

# SIGNS OF HIS COMING

MATTHEW 24



*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

T . M . M O O R E

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Signs of His Coming: Matthew 24  
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## Matthew 24: Introduction

In this chapter, Jesus answered two questions at once, eliding His answers to create an overall scenario of the last days, the time in which we live.

He described these as days of sorrow and tribulation. The world would know many causes of misery and travail; and the people of God would suffer under the hostility of a world unfriendly to God.

No one can know precisely when the Son of God will return, so we at all times be ready for His coming. That was good advice then, and it still is today.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 Signs and Times

*Pray Psalm 56.10-13.*

In God (I will praise *His* word),  
In the LORD (I will praise *His* word),  
In God I have put my trust;  
I will not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?  
Vows *made* to You *are binding* upon me, O God;  
I will render praises to You,  
For You have delivered my soul from death.  
*Have You* not *kept* my feet from falling,  
That I may walk before God  
In the light of the living?

*Sing Psalm 56.10-13*

(Morecambe: [\*Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart\*](#))

I will not fear what foes might do to me.  
I give You thanks, my vows will I renew.  
You have redeemed me, set my spirit free,  
and ever in Your light I'll walk with You.

*Read and meditate on Matthew 24.1-8.*

*Prepare.*

1. About what two matters did the disciples ask?
2. What did Jesus describe as the “beginning of sorrows”?

*Meditate.*

Matthew 24 is one of most difficult passages in all of the New Testament. It's also one of the most important. Commentators differ widely in their interpretations, so we'll walk slowly through these words of Jesus to learn their importance for us.

Jesus teaching in this chapter is introduced by the disciples' comment about the temple buildings (v. 1). Jesus' answer is intended to turn their minds from the earthly trappings of religion – had He not just excoriated the religious leaders for such a focus (Matt. 23)? – and to refocus them on eternal matters. Jesus' comment in verse 2 is a clue to how to interpret the rest of this chapter. A day is coming, He says, when the temple and all its buildings will be thrown down. That happened in 70 AD by the armies of Titus Andronicus, when they destroyed the city of Jerusalem (the wailing wall, so venerated today in Jerusalem, is not part of the temple, which has been entirely destroyed, but only a retaining wall that was beneath the temple). Part of what He will say in this chapter related to that, to events that would occur in the disciple's lifetime.

Later, on the Mount of Olives, the disciples pressed Jesus on the matter. They actually asked two questions (v. 3), although, in their minds, they may have been conflating the events of Jesus' answer. The first question was, “when will these things be?” Here they were obviously thinking about the destruction of the temple. Jesus did not answer that question right away.

The second question was “And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” The disciples may not have separated the two questions, but Jesus would throughout the remainder of chapter 24.

But first, a word of warning: Jesus says the disciples must not be deceived concerning the identity of Jesus Christ (vv. 4, 5). Many would appear claiming to be a savior. Next, He told them that they would hear of “wars and rumors of wars”, but they must not allow this to trouble them: neither the appearance of false saviors nor of wars and rumors of wars signal the end of the age (v. 6). In verses 7 and 8, Jesus elaborated: Great national and international conflagrations will arise. This happened within the lifetime of at least some of the disciples, and others of the first generation of believers. It would also happen throughout the course of human history, and “these *are* the beginnings of sorrows” (v. 8).

Jesus began answering the disciples’ two questions here, answering in a way that would be true of both. The destruction of Jerusalem would feature false saviors and international war; the “end of the age” – which Joel and Peter referred to as “the last days” (cf. Acts 2.16, 17), will feature both phenomena. But the appearance of these *characterizes* the end of the age; they do not announce “the end” of all things.

For the world, the end of the age – the last days – is a time of sorrows. But not for those who have entered the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Reflect.*

1. What would be some examples of false saviors in our day?
2. Why is Jesus our only true Savior?
3. How does Jesus help us overcome the sorrows of these last days?

