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### Quick Links to the Study

#### I. Context

- a. Historical
- b. Literary

#### II. Message

- a. Uncertainty of the Times, vv. 36-41
- b. Watchfulness, vv. 42-44

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The passage under consideration for this study has parallels in [Mk. 13:32-37](#) and [Lk. 17:26-30, 34-36](#). These additional passages will be brought into the study as supplementary to [Mt. 24:36-44](#).

The unit theme in the Symth-Helwys Formations series for the lessons in this unit is titled "Pointing to Something New." The focus is upon Advent and the expected coming of the Lord, both initially in incarnation and later in final judgment. This latter emphasis is the first segment to study in [Matt. 24:36-44](#).

#### I. **Context**

As is ever true, a probing of the settings of this passage, both historically and literarily, is important to correct understanding of the text.

##### a. **Historical**

The external history, that is, the compositional history, of the Gospel of Matthew comes up against the anonymous nature of the document at the outset. That is, no author identification is contained inside the document itself. The heading, "The Gospel according to Matthew," usually printed in most English translations reflects the Greek heading KATA MAΘΘΑΙΟΝ, which was added to the document after it had gone through about a century of being copied after the initial writing of the document in the late 60s to middle 70s of the first Christian century. The heading, which links Matthew with this document, reflects the viewpoint of post-apostolic Christian tradition as to authorship. As Howard Clark Kee ("The Gospel of Matthew," *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, iPreach) describes:

From the early 2nd cent. down to the present, Christians have believed that the first gospel in the NT was also the first to be written and that the author was [Matthew](#) the tax collector, a disciple of Jesus (9:9). The source of this persistent belief can be traced back as far as ca. A.D. 130, when Papias, a bishop in Hierapolis, a city of Asia Minor, wrote a work titled "Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord." His writing, which is known only from fragments quoted by later Christian writers, reports that Matthew, the disciple, compiled the sayings of the Lord in Hebrew. Those who have quoted Papias seem to have accepted his statement without question as referring to the First Gospel.

Yet, several major barriers must be overcome before this ancient Christian tradition gains full acceptance. Kee addresses one of these in relation to the major source of that tradition with Papias:

There are several difficulties with this assumption, however. (a) The gospel consists of a rather full account of Jesus' public ministry, not merely of a series of sayings. (b) Detailed analysis of Matt. shows that the author used Mark as one of his sources (see below). (c) Mark and therefore Matt., for which Mark was a source, were written in Greek, not Hebrew. In view of these difficulties, it is plausible to assume that Papias is referring, not to Matt. as we know it, but perhaps to a now lost collection of sayings of Jesus.

Other obstacles exist as well. Most notable among them is the difficulty in explaining how a Jewish tax collector, whose job automatically placed him on the fringe of Jewish religious life, could develop the skills to be able to argue his case for Jesus as the promised Messiah using patterns of scribal argumentation

ranked among the best one can find in ancient Jewish writings. The presentation of his case reflects persuasion skills matching and following thought patterns found among the most skilled of the ancient rabbis in the Mishnah etc. Several other barriers also exist in regard to this early church tradition and are a part of the challenges to be faced in attempting to assert the accuracy of Matthew as the author of the first gospel.

For me, it's better to speak of the Matthean community, without fully assuming the early church tradition, as the source of this document. This divinely inspired document arose out of a desire to defend the belief in Jesus as the promised Messiah prophesied in the Hebrew Bible. Evidently this need was occasioned by the First Jewish War (appx. 66-70 AD), which resulted in the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and a huge fear among Jewish people for the continuing existence of their way of life and religious heritage. The religious community of mostly Jewish believers, possibly in the Roman province of Syria in either Damascus or Antioch -- or both -- came under strong pressure to abandon their Christian faith in favor of the synagogue tradition of Judaism as a way to help preserve that threatened heritage. God inspired this community -- along with individuals within it -- to produce the Gospel of Matthew in order to demonstrate just the opposite. In order to be consistent with what God had begun in the Old Testament faithful Jews should accept Jesus as their Messiah, since Christ represented the culmination of the Old Testament revelation and promises for His covenant people.

Because of the literary nature of our passage as apocalyptic, the internal history markers relate to the anticipated second coming of the Son of Man at the close of human history with divine judgment facing all humanity at that time. More needs to be said about this under Literary concerns.

