

“Ready or Not”
January 14, 2023
Matthew 24:36-51

I. Introduction

Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 24 and 25, was His reply to the questions the disciples asked in [Matthew 24:3](#) when they said, **“Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”** In the first part of chapter 24, Jesus gave some of the signs that will occur before His return. As we’ve already seen, He started with general things but concluded with more specific ones.

Many scholars of prophesy have studied these verses and others concerning the end time and, although they do not agree on all the details, a summary of the general conclusion about the order of events goes like this: 1) The Rapture of the church which can happen at any time ([1 Cor. 15:51-58](#); [1 Thess. 4:13-18](#)). 2) At the beginning of the Tribulation, the leader of a coalition of 10 European nations will make a 7-year agreement with Israel ([Dan. 9:26-27](#); [Rev.17:12-13](#)). 3) But after 3½ years, the leader will break the agreement ([Dan. 9:27](#)). 4) He will move to Jerusalem and sets up his image in the temple ([2 Thess. 2:3-4](#), [Rev. 13](#)). 5) The antichrist will take control of the world as he forces all people to worship and obey him. During this time God will send great tribulation upon the earth ([Matt. 24:21](#)). 6) The nations will gather at Armageddon to fight against Christ ([Rev. 13:13-14](#); [19:11-21](#)). 7) Jesus then returns to the earth, defeats His enemies, is received by the Jews, and establishes His kingdom on earth for a thousand years ([Rev. 20:1-6](#)).

After answering their question about the various “signs of His coming,” Jesus then gave the disciples a partial answer concerning their question, **“When will this happen?”**

II. The “Time” of Jesus Return

Although there will be observable and unmistakable **“birth pains”** leading up to His coming, like the actual birth of a child, the exact time of Jesus’ return will be unknown. Although the books of Daniel

and Revelation make it clear that the Tribulation will last for 7 years, the exact time, i.e., the day and hour of Jesus' second coming, is unknown. Jesus said that “no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven.” Although angels are God's messengers and are continually before God and although they will be actively involved in the end time, Jesus said that they don't know the specific time that He will return to the earth. They only know what it is in God's will for them to know.

More surprising “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Jesus, in His incarnation, didn't know the “day or hour” of His return. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus was fully God as well as fully man. Turn to Philippians 2:5-8. When Christ came to earth, He voluntarily restricted His use of certain divine attributes—for example, in His human form He was not omnipresent. While He did not in any sense give up His deity, Jesus limited the use of these divine attributes so the He could fully experience human life as we do.

In John 6:38 Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” Jesus could use His divine attributes only if it was the Father's will for Him to do so. Jesus also obediently restricted His knowledge to those things that the Father wanted Him to know during His earthly days of humanity. He told His disciples in John 15:15, “Everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” Jesus' human knowledge was limited to what His heavenly Father provided, and for that reason, the Son did not know the precise day or hour He would return to earth at His second coming.

It seems probable that Jesus regained all His divine attributes after His resurrection. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18: Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” It appears that by that time He had regained full divine knowledge and power. In Acts 1:7, just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His

own authority.” He repeated the fact that the disciples could not be told the time of His appearing, but this time He did not exclude His own knowledge, as He did in today’s Scripture.

They may not be allowed to know the exact time of His return, but in today’s Scripture, Jesus gave 3 attitudes the disciples and all Christians need to have as they watch and wait for His return.

III. 3 Attitudes

A. Be watchful First, they are to be watchful. Jesus used the Flood and the illustrations of the 2 men and the 2 women to demonstrate His point of being watchful or alert. In spite of Noah’s preaching and warnings of judgment, the people didn’t listen to him. Instead, “in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.” Jesus’ point wasn’t that these activities were sinful—these are all good and necessary things. His point was that the people were so wrapped up in everyday activities that they had no concern or time for spiritual or eternal things.

Because they didn’t expect a flood, they weren’t watchful and instead were caught off-guard and were killed. Similarly, those in the Tribulation who aren’t alert and watching for Jesus’ return will be caught off guard as well. Although some will be saved during the tribulation (Rev. 7:1-17; 14:6-7), just like people of Noah’s day and even people today, the majority of those living during the Tribulation will be warned and warned and warned again, but, sadly, will not believe. Instead, they will ignore all the signs or try to explain them away and then go about their daily lives as if nothing was happening. They will have nothing to do with God; writing of that time Revelation 16:10-11 says, “Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.”

So, when the Son of Man appears in His second-coming judgment, “two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” While men and women are going about their everyday activities, some are prepared, and

some are not. Those that, like Noah, who are alert and watching will be taken to safety; those who are not watchful, or alert will be left behind or abandoned.

