

The Significance of Matthew 24 Today Part 3

As most of you know, we've been studying in **Matthew 24** for the past couple months and we've made it through the first **31 verses**, so today we'll begin with **verse 32** and hopefully finish up the chapter.

In **verse 30** Jesus gave the sign of His coming, and that He would be coming in power and great glory, and in **verse 31** He said His elect church would be gathered together from one end of heaven to the other. Now, we don't have time today to talk about who composes the elect church, but it's a very interesting subject to study. According to *The Desire of Ages, page 685*, 2000 years ago Jesus gave special instructions to His elect church of 11 people, so there's no reason to feel bad, or feel neglected if you're meeting with just a small group. Better to have just a few faithful souls to worship with than a large group of nominal Adventists, but we'll have to leave this subject for another time.

Beginning with **verse 32**, Jesus tells a short parable to help illustrate what He has already said, mainly that His second coming would be very near once the signs He gave would come to pass, and for the most part those signs have already come to pass, and we are now living during the time when there's very little left to be fulfilled.

In **Matthew 24** Jesus only made brief sweeping statements that take in centuries in just a few words and you have to go elsewhere in the Bible to fill in the details, but here in **verses 32, 33** Jesus tells a parable, as He often did, from nature.

Jesus said, *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (that is His second coming) is near, even at the doors."*

Now, if someone is at the door, their next step would be to come through the door! But the question is, why hasn't Jesus taken that next step? Well, the reason Jesus hasn't taken the next step is because His people have to open the door and say "come in." He's not going to beat down the door or force His way in, He has to have an invitation. He hasn't yet taken the next step because His body of believers aren't ready to entertain Him as an abiding guest and to do everything they can to take the gospel to the world. A closed door is blocking His way, and we have to be willing for Him, not only to come in, but to be a permanent part of our daily lives.

Had God's people been ready, He would have come long ago, but because He's not willing that any should perish, He bids the four angels of **Revelation 7** to continue to hold the four winds that they might not blow upon the earth until His elect church are sealed in their foreheads.

There was at least one time since the great Advent movement began when Jesus could have come back in the late 1880s had righteousness by faith been understood and accepted. At that time a Sunday law was being urged by Babylonian preachers, and prophecy could have been fulfilled very quickly. But because of a legalistic mind set on the part of many of the church leaders, the

prophet said we may have to stay here in this sin cursed earth many more years because of insubordination to divine authority. And of course these words of warning have obviously come to pass, because here we are! Proof positive that something has gone terribly wrong.

The Desire of Ages, page 633 says, “Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would have before this been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come in power and great glory.”

Here we have the same wording as in **Matthew 24:30**, “in power and great glory.” In other words, what Jesus said was going to happen in this chapter, would have all been fulfilled by now, and we would today be in heaven during the thousand years spoken of in **Revelation 20**, and it’s still going to happen, it’s just been delayed, and the sad part is, if we’re willing to admit it, we’ve all been guilty of contributing to the delay, and that has to stop if we’re going to be among those who are sealed with the seal of God.

And so, we should never charge God for being responsible for something that we ourselves are guilty of, and it’s long past due that we begin redeeming the time that has been lost because of our own neglect.

In **Matthew 24:34** Jesus said, “*Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*”

Has this verse ever bothered you? Because it sounds like Jesus is saying that some of the generation that saw the signs given in the heavens mentioned in **verse 29**, would still be alive when He comes. But that can’t be what He was referring to, because that generation has long since passed away and He still hasn’t come. So what did He mean? From the shortening of the tribulation to the last sign given, which is the falling of the stars in 1833, there was only a little over 50 years that went by. In other words, there were people alive and saw the end of the tribulation, or the ending of the dark ages, to the falling of the stars. There was a generation that saw all these things happen. So when Jesus said, “This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled”, He wasn’t referring to His coming, but to the signs that would occur in the heavens that would take place over a period of a little over 50 years.

There’s an example of this kind of thing happening back in **Matthew 16:28** where Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”

If Jesus had been referring to His literal second coming in this verse, some of the people standing there when He said this would be over 2000 years old today; that’s twice as old as Methuselah. If we understand what Jesus said correctly, He was referring to the time when He would be transfigured, or transformed right before their eyes, and Peter, James, and John were there to see that happen. They saw a miniature representation of what Jesus will look like when He comes. You can read all about that in **Mark 9**. And so it’s very important to understand the context in which

things are said.

