

The Second Coming of Christ in Biblical Perspective
“The Second Coming and its Implications for the Christian Life”

Matthew 24:42-51

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In this study, we're finishing up Matthew 24. I think I've mentioned to some of you my mother enjoyed working. My mother was a hard worker. My mother was not a milk and cookies mama meaning when I came home from school, I didn't get milk and cookies. I had a list of about seven things that I was supposed to do when I got in. Then when she got home, my three sisters and I called it 'the white glove inspection time' where my mother took the list and checked us out. I can't remember a single time in my life when I survived that inspection time for not one time did I get the whole list done right. She would say to me, "Son, you haven't finished your work. The sign of a good worker is to finish well."

I remember reading the references for Robert E. Lee when he went to West Point. His headmaster of his last year in school said, 'The best thing I can tell you about this man is he's a finisher.' That's the thing that I want you to understand about the second coming. We preach many times about the finished work of Christ, but the fact is His work is not finished. I remind people of that every time I'm at a grave. God's not through with this person yet. He's going to raise them up. He's going to raise that body and the mortal is going to put on immortality. God's not finished with this heaven and this earth for He's going to roll it up like a scroll and it'll burn. Then He's going to bring forth and unroll out a new heavens and a new earth. Jesus Christ is coming again. He's not finished yet. He's going to bring it all to completion.

What Jesus is telling us in Matthew 24 and 25 is unlike my mama who really questioned whether I would ever finish anything in my life, you may rest assured that Jesus Christ will finish His work. He is coming again and it's been that focus that we've been looking at and we come now to the end of the one of the first of two chapters in which He devoted His teaching to His second coming. In this study we will look at the implications for the Christian life of His second coming.

The first thing I want you to remember that we have learned from Matthew 24:1-3 is that upon the finishing of Jesus' fifth discourse in the temple, He was asked a question in response to His last statement that the House of Israel, the temple, was going to be desolate. As the Disciples were in awe of the temple and it's building Jesus then enlarged upon His last statement by saying, "Not only will this temple be desolate, it's going to be utterly destroyed, for not one stone upon another." In response to that, the disciples then asked Him one question which in reality is three questions. One, when will all these things be? That is the desolation and the destruction of the temple and then two, they assumed that such an act must also mean what is the sign of Your second coming? And three, what is the sign of the end of the age?

Now Jesus goes about answering those questions. He answers the last one of the three – what is the sign of the second coming, first in Matthew 24:4-14. The first thing He does is He disabuses the disciples of the notion that when the temple is desolate and destroyed, then will be the end of the age. He makes clear to them that the two are not directly tied to each other, that in fact there will not be the end of the age tied to the second, tied to the destruction of the temple, because He says in Matthew 24:13-14 that there must be the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth before the end of the age. The temple destruction is not the harbinger of the end of the age. It tells you that there will be an end of the age, but the end of the age will not

take place until the Gospel has gone from the rising to the setting of the sun to all the nations.

Jesus then pastorally says, 'Listen, there are wars, rumors of wars, violence, natural phenomena, cataclysmic catastrophes and all kinds of things going on out there. The church is going to have apostasy in it. There's going to be love that is going to be killed. There's going to be lawlessness. Those things people are going to try to associate with the end of the age. They are not the signs of the end of the age.' So if anybody that develops a sermon, the conference or the book that says, "see these wars, this war, that war, all these hurricanes, these tornadoes, these earth, earthquakes, this, that and the other, the end of the age must be coming." Don't listen to them because those are not the signs. Those will be used to mislead you. The sign of the end of the age is the Gospel being preached throughout the whole world. Jesus said those things happening are birth pangs. Those are continual reminders that we're in a broken world full of sin, and they'll keep happening and leading us to the end of the age, but they're not signs of the end of the age. T

Then Jesus answers the second question which is, when will all these things be? That is, when will the temple be destroyed? Then He tells them about Daniel's prophecy of the desecration of the temple which has already been fulfilled but He says that prophecy is going to be replayed. He tells them when they see that happen, they better get out of Jerusalem because there is coming a time of distress upon the temple like you would not believe. Jesus was speaking of Titus' desecration of the temple in 66 A.D., the siege and the Jewish wars that would culminate in 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem and the absolute destruction of the temple and a time of distress like Israel had never known. Jesus says that will be a foreshadowing of another time of distress that He calls the great tribulation. He gives us the great tribulation in Matthew 24:15-20. Immediately, after that great tribulation will come the second coming of Christ.

