

The Coming of Christ in Matthew 24:23-44

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Intro:

(1) Thanks for invitation

(2) *Professor start with quiz

*Rain predicted:

*umbrella or sunglasses?

(3) Yes, principle of responding to predictions by making and following through with appropriate preparations

Proper Preparedness is the Proper response to Predictions

Foolishness of knowing it's going to rain hard, owning an umbrella and failing to use it.

This is just a silly illustration,

The real test is whether we make the same kind of connection between what we know is going to happen

and how we prepare in the big picture issues of life that really matter

How much more should we take Jesus' words extremely seriously when He tells us certain things about the future?

And how should we respond most appropriately?

I have been told that you have been going through Matthew 24 – Jesus large block of teaching in which He makes many predictions

I have been asked to speak on what He had to say about His future coming

I want to talk not just about His coming, but also talk about what difference that should make for us.

But first let's hear the Word of God

(4) Read 24:1-44 – Best thing you'll hear all morning

PRAY

(5) Transition:

Series of sermons – I am a guest who was not here

Bear with me as I review, so that we are all on the same page

A little bit of background information for this whole chapter to make our passage make more sense

Background setting

1. *Responding to 2 questions

Jesus had been teaching in the temple and disputing with the Jewish leaders

This ended with Jesus pronounced judgment on the Jewish leaders of His time in ch. 23

One of the last things that He said was that their house is left desolate v. 38

Then Jesus left the temple –

as He was walking away the disciples drew His attention to the marvelous buildings

Jesus then predicted that they would be completely destroyed – not a single stone remaining in place

The disciples responded with 2 questions:

*1. When will this happen?

*2. What will be the sign of your coming and of the end?

All of this chapter is in some sense a response to these two questions

2. (6) Prophetic Foreshortening

To understand this we need to be aware of a common occurrence in Bible prophecy – Prophetic Foreshortening

That is, the prophets are speaking God's Word to their immediate hearers, but sometimes also speak about things that are in the future

So that the time of the prophet and the future are intermingled, without always clearly defining which is which.

*This is often likened to looking at a mountain range – they look together, but really far apart

Or overlaying a transparency, to see both at the same time

And often the prophecy applies both to the time it was told and a future time.

So in Matt. 24, Jesus may be talking about 2 different things, which the disciples thought would be one

*The destruction of the temple, which took place historically in 70AD under Titus

(Christians survived because they fled to the hills by Jesus' instructions)

*And the end of this age at the return of Christ

We should try to keep both of these in mind as we read – some applies to 70, some to the end, some to both.

*And it is somewhat difficult to clearly understand which is which - humility

3. (7) **The purpose of eschatology/prediction** – define eschatology
Did not just answer their questions, but answered what they needed to hear
*application/preparation, not just fascination
Yes it can be fascinating and we should be fascinated, but there must also be more
I have met Christians who could chart out the future in minute detail, but who were not ready in their lives,
Which is more important – to know the airline schedule or have a ticket for the flight?
Eschatology is to give us motivation and hope and life change
My insistence on preparation and applying our eschatology is not just my idea, it came from Jesus
4. (8) **List of Jesus' Imperatives and Applications**
- a. *Don't be deceived – v. 4
 - b. *Don't be alarmed (freak out) – v. 6
 - c. *Flee destruction without looking back – v. 16-18
 - d. *Don't believe counterfeits – v. 23-26
 - e. *Learn the lesson of expectancy – v. 32
 - f. *Keep watch – v. 42
 - g. *Be ready/prepared – v. 44

Transition:

(9) Our passage – Coming of Christ

Overview outline

Just to let you know where we are going – overview is important before details

- *1. Christ's coming will be counterfeited and contested – 23-24
- *2. Christ's coming will be public and universal – 26-28
- *3. Christ's coming will be glorious and powerful – 29-31
- *4. Christ's coming is certain and immanent – 32-35
- *5. Christ's coming will be unexpected and sudden – 36-44

1. (10) Christ's coming will be counterfeited and contested – 23-24

The two greatest threats to the church throughout history have been persecution from outside and false teachers from inside – cf. Rev. 13

Contested comes from the previous verses of persecution and tribulation

They will hate and kill Christ's people

The idea of false christs and prophets has already been introduced earlier in v 5 & 11

Now the idea comes up again in terms of the Coming of Christ

a. There will be claims that Christ has come

He is here, He is there!

b. False christs and false prophets will come

We need to be wary of them because they do exist

c. They will perform great miracles and signs

Yes, the devil can do miracles, and we are told that he will

d. They will deceive and be extremely convincing

Miracles are proof of God, but not conclusive proof – can be faked

Then how can we know?