Then in **Matthew 24:35** Jesus said, *“heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”*

Can you say praise the Lord? Some day the atmospheric heavens with all their space junk shall pass away, and this earth as we know it shall pass away, and then after a thousand years God’s going to make new ones. But even though this is true, Jesus said there’s something that’s not going to pass away, what was it? His words! The words Jesus spoke concerning last day events are going to be fulfilled to the very letter very soon. We can count on it! In fact, the words of Christ are being fulfilled right now and will very soon be completely fulfilled.

Verse 36, *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”*

Over the years I’ve seen several time charts that have attempted to calculate how many years it would be, after certain events transpire, before the Lord comes, and I have concluded that it’s not only a waste of time, but dangerous to do so. Because if it were possible to know when Jesus is coming, fallen flesh would be tempted to put off preparation for that great day until the very last minute, which would eventually end up being a minute too long, and of course this is the devil’s goal with this kind of deception, and deception is exactly what it is. Because if we put off preparing our own hearts for Jesus’ return, we certainly won’t be doing what’s necessary to help others to have an understanding of present truth either. And if that’s the case, how then will this gospel of the kingdom be preached in all the world so the Lord can come?

We may not know the day and hour of Christ’s return, but we can certainly know when it’s near, that’s why Jesus said what He did in this chapter, and there’s no doubt that the time is at hand; in fact, it has been for some time. Are you aware that we are living during the *“sealing time”*? We have been for about 170 years now. And what is the seal of God? It’s the Sabbath, and light upon the Sabbath came to a small group of people in the 1840s. And so, not only are we in the sealing time, but we’re at the end of it. One of the definitions of the word “sealing” is “closing.” In other words, we are living during the closing scenes of this earth’s history and we need to be about our Father’s business, because we are living during the last of the last days.

Notice also in **verse 36** that Jesus said **He** didn’t even know the day of His return. I would say that by now He probably does know the exact time when He’ll be coming back, but here’s the point: if while the Son of God was upon the earth He didn’t even know when He was coming back, what makes us think that we can figure it out? It’s absurd when you think about it. So when it comes to time charts and predictions about the day and hour, or even the year of Christ’s return, we had better leave it alone. We’re told that our motto at this time is to be “watching, waiting, working, and praying for the coming of the Son of God,” and if we’re all doing that, we will be hastening the day, and God will have an elect church that is ready to meet Him in peace when He comes.

You remember what Jesus told His disciples in **Acts 1:7**? He told them, *“It’s not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power.”*

In other words, Jesus said, “you’re not going to know when I’m coming, because it’s not best for you to know.” If it was He would have told us! There are reasons the Father has kept this information to Himself. And here’s something else to keep in mind; God is not the servant of time, but the Master of it, and it’s all much too complicated for Him to explain it to us right now. We’ll just have to trust Him on this one and live every day like Jesus is coming today, but prepare for tomorrow in case He doesn’t.

We need to focus on the same thing Jesus was trying to get His early disciples to focus on; and that is, to prepare ourselves to receive power when the Holy Spirit shall come upon us as it did upon those that prepared for the day of Pentecost, because this work of taking the gospel to the world is not going to happen in our own power. And before it’s all over there’s going to have to be a unity among God’s elect, and among the various independent ministries, because one ministry or one small home church is not going to do it alone. There has to be a pressing together, and I want to be a part of that, don’t you?

In **Matthew 24:37-41** Jesus said, *“As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”*

Now, there’s much that could be said about these verses, but we don’t have time to go into great detail today, but I would like to just touch upon a few points. When Jesus mentioned all this *“eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage”*, He wasn’t implying that there was anything wrong with these things, but that these things would be carried to excess just before He comes; that the minds of people in the last days, just like in the days of Noah, would be so engrossed with these things that they would forget there was a God in heaven that will one day require them to give an account of all their words and actions.

“Eating and drinking” means that people would overdo them to the point that it would affect their physical and spiritual health, so much so that they would think that the elect church were crazed fanatics just like the antediluvians thought about Noah when he told them to repent and come into the ark of safety. And *“marrying and giving in marriage”* I believe has to do with, not just having mixed up priorities, but would include marrying and divorcing multiple times, even among professed Christians. Just these two things alone, if there were nothing else, would give us indication that the Lord is soon to come.

