



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 24:37–51

Gospel of Matthew

“Knowing the Days, But Not the Day,  
of His Coming,”

TRANSCRIPT

Our Scripture reading is found in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, so if you have your Bibles with you, I hope you have, turn with me to chapter 24 and verse 37. We hope to finish the 24th chapter today. This is, I think, our eighty-first or eighty-second study in the Gospel of Matthew—just a moment I will; it’s number eighty-two—so we have been studying Matthew for a rather lengthy time. We will be shortly beginning the study of the Passion of our Lord, and I think that is one of the most important parts of the New Testament. The stress of the messages in that section will be on the saving work of our Lord and the Gospel as it concerns, particularly, men who are lost. So if you do have friends who you think need to hear the message of the atonement of the Lord Jesus and salvation through him, I certainly would urge you to bring them out to the messages that begin with chapter 26 of the Gospel of Matthew. But now, let’s look at chapter 24 verse 37 for our Scripture reading. The Lord Jesus, in the mist of the Olivet Discourse, speaking to the disciples says,

“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day

“Knowing the Days, But Not the Day of His Coming” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came,  
and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man  
be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the  
other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be  
taken, and the other left.”

(Incidentally you’ll notice that the word, women, as well as the word, shall be, are supplied in the Authorized Version translation. The reason for that is that the Greek text uses the feminine gender in speaking of the grinding, and so we know from that that the reference is to the women that were grinding. It was the custom in those Halcyon days for the women to do that kind of work, so it’s not surprising then that the Bible should be saying just this. Those were great days, men, [laughter] but they are fast gone from us. Studying Greek, incidentally, enables you to discover a few things that you would not necessarily know from the reading of the English text, and by the way, I meant to say something. We were so delighted that I understand there were fifty-five that turned out for the course in Greek on Saturday morning under Mister Emgee, and over twenty for the advanced course in Greek, so the preachers are going to have to be careful [laughter] in the preaching at Believers Chapel in the future. Now verse 42:

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.  
But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the  
thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have  
allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore be ye also ready: for  
in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is  
a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his  
household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant,  
whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto

you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that  
evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;  
And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink  
with the drunkards; The lord of that servant shall come in a day  
when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware  
of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with  
the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

May God bless this reading of his Word.

The subject for today is, “Knowing the Days, But Not the Day, of His Coming.” If we have read the Bible a very much at all, we, I’m sure, realize that the Word of God does not contain an organized, obviously plain account of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. It does not contain one passage which answers all of the questions that we might have concerning the doctrine of the Second Coming. There is no one passage that answers the questions of millennialism: does the Bible teach amillennialism, postmillennialism or premillennialism, or the questions of tribulationism? Does the Bible teach a pretribulational rapture, a midtribulational rapture, or a posttribulational rapture, and some of the other questions that we might have concerning the Second Advent. In other words, there is no one passage that answers all of these questions.

Why is this? You might wish that the Bible did contain one little blueprint that you could turn to that would answer all of the questions, but it seems to me that one of the reasons why this is not so is that God evidently has thought that it was necessary for us to ponder and study the Scriptures in order that through the pondering and study of the Word of God, we might come ultimately to the knowledge of the truth. In other words, it’s necessary to do what the Reformers used to do when they spoke about the Analogy of Faith: compare Scripture with Scripture, because this is a good test of one’s desire to know the truth.

Incidentally, it's not simply concerning the doctrine of the Second Coming that these comments could be made. They could be made concerning most of the doctrines of the Word of God. If we wish to have a full understanding of all aspects of them, it's necessary to look at a number of passages in the Word of God. And the very fact that we are willing to do this is some evidence of a desire to know, and it seems to me, that one of the reasons that God has not given us one passage that answers all of our questions concerning each doctrine, is that he does want to test our desire to know Holy Scripture.

Now theologians speak of normative passages, and by that, they mean the central passage, the one passage that one turns to, first of all, to gain the major outlines of the teaching of a particular doctrine. We don't deny that there are normative passages—there are—but there are, for most of the major doctrines of the Word of God, no one passage that answers all of our questions. I do think that that is something for each of us to think about. It means that if we are really to know the teaching of the Word of God, it is necessary that we ponder and reflect a lot more deeply than simply looking at the Word in a surface kind of way.

I think there's another reason why the Bible does not contain an organized obviously plain statement concerning the Second Coming doctrine. We might be so pleased with this blueprint that we discover in the Word of God that we forget that the truth concerning the Second Coming is designed to change our lives. You may remember that in almost all of the passages of the Bible in which the Second Advent, or the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, is referred to, there is a statement in which that truth is made applicational. That is, it has to do with ethical or moral issues that are to flow out of it.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations. In 1 John chapter 3 when the Apostle John speaks about the fact that the Son of God is going to appear and then we shall appear with him, and it shall be manifested what we are and what he is, the apostle goes on to say, “He that hath his hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.” In other words the doctrine of the Second Advent is designed to be a purifying doctrine. It is to have moral issue.

