:17**, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus’ kingdom is already/not yet. He’s here. We’ve been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son.

We are seated in the heavenly places, are we not? Yet there is suffering and persecution on this earth.

**Jesus Reigning Spiritually, but Will Reign Physically**

You see Jesus is reigning on this earth through you and me. But one day he will come in power and in glory and reign physically.

**Summer is Near**

Summer is near saints. There is great hope. One day Christ will come in power and glory. Every thing that was necessary to be fulfilled for Christ to come took place in the first generation who heard Jesus’ words that day.

**Mt 24:34-35**, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

**A Time of Suffering: Don’t Be Surprised!**

Peter says do not be surprised because the Christian life is characterized by suffering. Don’t think that being in the Kingdom means you now are done with suffering and poverty and persecution. No, the testing of your faith has just begun.

**1 Peter 4:12-14**, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”

Paul says, we are just clay pots that are weak and suffering, always carrying about the dying of the Lord Jesus so that it will be obvious that the power and glory of the Gospel is of God and not of us!

**2 Cor 4:7-11, 16-18**, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you…”

“16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

**Be Hopeful! Jesus’ Coming is certain!**

You might be discouraged today. You will continue to suffer on this earth. I love **John 16:33** where Jesus says, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Remember what happened when Jesus ascended into heaven? Acts 1:9-11, “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, anda cloud took him out of their sight. **10**And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, **11**and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

**Don’t Lose Heart! There Will Be a Day…**

Don’t lose heart! God’s Kingdom is coming soon. The Day of Christ’s coming is upon us!

* There will be a day when God will wipe away all tears!
* There will be no more trouble.
* There will be no more sleepless nights.
* There will be no more awkward and devastating news from the doctor.
* There will be no more horrendous circumstances in life.
* There is coming a day when God will say “peace be still” and forever it will all be calm and rest.
* The lion and the lamb and the little child shall all play together.
* There will be no more political elections – Jesus alone will be king! His reign will be uncontested!

Summer is near! Summer is near! Come quickly Lord Jesus!

**“There Will Be a Day” Song**

As a popular song says:

*There will be a day with no more tears, no more pain, and no more fears  
There will be a day when the burdens of this place,  
Will be no more, we'll see Jesus face to face*

1. Be Prepared: the Lesson of the Flood, Mt 24:36-41.

**Be PREPARING God's family.**

**JESUS DIDN’T KNOW THE DAY OR THE HOUR**

**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.”

**Predicting the Day of Christ’s Coming?**

**There is coming a day when the world will end.** The Bible clearly teaches this. There have been tens of thousands of **seminars** on the last days **and what happens at the end of the world**. It seems this has happened throughout church history.

And through it all, people have tried to predict the end of the world. In my **research I found over 200 predictions of the Lord’s coming**, even though the Bible clearly warns us against date setting and teaches us **that no one knows the day or the hour**.

Some notable date setters include:

* **Sir Isaac Newton:**  predicted Christ would come in 1715.
* **Charles Taze Russell** of Watchtower/JW fame predicted Christ would come in 1914. In fact the Watchtower Society has since predicted the coming of Christ in 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975 and 1994.
* A very popular book went around in 1988 called 88 Reasons why Christ will Return in 1988 (**Edgar C Whisenant**).
* **Harold Camping** predicted Christ would return Sept. 15, 1994. He is now predicting the Second Coming for May 21, 2011.

**Ten out of Ten People Die!**

The sad thing about these predictions is that though the Second Coming will bring about the end of the world, most of humanity meets Christ before the Second Coming through their own death. We need to be ready at any time because none of us is guaranteed tomorrow! Ten out of Ten people die!

Most people don’t know about the first coming of Christ! We need to get them ready for the Second coming by telling them about the first coming! Jesus saves! Jesus’ blood washes us from all sin!

**Be Prepared, Even Jesus Did not Know His Coming**

Be prepared! The people in Noah’s day were completely unprepared. They would not put their mind on eternity.

We need to be ready and prepared, because at any time Christ could come!

**The Independent Use of Jesus’ Attributes**

What does Jesus mean when he 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.”

Remarkably, Jesus says in verse 36 that even He doesn't know the day and hour when this will happen; no one knows this, except the Father in heaven. Here we see the genuine humanity of Christ, for He humbly chose to take on the limitations of knowledge that other men have, though He Himself (simultaneously) remained omniscient and fully divine. Jesus' statement is a reminder that no man, regardless of what he claims, knows the timing of the second coming.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Jesus is God and can never set aside his attributes, but He can set aside the independent use of them. That is that Jesus is omniscient – He knows all things, right? But in **Luke 2:52**, the Bible says that “Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” How can the omnipotent God increase and grow? If He is complete, how can his knowledge and wisdom be incomplete? If Jesus is the “All wise God” how can he need to “grow in wisdom and in stature”?

**How Jesus Submitted to the Father**

The book of John (among other places) gives us tremendous insight into the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Son submits to the Father.

The Father planned our salvation, the Son submits and pays for our salvation, and later the Holy Spirit does the work of transforming God’s saved people.

What is this beautiful relationship between the Father and the Son? Look at several verses in John. Let’s begin with John 5.

