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Living For Christ Before His Coming?

By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #364 ~

Matthew 24, the single most important end-times' chapter, concludes by contrasting the lives of saints and sinners. The believer lives for Christ, expects His soon return, and is eternally blessed. The unrepentant unbeliever lives for self, is not expecting His return, and will be eternally cursed.

Matthew 24:42 – *"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."* No one but God knows the day and hour of Christ's coming, but we can know the season, the general time. That's because vss. 4-30 tell us 22 different things that must occur in the years leading up to His coming. So what is Jesus' instruction? Be on the **alert** – be awake, aware, and looking for these things to happen, and by doing this, you can sense, you can *"see the day drawing near"* (Heb. 10:25). *"We are not of night nor of darkness; let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."* 1 Thess. 5:5-6

Being on the alert is not just a physical thing. At its core, it's spiritual in

nature, it's being holy and godly. We can only be truly excited, expecting, and looking for our Lord's return if we are living a holy life. (1 Pet. 1:13-16). *"Do this, knowing the time, that it's already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, for now salvation is nearer to us than we believed. The night is almost gone and the day is near. Therefore, let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light..."* Rom. 13:11-14

Matthew 24:43 – *"If the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and not allowed his house to be broken into."* This is not saying that Christ is a thief, but that He is coming like a thief. Just like a thief does not announce when he is breaking into a house, Christ has not told us the exact time of His coming and, in fact, He Himself does not know (Matt. 24:36). So you can't be alert to the specific time of Christ's coming for God has not told you the time. God does not want you to set your alarm for the exact day and hour of Christ's coming, and be sinful and worldly in the meantime.

Matthew 24:44 – *"For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."* God wants you to be **ready**, prepared, and living a holy life in these last years leading up to Christ's coming. You must be ready because you do not know the exact time of His coming, and also because He will be *"coming at an hour when you do not think He will."* So don't spend your time trying to figure out the day or hour of Christ's coming.

Christ tells you many details leading up to His return, and He wants you to see these events so you can be **ready** and **alert**, so you can be excited and looking forward to His coming. I am thankful God did it this way, that He did not tell us the exact time of His coming, but the general time. He knew that if He did, we'd be more tempted, more prone, more wanting to live a worldly life up until that last month or two before Christ's return.

It’s like having a friend come to your place sometime in the afternoon, and you don’t know when. But you know he’s coming in a time span of several hours, and you are looking forward to seeing him, and you are waiting for him. And your place is ready, is clean, and the table is set, and the food is ready. Think how this relates to the end-times. As I have said, many things are taking place in these final years before Christ’s return. But the event that should really get your attention as to when He is coming is the revealing of the Antichrist at the midpoint, the 3½ year mark of Dan. 70th week. Know that great tribulation, the great persecution of Jews and Christians, begins soon after the revealing of the Antichrist. And this persecution lasts a little while but God cuts it short, and then this age comes to an end, and Christ returns to rapture the church. Matt. 24:15, 22, 29-31

The last 3½ years of Dan. 70th week is comprised of great tribulation affecting the church, the rapture, and God’s punishing wrath upon unbelievers. We don’ know how long tribulation lasts, but one aspect of God’s wrath lasts exactly 5 months (Rev. 9:5). And 3½ years is 42 months, and 42 – 5 = 37. Since the Antichrist desolates the temple at the midpoint of Dan. 70th week, then Christ must come sometime in the next 37 months, but surely many months less than that – and that’s because great tribulation goes on for a little while, but we don’t know how long. The point I am making is that God wants you to be **ready** and **alert** during these end-times, specifically during the birth pains (Matt. 24:4-8), and especially after the Antichrist is revealed (Matt. 24:15) at the midpoint of Dan. 70th week.

Matthew 24:45 – *“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom His master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?”* God is addressing Christians, and He calls you a slave, which means you are to be serving Him full time, 24/7. You are owned by God, the most loving Master in the universe, and you are to work day and night for Him. And God has good works, special assignments for you to do. Esth. 4:14, 1 Cor. 6:19-20, Eph. 2:10

The work God wants you to do usually relates to your spiritual gift(s). *"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1 Pet. 4:10). In addition to a spiritual gift(s), God has given you money, time, talents, and energy. As God's slave and steward, you are to use these things for His purposes and glory. *"You turned to God from idols **to serve** a living and true God, and **to wait** for His Son from heaven... who rescues us from the wrath to come."* 1 Thess. 1:9-10

Christ instructs you to be **faithful**, to be reliable, dependable, and trustworthy, and to be **sensible**, to be wise, prudent, and discerning, doing what is best with what God has entrusted you. Don't take lightly the gifts and abilities God has given you for His work, for your work in serving others. So how do you respond to Christ's question, *"Who then is the faithful and sensible slave...?"* Tell Him that you are His slave, His servant. Say to Him, *"Here am I. Send me!"* Isaiah 6:8

