

Is the Coming of Christ Imminent or Expectant? Matthew 24

Matthew 24:29–31 (NKJV)

²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:32–35 (NKJV)

³² “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and

earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Matthew 24:36–44 (NKJV)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.

Introduction:

The last few years has seen an resurgence of interest in the second coming of Jesus Christ, which I have always believed is a healthy thing for the church.

The obvious decline of our culture and the surge of evil of the darkest kind has made many think that we must be living in the time of Christ Return.

And most recently, the talk about AI and the enormous potential and fear this Artificial intelligence is creating has led some to ask the question as to whether this could play a part in the last days.

Then add to that, our soon to experience, digital dollar, that will usher in total control of every dollar you spend, how you spend it and where you spend it has made some think that this could be a precursor to the mark of the beast and the ability to only buy or sell with it.

Then there is the ongoing debate among millennials, not the millennial generation, but the views of the millennium. I'm specifically referring to the debate among Premill, Postmill and Amill. Historic Premill has been around since the beginning, as far back as the disciples of the Apostle John, and I would argue as far back as the Bible. Dispensational

Premill that would include an any moment Rapture before a 7 year tribulation is believed to be relatively new. Amill has seen a long history , many tracing it's origin to Augustine, Postmill has seen support in history among scholarship and the puritans but witnessed a devastating blow with the advent of 2 world wars but has in this last decade specifically seen a resurgence in the Reformed community.

All of these things taken together have been good for the church to again begin thinking about the return of Christ.

But when you consider the views of eschatology, they are not benign as to how one looks at the future, or how one prepares for the return of Christ. In other words, how you view the imminency or expectancy of Christ returns or the events leading up to it can dramatically affect how you think about it and live regarding it.

Let me explain,

1. Both the Historic Premil. and Amill would not expect to see a imminent signless Rapture but would anticipate things getting worse in the world until the emergence of the Antichrist with growing intense persecution of the church until the Return of Christ. They would argue that we need to be prepared for things to get worse and the unveiling of Antichrist and an increase of persecution of the

saints. The coming of Christ is not signless and would not be considered imminent, (at any moment) but should be expected as we see things worsen around us.

2. The Dispensational Premill would expect the next calendar event to be a signless Rapture. It is imminent and at any moment, Christ could return to Rapture His Church then the commence with the 7 year tribulation before his final return to earth. This they believe leads us to always be watching and alert for the Coming of Christ. Imminency is a big part of this view.

3. The Postmill view would see the need for the church to successively reach all the nations with gospel and that majority would become christians. It does not mean that there still won't be unbeliever but the predominant view and practice among the nations of the world would be christian. In this view, the predominant theme is the need to reach the nations with the gospel so as to usher in the physical kingdom of Christ. All nations must be brought into subjection to him, and this is primarily done through the evangelization efforts of the church.

So in this view, the coming of Christ would definitely not be signless, in that, the main sign is the nations are made subject to Christ via the gospel, all His

enemies are made His footstool. But I would argue that in this view the coming of Christ would neither be imminent or expectant.

It would not not be imminent for the obvious reality that the nations of the world are not subject to Christ because they are not christians. We can't even say that of America now.

Second, the coming of Christ cannot be expected now for the same reason.

There are 1.9 Billion Muslims in the world, and nearly 40 nations that declare Allah as god. Roman Catholics are a large populous of 1. 2 billion. Hinduism with 1.1billion followers of 330 million gods. Buddhism has 500 million followers. Shintoism has 104 million followers.

There are only 800 million protestants in the world

According to one seminary,

The number of Evangelicals in the world has increased from 112 million in 1970 to 386 million in 2020. <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/evangelicals-worldwide/>

If we are to believe half of those professed evangelicals are real believers that would mean that 193 million in the world are real Christians.

That means that Christians are only 2.4 percent of the population of the world. 97.6 percent are not. That is an incredible reminder of the urgency of world missions and that every evangelical church needs to be involved in evangelism and world missions.

But this also means that the post mill view of reaching the nations for Christ and all the nations and enemies of God being made his footstool before He comes, implies no imminency of Christ return and no expectancy, at least for now.

In other words, apart from a huge worldwide revival on the scale of the mass conversion of Nineveh , there is no need to expect the return of Christ now. It is true that this view has produced more enthusiasm of prayer for success in evangelism and subjection of the governments to the laws of God. But as far as watching for, being alert for, and sober regarding the return of Christ, it falls woefully short.

And this point of watching, anticipating the soon return of Christ is what I want to talk about.

I believe the Bible places an urgency upon the believer to be ever mindful and fully expectant that the Return of Christ could happen in their lifetime.

Some have attempted to relegate most of the urgent commands to be alert, sober and watchful for the return of Christ that is “at hand”, “near”, “at the door” to all refer to 1st century Christians facing the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

This is problematic on a number of levels and I will attempt to show you why.