*They eagerly desired to behold that glory and the countless blessing that will accompany it. Yet they asked him two things. When will these things come to pass—especially the overturning of the temple? And what will be the sign of his coming at the close of the age?* John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 75.1*

*Help me to keep focused on You and grounded in Your Word, Lord, as I...*

*Pray Psalm 56.1-9.*

Seek the grace of Jesus to guard and guide you in all you do today, and to give you courage to live for and bear witness to him.

*Sing Psalm 56.1-9.*

**Psalm 56.1-9** (Morecambe: [\*Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart\*](#))

Savior, be gracious, gracious unto me!  
Weary, I seek the shelter of Your wings.  
Till trouble passes, till my sighings flee,  
I seek the Lord Who for me does all things.

When I'm afraid I'll put my trust in You,  
You, Lord, Whose everlasting Word I praise;  
I will not fear what foes to me might do,  
but will in faith to You my crying raise.

Wickedly how my foes distort my words;  
constant attacks and snares await my way.  
Pour out Your wrath, consume them, mighty Lord!  
Bring evil to its end, O Lord, I pray!

Lord, see my wand'rings, see my anxious tears!  
Help me to trust and praise Your holy Word.  
Gladly I know that when I call You hear;  
I will not fear but trust in You, O Lord.

## 2 Tribulation (1)

*Pray Psalm 56.3, 4.*

Whenever I am afraid,  
I will trust in You.  
In God (I will praise His word),  
In God I have put my trust;  
I will not fear.  
What can flesh do to me?

*Sing Psalm 56.3, 4.*

(Morecambe: [\*Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart\*](#))

When I'm afraid I'll put my trust in You, You, Lord, Whose everlasting Word I praise;  
I will not fear what foes to me might do, but will in faith to You my crying raise.

*Read Matthew 24.1-14; meditate on verses 9-14.*

*Prepare.*

1. When did Jesus say that tribulation and persecution would begin (cf. v. 8)?
2. Why would people's love grow cold?

*Meditate.*

The desire to reserve these passages about tribulation and persecution to some brief period immediately before the return of Christ is, I believe, misguided. Here Jesus says that at “the beginning of sorrows”, “then” persecution will begin. Were not the disciples and first Christians persecuted and killed? Were not Christians persecuted and killed throughout the first two-and-a-half centuries of the Christian movement? Have they not been persecuted and killed throughout the history of the Church? Are they not being killed and persecuted today?

Jesus is not speaking of some distant, unknown time, when Christians will suddenly and brutally be persecuted by their enemies. That's been going on for centuries. Rather, He is telling us what to expect in the time which the disciples referred to as “the end of the age”, but which Peter insisted are “the last days” of which Joel prophesied – the days when the Spirit of God is working to advance the rule of King Jesus on earth as it is in heaven.

We should not be surprised when tribulation, persecution, and hatred break out against us for our faith in Jesus. He told us to expect it (v. 9). He also said that the presence of the Gospel will be like a sword, dividing peoples and causing some to hate (v. 10; cf. Matt. 10.34-46). And He warned that false prophets will arise and try to deceive many – precisely as has happened throughout the course of Church history.

We as believers can't do anything about that. Others will hate us if they choose, and persecute us if they can. We should not be surprised when it happens, nor should we strike back in kind. Jesus told us to love our enemies and to pray for them, and that's what we must be prepared to do (Matt. 5.44-48).

We must not allow our love to grow cold, which we will do if we neglect the commandments of God (v. 12). The love that people in the world express might well grow cold, given their hostility to the

Law of God. But we must guard against this; and we must prepare to walk the path of obedience and love for the long haul, come what may (v. 13). We must be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us, and to preach the Gospel at every opportunity (v. 14; cf. 1 Pet. 3.15). The end of the last days will come when the Gospel has been “preached in all the world as a witness to all nations.” But this is a task that must be renewed in every generation, including our own.

The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and that, despite the sometimes rocky road we may have to walk as the followers of Christ. Let’s be realistic in our expectations about what to expect in this world, and faithful in our duties to love and bear witness to Christ.