**John 5:19**, “Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”

**John 4:34**, “Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

**John 6:38**, “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

**John 14:31**, “so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded.”

**John 15:10**, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”

**Jesus Laid Aside the Independent Use of His Attributes (Explained)**

Philippians 2 gives us a clue into Christ’s submission to the Father. **Phil 2:5-11**, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7**but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9**Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10**so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11**and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

So Christ laid aside the independent use of his attributes so that at times…

* Jesus was surprised at what the disciples would say.
* Jesus grew as a boy in wisdom.
* Jesus did not know the day or the hour of his coming.
* He experienced human limitations such as hunger (Mt 4:2), weariness (Jn 4:6) and ignorance (Mk 13:32; Lk 8:45-47).
* He experienced the pain of weeping (Jn 11:35,38), agonizing (Mk 14:32-42; Lk 12:50; Heb 5:7-10) and suffering on the cross (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34).
* Jesus experienced separation from God His Father on our behalf.

While we cannot fully understand the mystery of Christ’s divine-human person, we need to obediently acknowledge that Scripture declares Him fully God and fully man.

**Christ Did Not Know The Day or the Hour**

Christ did not know the day or the hour when he was a man on earth. He knows it now because He is glorified! But as a man, being the perfect man, he could not know. He had to be tested with the same humanity as we have.

He was hungry and limited as a man as long as the Father wanted Him to be limited.

The point is, since you don’t know the day or the hour, you need to prepare!

**THE PEOPLE OF NOAH’S DAY DIDN’T PREPARE**

**Matthew 24:36-39**, “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.”

**Y2K Hysteria**

Remember the Y2K hysteria? People thought it was the end of the world and they prepared. They had stock piles of food and weapons. We hardly prepared at all, because no man knows the day or the hour.

**Preparing for Birth of First Child**

[SLIDE] Jill and I were so excited preparing for the birth of our first child, Katie. Now she’s driving, but there was a day when we didn’t know when she was coming. We could see the signs. Jill had several false alarms.

But we were busy preparing for the baby’s birth. We didn’t know when she would be born. I was born two and a half months premature. You never know when the baby’s coming.

When did we know when Katie was on her way?

When Jill’s water broke! We were in the middle of remodeling a house inside and out, and with me caked in mud from head to toe and Jill cleaning and nesting inside, the sign that the baby was coming was here!

We got in our car and headed to the hospital.

But before that time WE WERE PREPARING! When you prepare for the baby…

* You paint the room
* You clean every crevasse
* You baby-proof the house
* You get the crib
* You get all the equipment – the high chair, the baby stroller, etc.
* You prepare!

**Noah Prepared an Ark to Save People**

How much more should we be preparing for Christ’s return. The people in the days of Noah were unprepared. Noah was building the ark, and day after day he likely preached.

Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”

Remember Jesus said that the world is “eating, drinking, and marrying”. The idea is that they are partying and not thinking about God’s coming judgment. They are essentially oblivious to the judgment that was coming. They look out their windows at their parties and they see this massive boat 450 feet long. About a football field and a half! 75 feet wide, 3 stories high! It’s being built for a flood, even though it has never rained! It’s not by any sea. It’s inland.

How many do we know that say they believe Jesus is coming again, but they are not ready, and their not even preparing. Like those in the day of Noah, they may believe “FLOOD” but they do not build “ARK”. If you believe flood, you build ark! All else is empty words.

**Noah Calls People to the Ark**

Noah is told to gather his family. **Genesis 6:17-18**, “For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and **you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you**.”

In addition, Noah also preaches to the lost. 2 Peter 2 tells us that Noah is “a herald of righteousness.”

**2 Peter 2:5**, “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…”

He’s out preaching that people need to come. He’s not vindictive when building the ark. He has a compassion for the lost around him.

**ONE WILL BE TAKEN (SAVED) THE OTHER LEFT TO BE JUDGED**

**Matthew 24:39-41**, “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.”

How frightening to see this all play out. The second coming will divide close family members and friends. These were common things to be working in the field and grinding at the mill. Yet it’s going to be so sudden at Christ’s coming that one will be taken in salvation and the other left to be judged. Can you imagine?

Be preparing!

**How Can You Help Others on the Ark?**

Like Noah we need to be preaching.

* HELP THE SAVED GROW. Be ready to help your brothers and sisters grow in Christ – confront them and love when they sin – don't sweep it under the rug – Jesus could come today
* SERVE THE LORD. Prepare for opportunities of service – don't wait to serve the Lord don't say tomorrow or next year – serve the Lord today.
* HELP THE LOST TO SEE THEIR NEED FOR CHRIST. Be like Noah, and be a “herald of righteousness.”
* Are you preparing for the coming of Jesus?

1. Be Alert: the Lesson of the Awake Owner, Mt 24:42-44.

**Be ALERT in your own heart.**

**Matthew 24:42-44**, “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.”

**Personal Holiness**

Are you ready in your own heart for Jesus to come? Is your house prepared?

You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Are you like an alert homeowner?

**Gates of Your Home**

Do you have every gate of your home protected?

Is your eye gate protected? Are you careful with what you are watching?

Is your ear gate protected? Is all that you are hearing honoring to Christ?

What about your heart? Is your heart protected? Are you doing all to protect your heart. Are you guarding your heart?

**Conclusion**

Are you hopeful, prepared and alert?

1. Platt, David (2013-11-04). Exalting Jesus in Matthew (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (Kindle Locations 6124-6129). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Osborne, G. R. (2010). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, p. 899). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (Mt 24:33). Chicago: Moody Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Platt, ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)