

INTRODUCTION:

About 2023 years ago, Israel was waiting. They had been promised a Messiah, a man from the line of David, who would rescue them. There were prophecies going back hundreds of years. Israel had been planted in the promised land, had sinned and been sent back into exile, then allowed to move back to their land, but they were still not free. They had been controlled by another nation for hundreds of years. This time the nation was Rome.

Hundreds of years of waiting, and hundreds of years of prophecy, and most recently, four hundred years of silence from God, and they still must wait for their salvation. They still needed to wait and watch expectantly for God to fulfill His promise to them. And then, He came, in a way that they did not expect.

Two thousand years later, we wait for Him to come again as He has promised. Jesus told us some things about His return. We know that He will come back in the same way that the disciples saw Him ascend. We know that He will rule on the earth for 1000 years before the final battle, and He will rule eternally. What He didn't tell us was when. Because He Himself did not know.

As we spend the next few weeks looking forward to the observance of Christ's birth, we want to do so with the awareness that we should be anxiously watching for His return!

MAIN TEXT (Matthew 24:36-44)

BACKGROUND:

Our passage today is from Matthew, who had been a tax collector turned disciple of Christ. Matthew wrote his gospel to prove to Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah. He was a Jew writing to Jews, but his words still have teachings for us today.

Today, we will observe that CHRIST WILL RETURN, PEOPLE WILL BE LIVING LIFE, and YOU MUST BE ALERT.

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

1. CHRIST WILL RETURN

- a. (24:36) **Now concerning that day and hour now one knows—neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son—except the Father only.**
- b. He is continuing a thought from vs. 30-31: **Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.**
- c. He is describing His return as a fearful time, because people who have not believed His return will see it. Those who have not been prepared will be faced with the awareness of their unpreparedness.
- d. In the next chapter, He reinforces the point with the parable of the ten virgins.
- e. Not only do we see that Christ will return, and what it will be like when He does, but He points out that people will be just living life.

2. PEOPLE WILL BE LIVING LIFE

- a. (24:37-39) **As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. They didn't know until the flood came and swept them all away.**
- b. Bible scholars estimate that it took Noah 75-120 years to build the ark. People saw it. They didn't believe the flood would come.

- c. Marrying and giving in marriage are signs that you are planning a future.
- d. Example: Seeing people's last FB posts.
- e. These people were not expecting to be taken in a flood, even though they had been warned. People alive now are not expecting Christ's return, even though they have been warned.

3. YOU MUST BE ALERT

- a. (24:39b) So this is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be
 - i. He has warned us that His return will be like the flood. It will be sudden, even though the signs have been there.
- b. (24:40-41) Two will be there and one will be taken.
 - i. Like a scene from "Left Behind".
 - ii. A terrible joke to play on your friends.
- c. (24:42) Therefore be alert, since you don't know what day your Lord is coming.
 - i. (New York Times, Sept. 10, 1861) A soldier was to be shot yesterday near Washington for sleeping at his post. The offence was committed at the hour between 3 and 4 A.M. on the 31st day of August, while on picket guard, near Camp Lyon, District of Columbia. Found guilty at Court-martial, Gen. MCCLELLAN confirmed the finding and the sentence, and private WILLIAM SCOTT, of the Third Vermont Volunteers, would have received a volley of bullets from his comrades, as a tragic, terrible vindication of military discipline, had not the Presidential pardon saved him.
- d. (24:43) But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into.

- i. Example: State Inspections
- e. (24:44) This is why you also must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
 - i. Are you ready for Christ?

CONCLUSION:

As we approach Christmas, a lot of time we are very tempted to look back. We love nostalgia and thinking about Christmas from our childhood. As we enter this season though, it is important for us to look forward with the same expectation that the ancient Israelites had. We should be looking forward to His return. If we are not prepared for His return, we will be the ones who don't get into the banquet.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

1. Are you looking forward to Christ's return?
2. When He comes back, will you be found ready?
3. Have you committed your life to Him?