*Reflect.*

1. How can you make sure you are ready to face opposition or persecution with love?
2. Your part of the world is your Personal Mission Field. Are you working to bring the Gospel to everyone there?
3. How can believers help one another “endure to the end”?

*“Most men’s love will grow cold.” Even all this, however, will in no way harm those who are noble and firm. So do not be afraid. Do not be troubled. If you demonstrate the patience that fits your faith, these dangers will not prevail over you. You will see proof of this when the gospel will be preached everywhere in the world. Then you will be above all these things that would otherwise alarm you. You will preach everywhere. You will not waste away in despair asking whether you will survive. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 75.2**

*Lord, grant me love for my neighbors and the courage to...*

*Pray Psalm 56.1, 2, 5-13.*

Thank God that He is with you no matter what you have to face today. Then offer yourself to Him completely, that He might use you for the progress of His Kingdom today.

*Sing Psalm 56.1, 2, 5-13.*

**Psalm 56.1, 2, 5-13** (Morecambe: [\*Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart\*](#))

Savior, be gracious, gracious unto me! Weary, I seek the shelter of Your wings.  
Till trouble passes, till my sighings flee. I seek the Lord Who for me does all things.

Wickedly how my foes distort my words; constant attacks and snares await my way.  
Pour out Your wrath, consume them, mighty Lord! Bring evil to its end, O Lord, I pray!

Lord, see my wand’rings, see my anxious tears! Help me to trust and praise Your holy Word.  
Gladly I know that when I call You hear; I will not fear but trust in You, O Lord.

I will not fear what foes might do to me. I give You thanks, my vows will I renew.  
You have redeemed me, set my spirit free, and ever in Your light I’ll walk with You.

### 3 Tribulation (2)

*Pray Psalm 7.17.*

I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness,  
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

*Sing Psalm 7.17.*

(Finlandia: [Be Still, My Soul](#))

All praise and thanks to You, O righteous Savior!  
My hope, my trust, my confidence are You!  
Embrace me with Your kindness and Your favor,  
and to Your glory make me ever true.  
We sing Your praise and glorify Your Name,  
Who brings our foes to judgment and to shame.

*Read Matthew 24.1-28; meditate on verses 15-28.*

*Prepare.*

1. When will the “great tribulation” begin?
2. What else accompanies this time of tribulation?

*Meditate.*

Jesus again broached the subject of tribulation, this time tribulation “such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (v. 21). This is referred to as the “great tribulation”, and Jesus indicated that it would begin within the lifetime of some of those who heard Him (“when you see”, v. 15).

The “abomination of desolation” perhaps refers to the desecration of the temple by Roman authorities, followed by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. While persecution and harassment of Christians was going on in the world prior to that event, the Roman slaughter in Jerusalem seems to have marked the beginning of a lengthy effort on the part of various Caesars to suppress if not obliterate the Christian movement. What Rome began and sustained for more than two centuries has continued throughout the course of Church history, unto this day.

We are living, in other words, in the time of the great tribulation, and Christians around the world are enduring it to one degree or another.

During this time “false christs and false prophets” will also be empowered to persuade many to believe them. As you read this, don’t think only of magicians or wizards or other religious figures performing signs and wonders. Think of the scientific enterprise, and the many “great signs and wonders” it has produced, and how many scientists today insist that science is the only source of truth and the only valid worldview. This is not science, but scientism, and it is as real a false christ as any that have shown up during the past two millennia.

When Jesus finally comes at the end of the great tribulation, there will be no mistaking Him (vv. 26, 27). He will be visible to all, and judgment will follow His return. Keep looking for Jesus, and stay the course of the Kingdom-seeking life to which He calls us. That way we won’t lose heart, and we won’t easily be deceived or misled.

*Reflect.*

1. Do you pray for Christians who are being persecuted in the world? How should you pray for them?
2. Can you think of some examples of “false christs and false prophets” in the world today?
3. How can believers help one another to keep their eyes on Jesus, and to keep looking ahead to the day of His return?