God has given you a divine stewardship and responsibility in the work of Christ for this momentous time in history. And He wants you to be like John the Baptist, to help *"prepare the way of the Lord"* (Lk. 3:4). It won't be long before Christ returns to rapture the church and take over the world. That's when you and everything else will suddenly and wonderfully change. *"We will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet."* 1 Cor. 15:52, Acts 3:20-21

Matthew 24:46-47 – *"Blessed is that slave whom His master finds so doing when he comes? Truly I say to you that He will put him in charge of all His possessions."* The Christian who is serving God, who is faithfully doing His work until Christ's return, will be blessed, recognized, and rewarded with more work, important responsibilities in the kingdom ages. *"Well done, good slave; because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities."* Luke 19:17

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-21 talks about serving God in secret, specifically, giving, praying, and fasting. It could also be praising, trusting, and obeying God, studying His word, etc. *"When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you"* (Matt. 6:18). It's truly amazing that God will reward you for everything you think, say, or do for Him.

There's much more on this important subject of rewards than people realize: *"He who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to what he has done"* (1 Cor. 3:8). *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance"* (Col. 3:23-24). *"Behold, I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."* Rev. 22:12

Matthew 24:48-51 – "*If that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and begins to beat his fellows slaves and eat and drink with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* The actions and consequences of sinners, of unrepentant unbelievers, are the complete opposite of the saved, of true believers.

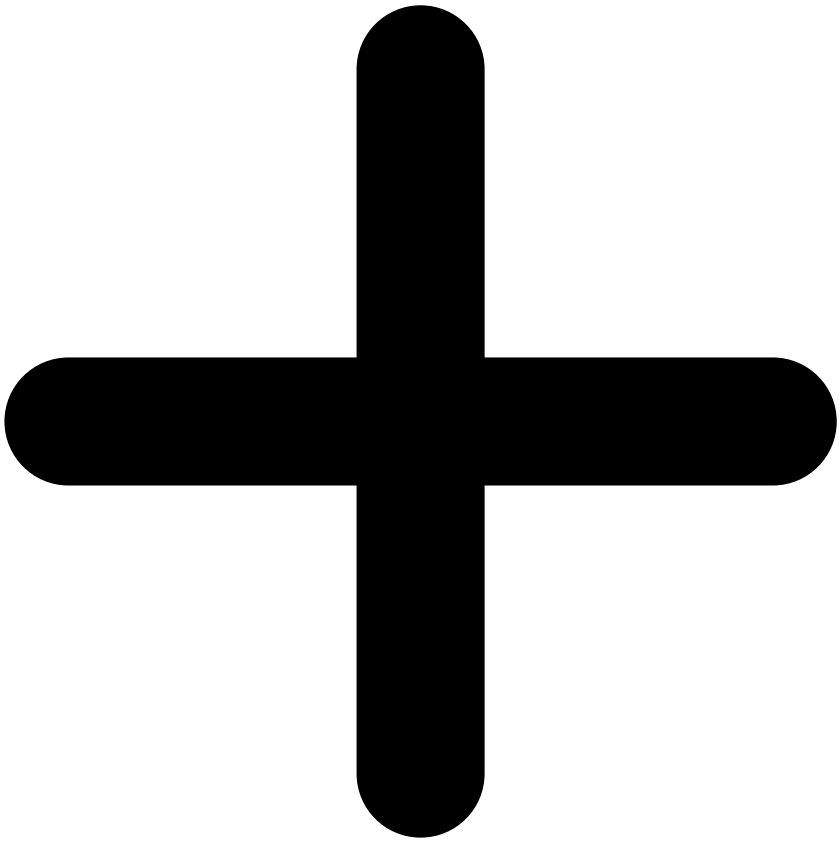
These sinners, these Christ-rejectors, are evil, are children of the devil, and will be punished when Christ comes back. Those on earth at the end of this age will go through the Day of the Lord, the devastating trumpet and bowl judgments (Rev. 8-9, 16); then they go to hell, to Hades, for 1,000 years (Lk. 6:23, Rev. 20); and then they will be *"thrown into the lake of fire."* Rev. 20:11-15

"Depart from me accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been

prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41). *"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"* (Matt. 25:46). *"The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."* 2 Thess. 1:7b-9

Wow! What a chapter! Matt. 24, more than any other chapter, describes what is happening in the end-times and at Christ's coming, and you must learn these things. And tell family, friends, and fellow church members. And be expecting, watching, and waiting for Christ's return. And be looking for these events signaling His return. And encourage fellow believers when you see them happen. Most of all, be looking for Christ to come back in the clouds, for then you will be glorified, and finally and forever be with Him and other believers. *"Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."* Revelation 7:12

P.S. Here are two good posts, one about how to live for the Lord in the end-times, and the other about the rewards He gives us for living for Him: *"How Then Should We Live in the End Times?"*, and *"Earthly Work that Results in Heavenly Rewards."*



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