#### **b. Literary**

The literary setting of 24:36-44 has several layers. Most immediately, it stands as a part of the fifth and final [discourse of Jesus](#) in chapters twenty four and twenty five, as outlined in my [Study Manual of the New Testament](#).

1. Temple destruction predicted (24:1-2)
2. Signs of the Times (24:3-31)
3. Watchfulness (24:32-25:30)
  - a) Lesson of the fig tree (24:32-35)
  - b) The unknown day and hour (24:36-44)**
  - c) Parable of the unfaithful servant (24:45-51)
  - d) Parable of the ten virgins (25:1-12)
  - e) Parable of the talents (25:13-30)
4. Judgment of the sheep and goats (25:31-46)

In this setting, these verses are a part of the theme of [watchfulness](#), which is an important emphasis especially in the Matthean gospel. One of the indicators of this is the [Greek verb](#) γρεγορεύω [gregoreuo], which is usually translated as “watch.” The contribution of 24:36-44 to this theme is the emphasis upon the uncertainty of the return of the Son of Man, thus necessitating continual watchfulness.

The next tier of literary context has to do with this fifth discourse in these two chapters of Matthew. It stands as the [fifth and final discourse section](#) of the Gospel, following a popular Jewish model of organizing material around the structure of the five “Books of Moses” in the Old Testament. An earlier expression of this is the Book of Psalms. Matthew follows a well established Jewish model, then, in making its case for the validation of Jesus at the Jewish Messiah:

The Prologue Matt. 1-2

Book One: The Son begins to proclaim the Kingdom Matt. 3:1-7:29

Narrative: Beginnings of the ministry Matt. 3:1-4:25

Discourse: The Sermon on the Mount Matt. 5:1-7:29

Book Two: The mission of Jesus and his disciples in Galilee Matt. 8:1-11:1

Narrative: The cycle of nine miracle stories Matt. 8:1-9:38

Discourse: The mission, past and future Matt. 10:1-11:1

Book Three: Jesus meets opposition from Israel Matt. 11:2-13:53

Narrative: Jesus disputes with Israel and condemns it Matt. 11:2-12:50

Discourse: Jesus withdraws from Israel into parabolic speech Matt. 13:1-53

Book Four: The Messiah forms his church and prophecies his passion Matt. 13:54-18:35

Narrative: The itinerant Jesus prepares for the church by his deeds Matt. 13:54-17:27

Discourse: Church life and order Matt. 18:1-35

Book Five: The Messiah and his church on the way to the passion Matt. 19:1-25:46

Narrative: Jesus leads his disciples to the cross as he confounds his enemies. Matt. 19:1-23:29

**Discourse: The Last Judgment Matt. 24-25**

The Climax: Death-Resurrection Matt. 26-28

Lastly, the literary concerns need to address the kind of writing characterizing these verses. The genre, i.e., the literary form, of these two chapters is apocalyptic writing. Stephen Motyer ("Apocalyptic," [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)) provides a helpful summation of this literary form:

Type of biblical literature that emphasizes the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth and the revelation of God and his plan for the world. Apocalyptic writings are marked by distinctive literary features, particularly prediction of future events and accounts of visionary experiences or journeys to heaven, often involving vivid symbolism. Later apocalypses often build upon and elaborate the symbolism employed by earlier ones.

Matthew 24-25 is based in part on [Mark 13](#), as is also [Luke 21](#). Together these three passages are known as the "little apocalypses" since they somewhat follow the writing style of Revelation 4-20. Howard Kee ("Gospel of Matthew," *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, iPreach) summarizes Matthew at this point:

Writing in language and employing imagery that is characteristic of the apocalyptic writings of Judaism in the period about the time of Jesus' birth, Matt. adopts and expands Mark 13:3-37 in order to describe the conditions that will obtain on the earth in the time immediately preceding the coming of the Son of man, which will mark the end of the age. To Mark's material Matt. has added some extended parables and a group of sayings about the need to be watchful, since no one can predict when the end will come.

Identification of this literary form helps set a frame of reference for understanding the passage. The concern is eschatological judgment and how to be ready for it.