B. Be ready Not only is one to be watchful or alert, i.e., looking forward to Jesus' second Advent, they must also be ready for His return. Jesus drew a comparison between the unexpectedness of His coming and the unexpectedness of a thief's activity. "If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into." If he knew that a thief was coming, a homeowner would do whatever was necessary to be ready. This may mean staying up all night watching, reinforcing weak parts of the house, or perhaps enlisting the help of neighbors. People today buy burglar alarms and some even have big dogs. Being ready for other tragedies, others have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. They are watchful and they are ready for any burglar or any other tragedy which may come their way. Similarly, Christians and non-Christians need to be ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

Turn to Luke 12:35-40. A homeowner could relax if he knew at what part of the night a thief was going to try to break in. But since he doesn't, he has to be ready all night long. The same is true for those looking for Jesus' second-coming. Since they don't know the hour or day of Jesus' coming, they must continually watch and be ready for the Lord's sudden appearance. Being ready includes being sure of one's salvation, living lives that are pleasing to God, and continually seeking first the kingdom of God.

C. Be Faithful Not knowing when Jesus will appear, every Christian must be watchful, ready and, finally, faithful. Everything a Christian has—his life, his talents, his gifts, and everything else—is from God and is to be used in God's service and for God's glory. The good servant is the believer who is faithful to the Lord in using what he has been given. **Turn to Luke 19:11-27.** Jesus said that, because of the servant's faithfulness, the master "will put him in charge of all his possessions." In **Revelation 3:21** Jesus said, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."

Unbelievers, represented by the wicked servant, will also be held responsible for what they do with their opportunities from God. During the end time, many unbelievers will remain openly sinful and rebellious against God, caring nothing for His truth or His mercy. Like some people today, they will want nothing to do with God. Others will be aware of their lost condition and their need of a Savior but will put off believing, thinking they will have time after fulfilling their own selfish desires before Jesus comes in judgment. Like some people today, they will say by their lives if not by their words, “‘My master is not coming for a long time.’ I’m going to eat, drink, and be merry.” In the case of the unbeliever, the master will not come as Savior and King to bless and to reward but will come as Judge and Executioner to condemn and to destroy. Jesus said that the place of the evil servant is with all the hypocrites—all those who falsely claim to be disciples—“where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”—hell.

Jesus’ warning wasn’t simply to inform unbelievers about the horror of facing a place of torment but to use that terrible prospect as a motive for believing in Him in order to escape it. In [Luke 13:5](#) He said, “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.” His call was to believe while there is opportunity, rather than foolishly waiting for a supposedly more opportune time that might never come or might not be taken advantage of when or if it does come.

IV. Conclusion

In Matthew 24-25 Jesus was really considering those who will be alive during the “generation of the Tribulation.” But His warning is just as appropriate for those who live before this time, too—including today. Jesus is coming back for His children—[turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#). As we wait for Jesus’ return, we also need to be watchful, ready, and faithful. No one knows when the Rapture or the Second Coming will occur. Quoting again from [Acts 1:7](#), Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority.” Since no one knows when they will leave this earth, whether by death or the rapture, or the 2nd Coming, we all need to be watchful. We need to be watchful to what our priorities are, alert to what our lives say about who our Lord really is. [Turn to 1 Peter 3:8-16](#).

“Live in harmony, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.” If we are living the way He wants, we, like the faithful and wise servant, can look forward to the return of our Lord and Savior.

We also need to be ready. We need to be ready—prepared—to stand before God and claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We also need to be ready to tell others that Jesus saves. As we just read in **1 Peter 3:15**, “Always be prepared—ready—to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” Our lives as well as our voices need to be prepared to stand for Him.

Finally, we need to be faithful. When you became a Christian, you vowed to make Jesus your Lord and Savior. This meant that you promised to make Jesus #1 in your life. So how good is your word? Is He really #1 in your life? As your friends and those close to you watch you, what does your life say about your priorities? We all need to be faithful to God and say along with Isaiah in **Isaiah 6:8**, “Here am I. Send me.”

We may not go through the Tribulation, but we need to be watchful & alert. We need to be ready, and we need to be faithful to God. No one knows what is going to happen this afternoon let alone tomorrow. **James 4:14** says, “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” But if you remain watchful, ready, and faithful to the teachings of God’s Word and the directions of His Spirit, when you stand before Him you will hear the greatest thing you have ever heard, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

The words “Ready or not, here I came” can be applied to Jesus’ 2nd coming, but it can also be applied to the time you will leave this earth—are you ready?