

Hymns: 4 Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine 34 When We All Get to Heaven  
33 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder

Scripture: Psalm 63; 130

Big idea: Be Ready

Our scripture text for today is: **Matthew 24:32-44**

We're looking again at the Olivet Discourse. Last time we covered many prophetic details. It makes sense here to review what we covered back before Thanksgiving to refresh our memories and set the stage for today's study.

Jesus, having just completed excoriating the religious leaders, gave information concerning the future to His disciples on the Mount of Olives just two days before He gave His life a ransom for the world on the cross. The Mount of Olives overlooks Jerusalem. The Garden of Gethsemane is there adjacent to a huge Jewish cemetery. Jesus made His triumphal entry there. Jesus ascended into heaven from there. Jesus will return there, and when he does, this mountain will split in two.

After Jesus lamented that the temple and Jerusalem would be destroyed. Four of His disciples asked Him four important questions: the first two regarding the things Jesus had predicted, and the second two regarding when He would finally rule as the promised King. The disciples and Jesus' mother especially had been expectantly waiting for Jesus to rule and reign throughout His ministry. They weren't alone. The mobs of Jews just a few days earlier shouted "Hosanna" which means "save now" on the day we celebrate as Palm Sunday. They were looking for a king to give them freedom right then from being a conquered people ruled by Rome.

Here are those four questions:

1. When shall **these things** occur? (*These things* refers to the destruction of the temple.)
2. What **sign** will precede **these events**?
3. What **sign** will precede His coming? (This refers to His second coming in glory and power.)
4. What **sign** will precede the end of the age?

In Matthew 24:4-8 Jesus first gives a broad summary of prophetic events leading up to the end of the age (questions 3 and 4) including some of the catastrophic events (still in our future) later predicted in detail in the book of Revelation. He then transitions to describe the details (elaborated in Luke 21:12-13 and Mark 13:9-12) regarding events leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and temple destruction in AD 70 – answering those first two questions.

In Matthew 24:11-14, Jesus paints with a wide brush regarding general events preceding the end of our current dispensation which ends with His second coming.

Then in verses 15-31, Jesus homes in on specific events:

1. The Abomination of Desolation (the Beast or Antichrist) (v. 15).
2. Instructions to flee to mountains (vv. 16-20).
3. The Great Tribulation (vv. 21-22)
4. False Prophets (vv. 23-26)
5. Cataclysmic events in the heavens (v. 29)
6. The Second Coming of Christ in great power and great glory (vv. 27-28, 30)
7. The Resurrection of the Just (which includes Old Testament saints) (v. 31)

Did you notice that any mention of the church age and the rapture of the church are **nowhere to be found here**? They were a **mystery** to the Jews of Jesus' time as stated in Ephesians 3:2, 9 and I Corinthians 15:51). But after the church is snatched up in the rapture, then comes the time of great tribulation followed by the second coming of Jesus which ushers in His thousand year reign on the earth (Millennium).

With that, let's press forward. The Olivet Discourse includes five parables:

1. Fig Tree (vv. 32-44)
2. Wise and Evil Servant (vv. 45-51)
3. Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
4. Talents (vv. 14-30)
5. Sheep and Goats (vv. 31-46)

But exactly what is a parable? A **parable** is a **comparison**. It's been called "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning" – a short story using familiar objects and conflicts designed to show a higher truth. With parables, we need to be very careful not to leap off into the details of the story or worse yet, base doctrine on those details but instead focus on the the point of the story usually given at the end if given at all.

Why did Jesus speak to the multitudes in parables? Jesus' disciples wondered the same thing so they asked Him. Here's what He said:

Matthew 13

*[11] He answered and said unto them, Because*

*it is given []to **you** to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,  
but to **them** it is not given.*

*[12] For whosoever ha[s], to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance:  
but whosoever ha[s] not, from him shall be taken away even that [which] he ha[s].*

Here Jesus plainly answers why He spoke in parables. First:

*[13] Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not;  
and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

He had a second reason which he gave next.

*[14] And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which sa[ys],  
By hearing y[ou] shall hear, and shall **not** understand;  
and seeing y[ou] shall see, and shall **not** perceive:*

So Jesus gave two reasons for parables:

1. To illuminate those enabled to hear them while hiding the truth from the rest.
2. To fulfill a prophesy made by Isaiah.

With that, let's launch into the first parable found in Matthew 24:32-33. As we read this, try to focus on the common thread or theme that ties it together. Also, listen for repeated words and phrases as they give clues to that main point.

*[32] Now learn a **parable** of the fig tree [...and all the trees Luke 21:29]; [**When** they now shoot forth, Luke 21:30] **When** [it']s branch is yet tender, and put[s] forth leaves, ...:[...y[ou] see and **know** [] that **summer** is [near]. Luke 21:30]*

*[33] So **likewise** y[ou], **when** y[ou] shall see all these things, **know** that it is **near**, even at the door[.]*

Just as men pay attention to signs in nature, people living in **that** time need to pay attention to the **signs** Jesus gives here to recognize when these events are about to happen.

*[34] Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass [away Luke 21:33], **till all** these things be fulfilled [done Mark 13:30].*

Of course, many generations **have** passed since Jesus made this prophecy, so what did He mean? Most Bible scholars understand this to mean that the generation that sees these signs will see **all** of these coming events that He is describing. Jesus said **all** of these things will have to occur – including the many cataclysmic events and the return of Jesus in power and glory to rule and reign on the earth – which clearly have not yet happened in any literal sense.