Each synoptic gospel has a distinctive approach to this material from the teachings of Jesus, as a quick comparison of outlines of each will reveal (see my [Detailed Outline of the Life of Christ](#)):

#### Matthew 24-25

- 140. Temple destruction predicted 24:1-2
- 141. Signs of the Times 24:3-31
- 142. Lesson of the fig tree 24:32-35
- 143. **The unknown day and hour 24:36-44**
- 144. Parable of the unfaithful servant 24:45-51
- 145. Parable of the ten virgins 25:1-12
- 146. Parable of the talents 25:13-30
- 147. Judgment of the sheep and goats 25:31-46

#### Mark 13

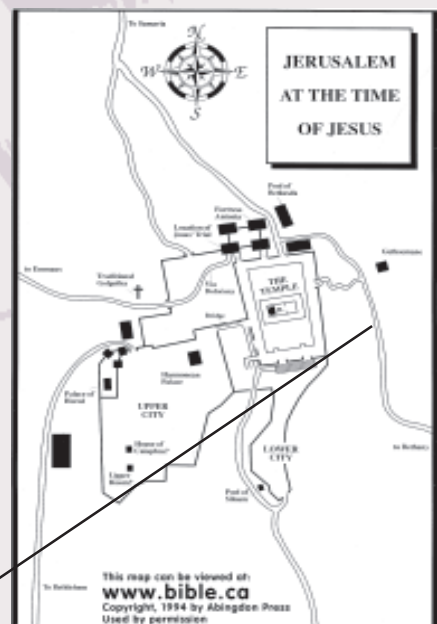
- 74. Temple destruction predicted 13:1-2
- 75. Signs of the times 13:3-27
- 76. Lesson of the fig tree 13:28-31
- 77. **The unknown day and hour 13:32-37**

#### Luke 21:5-36

- 131. Temple destruction predicted 21:5-6
- 132. Signs of the times 21:7-28
- 133. Lesson of the fig tree 21:29-33
- 134. Be ready 21:34-36

A couple of things pop out with observation of these outlines: (1) Matthew has followed Mark but then added some additional materials in order to expand the presentation of Jesus' teachings, and (2) Luke doesn't contain the "The unknown day and hour" pericope here. Interestingly, this material was inserted by Luke in [chapter seventeen](#) (17:26-30, 34-36) in the [Later Perean Phase](#) of Jesus' public ministry before arriving at Jerusalem.

The Matthean and Markan setting for this teaching is on late Tuesday afternoon of the Passion Week before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion at the end of that week. The discourse material serves as the climax to a day of unsuccessful, repeated challenges from Jesus' enemies, and is spoken to just the Twelve as they are leaving the Temple area headed eastward to Bethany where they spent each night during that week.





## II. Message

The internal structure of Mt. 24:36-44 naturally breaks down into two key emphases: (1) the uncertainty of that time, vv. 36-41, and (2) the implication of watchfulness, vv. 42-44. The [block diagram](#) of the Greek text highlights this structure.

### a Uncertainty of the Times, vv. 36-41

#### Matt. 24:36-41, NRSV

36 "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son,<sup>F179</sup> but only the Father. 37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left.

Footnotes:

F179: Other ancient authorities lack *nor the Son*



#### Matt. 24:36-41, GNT

⟨24:36⟩ Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος. ⟨24:37⟩ ὥσπερ γὰρ αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ Νῶε, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. ⟨24:38⟩ ὥς γὰρ ἦσαν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις [ἐκείναις] ταῖς πρὸ τοῦ κατακλυσμοῦ τρώγοντες καὶ πίνοντες, γαμοῦντες καὶ γαμίζοντες, ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας εἰσῆλθεν Νῶε εἰς τὴν κιβωτόν,

#### Mark 13:32-34, NRSV

32 "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert;<sup>F109</sup> for you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

Footnotes:

F109: Other ancient authorities add *and pray*

Bethany & Bethpage



#### Mark 13:32-34, GNT

⟨13:32⟩ Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἢ τῆς ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ. ⟨13:33⟩ βλέπετε, ἀγρυπνεῖτε· οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ καιρὸς ἔστιν. ⟨13:34⟩ ὥς ἄνθρωπος ἀπόδημος ἀφείστην οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δοὺς τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐκάστω τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ θυρωρῷ ἐνετείλατο ἵνα γρηγορῇ.

#### Luke 17:26-30, 34-36, NRSV

26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them. 28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them 30 — it will be like that on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

34 I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken and the other left." 36<sup>F218</sup> 37 Then they asked him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

Footnotes:

F218: Other ancient authorities add "Two will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left."

