



Kingdom Preparation

Matthew 24:29-41

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How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/unknown-day-and-hour>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/one-taken-and-the-other-left.html>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/do-you-see-eternity>

Discussion Guide Outline:

Matthew 24:29-41

1. Christ's Return Will Be Unmistakable. Vv. 29-31
2. Christ's Return is Ever Imminent. Vv. 32-36
3. We Should Always Be Ready to Face Persecution and Share the Gospel. Vv. 37-41

Matthew 24:29-41

The Glorious Return

29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

31 And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Parable of the Fig Tree

32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;

33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

34 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.

41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 24:29-41.

INTRODUCTION AND MAIN IDEA

If you ever watch a Marvel super-hero movie, the end credits tend to note that the main character “will return,” in a future movie. In Matthew 24:29-41, Christ makes clear to His Disciples and to His Church today that He will return. His return will be unmistakable: invoking awe and wonder among believers and fear and terror among unbelievers. His return is also ever imminent: it could happen at any moment. It has been approximately 1,993 years since Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven. He could return today, tomorrow, or 1,993 years in the future. We must always be ready to face persecution that precedes His coming and to share the good news of the Gospel to all, so they may be saved from God’s wrath upon Christ’s return.

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Christ’s Return Will Be Unmistakable. Vv. 29-31

1. Read Psalms 19:1. How does a great calamity in the sky, described in verse 29, make it hard to deny that God is at work? Could the description in verse 29 be excused as a simple comet, eclipse, or other natural phenomenon we have seen in the past?

2. Read Daniel 7:13 and Acts 1:9-11. The “sign of the Son of Man” in verse 30 is fulfilled by the unmistakable visible appearance of Jesus Christ returning on the clouds in Glory as promised in Daniel 7:13 and Acts 1:9-11. Why might the people of the earth mourn when they see Jesus Christ return in such a powerful way?

3. How does Christ’s Second Coming differ from His first (see Philippians 2:5-11)?

4. When Christ returns after the great tribulation, one of His first acts is to immediately gather all believers to Him across the World (verse 31). Do you look forward to being with Jesus? How might your life need to change today to reflect someone who looks forward to being with Jesus?

II. Christ's Return is Ever Imminent. Vv. 32-36

5. In verses 32-35, the fig tree is given as an illustration that great tribulation and signs in the heavens will immediately precede Christ's Second Coming just like the changing of the fig leaves precede summer. These signs mean Christ's return is "right at the door," and imminent (Verse 33). How does the fact that Christ may return at any moment change our perspective? How did it change the perspective of the Disciples?

6. The generation, in verse 34, may refer to the generation of the Disciples and be partially fulfilled by the fall of the temple in AD 70, it may refer to all believers during the age between Christ's ascension and return, or perhaps both. Either way, we know that Jesus promises all Christians persecution (John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12). How does the fact that Christians throughout history and continuing to today have faced persecution give us confidence that Christ's words are true and "will never pass away"?

7. In verse 36, Christ is clear: no man or angel knows when the great tribulation or Christ's Second Coming will occur, and Christ himself in His humanity was not charged by God the Father to reveal the day or hour to us. If you know you may face persecution tomorrow and Christ may return soon thereafter, how does that alter the way you live?

III. We Should Always Be Ready to Face Persecution and Share the Gospel. Vv. 37-41

8. Read Luke 17:28-30. What is the common theme between Christ's reference to the time of Noah and the time of Lot in Sodom?

9. Note, Christ is referring not to the Rapture in verses 40-41, but rather about the final judgment. By referring to the flood and the destruction of Sodom, He is noting some will be taken away in judgment. We see this on full display later in Matthew 25:31-46 (stay tuned!). The principle is that unbelievers will find themselves surprisingly unprepared to face Christ's final judgment. Why are unbelievers incapable of satisfying God's wrath? How does Christ satisfy God's wrath on our behalf?

10. We all know someone who is an unbeliever, subject to eternal separation from God either from death before believing, or from Christ's imminent return. What should our response be to knowing they face imminent ruin apart from Christ?

11. What steps can we take to be ready for Christ's return?

Matt. 24:29 sun . . . moon . . . stars . . . powers. It is possible that this is entirely literal language (with "stars" perhaps referring to a large meteor shower). Others take it as a mixture of literal and figurative language, and still others take it as entirely figurative, pointing to political judgment on nations and governments. The argument in favor of a figurative interpretation is that this verse echoes possibly figurative language about heavenly disturbances in the OT prophets, such as Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:10; and Amos 8:9. Those arguing for a literal interpretation point to biblical accounts of actual darkness: cf. Ex. 10:21–23 and Matt. 27:45. The idea of the stars falling and the heavens being rolled up is mentioned elsewhere in the NT as well (see Heb. 1:12; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12; Rev. 6:13–14). Whether these events are to be understood as being primarily literal or primarily figurative, it is clear that these will be "earth-shattering" events, through which all creation will be radically transformed at the return of Christ. (Regarding the "new heavens and the new earth," see Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1.