A fourth text that we looked at was Matthew 24:21-31 which is a reminder to us that the second coming of Christ, the end of the age and the all of these things that are going to happen, will happen suddenly and visibly. Unbelievers will be taken like thieves in the night. They will be come upon and they will not be ready for it. Believers should be anticipating and expect it, even as a fig tree puts out its blossoms and you know, the season of fruit bearing is there. You know it won't be long till Christ comes.

The final text we looked at was Matthew 24:32-35, where we were taught that when He comes, it will come like the days of Noah. This is pretty crucial. People have written novels and a series of books from this text, and I think it's been misunderstood for He says the coming of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah and in the days of Noah, everybody was business as usual. They were marrying, giving in marriage. They were eating, drinking and then they were mocking and making fun of Noah, who was calling them to repentance and saying to them, 'judgment is coming.' But then judgment came swiftly and suddenly from the heavens, and the unbelievers were taken away in judgment, and the believer was left and gathered into the ark. Jesus says 'So it will be in the days of the Son of Man for two will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left. Contrary to popular opinion, the exegesis of the text shows that's not the believer that is taken. It's the unbeliever taken away in judgment. The believer is left in the security in the ark of safety, Jesus Christ.

Before we get to the parable at the end of Matthew 24, I'd like to first look at Revelation 20. There is something called The Thousand Years. It's only mentioned in this text of Scripture. Revelation 20:1-6 says, *[1] Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2] And he seized the dragon, that ancient*

serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3] and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

[4] Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was omitted. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

That's what we call the millennium. Now, the question is, in light of what we have learned in Matthew 24 and in the fact of a millennium, how have Orthodox Bible believing Christians dealt with this? Historically, classically, there have been three positions that have taken what we have talked about in Matthew 24 and then this fact of a millennium. They are called the pre millennial, the amillennial and the post millennial views.

The pre millennial meaning the second coming of Christ will come then a thousand year reign in which Satan is bound and then there will be a loosening of Satan for a final rebellion and Christ will bring it all to consummation at the end of that thousand years.

Then there is the amillennial view that says Satan's already bound. Did not Jesus say very clearly, 'I have bound the strong man. We're plundering this house'? Amillennial means no millennium. That doesn't mean they don't believe in a millennium. What they mean is they don't think it's a thousand years literally, because where does the thousand years come? It comes in the Book of Revelation. Any symbolic numbers in the Book of Revelation? Yes. So, for the amillennial, it's not a literal thousand years. It is a symbolic thousand years, meaning a complete time between the first advent and the second advent. So, you are now in that millennial reign of Christ with Satan bound, but yet there will be a loosening of him at the end of what's called a great tribulation.

Then there is a third view which is the view of post millennial, and that is the view that Christ is coming, but first, the Gospel is going to bring a rule and reign throughout all the earth of peace and power. Then Christ will come post – after that thousand years.

First of all, is the historic pre millennial view. In the Gospels we are told that Jesus Christ has come, died, rose again and ascended. That's 30 to 33 A.D. And then we're also told that within that generation, there would be the fulfillment of the desecration and desolation of the temple, that it would be desecrated 66 A.D. to 70 A.D. destroyed, and a time of distress would come upon Israel. That is a foreshadowing of a great tribulation. But Jesus is not coming, and there won't be the end of the age until the Gospel spreads throughout all the world. So, there is the great commission fulfillment and the Gospel Ministry, and then the second coming of Christ will be preceded by a great tribulation. Then Christ comes and when Christ comes the church is raptured. The last judgment is initiated and it all happens immediately after the great tribulation, in which comes a thousand year reign of Christ, but then a final rebellion as Satan is loosed and then the consummation of all things. The pre millennial view takes a literal view of the thousand years, and that thousand years comes after Christ comes the second time. Then there is a final rebellion and then comes new heavens and the new earth. This is known as the historic premillennialism.

