

# Alert

Session 11 • Matthew 24:36-51



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## ENGAGE

**PREPARE:** Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Matthew 14–28*) and **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Parables of Jesus*).

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 89.

**ASK: What is it about the end of the world that most fascinates or frightens you?** (p. 89)

**DISCUSS:** Encourage the group to suggest movies, books, television shows, and other popular media that centers on the end of the world. Lead a brief discussion on how those feed our desire to know more about the end times. Affirm that it's human nature to want "inside information" on the last days.

**CONTEXT:** Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Matthew 14–28*). Point out that today's session comes from Matthew 24. Summarize the following information from **Understand the Context** to provide context for today's focal passage:

- "Chapter 24 begins with the disciples marveling over the magnificence of the temple. Jesus informed them that the temple would be destroyed. His disciples asked when this would happen and what

signs would signal His return and the end of the age. Jesus's response prompted what is known as the Olivet Discourse, an extended teaching given on the Mount of Olives found in Matthew 24–25." (p. 89)

**SHARE:** Point to **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Parables of Jesus*). Note that Jesus's parable of the fig tree (Matt. 24:32-35) leads into today's focal passage.

**SAY:** *This parable challenges believers to remain vigilant for the return of Jesus. That will continue to be Jesus's theme in the verses we study today.*

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## EXPLORE THE TEXT

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read **Matthew 24:36-41** aloud as the group listens for details about Jesus's second coming.

**ASK: What do we learn about God's plans for Jesus's return in these verses?** (p. 91)

**EXPLAIN:** Stress the primary teaching of this parable:

- *Implied in the disciples' question about signs of Jesus's coming was the question, "When?" The answer, according to Jesus, was no one knows—neither the angels nor He Himself knew God's timetable.*

*Because no one knows the time of Christ's return, any attempt to speculate and calculate it is a waste of time and energy. Instead, preparedness is the proper response to the fact that Jesus will return.*

**ASK: How do the two illustrations given help us better understand the nature of Jesus's return?** (p. 91)

**SHARE:** *Noah tried to warn those around him, but they refused to listen. Before the flood came, they continued going about their normal routines. By the time they realized what was happening, it was too late. Likewise, Jesus's return will catch people off guard. Like men walking in the field or women working at a mill, many will ignore Jesus's warnings and fail to prepare for His return. And they will suffer the consequences for their decision.*

**SAY:** *We saw in verses 36-41 that we don't know when Jesus is coming back, but His return is guaranteed. In these verses, Jesus focused on what believers should do while they wait.*

**READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 24:42-44 aloud** as adults underline the responsibilities of believers waiting for Jesus to come back.

**DISCUSS:** Lead a brief discussion on what adults marked in the verses. Highlight the need for diligence. Affirm that it would be easy to discount Jesus's return since it has taken so long, but we are called to be alert as we serve Him here on earth.

**ASK: What does it mean to be ready for Jesus's return? Why is it important to be ready?** (p. 91)

**RECAP:** Review the illustration that Jesus used to make His point about vigilance in this passage:

- **(24:43)** To illustrate the need for constant vigilance until His return, Jesus shared a short parable about a homeowner and a thief. The image comparing Jesus's return to a thief striking without warning was later repeated by Paul (1 Thess. 5:2-4), Peter (2 Pet. 3:10), and John (Rev. 3:3; 16:15) in their writings to first-century churches. It underscores the sudden and unexpected nature of the Lord's return—and the catastrophic consequences for those who are not prepared. The focus is on vigilance.

**CONTRAST:** Draw a two-column chart on the board. In the left column, write *be alert, know,* and *be ready.* Encourage adults to suggest the opposite of these terms and record their responses in the right column. Discuss how each side of the chart could affect one's approach to the second coming.

**SHARE:** *Again, Jesus made two points here. First, we don't know when He is coming back. Second, we can be sure that He is coming back. And because that's a guarantee, we need to stay alert and keep serving Him well until the day of His return finally arrives.*

**READ: Invite the group to read silently Matthew 24:45-51,** underlining the question in verse 45 and considering how the rest of the passage answers that question.

**RECAP:** Briefly discuss adults' responses to the verses they read. Summarize the following content to provide more context to Jesus's contrast of the two servants:

- **(24:45-51)** Jesus shared a second parable that further illustrates the importance of remaining faithful while we await Christ's return. Two servants were entrusted with a master's household. The implication is that the master was away for an extended period. During the master's absence, one servant was faithful to continue his tasks. The other was not faithful but rather pursued selfish pleasure. One was ready for the master's return, the other was not. Jesus was teaching His disciples about the certainty of His return and their doing His work and will as they awaited that day.

**ASK: How are you preparing yourself for Jesus's return?** (p. 91)

**REFLECT:** Remind adults that the servants represent two responses to Jesus and that the blessing and punishment represent real eternal consequences. Provide a few minutes for silent prayer so adults can consider where they stand with God right now.

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## CHALLENGE

**SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from this week's Bible passage as adults consider their own level of commitment to each item:

- We can be certain that Jesus will one day return.
- Believers should be ready for Christ's return.

- Believers are to remain faithful while we await Christ's return, stewarding well the resources God has given us.

**CHALLENGE:** Challenge the group to consider their feelings about Christ's return and to use those as reminders to live for Him, seek Him, and share Him with people who do not believe.

**DISCUSS:** Direct attention to the **Apply the Text** question on page 91. Discuss responses and encourage adults to find ways to hold one another accountable to staying alert. Remind adults that this is what Jesus expects of His people as they wait for His return.

**PRAY:** Close in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to bring this passage to life this week as each adult seeks to know God, live for Christ, and be filled with the Spirit.

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## AFTER THE SESSION

Keep the conversation going this week through your group text or email communication. Encourage the group to share how they are keeping Christ's return in mind as they go about their everyday tasks and life. Encourage adults to point to Jesus as they live among people who need to hear the truth.