Then the apostle in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, in the passage in which he seeks to comfort the Thessalonians who had lost some loved ones since the apostle had mentioned the doctrine of the Second Advent to them. And he went on to say to them that those who had died were not going to miss out on the rapture of the church, because the Lord was going to come from heaven with the spirits of those who had slept in Jesus, had gone to be with him. The bodies of the dead are going to be raised first, even before those of us who are living have our resurrection bodies. And those bodies are going to meet the spirits which have come with the Lord in the air.

And the apostle goes on to say that we who are alive and remain shall be called up with them in the rapture of the church. I have a good friend that calls that the great snatch [laughter]. We meet him in the air and then the apostle says wherefore comfort one another with these words. So the doctrine of the rapture of the church is not designed simply to satisfy our curiosity, but it's designed to have a very practical effect.

In fact, the effect that the apostle desires that the doctrine of the rapture have is one that is related to such fundamental matters of life as death itself. It is an encouragement to the believers who remain to realize that the separation that takes place is only temporary among believers. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. The hope of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus is one of the great encouragements for pilgrims.

Now the Bible says we are pilgrims and sojourners. Now, I know, of course, that we are not so pilgrim-minded today. Someone has said that the church is the best-disguised set of pilgrims the world has ever seen. We are supposed to be pilgrims and we are supposed to be sojourners, but we've become dissatisfied with our tents and we want our mansions now, and some of us have them. [Laughter]

We are bombarded with enticements from the world, from the media. We cannot look at our television screens without being urged to buy this or buy that or satisfy this want or to have created within us some new want. We are surfeited with material possessions. I know you may be thinking you don't have as much as you would like to have or as someone else has, but when you

think about what we have and what others don't have, we are truly surfeited with material provisions. We have forgotten our citizenship is in heaven and we have settled for a damaging kind of covetousness for material things.

And when the doctrine of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus is preached in our presence, we almost inevitably recoil from it saying, yes I do think I would like to see the Lord, but just give me a little bit more time. I have a few more things to do or a few more things to enjoy. Now that is true of preachers just as well as people who sit in the pew. So often when I think of the Second Advent, something flashes into my mind, now Lord, wait a month or six months until I finish doing this, then I'll be ready.

The Lord Jesus had some very strong words to say about individuals who thought that life consisted in the piling up of material possessions. He told a little illustration of a rich man. A rich man who was so prosperous and found that his business was so growing—he had truly a growth enterprise upon his hands—and his ground was bringing forth so plentifully. We can transfer that to our corporations, because the same thing is true. The cash flow was increasing so rapidly that he didn't know what to do with the possessions that he had.

And he made the decision that he was going to build some more barns after tearing down his old ones and there he would bestow all his crops and all his goods, and there's a little conversation the Lord puts in the heart of the rich man which is so true you can almost hear it because you've spoken it yourself. I'll say to my soul, “Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”

Then the Lord Jesus has God say to the rich man, “Thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then who shall those things be which thou hast provided?” So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

The doctrine of the Second Coming is not a very happy doctrine for most of us, because it is diametrically opposed to the activities of so many of us. It is contrary to our own determinations. It's contrary to our desires it's contrary to the lusts that we have to get on in this particular world.

On a hillside looking across to the city, in the sad fading evening light of an afternoon, the Lord Jesus gave this Olivet Discourse. He has finished the doctrinal section, the primary aspects of it. He’s told us about the Second Advent, the signs that shall let us know that it is near at hand, and now he turns primarily to the ethical, to the application of the truths. He’s just stated that the time of the coming is not a part of the revelation that God had given to him to make known to others, for he had said, but of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

He has been trying to stress that the important thing is preparedness. And that’s what he will stress now: preparedness for the Second Advent. In spite of the fact that people are told by the Lord Jesus that the angels don’t know the time of the Second Advent, the Son doesn’t know the time of the Second Advent—no man knows it. Still, men try to predict the time.

Bengel, the great German orthodox, premillennial student of the Word of God, said that as a result of his studies, he felt that the Lord Jesus was going to return June 18, 1836, and he already is almost a hundred and fifty years wrong. That’s sad when a man who is known for his studies of Scripture should also be known for such a *faux pas* as that. We do not know when our Lord Jesus shall come to the earth in his Second Advent. But while we do not know the precise day, the Lord Jesus does go on to give a descriptive account of the kind of day that shall exist on the earth when our Lord Jesus does come. And that’s what he speaks about in verse 37 through verse 41, and then he makes an application in verse 42.

If he does not know the time of the Second Advent, he does know the character of those days, and God the Father has given him this revelation to make known to us. Those days he said shall be like Noah’s days. Well, if you turn back to the book of Genesis and read the 6th chapter, you discover, of course, that there is divine judgment upon the age of Noah. It was a day of immorality, and it was a day in which men were more concerned about things than they were about spiritual things. God had said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh, but he gave him a hundred and twenty years of longsuffering.” He goes on to say, God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil

continually, and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart, and the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.