*False Christs are the false truths of the heresies, and false prophets are preachers of false truths. Their signs consist in doing the same things falsely which the faithful do truthfully. They remain chaste and observe the fasts and practice mercy and fulfill every rule of the church. Do not the devil's signs appear most deceptive when you see him doing the works of God? Anonymous, *Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 49**

*Help me to keep focused on You, Lord, and let me encourage other believers today by...*

*Pray Psalm 7.1-16.*

Pray for believers who are persecuted throughout the world, that God would give them strength to endure, and would change the hearts of their tormentors.

*Sing Psalm 7.1-16.*

**Psalm 7.1-16** ([Finlandia: Be Still, My Soul](#))

O Lord, my God, in You do I take refuge;  
save me from those who my poor soul would tear!  
Deliver me from my foes' angry deluge,  
lest I be swept beyond all hope and care.  
Let not injustice, let not evil stain me,  
lest to the dust my glory trampled be.

Arise, O Lord, rise up in wrath to save me!  
Let rage and judgment fall upon my foes!  
From all around to You let thanks and praise be.  
Rise up on high; the wicked curse with woes.  
O Judge of all, observe my just demeanor  
and vindicate me by Your grace, O Lord.

Bring to an end the evil of the wicked,  
but let Your righteous ones established be.  
You are my shield, my soul will not be stricken;  
You save the upright; You will rescue me!  
You are a righteous Judge in every way;  
a God of indignation every day.

Let all repent or know Your piercing sword!  
Your bow is bent and ready for the fight!  
Take deadly weapons in Your hand, O Lord,  
and fiery arrows, aimed against the night.  
The wicked fall and stumble in their mischief,  
but to my soul Your grace will bring relief.

## 4 The Coming of the Son of Man

*Pray Psalm 91.1-3.*

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the LORD, “*He is my refuge and my fortress;*  
*My God, in Him I will trust.*”  
Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
*And* from the perilous pestilence.

*Sing Psalm 91.1-3.*

(Lauda Anima: [\*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven\*](#))

All who dwell within God’s shelter in His shadow will reside.  
He our Tow’r, our Fortress ever, in Him we our trust confide.  
From the trapper’s snares He saves us; safe from sickness we abide.

*Read Matthew 24.1-35; meditate on verses 29-35.*

*Prepare.*

1. What was Jesus describing in these verses?
2. What happens after the sound of the trumpet?

*Meditate.*

In these verses, Jesus described the final events of earth as we know it. Peter wrote, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3.10). This seems to be what Jesus foretold in verse 29, the “dissolving” of the creation as we know it. This comes at the end of the last days, the days of tribulation and Kingdom progress on earth as in heaven.

In verse 30, Jesus foretold what John reveals in greater detail in Revelation 19, the appearing of the Son of Man from heaven, visible to all the world (v. 27), and the mournful reaction of the unsaved peoples of the earth (cf. Rev. 6.12-17). Then, Jesus will gather all His elect to Himself, the dead in Christ rising first, then all who are alive and remain until His coming joining them to be with the Lord, as He comes in judgment (cf. Matt. 13.31; 1 Thess. 4.16, 17; Rev. 19.11-16).

Those who remain on the shaken and dissolving earth will mourn, seeking someplace to hide from the Lord and His armies, while others of His enemies will muster for one last, futile attempt to resist Him (Rev. 19.19). But they will be defeated and destroyed in an instant.

Then, somewhat surprisingly, Jesus seems to have connected these events with the lifetimes of those hearing Him (vv. 32-35). But “this generation” does not necessarily mean only those alive during Jesus’ day. It can also refer to “an indefinite period of time, but in close relationship to human existence and in some contexts, a period of time about the length of a generation - age, epoch” (Louw and Nida). Jesus may have been deliberately vague here, thus heightening the attention of His contemporaries, but leaving open the possibility of a longer period of time.

The end of time as we know it holds thrilling promise for all who believe in Jesus and hold fast to Him. But for those who resist to the end, they will realize the full and terrible consequences of their choice: eternal separation in misery from the bliss and glory of Christ and the new creation.