So my thesis would be that “the Bible teaches that the believer should always be alert, watchful and sober for the Second, final coming of the Lord, because it is near, at hand, even at the door, so be expecting it in your lifetime.”

I. The Statements of Scripture

A. The Proximity of the Return of Christ

Matthew 24:33 (NKJV)

³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!

James 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

1 Peter 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Philippians 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

Hebrews 10:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Revelation 1:3 (NKJV)

³ Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.

Revelation 22:7 (NKJV)

⁷ “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Revelation 22:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)

¹² “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Revelation 22:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.”

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

1 Corinthians 7:29–31 (NKJV)

²⁹ But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, ³⁰ those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, ³¹ and those who use

this world as not misusing *it*. For the form of this world is passing away.

1 John 2:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

B. The Expectancy of the Return of Christ

2 Peter 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Titus 2:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

¹³ **looking** for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

προσδέχομαι^c; ἐκδέχομαι^a: to remain in a place and/or state, with expectancy concerning a future event—‘to await, to wait for.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, pp. 728–729). United Bible Societies.

Romans 13:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹ And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

Philippians 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Corinthians 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Matthew 24:42–44 (NKJV)

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.

Matthew 24:45–51 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶ Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:13 (NKJV)

¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Mark 13:33–37 (NKJV)

³³ Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ *It is* like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. ³⁵ Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—³⁶ lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Luke 21:34–36 (NKJV)

³⁴ “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Revelation 16:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

Revelation 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Revelation 3:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

So it is very clear from these text that the coming of Christ is to be considered near or soon, and that we should be fully expecting it in your Life time.

I. The Statements of Scripture

II. The Strategy for the Saints

But there is a Question that needs to be asked and answered.

According to

Matthew 24:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ “....of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

Matthew 24:42 (NKJV)

⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴..... the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Mark 13:33 (NKJV) adds,

³³ for you do not know when the time is.

Luke 21:34 (NKJV) adds,

³⁴ “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

And Jesus told his disciples when,

Acts 1:6–7 (NKJV)

6....., they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

So if we don't know the day or the hour and we don't even know the times and seasons which the Father has put in his own authority, then how are we to know what Jesus and the Apostles mean by

“it is near, it is at hand, it is at the door”?

If the Father only knows, then how did Jesus and the Apostles know?

Or is this even the right question?

Maybe better not, did they know the time but better what did they mean by the time statements of near, at hand or at the door?

1. They mean that He is potentially near.

That is to say that because they do not know the time of his return, there is a real possibility and a potential possibility that he is near or it could be very soon. To say that I do not know does not mean necessarily that it has to be an extreme distance into the future but all it does mean is that we do not know so that allows for the potential of it being near as much as being far.

This has implications in a number of ways.

1. Not knowing the time exactly but assuming the possibility of nearness leads to diligence and vigilance in our walk with Christ. To assume that it is so far into the future would tempt one to be careless in there living.

Matthew 24:45–51 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶ Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and

drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2 Peter 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

2 Peter 3:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

2. Not knowing the time exactly but assuming the possibility of nearness leads to hope of deliverance

To assume that it is so far into the future remove any encouragement and hope to persevere.

1 Thessalonians 5:6–9 (NKJV)

⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Thessalonians 1:4–7 (NKJV)

⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵ *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶ since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

This is Peter's whole point in 2 Peter 3.

There were people scarfing and mocking the return of Christ, as if it was not near at all. But this has been a promise not fulfilled. Yet Peter's point was to

show us that even 2000 years it's only two days to God. So for him to be gone for two days and to return on the third day is a very near prospect.

2 Peter 3:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

¹⁰ 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.

3.. [Not knowing the time exactly but assuming the possibility of nearness is the only option of how to refer to the second coming.](#)

Can you imagine the apostles, saying that coming of the lord, is nowhere near or the coming of the lord will, in no wise happen in your lifetime.

Or that the coming of the lord is 5000 years into the future.

Or another way of saying it for the Saints that were being persecuted there is no chance of the Lord coming back to take you out of here.

Can you imagine this verse reading this way.

Revelation 3:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also *might* keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I am coming *a long time from now!* Hold fast what you have *because is will be a long time till I show up,* that no one may take your crown.

Revelation 1:3 (NKJV)

³ Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is a long way off*

James 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is *no where near.*

1 Peter 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ But the end of all things is far off into the future; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Philippians 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is far off.

Hebrews 10:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day very far into the future.

 We all understand that this is silly and would be hopeless to the believers living in the world. The only way to communicate the Return of Christ that brings hope, endurance and encouragement is to talk in terms of nearness, soon-ness, at the door or at hand.

Also, it is important to note, the Bible was written for many generations of Christians to read not just for the first century Christians. In other words, the Lord knew that every generation would read these words, and fully expect that the Lord would return in their lifetime, not in some distant future far removed from

their time. It would motivate them to live, godly lives, and to expect the hope that comes with the return of Jesus Christ.