Now, there’s something interesting in **verses 40, 41** I want to draw your attention to, where it says, *“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be*

grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

Which one do you want to be, the one taken or the one left? And where do you suppose you would be taken? or where would you be left? We’ve all probably heard about the movie that came out some time ago called “Left Behind.” Before that I believe there was a book by the same title; the idea being that God is going to take away, or rapture away His people, and all those who are “Left Behind” would have another chance to be saved during a 7 year tribulation period through the preaching of 144,000 Jewish evangelists, which is all bogus by the way. And if they blow their second chance, well, they will be fuel for the fires of hell. Somehow that second chance thing doesn’t seem fair to me, because those that lived and died before that time didn’t get a second chance, did they? No! That’s because it’s all a deception of the devil. We are all having our second chance right now, because Adam and Eve blew our first chance. And so, if we don’t get it right in this life before Jesus returns, there won’t be another chance.

I was very excited when I found a few verses in **Isaiah 24:1-6** that totally dispels this false idea of those being left behind being the ones who will be lost. The context is very clearly speaking of the condition of the earth during the one thousand years spoken of in **Revelation 20**.

Notice what it says, **Isaiah 24:1-6**, *“Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men (what?) few men left.”*

Those few that will be left will be, not left behind, but left to live, because all the rest are going to burn up. Those that remain will live forever because they will be given immortality while the others are destroyed.

In fact, what Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 24:39** is proof enough that those who are taken away are the ones that will burn up. Notice what He said back in **verse 39**, *“And knew not until the flood came, and (did what?) took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”*

So it’s very clear that those who are “taken” will be destroyed just like what happened to those that were taken away by the waters of the flood, and those who were left in the Ark were left alive.

Then in **verse 42** Jesus said, *“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”*

This verse goes right along with what we already read in **verse 36** when Jesus said, *“But of that*

day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

Sounds like it’s going to be a surprise to the wicked as well as the righteous, doesn’t it?

Notice the next couple verses; **verses 43, 44** *“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. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”*

Jesus wanted us to know that He’ll be coming back when we least expect it. The ready part shouldn’t be something that catches us off guard, because we know we need to be prepared; we know we need perfection of character, but when Jesus will literally come as He promised He would do, cannot be known. We can only know when it’s getting close, and that’s something that accelerates as each day goes by.

If we are faithful to the end, the time is coming when we will know the day and hour, but that won’t happen until after probation is closed and the Lord is on His way. You can read about that in *Early Writings, page 285*. Also in *Letter 38, 1888* Ellen said, referring to the statement she made in *Early Writings, 285* “This is all I have ever been shown in regard to the definite time of the Lord’s coming. I have not the slightest knowledge as to the time spoken by the voice of God. I heard the hour proclaimed, but had no remembrance of that hour after I came out of vision. Scenes of such thrilling, solemn interest passed before me as no language is adequate to describe. It was all a living reality to me, for close upon this scene appeared the great white cloud, upon which was seated the Son of man.”

The Great Controversy, page 338 says, “When the professed people of God (**notice these words, they’re important**) are uniting with the world, living as they live, and joining with them in forbidden pleasures; when the luxury of the world becomes the luxury of the church (**the word “luxury” having to do with the gratification of appetite, and what church do you suppose she refers to here?**); when the marriage bells are chiming, and all are looking forward to many years of worldly prosperity—then, suddenly as the lightning flashes from the heavens, will come the end of their bright visions and delusive hopes.”

Let me also read you a statement about what Jesus was referring to when He spoke about the thief breaking into the house.

The Great Controversy, page 491, “The righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state—men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above. (**Now notice, she’s talking about the righteous and the wicked here**) Before the Flood, after Noah entered the ark, God shut him in and shut the ungodly out; but for seven days the people, knowing not that their doom was fixed, continued their careless, pleasure-loving life and mocked the warnings of impending judgment. ‘So,’ says the Saviour, ‘shall also the coming of the Son of man be.’ Silently,

unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man's destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy's offer to guilty men."

Obviously this is speaking of the close of human probation, when the investigative judgment is over. So, in the future if someone comes to you claiming to know when the Lord is coming or when human probation will close, you can dismiss them because they don't know what they're talking about. Three times in **Matthew 24** Jesus said we're not going to know, and His last day prophet said she didn't know. So let's not be concerned with the when but rather with being ready when ever that time should come.

Matthew 24:45, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?"

In a larger sense, the wise servant here, applies not just to the individual family and the head of the household, but to the spiritual leaders, or the ministers of "The household of faith", the church! It's their duty and responsibility to feed the flock of God with the right kind of food, and at the right time. That's what "*Meat in due season*" means. However, that doesn't mean that the church members don't have a responsibility, because they're supposed to study to make sure they're being told the truth.