*Reflect.*

1. Why should we look forward to Jesus' coming again?
2. Is it important to explain these verses to those who do not believe in Jesus? Why?
3. What should we be doing to prepare for the return of our Lord Jesus?

*When the stars were made, all angels praised the Lord with a loud voice. Much more upon seeing all things in course of final change, and their fellow servants giving account, and the whole world standing by that awful judgment seat, and all those who had lived from Adam until his coming having an account demanded of them of all that they did, wouldn't you expect the powers of the heavens to tremble and be shaken? John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 76.3**

*I long for Your coming, Lord Jesus, and as I wait, help me to...*

*Pray Psalm 91.4-16.*

Prepare for this day in prayer, and live like Jesus is coming at any moment.

*Sing Psalm 91.4-16.*

**Psalm 91.4-16** (Lauda Anima: [\*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven\*](#))

He will shade us with His pinions, 'neath His wings we safety find,  
from night's terror, from day's arrow, from the fears that stalk our mind.  
When destruction falls at noon time, safe in Him shall we abide.

Thousands at our sides may falter – it will not to us come near!  
We instead shall see the end of all who at God's mercy sneer.  
Evil shall no more befall us for we hold the Lord most dear.

He shall give His angels charge to bear us up, lest we should fall;  
they will guard and carry all who on the Savior's mercy call.  
Cobra, mighty lion, serpent: We shall tread upon them all!

Save us, Lord! We love You only; set us up secure on high!  
You we know, on You we call in trouble: Hear us when we cry!  
Show us Your salvation, let long life forever satisfy!

## 5 Not for Us to Know

*Pray Psalm 24.9, 10.*

Lift up your heads, O you gates!  
Lift up, you everlasting doors!  
And the King of glory shall come in.  
Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD of hosts,  
He is the King of glory.

*Sing Psalm 24.9, 10.*

(Foundation: [How Firm a Foundation](#))

O Who is this King, Who approaches our gate?  
His might is before us, His glory is great!  
This King is the Lord of all glory above,  
Who comes to indwell us in mercy and love!

*Read Matthew 24.1-44; Meditate on verses 36-44.*

*Prepare.*

1. Concerning His coming, what did Jesus tell us to do?
2. What will the world be like when He returns?

*Meditate.*

It makes no sense to speculate on the specific details of the times and seasons leading up to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has told us that “no one knows” (v. 36) and that “it is not for you to know” (Acts 1.7) the precise conditions prior to His return.

The world will look pretty much like it did in the days of Noah (vv. 37-39): people going about their business, doing their thing, and not paying much attention to God or His will. But as Noah prepared for the coming judgment of God, so also must we. Suddenly, without warning, Jesus will burst through the clouds and the sound of a trumpet will cause every eye to look up and see Him.

We’ll want to make sure we’re ready for that day, even though we can’t really know when it is.

At that time, some people will be taken away from the earth suddenly (vv. 40, 41). These are those who believe in Jesus and “are alive and remain” as He returns (1 Thess. 4.17). As we have seen, (vv. 30, 31; cf. Rev. 19), all the army of Jesus will join in His victorious return.

Our duty is to “watch” (vv. 42-44). But what are we supposed to watch? Not the signs of the times, apparently. Instead, we must watch ourselves, mainly, to make sure we are being good stewards of our time and opportunities, seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of the Lord always. We will “be ready” to join Him in the air when He returns by keeping busy preparing for His Kingdom day by day.

*Reflect.*

1. What’s involved in keeping watch on ourselves?

2. The world doesn't worry about the return of Jesus. But for a different reason, nor should we. How should we look at this event?

3. How can believers help one another to be ready for the Lord's return?

*You do not know when he will come. But you know assuredly that he will come. If you do not continue to watch, you will not be ready on that day.* John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 77.2-3*

*I want to be ready at every moment for Your return, O Lord. Help me today as I...*

*Pray Psalm 24.1-8.*

The Lord is coming soon. Our calling is to prepare well and be ready. Seek His help and Presence for the day ahead.

