

Matthew 24:32-25:13 | “Are You Ready for Christ’s Return?”

Preached on May 26, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew 24, verse 32 to start out. *[pause]*

As I said last week, we are talking about the topic of the end times, for Matthew 24 and 25 are all about the end times. *[pauseeeee]*

Have you ever said to someone, “Are you ready yet?” *[pause]*

Some guys may say, “Yes, I feel like I say that all the time to *someone* I know.” Or even the ladies here may feel that way.

Don’t nudge the person next to you, or you may get in trouble. *[pauseeee]*

I know that I have to say, “Are you ready yet?” to my children all the time to make sure that we can get out of the door on time. *[pause]*

We ask this because we are wondering if they are ready and prepared to leave and go somewhere else. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s say that you were going to leave and go on a 3 mile hike.

You would have to ask: “Is everything ready? Are we prepared? Do we have all that we need for the hike?”

You gotta be ready! *[pause]*

Well in the large portion that we are going to look at this morning, it’s like Jesus is asking us, “Are you ready?” *[pauseeee]*

It’s interesting that when it comes to the end times, we are all about what is going to happen and when, and we even love to see it laid out for us in massive charts.

But how much emphasis do we put on *being ready* for Christ’s return? *[pauseeee]*

The next time someone talks to you about the end times, or the next time you see an article, post, or video about the end times, notice what it’s about. *[pause]*

It will most likely be about the signs of the end times, when things will go down, or how something fulfills this or that end times prophecy. *[pause]*

I’m not saying that that’s necessarily wrong, but just pay attention to how little you hear someone talk about how to prepare for Christ’s coming. *[pause]*

Observe how little they will call you to steady faithfulness. *[pauseeee]*

All I did was type in “end times” into the search bar on YouTube, and I want you to just listen to the title or description of the videos that came up...¹ *[pause]*

One was titled, “The Antichrist Was Just Revealed to the World”. *[pause]*

There was one about a “spooky end times prophecy” and another about how “strange people are coming”. *[pause]*

There were multiple videos saying that Bible prophecies are happening NOW!, and even some pointing out that “terrifying” Biblical prophecy is being fulfilled. *[pause]*

Another was asking, “Is 2053 The End Of The World?”

And finally one even tells you, “STAY HOME If You Ever See This”. *[pauseeee]*

These are the most popular and most watched videos that people are seeing, and they are the ones that pop up first to watch on the topic of the end times. *[pause]*

Do you see the emphasis in these videos?

The emphasis is solely on what’s happening, and many of them cause people to live in fear.

I mean how are people supposed to respond when you say that the Antichrist was just revealed, there’s something spooky, strange people are arriving, wondering if a certain year is the end of the world, and to stay home? *[pauseeee]*

But what’s really significant is the amount of time that Jesus speaks about how we should *prepare* for His coming. *[pause]*

The whole second half of Matthew 24 and most of chapter 25 are about preparing for Christ’s return and simply being faithful. *[pauseeee]*

Just think about it.

You don’t see many popular videos on being faithful as you await Christ’s return, but some of the videos that I just mentioned have over a million views! *[pauseeee]*

It’s because simple faithfulness doesn’t seem enticing and thrilling to people, but mention that strange people have arrived or that there’s some spooky end times prophecy and people rave about it. *[pauseeee]*

Yet what we will see is that Jesus wants us to be ready, prepared, and awaiting His return through faithfulness.

But before He gets there, He will show us some more characteristics of His return. *[pause]*

¹ https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=end+times.

Look down at verse 32, as I begin READING. [*READ VERSES 32-35*]

Jesus gives an illustration of a fig tree, and relates it to His return. [*pause*]

A fig tree's tender branch and leaves signify that summer is near, so also, the signs that Jesus just gave signify that He is near.

They are indicators, which show us that His return is imminent. [*pause*]

He's not saying that He will necessarily come *immediately* after the sight of the signs, but that His coming is near and could happen at any moment.

And He reassures us that His coming would definitely happen for He states that His words will not pass away. [*pauseeee*]

What else does this show us but that...

I. Jesus' return is imminent and certain.

Do you realize that Jesus' return is imminent? [*pause*]

Even James in his time could say, "behold, the Judge is standing at the door."² [*pause*]

The writers of the New Testament knew that even *they* were living in the last days, and that Christ could come.

And this has led every generation of Christians since then to faithfully be ready, for they didn't know when He would return. [*pauseeee*]

The sight of the signs meant that He is near, and we can trust that His return is certain. [*pauseeee*]

Some people doubt if Jesus will return.

They are like the people, who Peter talks about, who scoff and say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"³

But Jesus is pushing us to see that His return is certain, for His words are certain. [*pauseeee*]

When we look around us, we think the world and this universe are the most stable things that there are, but Jesus is pointing to something more sure, more stable, more certain. [*pause*]

His words are the most stable thing that there is!