There's another historic position called amillennialism. Notice again the coming of Christ, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension. Notice again, there is a temple desecration as prophesied in Matthew 24. There is a temple destruction, there is a time of distress in 66 to 70 A.D. Then will come the millennial Gospel era as the Gospel expands throughout the world. In this millennial era Satan is bound. Christ's Gospel is going forward. Satan can do no more than God will allow Him to do. The Great Commission is fulfilled. Then comes a great tribulation that has been foreshadowed by the time of distress in 66 A.D. There is a great tribulation that comes then is the second coming, and at the second coming the church is caught up to be with the Lord. There is a last judgment. All of that takes place immediately after the Great Tribulation, and then we are ushered into the new heavens and the new earth. I think it's safe to say that from the Reformation on, this has been the majority report of most of Christendom.

Thirdly, is the historic postmillennial view. Notice again 30 through 33 A.D. in the Gospels, the time of distress is 66 to 70 A.D. but in the postmillennial view something is added there. The postmillennial view sees Matthew 24 and what we call a preterist view, and that is that 66 to 70 A.D. is the great tribulation of this horrendous time when Israel was under siege and it's already past, it's already been done. So, in this view there is the temple desecration, the temple destruction, the time of distress and the time of great tribulation. Now, just as Jesus said, there's a Gospel expansion and the light of the Gospel and grace is greater than sin. So, what's going to happen as the Gospel goes forward, the nations are discipled – the Great commission which says go and make disciples of all the nations? As nations are discipled it will usher in a 1000 year reign of Christ from Heaven. Then there will be a final rebellion and enthronement of Christ and that's the second coming. The church will be raptured, the last judgment and all of that will take place at that point. The great tribulation has already occurred.

What about the new kid on the block? A man by the name of John Nelson Darby promoted something where a system of interpretation, the Bible called dispensationalism. In it he said, there are two plans. There's a plan for Israel and there's a plan for the church. The plan for Israel was put on hold when Christ descended, and we are now in the church age and when that is through, the church will be raptured out, a tribulation, the coming of Christ, then we pick back up on the restoration of Israel and the reign of Christ in the thousand years, a final rebellion, and then a second, second coming of Christ at that point in time.

Let's take a closer look at this dispensational view. It also has the temple desecration, the temple destruction, the time of distress, then the church age for the Gentiles, and then a rapture of the church. Now, this isn't the second coming of Christ because He doesn't come all the way. What He does is He comes to call the church up at that time which takes place before the tribulation. Then there is the tribulation. The church has been removed. Then immediately afterwards Jesus Christ comes, the church is gone. Now we go back to plan A with Israel, a 1000 year reign, and then the final rebellion and the second coming and then the new heavens and the new earth.

I believe it has a number of faulty points to it. One, it has no historic roots. Number two, I can find no place in the Scripture at all for a rapture of the church prior to the tribulation. On the contrary, I see Jesus telling us that during the tribulation, the elect are here and that Jesus will care for them and He will bring them through it. Also, on the contrary, that text that is used many times that the believers are taken away and the unbelievers are left behind, the very text has the opposite statement that the unbelievers are taken away at the coming of Christ and the believers are gathered into the safety of Christ for the new heavens and the new earth.

Those are the four classic positions. If you want to do more study on this, I will recommend one book to get started. It's by InterVarsity Press, and it's called The Millennium. All four of these views are propounded by their proponents and then assessed by the other three with a constructive critique of them. Let me quickly tell you that all four of these are found among Bible believers, people who take seriously the Scriptures and then we know that somebody is wrong or they're all wrong. We want to make sure that when we look at these things, we want to be careful to state what the Bible states, don't go beyond what the Bible states and declare an appropriate agnosticism – I just don't know yet. But fulfillment will tell me when He comes. (24:07)

Now we are going to finish out Matthew 24 by coming to the first of four exhortations, as Jesus concludes the second coming Olivet Discourse. Matthew 24:42-51 says [42] *Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* [43] *But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.* [44] *Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

[45] *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? [46] **Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.** [47] Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. [48] But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ [49] and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, [50] the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know [51] and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

This is the first of four exhortations. This is known as the parable of the Good Steward or The Parable of the Faithful Steward. The second exhortation will come to us through a parable. called The Parable of the Ten Virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13. Then the third exhortation is a third parable called The Parable of the Talents which is found in Matthew 25:14-30. The fourth exhortation is in the parable of the sheep and goats, to declare the historical fact of the last judgment and that's found in Matthew 25:31-46. For the remaining of this study, we'll concentrate on the first exhortation and in the next study look at that last three exhortations, the simple statements of the parable.

They're all very similar for one is telling us to be alert, another to be grateful, another to be faithful, and lastly one is telling us to be wise. It's very clear that these are matters of eternity. Let's just take the first one. Clearly, the parable of the good steward, has its theme in Matthew 24:42 which says [42] *Therefore, stay awake, (be alert) for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* Here are a couple of things from this.

The first is, the second coming is factual and undatable. It is a pre written historical fact that will come, but for any of us and all of us, it is undatable. Do you understand that? Do not waste any money on any books or any time on anybody that tells you they know the date of Christ's return because no one knows when this will be and that's Scriptural. The second coming is undatable, but it's factual. It's a reality. It's coming, it will happen.

Secondly, this text is telling you is the undatable and inevitable second coming demands alertness, not slothfulness. We don't know when He's coming. Therefore, when He comes, I want to be ready. I want to be alert. Jesus is telling us that the second coming is sure, it's sudden, it's coming, but it's undatable and because it's undatable Jesus is telling us to be alert. What are the unbelievers going to be doing? Business as usual – marrying, giving in marriage,

mocking the promise of His coming. Jesus wants us ready, anticipating and alert. We're like the steward that was ready when his master came. Not like the steward who said, 'Well, I don't know when he's coming, so I'll just do it what I want to and try to pull it all together at the last minute.' Be ready and alert.

The third thing that this parable is telling us is alertness is stewardship. Alertness is a good steward. Now, once again, broaden stewardship from money. It's a way of life, but it certainly includes money because that's what Satan loves to get your love away from God with. So, He's saying that if you're alert, the testimony of alertness is good stewardship – good stewardship of the time that God has given to you. Time is precious. You have a finite number of sunrises and sunsets. You don't have an unlimited number here. A lot of us have already spent probably a lot more than we got coming. Time is a precious resource God's given you and it's not renewable. When you make decisions about Sundays, when you make decisions on Mondays, when you make decisions, how are you going to spend a week when you make decisions, how are you going to spend your time – forget managing time for time manages itself. You have to manage yourself and spend your time.

The good steward says, "I only have so much time. I may even have less time than I thought. Jesus may be here tomorrow or tonight. I want to invest my time in what counts and when He comes I want to be putting time where it counts." This is not because if I'm not doing it well, I'm not going to be saved. I'm saved by the finished work of Christ but as Christ finishes His work and comes back for me, I, the redeemed steward want to be found faithful and alert. I want to be found as a good steward not only investing my time but using my talents for what counts for eternity, not what counts for what's, but to get burned up.

Thirdly, I want to take these finances, this stuff that the world kills for, cheats for and murders for and I am going to use it for worship unto the Lord, to invest in His Kingdom for what really counts – the Gospel, the health of a congregation in Christ, the spreading of the Gospel from a congregation for the glory of Christ. Alertness means good stewardship.

Number four, salvation means stewardship. What do I mean by that? Here is what I don't mean. If I'm not a good enough steward, I can't be saved. That's not what I'm saying. Did you hear me? I did not say if you're not a good enough steward, you can't be saved. Notice there are two stewards. There's the evil one and there's a good one. Being an evil steward is not the loss of rewards in heaven, it's the testimony that you're headed to hell. Not just cut off, but notice it says in Matthew 24:51, "Cut him to pieces" – the worst death imaginable. I'm trying to give you a picture of the torment of eternal death. He's not saying your stewardship saves you. He is saying that saved people are stewards and unsaved people are like the people in the days of Noah – they live for themselves as if they are God and they have eternity within their own grasp. The good steward makes life count, and that's the evidence of stewardship. Stewardship is evidence of salvation, not the cause. The cause of salvation is the finished work of Christ. No stewardship, lack of stewardship, evil stewardship is the sign of no salvation and eternal torment. Then what is stewardship? It is not only the sign of salvation, it's the sign of alertness and looking to the coming of Christ. I want to make my life count for something.

Here is an illustration that I received this afternoon. I turned on the TV to check the Ryder Cup out when I got home. I wanted to be surprised, but I had 30 people tell me who had already won for I left this morning and the Europeans won. I listen to them talking and one guy said this, 'well, apart from my marriage and apart from the birth of my child, this is the greatest day in my life and the greatest day I'll ever have in my life.' Oh how my heart sank for him and I thought, "You mean that's life for you?" For the believer, the greatest day is a coming day

when they see their Savior in His glory coming upon the clouds to gather them up forever. There is the day that is great!

Finally, the issue is eternity that we're talking about. The second coming brings to our mind what we dismiss so quickly and that is eternity. It's one heartbeat away, one moment away, one wisp of way but yet Christ takes us into eternity and for His glory. The issues in this parable are not issues of if I do this, God's go, give me a lot of money in my bank or if I do this, God's going to give me a promotion or if I do this, then I'm going to get prestige. The issue of stewardship is not more of this world, but it is more of the Kingdom brought to this world, anticipating the King who is coming.

Here are some life takeaways here. The first one is Jesus has brought us clarity. Jesus tell His Disciples that His coming and the end of the age won't happen when the temple is destroy and desecrated for it will be destroyed and desecrated in a replay of the abomination of desolation. The Gospel also has to go to the end of the earth so hasten the coming of the Lord and take the Gospel to the whole world. Jesus also tells them that there's also going to come before His coming a great tribulation, and then He'll come after it. His people, will not miss that, but He will take care of them through that. Just like God took care of Israel in Goshen when He brought plagues upon Egypt, He is going to take care of them through that entire process when His judgment falls in that great tribulation. Jesus also tells them that no one knows the hour or the day of His coming. It'll be sudden, it'll be quick but you can be living to be ready. That is what He wants us to do.

Secondly, He brings perspective. Why does He give us clarity? He gives us clarity so we will live in light of eternity and His coming gives us perspective to get away from the moribund curiosity of date setting. You can't set it. He is calling us to a way of life.

Thirdly and finally, this is a lifestyle and we're going to learn three more things about this lifestyle. The first thing is the second coming brings a lifestyle of alertness. He wants us to be ready. When Jesus does this, do the Apostles pick up on this? I want to finish this out with a couple of passages. First is I want to look at I Corinthians 1. Is this consistent that the real issue of the second coming is to get clarity and perspective, so that a ready life style is in place? By the way, these ideas about the coming of Christ can be found by asking these questions. Do these ideas promote alertness in the life of a believer? Because if we are faithful in teaching the second coming, it doesn't teach slothfulness or curiosity or paralysis. It teaches a lifestyle of engagement and alertness for Christ and to be found alert and engaged when He comes.

I Corinthians 1:7 says [7] *so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait (eagerly) for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* What are we supposed to be doing for the second coming? We're supposed to be eagerly awaiting it, not dating it, not dismissing it, but eagerly awaiting it and engaged. There's an eagerness to be found faithful and alert when He comes. Now let's look at Philippians 3.

Philippians 3:20-21 say [20] *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await (eagerly) a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.* Heaven is my home, not here. He's coming. There's a transformation. I'm eagerly engaged, alert, waiting for it, anticipating it. Now let's look at Hebrews 10. It ought to affect the way we worship when we assemble at times like this.

Hebrews 10:22-25 says [22] *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. [23] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised*

is faithful. [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. What Day? It is the coming of Jesus. It invigorates the worship of God's people to encourage and stimulate one another. Now let's look at James 5. God has not forgotten His promises.

James 5:7-10 says [7] Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. [8] You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. [10] As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. In other words, the coming of Christ affects the way we live in worship, the way we look for Him to come, the way we engage in our relationship with each other. I want to look at one final text in I Peter 4.

I Peter 4:7 says *[7] The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* It's near. What? Don't act stupid in light of the second coming but be rational alert, eager, worshiping, encouraging, engaged. That's what we do. That's what God has called us to do. Dr. Schaeffer was asked this question; 'Dr. Schaeffer, if you know that Jesus is coming back tomorrow, what would you do today?' He said, "If Jesus is coming back tomorrow, I do today what I've already planned to do today because I planned to do today in light of His coming tomorrow." Do you understand that? If I didn't know the date, then I would do the day before what I've already planned to do the day before, because I want to plan every day as if it's the last day – being engaged, alert and ready. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we've been able to spend in Your Word. Thank You for the Lord Jesus, our Savior who is coming again from the clouds, in glory suddenly, taking away unbelievers to judgment – O let us send out the Gospel message that many may be rescued before that Day, taking us to glory in the security of Christ our Redeemer. Help us to embrace, engage, understand, and respond to this truth. We thank You for the prayer of John, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." Amen. Please stand if you.