Matt. 24:30 sign of the Son of Man. Some suggest that this is a type of heavenly standard or banner that unfurls in the heavens as Christ returns in "power and great glory," while others understand it to be the arrival of the Son of Man himself as the sign of the end-time consummation of the age (cf. 16:27; 26:64). mourn. Either a sorrow that produces repentance, or a great sadness of regret in light of coming judgment. they will see the Son of Man (see note on 8:20) coming on the clouds of heaven. This most clearly is end-time language that recalls Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 7:13–14) and points to Jesus' return at the end of the age (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7–10; Rev. 19:11–16). with power and great glory. Christ will be revealed as the eternal ruler of the kingdom of God, designated by the Ancient of Days to receive worship and to exercise dominion over the earth and all of its inhabitants (cf. Dan. 7:13–14). The return of Christ is a literal event, in which Christ "will come in the same way" that the disciples "saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Matt. 24:31 A trumpet call is associated in Jewish end-time thought (Isa. 18:3; 27:13) and also in Christian writings (1 Cor. 15:51–52; 1 Thess. 4:16) with the appearance of the Messiah. his angels . . . will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. The involvement of angels probably indicates that, when Jesus returns, he will not only gather to himself all believers alive on the earth but will also bring with him all the redeemed who are in heaven (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14; Rev. 19:11–16).

Matt. 24:32–41 The Nearness and Time of Jesus' Coming. Jesus moves from describing future events to dealing with the attitudes that should characterize his followers as they prepare for the end (vv. 32–35), knowing that his return is imminent (vv. 36–41).

Matt. 24:34 this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Several interpretations have been offered for this difficult passage: (1) Some think "this generation" refers to the disciples who were alive when Jesus was speaking, and "all these things" refers to the beginning but not the completion of the sufferings described in vv. 4–25. (2) Others see in "all these things" a prediction with multiple fulfillments, so that Jesus' disciples will be both "this generation" that sees the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 and also those at the end of the age who see the events surrounding the "abomination of desolation" (v. 15). (3) Since "the generation of . . ." in the OT can mean people who have a certain quality (cf. Ps. 14:5; 24:6; cf. Gk. *genea* in Luke 16:8), others understand "this generation" to refer either (a) to "this generation of believers" throughout the entire present age, or (b) to "this evil generation" that will remain until Christ returns to establish his kingdom (cf. Matt. 12:45; Luke 11:29). (4) Others, particularly some dispensational interpreters, understand "generation" to mean "race" (this is another sense of Gk. *genea*) and think it refers to the Jewish people, who will not pass away until Christ returns. (5) Others understand "this generation" to mean the generation that sees "all these things" (Matt. 24:33), namely, the generation alive when the final period of great tribulation begins. According to this view, the illustration of the fig tree (v. 32) shows that when the final events begin, Christ will come soon. Just as "all these things" in v. 33 refers to events leading up to but not including Christ's return, so in v. 34 "all these things" refers to the same events (that is, the events described in vv. 4–25).

Matt. 24:35 my words will not pass away. Jesus attributes divine authority and permanence to his own teaching—it is greater even than heaven and earth.

Matt. 24:36 In response to the disciples asking, "when will these things be?" (v. 3), Jesus says no one knows, not even . . . the Son, but the Father only. In his incarnate life, Jesus learned things as other human beings learn them (cf. Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8). On the other hand, Jesus was also fully God, and, as God, he had infinite knowledge (cf. John 2:25; 16:30; 21:17). Here he is apparently speaking in terms of his human nature. This is similar to other statements about Jesus which could be true of his human nature only, and not of his divine nature (he grew and became strong, Luke 2:40; increased in stature, Luke 2:52; was about 30 years old, Luke 3:23; was weary, John 4:6; was thirsty, John 19:28; was hungry, Matt. 4:2; was crucified, 1 Cor. 2:8). Taking account of these verses, together with many verses that affirm Christ's deity, the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 affirmed that Christ was "perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man." Yet it also affirmed that Jesus was "one Person and one Subsistence." With regard to the properties of his human nature and his divine nature, the Chalcedonian Creed affirmed that Christ was to be

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

"acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved." That meant the properties of deity and the properties of humanity were both preserved. How Jesus could have limited knowledge and yet know all things is difficult, and much remains a mystery, for nobody else has ever been both God and man. One possibility is that Jesus regularly lived on the basis of his human knowledge but could at any time call to mind anything from his infinite knowledge.

Matt. 24:40–41 taken . . . left. The description may indicate that one is taken away to final judgment (cf. v. 39) while the other remains to experience salvation at Christ's return. Or possibly the one who is taken is among the elect that the Son of Man will "gather . . . from the four winds" (v. 31).