And that means that you can count on His return happening. [*pauseeee*]

² James 5:9b.

³ 2 Peter 3:4.

Think about the most sure and certain thing in this world -- His words blow it out of the water in certainty. *[pause]*

You can cling to His word and not regret it!

You can hold tightly to His word and hope in it!

Amidst an ever-changing, uncertain world, you can trust the never-changing, certain Word of Christ! *[pauseeee]*

Do you act like He is definitely, without a shadow of a doubt, coming?

Do you live like, without question, Jesus is returning? *[pause]*

It goes back to: do you trust His word?

Do you believe that His words will not pass away? *[pauseeee]*

Jesus' return is imminent and certain.

We must not move away from those points, for they will affect how we live.

And that's why Jesus goes on to speak about people who are ready or not ready for His return. *[pauseeee]*

It all comes back to, do we trust Him that He *is* coming back and that His coming is imminent?

That's the difference between people who are ready or not. *[pauseeeee]*

As I continue READING, listen for the contrast between people who are ready and people who are not. *[READ 24:36-25:13]*

A main point that Jesus spotlights is that...

II. Jesus' return will be at an unknown time.

So even though Jesus just told us that there are signs, and we can know the general time of when He will return, His actual day of return is unknown. *[pause]*

He says, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." *[pauseeee]*

There have been many people throughout history who have claimed to know the exact date of Christ's return.

But they have gone directly against Scripture, for Scripture tells us that "no one knows...but the Father". *[pause]*

If even Jesus as He was living on earth didn't know, who are people to claim that they know more than Him? *[pause]*

Just ignore the date-setters, for they are completely wrong and I would even say that they are deceivers and liars, for they are going directly against Scripture.

His date of return is unknown. *[pauseeee]*

Think of the game "hot potato".

You keep passing a ball down a line of people until the music stops, but no one knows when it will stop.

That's like Jesus' return, no one knows when He will come back, but you need to be ready, or you will be completely caught off guard. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus explains that some people won't be ready at all, for they act like nothing will happen. *[pause]*

He makes a connection between the days of Noah and the days of His return. *[pause]*

In the days of Noah, "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were *unaware* until the flood came and swept them all away." *[pause]*

That's how it will be when Christ returns.

There are going to be many people who won't be ready at all.

They will act like nothing is going to happen, and they will only be focused and concerned with day-to-day life. *[pauseeee]*

Isn't it interesting that Jesus doesn't point out any evil activities, but rather, these are normal life activities.

But their problem is that they were "unaware" of the coming day of judgment. *[pause]*

They were just living life without any concern for the Lord. *[pause]*

This is like many, many people today, especially in our country.

They act like nothing is going to happen, and are only concerned with the normal day-to-day activities of life. *[pause]*

They are more concerned with sports, hobbies, food, travel, and possessions than anything to do with God. *[pause]*

The coming of Christ is the last thing on their mind because they are too focused on the next thing on their to-do list or bucket list.

But to-do lists and bucket lists won't prepare you for Christ's return!

You must be concerned with the state of your soul! *[pauseeee]*

We cannot be so concerned and consumed with normal life activities that we do not take into account that Christ is coming.

For while people are doing normal tasks, Christ's coming will be sudden and take one person and leave another.

One will be facing judgment, the other salvation. *[pauseeee]*

Do you act like nothing is going to happen, and just focus on regular life activities?

Or are you ready and expectant for Christ to come, like Noah was ready for the flood? *[pauseeee]*

This is why we must be ready like a homeowner ready for a thief, for Christ's coming will be like a thief.

We don't know when it will be, so we must be prepared. *[pauseeee]*

Notice another thing that comes out of these illustrations...

Some expect Jesus to come *later* than He will. *[pause]*

Now these people are different from the people of Noah's day. *[pause]*

The people of Noah's day acted like nothing was going to happen, but these people know that Christ will return, but think they have plenty of time. *[pauseeee]*

In verses 45-51, Jesus gives this example of a faithful, wise servant and a wicked servant. *[pause]*

The faithful, wise servant just does his job faithfully, so that no matter when the master returns, he's faithfully doing his job.

But the wicked servant says, "My master is delayed," and so beats his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards.

Yet, Jesus says that this wicked servant will be caught off guard, for the master will return earlier than he expected and deal out judgment. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the problem with the wicked servant was that He thought, "I've got time!" *[pause]*

He thought that the master wouldn't be returning for a very long time, so he might as well just live it up now and then later he will get his act together.

But sadly, this is what will happen to many people. *[pause]*

They grow up hearing that Christ will return, but they think that they have time before it happens.