#### Luke 17:26-30, 34-36, GNT

17:26 καὶ καθὼς ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Νῶε, οὕτως ἔσται καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· 17:27 ἥσθιον, ἔπινον, ἐγάμουν, ἐγαμίζοντο, ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας εἰσῆλθεν Νῶε εἰς τὴν κιβωτόν καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμὸς καὶ ἀπώλεσεν πάντα. 17:28 ὁμοίως καθὼς ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Λώτ· ἥσθιον, ἔπινον, ἡγόραζον, ἐπώλουν, ἐφύτευον, ὦ κοδόμουν· 17:29 ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα

<24:39> καὶ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν ἕως ἦλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμὸς καὶ ἦρεν ἅπαντας, οὕτως ἔσται [καὶ] ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. <24:40> τότε δύο ἔσονται ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, εἷς παραλαμβάνεται καὶ εἷς ἀφίεται· <24:41> δύο ἀλήθουσai ἐν τῷ μύλῳ, μία παραλαμβάνεται καὶ μία ἀφίεται.



ἐξῆλθεν Λὼτ ἀπὸ Σοδόμων, ἔβρεξεν πῦρ καὶ θεῖον ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἀπώλεσεν πάντας. 17:30 κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ἔσται ἡ ἡμέρα ὃς υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκαλύπτεται.

... 17:34 λέγω ὑμῖν, ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτὶ ἔσονται δύο ἐπὶ κλίνης μιᾶς, ὃς εἷς παραλημφθήσεται καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἀφεθήσεται· 17:35 ἔσονται δύο ἀλήθουσai ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, ἡ μία παραλημφθήσεται, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα ἀφεθήσεται. 17:36 omitted in most ancient manuscripts. 17:37 καὶ ἀποκριθέντες λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Ποῦ, κύριε; ὃ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ὅπου τὸ σῶμα, ἐκεῖ καὶ οἱ ἄετοὶ ἐπισυναχθήσονται.

### Notes:

The thought flow in Matthew begins with the assertion of that no one but the Heaven Father knows the time when the Son of Man will return (v. 36), and is followed a twofold justification (vv. 37-39), then with a characterization of that time (vv.40-41).

The Markan Gospel includes most of these ideas, but they are configured differently. First, there is the declaration that no one knows the time (v.32), then two admonitions to stay alert (vv. 33, 35) with parabolic comparisons to what that day will be like. Luke, on the other hand, compares that day (v. 30) to the day of both Noah (vv. 26-27) and Lot (vv.28-29). Additionally, three parabolic sayings are inserted to reinforce the uncertainty of that day: (1) thief, v. 34; (2) two women grinding, v. 35); (3) a corpse (v. 37). One thing this comparison should reflect is the creativity of both Matthew and Luke in their use of the Markan gospel as one of their sources.

Returning to Matthew, we note the emphasis upon the uncertainty of that day: “[about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father](#)” (v. 36). This becomes the basis for the admonition to [watchfulness](#) in v. 42: “[you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.](#)” Again in 25:13 a similar admonition occurs: “[Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.](#)”

The point emphasized is that no one can predict when Jesus will return. Over the centuries various Christian groups have mistakenly tried to predict a specific date for the second coming of Christ. Although summarizing this history from a Roman Catholic perspective, J.P. Kirsch (“Millennium and Millenarianism,” [Catholic Encyclopedia](#)) does a good job outlining many of these groups from the second century onward. Since the Protestant Reformation, various non-Catholic groups have been prone toward this kind of speculation as the Wikipedia article on [millenarianism](#) illustrates. Some of these have expressed radical tendencies, such as the [Heaven's Gate cult group](#) which committed mass suicide a few years ago in California. The Wikipedia article provides a helpful summation of this kind of thinking:

Millenarism typically claims that the current society and its rulers are corrupt or unjust and will be destroyed soon. The evil nature of the status quo is always considered intractable without dramatic change. In Medieval millenarianism the world was seen as controlled by demons, in the modern world economic rules or vast conspiracies guarantee continued oppression. Only dramatic change will change the world and change will be brought about, or survived, by a group of the devout and dedicated. The disaster or battle to come will be followed by a new, purified world in which true believers will be rewarded.

Millenarian beliefs can make people ignore conventional rules of behaviour, which can result in violence directed inwards (such as mass suicides) and/or outwards (such as terrorist acts). It sometimes includes a belief in supernatural powers or predetermined victory.

Millenarian ideologies or religious sects often appear in oppressed peoples.