*Sing Psalm 24.1-8.*

**Psalm 24.1-8** (Foundation: [How Firm a Foundation](#))

The earth is the Lord's, as is all it contains;  
the world and its peoples He daily sustains.  
He founded it fast on the seas long ago,  
and bid gentle rivers throughout it to flow.

Oh, who may ascend to the Lord's holy place?  
And who may appear to His glorious face?  
All they who are clean in their hearts and their hands  
and true in their souls with the Savior shall stand.

A blessing all they from the Lord shall receive  
who seek Him and on His salvation believe.  
For these are His people, the children of grace,  
who earnestly, eagerly seek for His face.

O lift up your heads, all you gates of the soul,  
for the Savior would enter and render you whole!  
The Lord strong and mighty in battle draws nigh;  
He rules in His glory above us on high.

## 6 The Faithful Servant

Pray Psalm 142.5, 6.

I cried out to You, O LORD:

I said, “You *are* my refuge,

My portion in the land of the living.

Attend to my cry,

For I am brought very low;

Deliver me from my persecutors,

For they are stronger than I.

Sing Psalm 142.5, 6.

(Dix: [For the Beauty of the Earth](#))

Hear my cry, Lord, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.

Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

*Refrain*

Lord, You are my Refuge strong!

O receive my plaintive song.

Read Matthew 24.1-51; meditate on verses 45-51.

*Prepare.*

1. Over what is the faithful servant master?

2. What’s the difference between a faithful servant and an unfaithful servant?

*Meditate.*

Jesus invites us to consider whether we are “faithful and wise” servants. How can we know?

First, do we accept that God has charged us with ruling over a sector of His “household” (v. 45)?

The word for household (Greek, οἰκετεῖα, *oiketeia*) is related to the Greek word for “economy”, which is sometimes also translated “household.” God has established a new economy in these latter days, comprised of many households where His servants are called to seek His Kingdom and righteousness, and bring His rule to bear on earth as it is in heaven. Each of us has a “household” over which God has appointed us as servants to further the righteousness, peace, and joy of His rule (Rom. 14.17, 18). This is your [Personal Mission Field](#), and faithfulness as God’s ruler begins in accepting His appointment.

Second, in that household, we are called to *serve*. Following the example of Jesus, we seek opportunities to bring the grace of the Kingdom to bear on the lives of those to whom He sends us each day (Jn. 20.21). Jesus used the image of preparing and serving food to stand for the ministry of service generally. In our Personal Mission Fields, are we seeking always to serve? Or are we passing up opportunities, or merely hoping others might serve us?

Finally, do we live and serve as if we expect to be held accountable by the Lord upon His return (v. 46)? Faithful and wise servants want every moment the Lord gives them to be invested for His Kingdom and glory (Eph. 5.15-17; 1 Thess. 2.12). They long to hear “Well done” when He returns, and they do their work cheerfully, in expectation of knowing the Lord’s pleasure.

We are not faithful and wise servants if we ignore our charge, squander opportunities, waste time, or care only about our own interests and needs. We may claim to be servants of the living God, but, as Jesus earlier said, “By their fruits you will know them” (Matt. 7.19, 20).

We don’t know when Jesus will return; but we can be sure that He will. Pray and work that He may see you as a faithful and wise servant, preparing diligently to enter into His eternal Presence and pleasure.

*Reflect.*

1. How would you define the “household” over which our Lord has made you ruler?
2. What does serving the people of your “household” require of you?
3. What can you do to make better use of your time in serving your “household”?

*One is faithful who has been a good steward of his Lord’s goods, not stealing from the Lord, not spending without aim or fruit. One is wise who knows how to dispense the things given him in a fitting way. Indeed, we have need of both these things together, faithfulness and wisdom, and these in conjunction. We are called to exercise our stewardship in a fitting manner, spending carefully.* John Chrysostom (34-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 77.3*

*Today, Lord, I go forth to serve in Your Name, so that...*

*Pray Psalm 142.1-4, 7.*

Commit your day to the Lord, to serve the people to whom He sends you, and to praise and thank Him for your calling.