So what do they do?

They live for self, neglect what God has called them to do, and will face judgment when Christ returns. *[pauseeee]*

So many people put off the things of God.

They put off trusting in Jesus and following Him. *[pause]*

Many young people think, "I've got time! I've got my whole life ahead of me. I'll just live it up now, and then I'll get right with God when I'm older."

But you don't know when Jesus will return! *[pause]*

Will you find yourself like the wicked servant, caught off guard by Jesus' return? *[pause]*

This is not some small thing, but a big deal.

This is your eternity, for did you notice how the wicked servant was sent to the place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth"?

He was sent to Hell, a place of eternal torment! *[pauseeee]*

Do not delay getting right with God through faith in Jesus Christ!

And when you truly trust Him, you will live for Him, faithfully doing what He has called you to do. *[pauseeee]*

So some expect Jesus to come *later* than He will, but we also see an illustration of how others expect Jesus to come *sooner* than He will. *[pause]*

Look at the story found in Matthew 25:1-13.

It's the parable of the ten virgins. *[pause]*

These virgins are probably what we today would call 'bridesmaids', and they had a role in weddings back in the time of the New Testament. *[pause]*

In that day, the groom would come and get the bride to bring her to his house for a great feast, and the bridesmaids would accompany them to the house with lamps to light the way. *[pause]*

Well here are these 10 virgins -- 5 wise and 5 foolish. *[pause]*

The wise are prepared with oil, but the foolish don't bring any oil with them. *[pause]*

They have to wait a long time, but when the bridegroom finally arrives, the wise are prepared, but the foolish have to run and get more.

And when they eventually return, the door is shut, and they are not allowed to enter. *[pause]*

The reason? He says, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you." *[pauseeee]*

I want to think about what the main difference is between the wise and foolish virgins -- being prepared with oil. *[pause]*

One group was prepared with the oil, and the other wasn't prepared, but brought none. *[pause]*

It appears that the oil pictures either being saved and/or the Holy Spirit. *[pause]*

The wise ones made sure to make their preparations, get right with God, trusting in Jesus Christ before He returned.

But the other group may have *looked the part*, but they never had any oil. *[pause]*

They never made preparations for their soul, and when Christ returns, they are found with nothing.

And here's the thing, once He returns, it's too late! *[pause]*

This is why the door was shut, for they weren't ready and prepared when the time came.

And they were not allowed in, for though they looked like they belonged to the wedding party, the bridegroom didn't know them. *[pauseeee]*

This shows an important truth...

There will be some people who appear like they are Christians, and they even look the part, but Jesus is going to say to them, "I do not know you." *[pause]*

What matters is not that you look the part, it's whether Christ truly knows you in relationship, where you have personally placed your faith in Him and what He did on the Cross. *[pauseeee]*

If you are unprepared in your heart, do not think that all will be well and just work out in the end.

But turn to Christ and be saved! *[pause]*

It's not what you wear, your Christian lingo, and your Christian family's heritage that makes you ready for Christ's return.

It's whether you have oil in the lamp -- that is, whether grace has changed you by faith, and you have the Holy Spirit. *[pauseeee]*

There may be some listening today, and you are like those foolish ones -- you have never actually turned from your sins and believed in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. *[pause]*

You look good, and others think that you belong, but you don't.

Christ doesn't truly know you in a relationship, and there will be a day where it's too late, the door will be shut. *[pauseeee]*

The oil, that is, faith and the Spirit cannot be simply transferred to you from someone else.

Rather, you must personally trust in Christ alone. *[pause]*

You cannot delay!

You know neither the day nor the hour of His return! *[pauseeeee]*

You know when you play hide and seek, the person says, "Ready or not, here I come!"

Well there will be a day when Christ returns and it will be a time where it's: if you are ready or not, He is coming. *[pauseeee]*

So what must we do in light of His impending return that will come at an unknown time?

We must...

III. Watch and be prepared for His coming!

If you are sitting in a deer stand, you know that you must be alert, watch, and be ready.

Your eyes have to be looking around, your gun has to be loaded, and you have to be alert to the sights and sounds around you. *[pause]*

If you are caught off guard, the opportunity will be missed.

And it's that kind of watchfulness, preparedness, alertness, and readiness that Jesus emphasizes in these stories. *[pause]*

The opposite is to be caught unaware, be asleep, lazy, unready, and unprepared. *[pauseeee]*

Some don't even think Christ will return, others think they have more time, and still others are not prepared for a long delay.

But *we* must watch and be prepared for the coming of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

We must be awake like a homeowner, ready for a thief at any moment.

We must continue being faithful like a wise servant, ready for his master to return at any time.