But the New Testament is abundantly clear on this point: absolutely no one knows when that day will

be! Why then do religious groups make such predictions? I suspect that question has almost as many answers as groups making these predictions. Hal Lindsey made millions of dollars in the late 1970s with his prediction of Christ's return in 1982 through his book Late Great Planet Earth. Many of the cultic groups, like the Heaven's Gate cult, use such teaching as a mind control vehicle in order to instill fear and conformity into the thinking of its members. The world denying nature of this approach to religion finds in millenarianism a convenient vehicle to affirm its contention of the absolute evil of the surrounding world.

Most of us are not going to be tempted by individuals teaching such garbage. Our challenge, however, will likely be in an extreme reaction to this distortion of the Bible to the extent that we lose sight of the reality of the second coming of Jesus. And, especially how that should impact our daily living.

The unquestionable teaching of the New Testament is that Jesus is coming again. Of that, we can be absolutely certain. What we cannot know is when.

What Matthew goes on to say is to characterize the time period when that day will take place. His first point is to compare it to the days of Noah, vv. 37-39. Note the repeated phrase: "so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (vv. 37, 39). What were the "days of Noah" like? 24:38-39 describe those days: "38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away." This characterization depicts rather normal patterns of daily living; nothing here to signal the end is near. There is nothing here picking up directly on the Genesis 6 depiction of these days:

1 When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose.

3 Then the Lord said, "My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years."

4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown. 5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

6 And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

Luke's additional neutral depiction of the "days of Lot" in regard to Sodom and Gemarah (L. 17:28-29, "28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them...") seems to characterize life as fairly normal. Yet, in both OT texts stands the presumption of human wickedness to such a degree that God finally had had enough of it, and responded in severe judgment and wrath. This seems to lurk behind the gospel writers' use of the comparisons. At one level, that time in the future will seem like a normal daily pattern of living to the uninformed, but to God the level of wickedness is perceived to have risen to a degree that he can no longer tolerate it. Another possible point of emphasis in these OT motifs is the lack of spiritual perception by people. Noah and Lot were the only ones with enough insight to escape God's wrath. That day in the future will most likely be similar: most people will be too spiritually dumb to realize both the extent of their wickedness and the reality of coming divine judgment.

The second justifying basis for the uncertainty of that day is found in verses 40 and 41. This agriculture image pictures that day as two workers in the field and two women grinding corn. One of each is suddenly taken and the other is left behind. Luke changes the images to two people sleeping and two women grinding (L. 17:34-35). Mark doesn't include this explanation of the nature of that day. What is the point of these images? Gene Boring (Matthew, *New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) has a helpful summation:

Modern dispensationalism has understood those who are "taken" as those who are temporarily removed from the world at the rapture. Matthew has no rapture in his eschatological understanding (see footnote 525). Those who are "taken" refers to being gathered into the saved community at the eschaton, just as some were taken into the ark. To be a believer is to endure faithfully the tribulation, which is part of the church's mission, not to escape from it. The point is that in the present the two men in the field and the two women grinding at the mill appear alike, but the parousia will disclose that one is saved and one is lost. The eschatological judgment has a revelatory function: The crucified Jesus is already the Christ, and the persecuted church is already the elect people of God, but the reality is hidden except to eyes of faith. The eschaton will make the present hidden reality apparent to all: when the



crucified one is revealed to all, the Son of Man and his persecuted community will be revealed as the elect people of God.

Just as the flood in Noah's day brought to light the good and the evil, so also will the coming of the Son of man. Our challenge is to be on the righteous side.

## b. Watchfulness, vv. 42-44

### Matt. 24:42-44, NRSV

42 Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day<sup>F180</sup> your Lord is coming. 43 But understand this: if the owner 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 unexpected hour.

Footnotes:

F180: Other ancient authorities read *at what hour*

### Matt. 24:42-44, GNT

<24:42> γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε ποῖα ἡμέρα ὁ κύριος ὑμῶν ἔρχεται. <24:43> ἐκεῖνο δὲ γινώσκετε ὅτι εἰ ἢ δει ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης ποῖα φυλακῇ ὁ κλέπτης ἔρχεται, ἐγρηγόρησεν ἂν καὶ οὐκ ἂν εἴασεν διορυχθῆναι τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ. <24:44> διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὑμεῖς γίνεσθε ἕτοιμοι, ὅτι ἢ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται.

### Notes:

How are we supposed to function in light of the nature of the coming of the Son of Man described above? The three gospel writers admonish “watchfulness” as the foundational response. This is then followed with explanatory materials. Matthew builds off of Mark’s image of a thief breaking into a house during the night. Luke, at the very end of his version of the discourse, takes a different but clearly understandable direction (21:34b-36).

Matthew admonishes watchfulness (v. 42) based upon not knowing what kind of a day the Lord’s coming will be. Although the NRSV translates ποῖα ἡμέρα as “on what day”, the more accurate translation is “on what kind of day.” The qualitative nature of the [Greek relative pronoun](#) ποῖος lies behind this. The issue is not calendar date determination. Instead, it has to do with the character and nature of that day. Date predictors miss the point completely. Matthew’s point, affirming his earlier depiction, is that everything will seem normal on the surface. Thus, we mortals won’t be able to determine that day. But God knows what the times will be like when He sends his Son back to this world. Matthew’s further depiction of that day coming like a thief in the night (v. 43) affirms this.

Matthew’s final point (v. 44) defines watchfulness as being prepared for that day. Luke adds some insight with his emphasis on behaving ourselves and praying as two key components in being prepared to stand in judgment before the Son of Man. May we all be ready for that day! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

### Mark 13:35-37, NRSV

35 Therefore, keep awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Footnotes:

F109: Other ancient authorities add *and pray*

### Mark 13:35-37, GNT

<13:35> γρηγορεῖτε οὖν· οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας ἔρχεται, ἢ ὥσπερ ἢ μεσονύκτιον ἢ ἀλεκτοροφωνίας ἢ πρωῒ, <13:36> μὴ ἐλθὼν ἐξαίφνης εὕρη ὑμᾶς καθεύδοντας. <13:37> ὁ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω πᾶσιν λέγω, γρηγορεῖτε.

### Luke 21:34-36, NRSV

34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

### Luke 21:34-36, GNT

<21:34> Προσέχετε δὲ ἑαυτοῖς μήποτε βαρηθῶσιν ὑμῶν αἱ καρδίαι ἐν κραιπάλῃ καὶ μέθῃ καὶ μερίμναις βιωτικαῖς καὶ ἐπιστῇ ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς αἰφνίδιος ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη <21:35> ὥς παγίς· ἐπεισελεύσεται γὰρ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πάσης τῆς γῆς. <21:36> ἀγρυπνεῖτε δὲ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ δεόμενοι ἵνα κατισχύσητε ἐκφυγεῖν ταῦτα πάντα τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι καὶ σταθῆναι ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Matt. 24:36-44, GNT

36

δὲ

Περὶ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας

1

οὐδεὶς οἶδεν,

2

οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν -----

3

οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός -----

εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος -----.

37

γὰρ

ὥσπερ αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ Νῶε,

οὕτως

4

ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

38

γὰρ

ὡς ἦσαν

ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις

ταῖς πρὸ τοῦ κατακλυσμοῦ

τρώγοντες

καὶ

πίνοντες,

γαμοῦντες

καὶ

γαμίζοντες,

ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας εἰσῆλθεν Νῶε

εἰς τὴν κιβωτόν,

39

καὶ

οὐκ ἔγνωσαν

ἕως ἥλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμός

καὶ

ἦρεν ἅπαντας,

οὕτως

5

ἔσται καὶ ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

6

40

τότε δύο ἔσονται

ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ,

εἷς παραλαμβάνεται

καὶ

εἷς ἀφίεται·

7

41

δύο ἀλήθουσαι

ἐν τῷ μύλῳ,

μία παραλαμβάνεται

καὶ

μία ἀφίεται.

42

οὖν

8

γρηγορεῖτε,

ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε

ποία ἡμέρα ὁ κύριος ὑμῶν ἔρχεται.



43

δὲ

9 ἐκεῖνο γινώσκετε

εἰ ἤδει ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης

ποιὰ φυλακὴ ὁ κλέπτης ἔρχεται,

ὅτι...ἐγρηγόρησεν ἄν

καὶ

οὐκ ἂν εἴασεν διορυχθῆναι τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ.

44

διὰ τοῦτο

καὶ

10 ὑμεῖς γίνεσθε ἔτοιμοι,

ὅτι ἢ οὐ δοκεῖτε ὥρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται.

