

Lasting Impressions from the Last Week of Jesus' Life
The Last Sermon: I'll Be Back
Matthew 24-25

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Introduction: We are in a series of messages concerning the "last week of Jesus' life." Today, we consider the last sermon. You will soon see with me that this sermon is on the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. Now, I have been planning this message for some while now, but it seems that the message takes on increased interest and, I might add, imagination when the events in Japan. It seems that every time we see an event like this one, there are some who will conclude that the end of the age is immediately upon us and even predict as such. There are those who are as usual using this earthquake and tsunami as the sure sign of Jesus' return in 2011 or 2012. Certainly, Jesus' sermon undoes a lot of the confusion concerning these rather fanciful offerings.

Text: ³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two *women* will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Message Introduction:

Of all the Gospels, Matthew might be called the Gospel of Jesus' sermons. In Matthew we find the Sermon on the Mount (5-7), an extended sermon on the meaning of discipleship (10), sermons on the meaning of the Kingdom of God (13), and then the Olivet Discourse as found in our text today (24-25). Certainly we must pay attention to all that Jesus taught and did, but perhaps we ought to pay much closer attention to this—*His final sermon*.

This sermon, or Discourse, as it is most often called comes as the result of a question from the disciples. Jesus had just prophesied to the disciples the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which did happen, by the way, in A.D. 70. This prophecy prompted a question from the disciples about the timing and then bleeds over into a question about the "end of the age." (v.3)

What follows in chapter 24 and 25 is an extended sermon on these questions. From His sermon, we gain much insight into this particular belief that "Christ is returning."

I have heard from many that every sermon ought to have a point. Often times, the preacher will have an illustration or a story to help make clear the point of the sermon. Finally, a sermon ought to offer some application for the main point of the sermon. The application is the "so what" of the sermon. Let's consider Jesus' final sermon in that kind of way today.

The Thesis of the Sermon

- Jesus will return.

Now, understand that libraries of books have been written about the return of Christ. There is a certain fascination with the subject of Christ's return. Many will be frustrated by my teaching today, because you will want to know more. But, as I see it, here is the main point of what Jesus had to say about His return: "I will return, so be ready."

The truth is that the subject of Jesus' last sermon was the subject of His most famous sermon—the Sermon on the Mount. That is, at least in respect, to choosing Him and the narrow way.

The Illustrations of the Sermon

After presenting the main point, Jesus presents several illustrations to drive the point home. Each of the stories or parables helps us with a further understanding.

The Parables help us to understand the Timing of Jesus' Return:

1. Jesus will return at an unknown time. (24:42-44)
2. Jesus will return sooner than some of us expect. (24:45-51)

The story is of a faithful and wise servant. The wise servant is the one who is doing what his master has requested upon the return. The evil servant is the one who thinks he has time for beating his fellow servants and eating and drinking with the drunkards, thinking that he has time to get "his house in order."

3. Jesus will return later than some of us expect. (25:1-13)

The parable concerns ten engaged brides waiting for the bridegroom. Five were foolish bringing no oil for their lamps thinking that the groom would come before their lamps went dry. Five were wise by bringing oil to replenish their lamps in case of delay.

We know Jesus is coming! We do not know the timing. We need to live like it is soon, but prepare like it is a long way off. To not do both is foolish!

The Parables also help us to understand some Truths of Jesus' Return:

1. When Jesus returns, He expects to find us faithful. (25:14-30)

The parable concerns the giving of talents. The master gave one five talents, another two, and yet another one. The ones given five and two made five and two more. The one receiving one dug a hole in the ground to keep his one.

The point of the parable is that God gives us according to our abilities and expects to find us faithful upon His return.

2. When Jesus returns, His findings will be final. (25:31-46)

The story is of the sheep and goats. The truth is that God knows and is able to separate us into those who have been faithful and those who have not. His findings (His judgments) will be final.

The Application of the Sermon

Be at Peace

Thinking about the return of Christ should not be a cause of panic, but peace. How do you describe time to a small child? What's the most dreaded question on a trip from a child? When are we going to be there? We could say in about 1 hour, but they will ask, "What's an hour?" We could say in about 100 miles, but they will ask, "What's a mile?"

When it comes to history, we are on a trip. We want to know when we are going to get there, but we are the children and God is the Father. He can point us to some signs, but can we understand? Only this, trust the Father to bring us to the destination.

Be Ready!!!!

I have heard the story of Sir Ernest Shackleton, a famous explorer, in the late 1800's and early 1900's. In an expedition to the Antarctic, Shackleton had to leave over 20 of his men under the command of Frank Wild. It was over 100 days before Shackleton was able to break through the ice to rescue his men. He found them packed and read. It is reported that Wild woke his men every morning by saying "Pack your things, boys, the boss may return today."

Such should be our attitude as we wait the return of our LORD.