First of all, Jesus told us there would be and commanded us to test the Spirits

Edwards Distinguishing Marks

Some things are not conclusive either way

Some things are:

1. Increased esteem for Jesus
2. Increased esteem for the Word of God
3. Increased love for God and neighbor
4. Increased truth, less error, etc.

I want to add two more tests

Test of the cross – no cross, no crown

A promise of the easy way out, having it your way, is usually a lie

Jesus said if you want to follow me, you will take up your cross

Never promised it would be easy – just worth it

Test of the Scriptures – test new “revelation” by old Revelation

Transition: The good news is that Jesus warned us ahead of time - 25

applies to what comes before, and what comes after

2. Christ's coming will be public and universal – 26-28

Christ seems to be repeating Himself here, but He is not

He says that some will claim that the Christ is in the desert or in the inner room.
Notice that both these places are private, away from the public eye

The desert is a deserted place, the inner room is a secretive place
False hood works in secret and private, God works in public, with nothing to hide
When Christ comes back, everyone will know

Don't fall for a secret christ because the real Christ will come back in public

That is what the two illustrations mean

The reason we are not to follow the secret claims:

1. The coming of Christ will be like lightning – which is plainly visible to everyone across the whole sky – Christ's coming will be publicly seen and unmissable
2. There will be public and unmistakable pointers to His coming

In other words, just like when you see vultures circling, you know there is a carcass

In the same way, you won't be able to miss the public display of Christ's coming

(12)Application:

*Don't believe the lies, don't chase after them,

You don't need to chase spiritual experience, Christ has come near to you,
no idolatry, wait for the True One

Don't look for the easy way out, look for the saviour

Never say no without bigger yes

Our biggest concern should not be in reading the smallest signs of the times or chasing various claims, but rather pursuing the real Christ, and then there's no way you will miss anything

3. (13) Christ's coming will be glorious and powerful – 29-31

- a. When Jesus returns, the heavens will shy away in His glorious presence

The sun will be darkened

The moon will not give its light

The stars will fall from heaven

The powers of the heavens will be shaken

What are we to make of this?

Jesus is not making this up, but drawing from standard OT imagery for God showing up in judgment esp. Isa 13 & 34

The picture is of everything running away from God's terrible majesty

But also possibly a picture of candle next to the sun – cf. Rev.

In the OT, this imagery is used in contexts of judgment – our God is a consuming fire, not to be trifled with – both in OT and NT

He will come to judge the earth, and it will be tremendous beyond imagination

- b. Jesus will appear

- a. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven

What is the sign

Possibly – banner, like a flag

Possibly – some astrological sign, like a comet etc.

Most likely – the sign of the coming of the Son of Man will be the coming of the Son of Man

In other words, translate “the sign, which is the Son of Man”

- b. The result

- i. All the people groups of the earth will mourn

Cf. Zech 12 – mixture of judgment and salvation

- ii. They will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds with great power and glory

Cf. Dan 7:13-14 – “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

All will see and acknowledge the power and rule of Jesus – cf. Phil 2 – “every knee”

No power even close, no enemy will prosper, only Christ is Lord

many do not acknowledge this now

All will acknowledge this then

c. Jesus will gather His elect

He will send His angels with a great trumpet blast

They will gather His elect from the entire earth

Word picture harvest combined with that of going out of the city to greet the king who is coming to town in triumph or for enthronement (or both) joyous celebration

(14) Application: Repent, Hope and Rejoice

Notice the mixing of judgment and rescue – Which is it?

Depends – when see army coming – your side or enemy

When hear police siren – are you crook or victim

Persecution and suffering will end for those on Christ's side, will begin for His enemies

*To whatever extent, you are not being faithful to Christ – change,
seek His readily available forgiveness and power to change

*To whatever extent you are being faithful to Christ – hope & rejoice in the meantime
It will be worth it all

Rom 8:18, 2 Cor 4 16

“It is important to remember that all these natural portents...are signs of God's power and overruling providence; they are a terror only to the faithless” AB quoted in Morris

4. (15) Christ's coming is certain and immanent 32-35

Jesus makes a comparison with a common experience of the people of His day
They were able to recognize the sure signs from a fig tree that summer is right around the corner