*Sing Psalm 142.1-4, 7.*

**Psalm 142.1-4, 7** (Dix: [\*For the Beauty of the Earth\*](#))

With my voice, O Lord, I cry – hear my plea for mercy, Lord!

My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

*Refrain v. 5, 6*

Lord, You are my Refuge strong!

O receive my plaintive song!

When my spirit faints away, You my falt’ring pathway know.

Where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

*Refrain*

Lord, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.

Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

*Refrain*

Out of prison lead me, Lord; thanks and praise to You shall be.

Righteous men armed with Your Word Will Your grace bestow on me.

*Refrain*

## 7 He Is Coming!

*Pray Psalm 96.11-13.*

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;  
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;  
Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it.  
Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice  
before the LORD.  
For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.  
He shall judge the world with righteousness,  
And the peoples with His truth.

*Sing Psalm 96.11-13.*

(Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above\*](#))

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!  
Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly  
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness –  
He comes; exalt Him greatly!

*Read and meditate on Matthew 24.1-51.*

*Prepare.*

1. How will we know when Jesus is coming? How should we prepare for that event?
2. How did Jesus characterize the age in which we live, these “last days”?

*Meditate.*

The primary message of Matthew 24 is that Jesus is coming again. This is an event of unprecedented importance. Until it happens, the world will be wracked with strife and turmoil and sorrows. Jesus did not give us many details about what will happen after He returns, except to warn of the judgment of all those who refuse to believe in Him. The focus is on Him and His coming. When we see Him, that will be all that matters; He is the complete realization of all the righteousness, peace, and joy we could ever want to know.

The age in which we live – the last days, as Peter explained in Acts 2 – will be fraught with difficulty. Wars, famines, plagues, and tribulation for the followers of Christ will be in every generation. The destruction of Jerusalem will mark the official start of this time of woes, although precursors of it can be seen in the book of Acts. So sorrowful and difficult will these times be, that many will appear from time to time, claiming to be Christ and promising to deliver us into a better way of life. We must not be misled.

When Jesus does return, everyone will know it. Every eye shall see Him. All the dead will be raised – the righteous to eternal life and the unbelieving to eternal perdition. In the meantime, Jesus has given us a charge to keep: Set His house in order by loving service and faithful witness. Each of us has a calling from the Lord. We must be diligent to work the work He has appointed to us until He comes again, and not waste precious moments and thoughts in vain speculations about the precise details of His return. The world is wracked with sorrow and sin; our calling is to watch and work, so that when He comes, He will find us busy about seeking and advancing His Kingdom.

For now, that's all we need to know.

*Reflect.*

1. What has Jesus appointed for you to do until He comes?
2. Why must we not waste time or thought speculating about the precise events of Jesus' return?
3. How can Christians encourage and help one another in being faithful until He comes?

*A great promise is extended to the Lord's faithful and wise stewards. It is like the promise he made to those to whom he said, "Take authority over five cities" or "take authority over ten cities." For to be made the head "over all his possessions" is nothing other than to be made an "heir of God and coheir with Christ" and to reign with Christ. Origen (185-254), Commentary on Matthew 62*

*Come quickly, Lord Jesus, and help me today as I...*

*Pray Psalm 96.1-10.*

Commit yourself to the Lord, and live this day in the joy and strength of His coming.

*Sing Psalm 96.1-10.*

**Psalm 96.1-10** (Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above\*](#))

Sing to the Lord! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!

Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!

For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised –  
fear Him, and sing His glory!

All other gods are idols vain – the Lord created heaven.

Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him be glory given!

All fam'lies, praise this mighty Lord! Give strength and glory to His Word;  
exalt the Lord of heaven.

Bring offrings sweet to Him, our Lord, in holy garments praise Him!

Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!

The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove –  
exalt the Lord and praise Him.

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Why must we not waste time or thought speculating about the return of Jesus?
2. How can we know that we are living in the last days?
3. With what have we as believers been charged for these last days?
4. How will we actually know when Jesus is coming again? What happens then?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 24.1-51? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.