And we must be prepared like a virgin with oil in our lamp, awaiting the bridegroom's arrival.
[pauseee]

But what does it actually mean to be watchful or not watchful? [pause]

We all know what it looks like to be alert, prepared, and watchful in earthly life, but what does it mean as you apply it to a life of faith? [pause]

I found some other passages of Scripture that are very helpful in helping us to see what this all means.

And in Luke's account of this, listen to what Jesus says...

"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."⁴ [pauseee]

The opposite of being watchful is being weighed down by drunkenness and the cares of this world.

It's the idea of just living for the here and now, living for self, and being distracted by the cares of this life. [pauseee]

There are so many people weighed down and distracted with the things of this world!

They live for the here and now only, and they are numb to the thought that the Lord is going to return. [pause]

The world is constantly trying to pull us away from faithfulness to believe that everything is about the things of this earthly life. [pause]

People think life is about money, status, possessions, thrills, experiences, adventures, and they are consumed with the cares of this life.

But as a Christian, your life cannot be only about the here-and-now. [pause]

Your life can't be all about the next thrill, the next experience, the next vacation, the next paycheck, or the next girlfriend or boyfriend.

⁴ Luke 21:34-36.

You need to start looking at your life through the perspective of eternity and Christ's return.
[pause]

He *is* coming again someday, so what are you all about?

He *is* coming again someday, so will He find you faithful or off living for yourself? [pauseeee]

According to Luke's account, what is the way to be watchful? Prayer.

Depend on God, look to Him, and don't be taken up into the concerns nor the lifestyle of this world. [pauseeee]

Another passage that helped me to see what watchfulness and alertness meant was in 1 Thessalonians 5. [pause]

Paul talks about the coming of the Lord and how it will come like a thief.

He says that Christ's coming shouldn't really surprise us, for we are children of the light, and we do not sleep like others.

So he says, "...Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation."⁵ [pauseeee]

So how can we be sober, watchful, and alert?

We arm ourselves with faith, hope, and love! [pauseeee]

Being watchful and ready for Christ's return isn't some complex, hard-to-understand or hard-to-do task, but it's everyday Christianity, that is, everyday faithfulness. [pause]

We keep trusting the Lord and putting our hope in Him.

We love Him above all.

We are on guard against sin, alert to the dangers around us, and we extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one with steadfast faith.⁶ [pauseeee]

To be asleep spiritually and not alert is to be apathetic to the things of God, and live only for ourselves and what we want.

But to watch and stay awake spiritually is to stand strong in the faith, hold onto hope, and love Christ and His appearing.⁷ [pauseeee]

You see, the way to 2nd coming watchfulness is foundationally a trust in, a hope in, and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. [pause]

⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

⁶ A reference to Ephesians 6:16.

⁷ An allusion to 2 Timothy 4:8.

How you think about Christ will affect how you live, and your true spiritual nature will be revealed in how you live, as you await Christ's return. *[pauseee]*

The wise servant wanted to please his master, so he was faithful, knowing that his master could return at any moment.

The wise virgins wanted to please the bridegroom, so they desired to be ready, being rightly prepared for his arrival.

And so this passage teaches us that we need to...

Be ready, Christ is coming at an unknown time!

One commentary that I read gave this illustration...

“Many years ago, while traveling out-of-town, a businessman attended a Sunday morning worship service at a large church in Texas. *[pause]*

As is customary during most church services, a portion of the time was devoted to important announcements, which the pastor stood up to deliver. *[pause]*

One of the announcements was with regard to the sermon topic of that evening's worship service.

The sermon title was “Jesus Is Coming!” Its focus would be on Jesus' return and the need for Christians to be ready for this event. *[pause]*

As the pastor wound up his invitation to attend the evening service, he quickly concluded by adding, “Remember, ‘Jesus Is Coming!’ at seven o'clock this evening.” *[pause]*

Immediately chuckles could be heard across the large sanctuary.

[And] the pastor, after realizing how his statement must have sounded to some of his listeners, simply smiled and moved on. *[pause]*

Although humorous, his statement was somewhat of a stopper for the businessman, he found himself visualizing the possibility of seeing Jesus that evening.

The pastor's unintended remark made solid contact with the visitor. It's a question we all do well to ask: Am I ready?”⁸ *[pauseee]*

Are you ready?

Will you keep putting off repentance, thinking that you have time, or will you turn to Jesus and be saved?

⁸ Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 409.

Will you be found lazy, acting wickedly, or be unprepared, or will you be found faithful? *[pause]*

Don't be focused on all of the time that you wasted in the past, but think, "What can I do *now*?"
[pauseee]

Look to Christ, love His appearing, and faithfully serve Him, so that with joy you may say someday, "Here is the bridegroom!"

And what blessing you will experience, for He told us, "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes."