

# Matthew 24:36 Commentary

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

**Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Peri de tes hemeras ekeines kai horas oudeis oiden (3SRAI) oude oi aggeloi ton ouranon oude o huios eis me o pater monos**

- Mt 24:42,44 Mt 25:13 Zec 14:7 Mk 13:32 Acts 1:7 1Th 5:2, 2Pe 3:10 Rev 3:3 Rev 16:15

### SETTING DATES FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

**No doctrine is more closely linked to practical daily living  
than that of the Lord's return.**

**But (de)** - Normally this introduces a contrast but in this case the "but" (de) is coupled with another Greek word [peri](#)" which is better translated "but concerning" (as in Mt 24:36ESV) and frequently indicates a move to a new thought (e.g., (Mt 22:31; Mk 12:26; 13:32; Ac 21:25; 1Co 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 1Th 4:9, 13; 5).

**Ray Pritchard** rightly said that "We face two dangers whenever we talk about the Second Coming: A. Becoming more concerned about the date and the signs than about his return. B. Ignoring the truth of the Second Coming and living as though he will never return. Frankly, I don't know which is worse... God knows the future because he has ordained the future. God reveals the existence of certain future events. (Bible prophecy) God chooses not to reveal the timing of those future events. No matter how many times we may ask the question, God's answer is always the same: "It is not for you to know." What is left for us is to know as much as we can know and to trust God for the rest. That perspective comes through clearly in Matthew 24." ([Matthew 24:36-51 Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is? Why Christ May Come at Any Moment](#))

Before you read my comments on Mt 24:36-51 you need to be aware that this is a difficult passage to interpret and there is no clear consensus on how it should be interpreted even among conservative evangelical writers. Why is this section so difficult (as if Mt 24:1-35 is not difficult enough)? **Dilemma** is defined as a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives. Here the dilemma is how can Jesus' Second Coming be preceded by clear signs in Mt 24:15, Mt 24:21, Mt 24:27, Mt 24:29, et al, and still be a time regarding which Jesus says "**of that day and hour no one knows?**" In addition, Jesus' warnings against being unprepared in Mt 24:36-51 seem to be describing a time (as in the days of Noah) in which it is "business as usual" for the world (Mt 24:37, 38ff). And yet we know that in the time of the Great Tribulation there will be "business" like the world has never seen nor will ever see again (Mt 24:21-note). At that time believers (and even unbelievers - Rev 6:16-17-note) will surely be aware of the fact that the end of the age and the return of the King is near (e.g., Lk 21:28). And as discussed below, because of the distinct time segments (7 years, 3.5 years, 1260 days, 42 months) of the **Seventieth Week** of Daniel, it would seem to be theoretically possible to know the **day** of Jesus' return (see [some thoughts on this point](#)). And yet Jesus clearly states not even the Son knows, so how can men expect to know? Can you see the dilemma that these passages in Matthew 24 pose? I must confess that I am at a loss to explain how on one hand signs point to His return and on the other hand we cannot know the day nor the hour. As discussed below because of this dilemma some have been led to believe Jesus is referring to the signless Rapture and not to His Second Coming.

There are basically two different approaches to explaining this dilemma.

(1) Some, such as **Ray Stedman** ([A Thief in the Night](#)), **Arnold Fruchtenbaum**, et al (see note **8**), interpret this section as a description of the Rapture of the church, reasoning that Jesus' description of "business as usual" (Mt 24:37-39ff) simply cannot be true of the horrible time of the Tribulation and therefore must be a description of the Rapture which could happen at any time (if one holds to a pre-tribulation view of the rapture).

(2) The other interpretation, held by the majority of commentators is that Jesus' words are calling for men to ready for His return at the end of the Great Tribulation but that the rapture is not taught in Matthew 24 (See notes **6** and **7**). After studying this text for some time, I am uncertain of which position is correct, although I favor interpretation (2). Therefore in these comments I am referring to His return as something for which we should always be prepared because that is what the tenor of the text teaches - **Be prepared!** It's a good motto for the Boy Scouts and a great motto for believers of every age!

For those who would like to study this issue in more depth, below are resources that may be of assistance:

[John Hart - Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36-44? - Pt 1](#)

[John Hart - Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36-44? - Pt 2](#)

[John Hart - Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36-44? - Pt 3](#)

**John Hart** writes that "Most if not all **posttribulationists** argue that the Rapture of the church is described in Mt 24:36-44 and that this Rapture coincides perfectly with the return of Christ after the Tribulation period mentioned in Mt 24:29-31.<sup>5</sup> By far, the most common interpretive approach by pretribulationists is to assign Matt 24:29-31 and Mt 24:36-44 to the same posttribulational Second Coming of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the Rapture is not found in the Discourse whether it is a posttribulational or pretribulational Rapture.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a few, but only a few, pretribulationists argue that the Rapture is taught in Matthew 24, specifically in 24:36-44.<sup>8</sup> ([Ref](#))

<sup>5</sup> Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 129-39;

Douglas J. Moo, "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," in Gleason L. Archer et al., *Three Views on the Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 190-96.

<sup>6</sup> Contra Carson, who thinks that the most common view among pretribulationists is to assign Mt 24:36-40 to the rapture of the church. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:494. Later, on p 495, however, he acknowledges that many dispensationalists deny the rapture in the Discourse.

<sup>7</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 76-79;

Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 209;

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., "The Olivet Discourse: A Resolution of Time," *Conservative Theological Seminary Journal* 9 (spring 2003): 106-40;

Thomas R. Edgar, "An Exegesis of Rapture Passages," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis, John R. Master, and Charles C. Ryrie (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 217, 221;

Paul D. Feinberg, "Dispensational Theology and the Rapture," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis, John R. Master, and Charles C. Ryrie (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 242-43;

Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture," *Three Views*, 80, 225, 229-31; E. Schuyler English, *Rethinking the Rapture* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1954), 41-55;

Ed Glasscock, *Matthew, Moody Gospel Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 476;

[William K. Harrison, "The Time of the Rapture as Indicated by Certain Passages: Part III: The Time of the Rapture in the Light of Matthew 24," \*Bibliotheca Sacra\* 115 \(April-June 1958\): 109-19;](#)

John MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 70-72;

[Russell L. Penney, "Why the Church Is Not Referenced in the Olivet Discourse," \*Conservative Theological Journal\* 1 \(April 1997\): 47-60;](#)

J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study of Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 162, 275-85;

James F. Rand, "The Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954), 126, 162;

Charles C. Ryrie, *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus: What You Need to Know about the Rapture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996), 94-97;

Ryrie, *What You Should Know about the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 82-84;

Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord Comes!* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 178-84;

John A. Sproule, "An Exegetical Defense of Pretribulationism" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 56, 60;

Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept from the Hour* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle, 1991), 57-65;

[David L. Turner, "The Structure and Sequence of Matt 24:1-41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments," \*Grace Theological Journal\* 10 \(spring 1989\): 21-22;](#)

Stanley D. Toussaint, "Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?" in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 235-50;

Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King* (Portland: Multnomah, 1980), 280-82;

John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 85-90;

John F. Walvoord, "Christ's Olivet Discourse on the Time of the End: Part I," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (April 1971): 116.

8 Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 1982), 446-47;

Hodges, *Jesus, God's Prophet*, 24-32; Dave Hunt, *How Close Are We? Compelling Evidence for the Soon Return of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 105-6, 210-11, 238, 314-15;

J. F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture* (Moline, IL: Strombeck Agency, 1950), 68-71; Ray C. Stedman, *What on Earth's Going to Happen?* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, G/L Publications, 1970), 130-43.

Beechick understands the Discourse as a double reference, applying to both tribulation saints and the church. Allen Beechick, *The Pretribulation Rapture* (Denver: Accent Books, 1980), 231-68.

Wood states that the Discourse implies the rapture in Mt 24:42-44 and that Jesus' language has an unusual similarity to other passages on the pretribulation rapture.

Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last-Day Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 91

(Ed: Add John Phillips - *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew*; Jon Courson).

**Of that day and hour** - This does not mean we can know the year! Some have falsely reasoned that since He just said day and hour, that does not mean we cannot discern the year, but that is fallacious reasoning and is not correct. The Adventist predicted 1844 and were wrong! Jehovah's Witnesses predicted 1916 and were wrong! Only the Father knows the timing and clearly this includes His knowledge of the specific year, which no one can know.

**Phil Newton** adds that "The expression, "day and hour," was not intended to exclude only the preciseness of predictability but to go on with broader predictions. As John Broadus wisely comments, "It is mere quibbling to say that still we may ascertain the year and month" [Selected Works of John Broadus, vol. 3, 492]. And that was written in the late 1800's. I'm not sure if Dr. Broadus could have imagined the "quibbling" the next century has endured! ([Sermons from the Gospel of Matthew](#))

In Acts the disciples asked the resurrected Jesus "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus made it clear that "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority." (Acts 1:7,8).

**No one** (3762)(**oudeis** from **ou** = not + **de** = even + **heis** = one) means not even a single one.

**Glover** has an interesting comment (quoted by Leon Morris in the Pillar NT Commentary) on Jesus' words noting that "No day is named, that every day may be hallowed by the sense of the possibility of its being the day of His Advent. It helps to hallow each day of life, to realize that before its close we may be in the presence of Christ's glory." (A Teacher's Commentary on the Gospel of St.

Matthew - London, 1956)

**Broadus** writes "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"

**Leon Morris** comments that "With such firm and detailed prophecies of the end of the age it seems natural to most of us to look for the date, and through the centuries there have never been lacking those who felt that it was possible to work out that date, sometimes exactly, sometimes approximately, referring only to a general period. But all such efforts are wrecked on this saying of Jesus. It is both clear and emphatic." (The Gospel according to Matthew - The Pillar New Testament Commentary)

**John MacArthur** - Although there will be observable, worldwide, and unmistakable indications of His coming just before it occurs, the exact time will not be revealed in advance. **Of that day and hour no one knows**, Jesus declared categorically. The signs He had just been describing will be conclusive proof that His arrival is very near. Once they have begun, the general time period of His return will be known, because one of the key purposes of the signs will be to make it known. But even during those sign-days the precise day and hour of Jesus' appearing will not be known, a truth He reiterates several times in this Olivet discourse (see Mt 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13).

**William Barclay** says Mt 24:36 tells "us that the hour of that event is known to God and to God alone. It is, therefore, clear that speculation regarding the time of the Second Coming is **nothing less than blasphemy**, for the man who so speculates is seeking to wrest from God secrets which belong to God alone. It is not any man's duty to speculate; it is his duty to prepare himself, and to watch." ([Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

"Impatient heart, be still!

What though He tarries long?

What though the triumph song

Is still delayed?

Thou hast His promise sure,

And that is all secure:

Be not afraid! Be not afraid!

Be still! be still!

Impatient heart, be still!"

My eager heart, be still!

Thy Lord will surely come,

And take thee to His Home,

With Him to dwell:

It may not be to-day;

And yet, my soul, it may —

I cannot tell! I cannot tell!

Be still! be still!

My eager heart, be still!

My anxious heart, be still!

Watch, work, and pray: and then

It will not matter when

Thy Lord shall come,

At midnight or at noon:

He cannot come too soon

To take thee Home: to take thee Home.

Be still! be still!

My anxious heart, be still!"

**Knows** (1492)(**eido** the aorist of **horao** = to see and perceive with emphasis on perception) means in general to know by perception.

Jesus gives 3 more admonitions in the Olivet Discourse regarding the fact that the time of His coming cannot be known: (1) Mt 24:42 = "**you do not know** which day your Lord is coming." (2) Mt 24:44 = "the Son of Man is coming at an hour you **do not expect**." (3) Mt 25:13 " you **do not know** the day nor the hour." Date setting is absolutely forbidden! In Deut 29:29 Moses writes "**The secret things belong to the LORD our God**." Clearly the date of the Son's return is a "secret thing!" Paul and Peter both affirm that all that we truly need is revealed in the Word of God - 2Ti 3:16-17 and 2Peter 1:3-4. Stated another way if something is not revealed for us in the Bible then it is not needed to accomplish God's will in our lives.

**R. T. France** "In view of such plain statements as this, it is astonishing that some Christians can still attempt to work out the date of the parousia!"

**Michael Green** said that even the rabbis warned against setting a date for Messiah's arrival writing that "He who announces the messianic times based on calculations forfeits his share in the future."

**Ray Pritchard** - Here is the application of this great truth. Jesus is coming. That much is certain. The precise time is hidden in the heart of God. It may be soon. It may not be for a 100 years. But one of these days, the sky will split open, there will a loud shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet call of God. Then the dead in Christ will rise first. Living believers will be raptured, and all God's children will rise to meet the Lord in the air. That starts the chain of events that leads eventually to the return of Christ to the earth. Since no one knows when the rapture will occur, our job as believers is very clear:

**Believe in His coming.**

**Pray for His coming.**

**Love His coming.**

**Preach His coming.**

**Watch for His coming.**

**Wait for His coming.**

**Expect His coming.**

**Look for His coming.**

Live as if it might be today and one day you won't be disappointed. If you don't know Jesus, don't wait another day, another hour, another second. Run to the cross, lay your sins on Jesus, and trust him as your Savior. This is the most important decision you can ever make. Don't be caught unprepared when the Son of God returns to the earth. Amen. ([Sound the Trumpet! Christ's Second Coming to the Earth](#))

## **THE ANGELS DO NOT KNOW THE TIME OF THE SON'S COMING**

**Angels** (32)(**aggelos/angelos**) literally means a messenger (one who bears a message - Lk 1:11, 2:9, etc or does an errand). Most of the NT uses refer to heavenly angels (messengers) who are supernatural, transcendent beings with power to carry out various tasks. All uses of **aggelos** that refer to angels are masculine gender (the feminine form of **aggelos** does not occur.)

It is interesting that Jesus mentions that the **angels** did not have knowledge of the timing of His return. In Mt 18:10 Jesus is describing "little ones" explaining that "their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father Who is in heaven." So here we have these created beings who are always in close proximity to the Father and yet they do not know the Father's timing of the

Son's return. How can men possibly think they can predict the timing of His return! It borders on the height of arrogance mixed with foolishness to try to do so! In addition although the angels will play a role in the work of the eschatological day (Mt 24:31), the timing of that day has not been revealed to them. The limited knowledge of the angels is also shown in Ephesians 3:10 and 1Peter 1:12.

**Michael Wilkins** - The knowledge of his return was not given to angelic heavenly beings, who apparently have superhuman but not unlimited knowledge. Their comprehension accords with what is God's will for them to know. (The NIV Application Commentary)

**Heaven** (3772)(ouranos) in this context refers to the abode of God and of the angels. So even though the angels are presumably in the presence of the Father, they still do not know the Father's mind on when this time will come.

## **THE SON DOES NOT KNOW THE TIME OF HIS COMING**

It is interesting that Jesus uses the title "**the Son of Man**" 6 times in the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44, 25:31) and only in Mt 24:36 refers to Himself as "**the Son.**"

**The Son (huios)** - The first uses of huios in the NT are in the very first verse of Matthew - "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Mt 1:1) Jesus is the Son called Immanuel (Mt 1:23), the Son born to a virgin (Mt 1:25), God's Son Who He called to Egypt (Mt 2:15), the beloved Son of the Father (Mt 3:17), the acknowledged Son of God (Mt 4:3,6), the Son of Man (first used by Jesus Himself - Mt 8:20). While Jesus did not add the specification "of Man," here in Mt 24:36, most commentators infer from the context that Jesus was speaking of the **Son of Man** (cp this exact phrase in the next verse - Mt 24:37), the title Jesus used of Himself frequently in the Gospels (84x/80v) and the title which placed emphasis on His humanity. The significance of this inference is discussed below.

**Nor the Son** - Note that some Greek manuscripts (Nestle-Aland 27) omit this phrase. And thus the NET reads "But as for that day and hour no one knows it- not even the angels in heaven- except the Father alone." On the other hand the parallel passage in Mark 13:32NET reads "But as for that day or hour no one knows it- neither the angels in heaven, **nor the Son**- except the Father." So even though some Greek manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel question the phrase "**nor the Son**," the fact that it is present in the Gospel of Mark supports the point that only the Father knows. How the omniscient Christ cannot know the day or hour is explained below.

Jesus' acknowledged limitation of His knowledge does not deny His **deity**, but to the contrary is a mark of His true **humanity**.

### **Related Resources on the Humanity and Deity of Christ:**

[How Can Jesus Be God and Man- Matt Perman](#)

[The Person of Christ - His Humanity and His Deity \(written outline\) by Wayne Grudem](#)

[Audio Discussion of the Person of Christ by Wayne Grudem - Parts 1 of 3](#)

[Audio Discussion of the Person of Christ by Wayne Grudem - Parts 2 of 3](#)

[Audio Discussion of the Person of Christ by Wayne Grudem - Parts 3 of 3](#)

It is notable that around 320AD proponents of **Arianism** used Mark's text (Matthew's Greek text was less certain as noted above) to assert that Jesus Christ was not God in the Flesh but was created by God as His first act of creation. In short, Arianism taught that Jesus was a created being with divine attributes, but was not Himself divine. This was one of the greatest of heresies in the early church. The Arians reasoned that Christ's ignorance regarding the timing of His return substantiated their false belief. They argued that since the Son of God did not know the time of His own return, He could not be omniscient by definition.

**Hiebert** remarks that Jesus' use of the title the Son (and not the Son of Man) places "Him alongside the Father, points to His consciousness of His unique nature as the divine Son. Since it is not the prerogative of any man "to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority" (Acts 1:7), in His incarnation, Jesus also voluntarily accepted this limitation. Plummer points out that "after the Resurrection Christ does not say that He is ignorant." It was not expedient that His people should know the day and hour of the end, and it was not a part of His revelation to them. God's wisdom graciously withheld any indication of a definite date for the Second Coming, otherwise no believer living before the indicated date could have experienced the purifying hope of His coming (1 John 3:2-3). (The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary)

**D A Carson** on **not even the Son** - John's Gospel, the one of the four Gospels most clearly insisting on Jesus' deity, also insists with equal vigor on Jesus' dependence on and obedience to his Father—a dependence reaching even to his knowledge of the divine. How NT insistence on Jesus' deity is to be combined with NT insistence on his ignorance and dependence is a matter of

profound importance to the church; and attempts to jettison one truth for the sake of preserving the other must be avoided. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke)

**Gundry** explains **not even the Son** - Theologically, we may say that just as Jesus didn't exercise his divine omnipotence except to further the kingdom (compare, for example, his refusal to make stones into bread for himself), so he didn't exercise his divine omniscience except to further the kingdom. To have known and made known the exact time of his coming would have damaged the work of the kingdom by encouraging carelessness during the interim. What Jesus could have done because he was divine didn't predetermine what he did do as also a human being. The incarnation didn't lessen his divine potencies, but it did lead him to limit the use of them. (Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation)

**John MacArthur** on **not even the Son** - Christ voluntarily restricted His use of certain divine attributes when He became flesh. "Although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," that is, to be held onto during His humanness (Phil. 2:6). It was not that He lost any divine attributes but that He voluntarily laid aside the use of some of them and would not manifest those attributes except as directed by His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). Jesus demonstrated His divine omniscience on many occasions. "He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). When, for example, Nicodemus came to Him at night, Jesus already knew what he was thinking and answered his question before it was asked (John 3:13).

But there were certain self-imposed restrictions in His human knowledge. He told the disciples, "All things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Jesus obediently restricted His knowledge to those things that the Father wanted Him to know during His earthly days of humanity. The Father revealed certain things to the Son as He reveals them to all men-through the Scripture, through the Father's working in and through His life, and through the physical manifestations of God's power and glory (see Rom. 1:19-20). Jesus learned much of His earthly knowledge just as every human being learns, and it is for that reason that He was able to keep "increasing in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). In addition to those ways, some truths were revealed to the Son directly by the Father. But in every case Jesus' human knowledge was limited to what His heavenly Father provided. Therefore, even on this last day before His arrest, the Son did not know the precise day and hour He would return to earth at His second coming. During Christ's incarnation, the Father alone exercised unrestricted divine omniscience.

It seems probable that Christ regained full divine knowledge after the resurrection, as implied in His introduction to the Great Commission: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Just prior to His ascension, He told the disciples, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (Acts 1:7). He repeats the truth that the disciples would not be told the time of His appearing, but He did not exclude His own knowledge, as He did in the Olivet discourse. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

**Sean O'Connell** - The highest heavenly created beings and the highest uncreated being don't know. (And yet some Christians think they know. I don't get it.) God the Father alone has such knowledge. (Matthew Commentary-Preaching the Word)

**Phil Newton** on **not even the Son** - Not only does Mt 24:36 stand as warning against speculation on Christ's return, but it also gives us a remarkable picture of the Incarnation. Jesus tells us that at that point, He did not know the day of His return. He, who is 'very God of very God,' co-equal with the Father, co-eternal with the Godhead, co-existent with the Father from all eternity, even He did not know. Now that is puzzling. Yet here we learn something more of the wonder of what took place in the Incarnation. Jesus Christ exists in two distinct natures. He is fully divine. In His deity there is nothing that He does not know-He is omniscient. Every detail of every molecule in the universe is known by Him. Not a speck of dust floats in the atmosphere apart from His knowledge. All of the infinite knowledge of God resides in Him as God. But we struggle, because here Jesus refers to something that He does not know. How can that be so, since He is God? Jesus Christ has always been God. He did not become God at some stage in the process of eternity. Before time existed, He is God. Yet, He did not exist as man with a human nature of the same stuff that constitutes us as humans until the Incarnation. So, while He has never, not been God, He was not always man. That came about in the wondrous story of the angel announcing the supernatural conception in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit of the Son of God. The one person of Jesus Christ took on the distinct nature of humanity. All of the limitations of the human race, He knew and understood from experience. He was sleepy, hungry, tired, thirsty, angry, grieved; He laughed, cried, talked, prayed, and entered into the depth of human relationships. But, He did not stop being God. At one and the same time, He sustained the universe by His power while in His humanity grew tired from a day of ministering to needy people. He kept the infinite solar systems in their revolutions while crying to the Father as a human being with needs. And now, the One that saw Nathaniel under the fig tree and who discerned the thoughts of scheming religious leaders, declares, that in His humanity, He did not know the time of His return. He does not complain about not knowing. Our Lord held complete confidence in the Father. The Omniscient One as God, in His human nature admitted things that He did not know. That gives further evidence of the genuineness of His humanity as well as His trust in the Father. Jesus knew everything necessary to be our Redeemer and to do the work of the Father on our behalf, but His human mind did not contain the infinite knowledge He possessed in His deity. "As man he knew only what God was pleased to make known to him," wrote Geoff Thomas. He adds several helpful statements about what Jesus did not know. "Jesus Christ our Mediator was never ignorant of



anything he ought to have known." The date of the second coming fell within this range since; "the date of the second coming was not revealed to him for this reason - you and I have no need to know it. It would not help our earthly pilgrimage, and so Jesus our Lord was not told the time." This further demonstrates that "Jesus Christ our Mediator had to save us within the limitations of his human body." He trusted the Father for all that He needed to know to complete the redemptive work. And so we hear His agony in the Garden and His cries of dereliction on the cross as a human suffering for humans. "Jesus Christ was limited in knowledge but not fallible in his knowledge." He held "no mistaken notions" or fallible understanding. What He knew, understood, and spoke was absolute truth. So, if Jesus Christ, in His humanity, did not need to know when He would return, then neither do we need that kind of precise knowledge. He will come again but the time is known only to God and not to man. ([Sermons from the Gospel of Matthew](#))

**Thomas Ice on not even the Son** - In this passage Jesus is referred to as "the Son." When the New Testament uses terms like **the Son**," or "the Son of Man," as occurs in the next verse (Mt 24:37), it stresses His humanity and the incarnation. This passage does not say, "that no man will ever know. This He did not say." 1 I agree with most commentators that this passage is saying that in His incarnation as the Son of Man it was not given to Him (or revealed to Him) the time of His return. I am sure that He knows (**Ed**: Referring to Jesus in heaven today) the day and the hour upon His return to heaven. John MacArthur notes the following: *Therefore, even on this last day before His arrest, the Son did not know the precise day and hour He would return to earth at His second coming. During Christ's incarnation, the Father alone exercised unrestricted divine omniscience.* Ed Glasscock echoes this understanding: *"The Lord did not attempt to display His deity but rather, in contrast, emphasized His humanity. As an obedient servant in His humanity, Jesus did not know the day or the hour of His return."* Jesus is saying that in essence He was not telling them at that time when He was returning. However, this does not mean that those at a future time would not be able to know when He was returning. Yeager says: "The thought of the context is that at the time that Jesus spoke this to His disciples, and even yet now, at the current writing, nobody knows the day and the hour." 4 It is not until after the rapture, when one is in the tribulation that God's prophetic clock will resume ticking. For believers living during that time they will be able to know at least the day when Christ will return to planet earth. (**Ed**: see [discussion of this statement](#)) ([Matthew 24:36-39 No One Knows](#)) (Bolding added)

**Zodhiates** explains **nor the Son** not knowing about the timing of His return - If we take the unqualified **Son**" here as the *Son of man*-not the *Son of God*-then we can offer the rational interpretation that the triune God, the Father, the Word, and Holy Spirit, did not reveal to the human nature of Christ (the "*Son of man*" who "increased in wisdom" [Lk 2:52]) the time of His return of which the L<sup>3</sup>gos (Second Person of the Godhead) or Infinite Wisdom had no need of revelation. In His humanity, He may have laid aside this particular detail as He did His glory. This is logically scriptural, and it was the mainstay argument of the most famous Greek Trinitarian in Christian history, [Athanasius](#). It was used successfully against the Arians in the fourth century, the Nestorians in the fifth, and against every cult that has denied the Trinity since. (Exegetical Commentary on Matthew)

**Hiebert** has an interesting thought noting that "God's wisdom graciously withheld any indication of a definite date for the Second Coming, otherwise no believer living before the indicated date could have experienced the purifying hope of His coming (1John 3:2-3)."

**Morris** - Much of the rest of the Olivet discourse is an urgent exhortation always to be ready and watching for Christ's return, an exhortation that would be contradictory if we first had to watch for the signs of His coming. The initial phase of His coming, therefore, is always imminent.

**Crisswell** - The exact time of Christ's coming is not to be the concern of God's people (cf. also Jesus' parting words in Acts 1:6-8). That Christ, in His humiliation (incarnation), was not aware of the time is not a denial of His deity, but an evidence of His functional subordination and temporary surrender of the use of certain attributes while living a life of faith and dependence upon the Father.

## SOME THOUGHTS TO PONDER

If one interprets literally the numerical descriptions of the "Tribulation" (1260 days, 42 months, 3.5 years, time, times and half a time) this interpretation introduces an interesting question. In other words if one believes in a literal 7 year period of 360 days per year, then one would be aware of when this time begins for the Antichrist will make a 7 year covenant with Israel as the starting point. This event will make international news for many days, so that all believers would know when the treaty was inaugurated. One could then count off 1260 days until the Antichrist breaks the covenant in the middle (Da 9:27 - 3.5 years). Then one would know that there are 1260 days remaining in the Great Tribulation (cp the abomination of desolation Mt 24:15, 2Thes 2:3-4 "inaugurating the "Great Tribulation" of Mt 24:21) and presumably the time of the return of the King. And so **THEORETICALLY** one would be able to know the day of His arrival. However one problem with this "theory" is the fact that Daniel speaks of a period of 1290 days (Da 12:11) and also a period of 1335 days (Da 12:12) Exactly what transpires during those 75 days (past the 1260 days) is uncertain.

In his sermon on this section **Dr John MacArthur** says

"The time period of the second coming will be known (**Ed**: He is referring to the "general" time period), it has to be known. It has to

be known because of all the sequence of events. The **abomination of desolation** will be an historical event. The tremendous worldwide conflicts, the wars, the rumors of wars, the nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, the famines, the pestilences, the descriptions of Revelation 6-18 where the fresh water is devastated and the salt water is devastated and the sea is turned to blood and where the day is set off its normal cycle and daylight is shortened and there's a greater amount of darkness, and all of those events that are very observable will indicate that it is the general period and the general time of the **Second Coming**. But the day and the hour will not be known. That will come with suddenness in an unexpected way. The period of the Tribulation, very clearly indicated, and we know the coming of the Son of Man, verse 29 says, is immediately after the Tribulation. But how immediately, we don't know." To approach it another way, remember this: That both Daniel in the Old Testament and John in the New Testament writing in Revelation tell us that the Tribulation period, the Great Tribulation, is a period of three and a half years, 42 months, 12 hundred and 60 days. We find that in Daniel 7:25, 9:27, and 12:7. We find it in Revelation 11 verses 2 and 3, in Revelation chapter 12 verse 14 and Revelation 13 verse 5. So there are all those indicators, very clearly, that that's a three-and-a-half-year period. It starts with the abomination of desolation in Mt 24:15, the antichrist setting up his self-worship. So that's very observable. Then it'll be three and a half years. **Immediately after**, says Mt 24:29, comes the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Now, how **immediately after**, we don't know. And once the sign comes, we don't know how long it'll be before He actually establishes the kingdom. So there's some latitude in that. There's a period of time in there - Daniel gives us a hint of it because in Daniel 12:11, Daniel speaks of a period of testing and tribulation of 1290 days, so he adds another 30 days on the end. And then in Daniel 12:12, he speaks of 1335 days - he adds another 45, making a total of 75 days. So Daniel sees a three-and-a-half-year period, 42 months, 1260 days, and then he sees another period, which is not described, as to its content of 75 days. So we don't know exactly the day and the hour. The time period, yes; the general period, yes. Now, we only know that once that period has begun, right? We don't know it now because we don't know what generation that's going to come upon. It will be initiated with the Rapture of the church. That hasn't happened. And then three and a half years of peace as antichrist comes to the political rescue of the Middle Eastern country of Israel and brings them safety and starts to build his revived Roman Empire in Europe. And everything's going along fine. And then it's in the middle of that seven-year period that all this begins when he sets up the worship of himself. So the Rapture, the rise of antichrist, the birth pains, the sign of the Son of Man, those have not happened yet. We don't know what generation they will come upon. It could be this generation. It could happen any moment, the church removed and the Tribulation begins. So we don't know what generation it is. But the generation that it comes upon, even with all those signs, even with all that goes on, still won't know the exact day and the exact hour when Christ is coming. That is a secret. Now, this is not talking about the Rapture, this is talking about the second coming. We're at the end of the Tribulation here, as is every obvious from verse 29. We have passed through the time of the Tribulation in the thinking of Matthew and the teaching of our Lord. ([Ready or Not—Here I Come!, Part 1](#))

**Thomas Ice** disagrees with **MacArthur** asking

What does this mean (**Ed**: Jesus' statement in Mt 24:36) in light of the fact that Matthew 24:4-31 speaks concerning the tribulation period that is seven 360-day years, divided at the midpoint by the abomination of desolation? In other words, alert believers in the tribulation should be able to know the exact day of the Second Coming. I believe that believers in the tribulation will indeed be able to know the day of Christ's return since Luke 21:28 says, "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Also, Matthew 24:34 is a time related statement saying that the generation that sees "all these things," (i.e., the events of the seven-year tribulation) will not pass away until Christ returns." ([Matthew 24:36-39 No One Knows](#))

In his Study Bible notes **MacArthur** writes that

"even with all those indisputable signs and precisely designated periods, the exact day and hour will not be known by any human beings, **not even Tribulation believers**, in advance." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

So whether a Tribulation believer **cannot know** (MacArthur) or **can know** (Ice) the **day** of Christ's return, one thing is certain. Anyone who becomes a believer during the Tribulation/Great Tribulation will certainly know that the return of Christ is very near (within the next seven years) and given the persecution and martyrdom inflicted by the Antichrist (in the last 3.5 years - the Great Tribulation), this sure hope will be soul stabilizing truth that enables tried saints to endure to the end (either the end of their life if martyred or to the end of the age when Christ returns, cp Mt 24:13-note)!

Perhaps **John Walvoord** offers the balanced explanation -

In any case, Christ points out that while prophecy is absolutely certain of fulfillment, the day of the Second Coming is not revealed, although the approximate time will be known by those living in the Great Tribulation... While these illustrations, beginning in Mt 24:32, have as their primary interpretation and exhortation the situation immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ, there are parallels to those living today in expectation of the rapture. Believers today also need to be faithful, to be recognizing the signs of the times, and to be living in such a way that they are ready for the Lord's return. Even among those who differ in their basic

interpretation of prophecy, there is this constant unifying note of being ready for the Lord's return. **John Calvin**, for instance, in commenting on 1 John 2:18, states, *"It behooves us to comfort ourselves at this day, and to see by faith the near advent of Christ ... nothing more now remained but that Christ should appear for the redemption of the world."* **Martin Luther** likewise anticipated the early return of the Lord, stating *"I think the last day is not far away."* He also adds, *"The world runs and hastens so diligently to its end that it often occurs to me forcibly that the last day will break before we can completely turn the Holy Scriptures into German. For it is certain from the Holy Scriptures that we have no more temporal things to expect. All is done and fulfilled."* So today, even though we may not understand all the prophetic Word and may not interpret it alike, believers should be looking for the coming of the Lord. As stated in 1John 3:3, "And everyone who has this hope (1Jn 3:2) on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come - [Matthew 24 The Signs of the End of the Age](#))

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Robert Neighbour asks "Is Christ's Coming Near?" -- "For yet a little while, (how little, how little) and He that cometh will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

We may not know the day of the coming of Christ, but we certainly may know the times and the seasons. If the men of the world can discern the sky and foretell whether it will be fair or foul weather, surely we can discern the signs of the times (see Mt 16:3). Where is the bride that does not know that her marriage draws near? She knows it long before the public knows. It is her secret; it is the joy of her heart; and God has written certain things across the years by which we will know when the time of His coming is near.

1. There are the Jewish signs. Truly when the fig tree puts forth its leaves, we know that summer is nigh; so also when we see Israel turning her face toward Jerusalem, her long cherished home, we know that Christ is near; even at the doors.
2. Spiritual signs proclaim His coming. To our minds, there is no sign of Christ's soon coming so marked as these. All over the world to-day, ministers who know the Book, and saints who love the Lord, are preaching and proclaiming the blessed hope of the Lord's return.
3. Moral signs proclaim His coming. The fact that evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse; that the apostasy with its denials of the faith has come. All of these proclaim the soon coming of the Lord.

There are many other signs of Christ's soon coming, surely He is near, even at the door.

Many are the signs that greet us,  
As we lift our eyes — they meet us,  
Christ is coming — He is near:  
Far and wide the cry is sounding,  
Through the world it is resounding;  
Soon the Bridegroom will appear.

O then, let your lamps burn steady,  
Be ye robed and be ye ready;  
That the wedding ye may share.  
Don't delay your preparation,  
Men of every tribe and nation,  
For the Coming now prepare.

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**False Predictions** - Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? — Matthew 24:3 - News that a solar eclipse would take place on July 22, 2009, brought an alarming prediction. It was predicted that the eclipse would sufficiently affect gravitational pull, causing tectonic plates to "pop a seam," resulting in a sizable earthquake and a subsequent devastating tsunami in Japan. The US Geological Survey responded that no scientists "have ever predicted a major earthquake. They do not know how, and they do not expect to know how, anytime in the foreseeable future."

There have also been many false predictions about the date of Christ's second coming—despite our Lord's emphatic words: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Christ told His followers that instead of trying to predict the date of His return, they should "watch" (Mt 24:42) and "be ready" (Mt 24:44).

Peter warned, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." Then he added: "What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives" (2 Peter 3:10-11 NIV).

Striving to live for God—that's what Jesus wants us to focus our energy on while we wait for that "blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

When someone says, "I can discern  
Exactly when Christ will return,"  
Don't be deceived or led astray—  
The Lord said we can't know the day. —Sper

**Look for Christ's return,  
and you'll live for Christ's glory.**

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**Day Unknown** - Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. —Matthew 24:36 - To many Londoners, 1666 looked like the year when Jesus would return. Prophecy enthusiasts had added 1,000 years since Christ's birth to 666, the number of Antichrist, to arrive at the date 1666. The world did seem to be on the verge of destruction when in 1665 a plague claimed the lives of 100,000 people in London. Then in September 1666, a London fire destroyed tens of thousands of buildings. Some wondered, Didn't the Bible predict catastrophes at the end of the world? (see Matt. 24:1-8). Yet the year 1666 passed, and life went on seemingly as it had before.

Even in our own day, there are those who have predicted the end of the world. A date is predicted, the media covers the frenzy, and then that day passes uneventfully.

In God's wisdom, the actual time of Christ's return has been kept from us. Jesus said, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:36). This any-moment aspect of Jesus' return helps keep believers motivated in Christian service and spiritual growth all the time—not just near a certain date (Mt 25:1-13; 1 John 3:2-3). Be assured, Christ's personal return will take place. And as we await that day, our lives should be marked by "holy conduct and godliness" (2Peter 3:11).

Should He come in the dawn of morning,  
At noon or at twilight dim,  
I only pray that every day  
I'll be waiting and watching for Him.  
—Bearden

**No doctrine is more closely linked to practical daily living  
than that of the Lord's return.**

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**Surprised To Be Here?** - You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. —Matthew 24:44 - It was early February 2000. My wife and I had just flown into Palm Springs, California, for the funeral of a family member. At the airport, a couple we had never met asked us if we were associated with RBC Ministries. They had overheard my name at the car rental counter where they were standing. When the woman learned that I was with RBC, she said, "We are Christians too." Then she asked, "Are you surprised to still be here?"

"No, not really," I replied, wondering what was behind her question. But the reason soon became clear. She said that many people had expected Jesus to come on January 1, 2000, to take believers to heaven.

Ever since Jesus left this earth, people have tried to interpret history in the light of prophecy and predict the day of His return. After centuries of unsuccessful date-setting, many well-meaning believers have been surprised—and disillusioned—on the day after they were supposed to be gone.

When Jesus told His disciples about His second coming, He said that only God the Father knew the day and hour (Matthew 24:36). Jesus gave many details about the time, but one practical truth stands out: If we are faithfully serving Him, we'll be ready no matter when He comes.

O Lord, we do not need to know  
Exactly when You will return;  
So give us patience as we make  
A godly life our main concern. —Sper

**If Christ comes today,  
will you be ready to meet Him?**

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**Perhaps Today** - You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. —Matthew 24:44

A year ago, I read an article saying that millions of TV sets in the United States would stop working today unless they were able to receive digital signals. Notices appeared in electronics stores, and the government even offered a free \$40 coupon toward the purchase of a converter box.

I suspect that most people took the necessary steps to make sure their TV set would work when they turned it on today. We usually respond well to warnings tied to specific dates, but often fail to prepare for an event that will come "some day."

When the disciples asked Jesus about the date of His return (Matt. 24:3), He told them that only God the Father knows: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Mt 24:36). Then He urged them to be prepared so that they would not be taken by surprise. "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt 24:44).

We don't know when Jesus will return; He may come at any time. Dr. M. R. De Haan, founder of RBC Ministries, kept a two-word motto in his office:

**"Perhaps Today"**

When we make our daily plans, are we aware that Christ may return? Are we prepared to meet Him?

The darkness deepens! Yes, but dawn is nearer!  
The Lord from heaven may soon be on His way;  
The "blessed hope" in these dark days grows dearer,  
Our Savior Christ will come—perhaps today! —Smith

**If Christ comes today,  
will you be ready to meet Him?**

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**Are You Ready?** - When Jesus promised His disciples that He would one day return to earth, He said He would come at a time they did not expect (Matthew 24:44). Therefore, people today who set dates for Christ's second coming are really wasting their time. Jesus never told His followers how to calculate the day of His return. Rather, He emphasized that our main priority is to make sure we're ready for Him, and that we are occupied in His service when He comes (Mt 24:45-46).

A woman who lived by this teaching was shopping in a small country store. Several young people were just standing around doing nothing. Knowing she was a Christian, they began ridiculing her. "We hear you're expecting Jesus to come back," they jeered. "That's right," she replied brightly. "Do you really believe He's coming?" they asked. "Absolutely," she answered. They said, "Well, you'd better hurry home and get ready. He might be on the way!" Facing them, she said, "I don't have to get ready—I keep ready!"

Are you ready for the arrival of God's Son? Will you be glad to see Jesus when He returns? If not, get ready now. Without delay, turn away from your sin and trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Then keep ready by walking in His will every day.

The Christ I love is coming soon,  
It may be morning, night, or noon;

My lamps are lit, I'll watch and pray;  
It may be today, it may be today. —Bixler

**Jesus may come at any time,  
so we must be ready all the time.**

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**Are You Ready? (Part 2)** - Two unusual things happened as I was sitting in a restaurant having my usual breakfast of a bagel and coffee. First I read an article on the front page of the newspaper. It quoted a certain Christian author who theorized that Christ would call millions of Christians to heaven before sundown that particular day.

A few minutes later, a friend walked up, sat down, and began to tell me that his life had been dramatically changed. He said that for the first time in his life he was ready to meet the Lord. This was good news, since we had often discussed his unwillingness to live in a manner consistent with his claim to be a Christian.

He said he had decided that it was all or nothing. He had an amazing peace, and now he was also concerned about others. When I asked him what had happened, he told me he had read the book I had been reading about in the newspaper. He said he finally realized that whether Christ came on that day or another day, he would have to stand before the Lord eventually.

To claim that Christ will come today may result in a false alarm. But to believe that Christ may come today and that we will have to answer to Him will motivate us to live for Him.

**Are you ready?**

When we live with expectancy,  
Awaiting Christ's return,  
Our diligent obedience  
Becomes our main concern. —Sper

**Plan as if Christ's return is many years away;  
live as if He will come today!**

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**Dirty Dishes** - Abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. —1 John 2:28 - When I was a boy, my father often traveled to other cities to speak at churches and Bible conferences. Sometimes my mother would accompany him, leaving my brother and me alone for a few days. We enjoyed being independent, but we detested doing the dishes.

I remember the time we tried to put off that dreaded chore as long as possible by stacking all the dirty plates, glasses, and silverware in the oven after each meal. At the end of the week, there was hardly any room left. Then, on the evening before Mom and Dad were to return, we rolled up our sleeves and cleaned up the whole mess. It took hours! How ashamed we would have been if our parents had come back earlier than we expected.

Because we don't know exactly when Christ will return (Matthew 24:36,42,44), we must not get lazy in our Christian walk. The expectancy of His any-moment appearance should help us to be "faithful and wise" servants (Mt 24:45) and to live in a way that "we may have confidence and not be ashamed" when He comes (1 John 2:28).

Yes, Christ will come again, just as He promised. Perhaps today! Do you have any "dirty dishes"? Now is the time to get ready.

Faithful and true would He find us here  
If He should come today?  
Watching in gladness and not in fear,  
If He should come today. —Morris

**Live as if Christ is coming back today.**

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Sean O'Connell - A SECOND- AND THIRD-CENTURY Roman clergyman calculated that Jesus would return in AD 500. His prediction was based on the dimensions of Noah's Ark. Christ did not return at that time. On January 1, 1000 many Christians in Europe, as you can imagine, predicted the end of the world. Sadly, some Christians, if they can be called that, reacted to that millennial mark in a military fashion. As the first of the year approached, Christian armies traveled to some of the pagan countries in Northern Europe in order to make converts, by force if necessary, before Christ returned. Christ did not return then. In 1415 the Taborites, a group greatly influenced by the apocalyptic writings of Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135-1202), thought that Christ would return once they shed "the blood of the enemies of Christ"-i.e., defeated their persecutors. The group disbanded after they didn't fare so well against the German army. Christ did not return. Also in the Middle Ages, Pope Innocent III took the number 618 (the year Islam was founded) and added the number 666 (the number of the beast) to get 1284 as the year of Christ's final judgment. Christ did not return.

On February 14, 1835 Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of the Latter Day Saints, called a meeting of Mormon leaders. He announced that Jesus would return within fifty-six years (History of the Church, 2:182). Earlier, in or around the year 1832, Smith wrote in Doctrines and Covenants, 130.17, "I prophesy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written-the Son of Man will not come in the clouds till I am eighty-five years old." Smith would have been eighty-five in 1890. Unfortunately a mob murdered him before his thirty-ninth birthday. Christ did not return. William Miller, founder of a popular end-times movement that bore his name-"Millerism"-predicted that the second coming would occur sometime between 1843 and 1844. Christ did not return. In 1874 Charles Taze Russell, founder of what is now known as the Bible Student movement, from which came the Jehovah's Witnesses (Watchtower and Tract Society) and other organizations, predicted the rapture in 1910, followed by the end of the world and Christ's invisible return in 1914. Christ did not return (or at least no one saw him).

In 1986 the group The Children of God predicted that Russia would defeat the United States and Israel, establishing a worldwide dictatorship. Then, in 1993, Christ would return. Christ did not return. In 1988 Whisenant Edgar wrote the book 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Is in 1988, and Colin Deal wrote Christ Returns by 1988. Those books sold over four million copies. Christ did not return. Lee Jang Rim of the church Mission for the Coming Days prophesied that Jesus would return through the Sydney Harbor on October 28, 1992. Christ did not return (and sadly, Rim did not return as well, walking away with 4.4 million dollars from his followers' life savings). In 1998 a Taiwanese cult in Texas claimed that Christ would return and invite the faithful followers aboard a UFO. Christ did not return (and to my knowledge, no UFO was spotted). Also in 1998-a good year for such prophecies, as 666 times three equals 1998-psyhic Edgar Cayce taught that a secret, underground chamber would be discovered between the paws of the Great Sphinx in Egypt. Within that chamber would be documents about the history of the lost city of Atlantis. This new revelation would activate the second coming of Christ. Christ did not return. In 2000 ... well, the list of prophecies is too long. Each time Christ did not return. To give one final example, Harold Camping (earlier in September 1994 and again 106 days ago before this sermon was preached) predicted the end of the world. He advertised on his fifty-five radio stations and on 6,000 billboards, "Judgment Day is coming/May 21, 2011. The Bible guarantees it!" You could even sign up for a live Twitter feed at [Twitter.com/endofworldmay21](https://twitter.com/endofworldmay21). I doubt that Twitter feed is feeding anything now. Christ did not return. Camping then, without apology for his earlier false prediction, named October 21, 2011 as the right date for Christ's return. Again Christ did not return. (Matthew Commentary-Preaching the Word)

**THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT - "Of that day and hour no one knows" Mt 24:36** - Those words seem clear enough, but the disregarding of them led to one of the most highly anticipated—and most disappointing—days in history.

The churches of northeastern America grew rapidly in the early 1800s, fueled by one revival after another. The new Christians had little theological education, yet many of them began to discuss details of biblical prophecy with great vigor. Speculation boiled over the exact day and year when Christ would return, and among the speculators was William Miller of New York.

Miller, when newly converted, had torn into the prophecies of Daniel, concluding in 1818 that Christ would return in 1843 or 1844. When he later began preaching, this became a keynote of his messages, and his listeners, finding him earnest, eloquent, and sincere, multiplied. He finally announced that Christ would return to earth on October 22, 1844.

The financial panic of 1839 contributed to the belief that the end of the world was approaching. Enthusiasm for Christ's return became so great that prophetic charts were added alongside stock market listings and current events in the newspapers. Miller's teachings swept through New England, and large numbers espoused Millerism.

As the morning of October 22, 1844, dawned, a sense of fear and foreboding fell over New England. People gathered on mountaintops and in churches. Normal activities ceased as everyone awaited the sudden rending of the skies and the end of the world. When the day passed uneventfully, many Christians grew disillusioned. The unsaved became cynical. The following years saw a decline in conversions, and the period of revivals came to an abrupt end. The event became known as "[The Great Disappointment](#)." (Nelson's complete book of stories, illustrations, and quotes)

## The Second Coming of Christ in Outline

### I. Time of Christ's Return

A. Unknown: Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32

B. Unexpected: Matthew 24:44

## **II. Other Terms for Christ's Return**

A. The Times of Refreshing: Acts 3:19

B. The Day of God: 2 Peter 3:12

C. The Last Days: 2 Timothy 3:1

D. The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Revelation 1:1

E. The Glorious Appearing of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Titus 2:13

F. The Day of Jesus Christ: Philippians 1:6

G. The Appearing of the Chief Shepherd: 1 Peter 5:4

H. The Blessed Hope: Titus 2:13

## **III. The Manner of His Coming**

A. Sudden and unexpected: Matthew 24:44; Luke 12:40

B. The same way he ascended: Acts 1:11

C. Like a thief in the night: 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 16:15

D. Like a flash of lightning: Matthew 24:27

E. In the clouds: Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7

F. With a trumpet, a shout, and the cry of the archangel: 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

G. Accompanied by angels: Matthew 16:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7

H. With his saints: 1 Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 14

I. With great glory: Matthew 16:27, 25:31

J. In flaming fire: 2 Thessalonians 1:8

## **IV. The Purpose of His Coming**

A. To be glorified with his saints: 2 Thessalonians 1:10

B. To raise the dead in Christ: 1 Thessalonians 4:16

C. To rapture the living saints: 1 Thessalonians 4:17

D. To reign on the earth: Isaiah 24:23; Revelation 11:15

E. To judge and reward his saints: 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

F. To defeat the devil forever: Revelation 20:10

## **V. Our Duties in Relation to His Return**

A. Consider it close at hand: Romans 13:12; Philippians 4:5

B. Be prepared: Matthew 24:44,46

C. Look for it: Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13

D. Love his appearing: 2 Timothy 4:8

E. Put on the armor of God: Romans 13:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:8



F. Wait patiently for it: 1 Corinthians 1:7; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:7-8

G. Purify ourselves in light of it: 2 Peter 3:11-12; 1 John 3:1-3

H. Pray for his coming: Matthew 6:10; Revelation 22:20