In *The Review and Herald, September 1, 1849* it says, "The Lord has shown me that precious souls are starving, and dying for want of the present, sealing truth, the meat in due season; and that the swift messengers should speed on their way, and feed the flock with the present truth."

You see, that's what's missing today in nearly all the churches.

Early Writings, page 63 says, "There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is 'present truth' that the flock needs now."

If this was true when it was written, don't you think it's still what we need today? It's present truth, if accepted, that will cause us to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, without it we may have a knowledge about the other many precious truths in the word of God, but we won't be ready when the irrevocable sentence is pronounced in the sanctuary above.

Some of that present truth that's being rejected by the majority today is an understanding about who and what is the church. The church is not any denomination friends, we've got to get that through our heads, because if we don't, we're going to be fooled. The church is a people that love God and keep His commandments, and if you retain your membership in an organization that tells you you're in a saved condition even while you're breaking those commandments, you will be held responsible for that decision.

Present truth today is whatever truth that's necessary to save your soul, that's the way it's always been. Many times present truth is truth that has been forgotten, or a correction of errors that have crept in over the years. I understand there's a movement underway right now within some

independent churches and ministries over the human nature of Christ, and if anything is clear in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, it's that Jesus had a fallen human nature. We are told that in unmistakable language, and yet the devil has convinced some that just the opposite is true. And I want to tell you something, if Jesus had the human nature of Adam before the fall, then there's no reason for you to think that you can be an overcomer; or that you can ever obtain character perfection; or that you can really become like Jesus, because if He had to have unfallen flesh to keep from yielding to temptation, certainly we can't do it in fallen flesh! And if that's the case we might as well throw the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy out the window and resign ourselves to sin until Jesus comes and hope He'll change us when He comes back like the majority of professed Adventists believe today, and it's all because they're mixed up about the human nature of Christ.

Rather than hearing present truth messages, what do we hear coming from most pulpits today? Peace and safety; entertaining stories; preaching that's calculated to get a laugh; messages that put people at ease and create an atmosphere of Laodicean slumber; teachings about salvation in sin; sermons about God's unconditional love, but nothing about salvation being conditional upon obedience to the truth; and sermons that leave you with a warm fuzzy feeling rather than a conviction to prepare our characters for heaven. We need present truth!

Matthew 24:46-51 *"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. (That is, being a wise and faithful servant as we read in verse 45) Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

This is a warning here to those who are just playing church; know what I mean? They're not scoffers; they don't admit openly that they believe the Lord's coming is a great way off, but their way of life betrays them.

Oh brothers and sisters, these words of our Lord that closes this chapter should cause us to think seriously about our own priorities, our own desires, and our own preparedness for what's soon to come upon this world. This world is in great agitation everywhere you look, and these are signs that the end is near, "Even at the doors." And if we ignore these things and continue on with business as usual, we will not be ready for what's about to break upon this world as an overwhelming surprise.

We learned earlier that **Matthew 24** applies specifically to Seventh-Day Adventists, and if you missed part one of this series let me know and I'll send it to you. However, **Matthew 24** also has another application that includes the whole world, and I'll read that to you from *The Great Controversy, pages 36, 37*, "The Saviour's prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow.

In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world that has rejected God's mercy and trampled upon His law. Dark are the records of human misery that earth has witnessed during its long centuries of crime. The heart sickens, and the mind grows faint in contemplation. Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven. But a scene yet darker is presented in the revelations of the future. The records of the past,—the long procession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions, the 'battle of the warrior . . . with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood' (Isaiah 9:5),—what are these, in contrast with the terrors of that day when the restraining Spirit of God shall be wholly withdrawn from the wicked, no longer to hold in check the outburst of human passion and satanic wrath! The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan's rule.

“But in that day, as in the time of Jerusalem's destruction, God's people will be delivered, everyone that shall be found written among the living.”

My, what a terrible representation we've been given to look forward to, and yet the promise to the faithful is there also, isn't it? Praise God! The time is coming when there will only be two kinds of people; those that are just like Jesus and those that are just like the devil. No mingling of good and bad traits of character any more like we see in people now, but only totally good, or totally bad. That is something this world has never witnessed before, and I want to be one of those that are totally good, don't you? Not because there's any goodness in my fallen flesh, but because I have learned to let Jesus live out His life within me. If we all do that, we will be delivered out of the hands of those that are totally bad, because we will be found written among the living, and we'll have Jesus to thank.