[35] *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Here we have a statement that applies in this context, but also provides a general principle of understanding the Word of God. The Gospel of John starts by describing Jesus as the Word as well as God Himself. Jesus is the second person of the Godhead which we label the Trinity. Jesus is emphatically stating that His words are enduring and true.

[36] *But of that **day and hour know[s]** no man, no, not the angels of heaven [which are in heaven, neither the Son, Mark 13:32], but my Father only.*

But, if God is three persons in one (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), how can one person (the Son) not know what the other (the Father) knows? That question treads where the Bible says we are not to go. We do not and cannot know the mind of God (Romans 11:33-36). We need to simply accept that the scripture says the Father knows things the Son does not know.

[37] *But **as the days** of No[ah] were, so shall also **the coming of the Son of man** be.*

Luke 21

[34] *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any **time** your hearts be overcharged with [dissipation], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that **day** come upon you [**by surprise**].*

[35] *For **as** a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*

[36] ***Watch** [] therefore, and **pray** always,*

Why?

*that ye may be accounted worthy to **escape all these things** that shall come to pass, and to **stand before the Son of man**.*

Mark 13

[33] *Take [] **heed**, **watch** and **pray**:*

Why?

*for y[ou] **know not when** the **time** is.*

[38] *For **as** in the **days** that were **before** the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, **until the day** that No[ah] entered into the ark,*

[39] *And **knew** not **until** the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also **the coming of the Son of man** be.*

Let's break this down. In the days of Noah, there were two groups of people. Noah and his family and the rest of the people of the world. Noah and his family believed God and acted in faith – building and preparing the ark.

The rest of humanity were living self-indulgent lives and rejecting God. With Noah, his family, the creatures, and provisions safely in the ark, God shut the door. Those remaining outside the ark were swept away to die in the flood. After their death and still in our future, the lost will rise to meet their maker in the second resurrection, face judgment at the Great White Throne, be found guilty, and be cast into the Lake of Fire.

[40] **Then** shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken [in death and ultimate judgment], and the other left [on the earth to enter the new kingdom].

[41] Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

[42] **Watch** therefore:

Why?

for y[ou] **know** not what **hour** your **Lord** [] **come**[s].

Mark 13

[34] [This] **is as** a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to **watch**.

[35] **Watch** [] therefore:

Why?

for y[ou] **know** not **when** the master of the house come[s],  
at **even**[ing], or at **midnight**, or at the **cockcrowing**, or in the **morning**:

[36] [Unless when he] **com**[es] **suddenly** he find[s] you sleeping.

[37] And what I say unto you I say unto all, **Watch**.

[43] But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what **watch** the thief would come, he would have **watched**, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

[44] Therefore be [] also ready: for in such an **hour** as y[ou] think not the **Son of man** come[s].

## Application

Jesus started with a short parable and then followed it up with many examples. One of the key words He repeated was the word *watch*. This year, included with each Christmas card I sent was my usual Christmas letter with a bonus. The bonus was a photo. Here's that photo. During a walk, our beloved and recently departed dog Grace chanced upon a small herd of deer. Naturally, she perked up, froze, and focused on the herd in front of her. I quickly snapped that picture. The point is, this is what Jesus meant when he said to *watch*. Be vigilant and focused on your goal.

Jesus also said to pray always. The apostle Paul reiterated this instruction in I Thessalonians 5:17 and Ephesians 6:18. How is that possible? The point is to remain constantly in contact with the LORD. Can you think of another time when Jesus said to watch and pray? Do you remember Jesus saying these same words to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). Something

bad was coming, and they needed the strength and direction from the LORD to get through that difficult time.

But wait a minute. We believe that the rapture of the church **precedes** all of these events (I Thessalonians 4:17; I Corinthians 15:52). Why are we supposed to watch for events that will happen *after* we go to be with the LORD? We're not! A very wise Bible teacher has said "All of the Bible is *for* us, but all of the Bible is not *to* us." These words were **spoken to Jews**. Jesus focus here is Jewish. He speaks of the temple which is in Jerusalem, and His rule which will be centered there. He wept over it's coming destruction. He speaks of a time of great tribulation also called the time of **Jacob's** trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). When we get to the book of Revelation we'll cover the details of that time.

He tells the **Jews** that **they** need to **watch** for **signs**. Recall three of the four questions of the disciples asked for **signs**. The twofold reason for them to watch as we just read in Luke 21:36 is:

1. So they will be ready to flee the terrible events.
2. Unlike with His first coming, the Jews were **not** prepared for Jesus. Their hearts were **not** in tune with the LORD. Instead, their interest was in legalism, idolatry, and government overthrow. By contrast, during the time of Jesus' second coming the Jews will finally be ready to accept Him. This is what Jesus is exhorting them to do.

While many mistakenly believe Jesus is telling His audience to be ready for the rapture, instead He's saying that the Jews must be ready for **His second coming**. The worst thing they could do would be to reject Him and personally be "taken away" in death and ultimately judged for their sins. As Christians, we are **not** seeking a sign. The Apostle Paul puts it this way:

I Corinthians 1

*[22] For **the Jews require a sign**, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:*

*[23] But we preach Christ crucified,...*

We're to be expecting **at any moment** *the call* of our LORD to take us home to be with Him. The apostle Paul writes to Titus in:

Titus 2

*[13] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*

Of course, everyone can apply these warnings in a more general sense to be ready to meet our Maker. Whether in the rapture or in death, we too shall all meet Him. We who know Him can be confident and very thankful that our God is faithful to His word keeping His own sealed until that day – being clothed

in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

**Benediction**

*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,  
and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,  
To the only wise God our Saviour,  
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,  
both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)*

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