They, like we, are able to make the mental connection – if this happens, this is certain
Jesus then applies the same principle to His coming

When you see all these things, it is immanent, near at the door

All these things not = the signs of 29-31, too late for signs by that time,

Rather “all” these things from whole chapter, which started in Jesus’ generation

Does this mean that Jesus was mistaken on the timing? NO

Immanent, not in the sense of within so many minutes, but in the sense of next

Next on the agenda, next in line, will be the next thing to happen with no indication when it will happen

The implication is the trustworthiness and certainty of Jesus’ prediction

“This generation will certainly not pass away” difficult saying

Possibly tell options

Generation of Jesus’ time – sees the start

Generation of last time – sees it through

Generation = race

These things did come true in 70 AD within a generation of Jesus’ prediction

This leads to our certainty that it will ultimately be fulfilled, even if it seems delayed

Jesus’ words are more certain than heaven and earth

(16)Application:

Learn the lesson from the Fig tree,

put the pieces together,

make the connection,

*be expectant,

don’t lose sight of eternity and what is really important

Live in this world, but don’t love this world in the bad sense

Be ready to flee at any time without turning back

Nothing in your house is worth your life (except your family)

Old story of satan and 3 apprentice devils

1st said – “I’ll tell them there is no God”

satan replied – “That won’t work, they all know there is a God, even if they pretend there is not”

2nd said – “I’ll tell them there is no hell”

satan replied – “That won’t work, they all know there is a hell, even if they pretend that there is not”

3rd said – “I’ll tell them there is no hurry”

satan replied – “Go and you will ruin them by the thousands”

Don’t live like there is plenty of time, learn the lesson of the fig tree

5. (17) Christ's coming will be unexpected and sudden – 36-44

No one but God the Father knows when it will be

Let's stop predicting the timing – rather proclaim the certainty
For everyone else Christ will come at an unexpected time – like a thief in the night
It will be just like the people in the days of Noah

They were living normal lives, doing normal things – eating and drinking etc.

With no idea of what was about to happen

They did not know or even suspect until it was too late, and it swept them away

Possibly - Illustration of prank calling ahead

Remember – it was not raining when Noah built the ark – they did not see it coming

The coming of Christ will be that way

Many will not see Christ coming until it is too late

Many will be caught unaware

2 illustrations:

2 men in a field, one taken, one left

2 women grinding at the mill, one taken, one left

Ambiguous – is taken good or bad compared to being left?

in light of v. 39 probably bad

in light of v. 31 probably good

no matter, be on the right side

(18) Application:

Keep watch and Be ready,

*be watchful

Jesus uses illustration of the householder waiting for the burglar,

He uses this as an illustration of the need for watchfulness

To respond appropriately to the prediction

In other words, you don't know when it will happen,

but YOU DO KNOW YOU SHOULD BE WATCHFUL

We often think of watching in a negative way.

I want to invite you to also think about it in a positive way

*like the dog waiting for its master to come home

Yes it is a threat, and should be taken as such if you are not faithful

But it can be a glorious invitation and hope if you are ready,

If you love the Lord, you will long for His return

*be ready

not reading signs of times as much as being faithful to do what you should

– cf. following parables

Not trying to outguess God for deathbed conversion – foolishness

Is your family coming home early a good thing?

Depends if you are lonely and waiting for them or if you are misbehaving

*Trust in the meantime

“If the Son himself does not know the time of the [Coming], ‘how cheerfully should we his followers rest in ignorance that cannot be removed, trusting in all things to our Heavenly Father’s wisdom and goodness, striving to obey His clearly revealed will, and leaning on His goodness for support’” Broadus quoted in Carson.

(19) Gospel Application:

Connect 2nd coming with First coming, cross & resurrection

Learn the character of the Lord of the Second Coming from His first coming

He is gracious and caring and made a way for you to be on His side

He did not wait for you to get your act together and be righteous, but made a way

He was powerful to overcome sin, death and the grave, He has all authority

He is gracious and patient, but His patience will end

Take full advantage while there is time

Then look forward with joy

It will be glorious

It will be worth it all

For those in Christ, the 2nd coming is not a threat, but a promise

For those who reject Christ or just play church, it is a threat

Look forward, live in hope & expectancy

Live all of life in light of eternity

Live every day of your life as if it was your last and you want no regrets

The rest of ch. 24 and ch. 25 tell how to do this.

Pray/Benediction