The earth was corrupt, Moses said, before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah the end of all flesh is come before me for the earth is filled with violence through them and behold I will destroy them with the earth. As it was in the days before the flood, Jesus says, they were eating drinking marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. So shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man.

Now it is striking to me at least that the Lord Jesus, when he says as in the days of Noah, does not say anything specifically about the corruption, the violence, the wickedness that exists, but simply said, they were eating and drinking and they were marrying and giving in marriage. Well is there anything wrong with eating and drinking? Well, nothing wrong with eating and drinking. Of course you can eat too much and drink too much. Look at us and see. But nothing is wrong with eating and drinking.

Is there anything wrong with marrying and giving in marriage? No, there's nothing wrong with marrying and giving in marriage. Why you see, the Lord Jesus looks at Genesis chapter 6, and does not stress the immorality and the corruption, he simply says that life was going on as usual, no reflection on the possibility that there might come a destruction. All the time God's prophet was constructing the ark. A hundred and twenty years, he was building that ark, while the longsuffering of God waited. But men lived as if the flood was not coming. That's the first characteristic of the days of Noah. It was life as usual.

Eating and drinking; why you can even glorify God in eating and drinking, Whether ye eat or drink do all to the glory of God, the apostle Paul says. So even in things that glorify God, we may



disobey God. What was the trouble with Noah’s day? Why it was simply the fact that they were wrapped up in these good things. They were wrapped up in life as usual. Nothing wrong it. But they were just simply wrapped up in that. They gave no thought whatsoever to the fact that divine judgment was on the way. They paid no attention to Noah. Eight souls out of all of the population evidently a vast population eight souls responded to the message of Noah the preacher of righteousness.

Well what shall we then, say, about the days of the coming of our Lord? Well, we may expect self-indulgent materialism to characterize the days of the advent of the Lord Jesus. We shall expect wild self-gratifying dissipation, in materialism, in the very things that in themselves are not necessarily bad, but we shall expect the occupation of men with the things of this life to be so involved and so definite that the eternal values are submerged in floods of intemperance. For it is intemperance to be so satisfied with the things of this life that we give no thought whatsoever to the things that have to do with eternity.

Now there is one other thing that we need to notice. That flood was a sudden disaster. The Lord Jesus stresses the fact that they were eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark. It went right down to the day that the first sprinklings of rain began to come from the sky. God had been longsuffering for a hundred and twenty years. The coming of the time of the flood was uncertain, and it was unexpected. It was sudden disaster. Someone has said death never comes without a warrant, but it often comes without a warning. The same thing can be said about divine judgment. It never comes without warrant but it often comes without warning.

And finally it was a time of divine judgment. The disciples had asked, what’s the sign of thy coming and end of the age, and the Lord Jesus had given them some hints. He said, the sign of the coming is when you see him in the air. Don’t pay any attention to people who say, lo he’s over here or he’s over there, but when the Second Advent comes, everybody will see him. You’ll know when the Second Advent is. But here he gives us some moral signs. He says, in effect, that when people are

so occupied with life as usual, that they give one—no one thought—to things that are eternal, then we are living in the kind of days that shall precede the sudden, unexpected return of the Lord Jesus in judgment.

Now our Lord of course is the greatest of preachers, and we all know that a preacher must apply the things that he says and so he says in the 42nd verse, “Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

Now let me say one thing here, lest we be confused. It is my own personal conviction that the Lord Jesus shall return in the air for the church preceding the time of the seventieth week of Israel. So that the next event for which the church looks is the rapture of the church.

Now these words have primary reference to the Second Advent to the earth, following the seventieth week of Israel, a period of roughly seven years, at the end of which the Lord will return to the earth. That seven-year period of time is a period of judgment, divine judgment poured out upon the earth, the details of which are found not only in Matthew 24 but in the chapters of the book of Revelation that begin with the 4th chapter and conclude with the 19th.

But all of these warnings of our Lord that have to do with preparation, with watchfulness, with faithfulness, with readiness—all of these warnings, if they pertain to the Second Advent, they surely pertain to the nearer event, the rapture of the church. So I hope you realize as we speak along that if you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus and belong to the church of Jesus Christ, then you should make the application to yourself. If you’re not a believer, then of course, it may be that you shall have the experience of entering into this tribulation period. This period that in its greatness is such that the world has never seen or ever shall see. And there are other things to indicate in the Word of God that if you should have heard the Word of God and have to enter into that period, you shall have no hope.

Well the Lord, to illustrate his point of watchfulness, tells a couple of little stories. They are simple little illustrations, but they are so true to daily life. In fact, if you read your newspapers this way last week, you found many illustrations of the things our Lord is speaking about right here, for

he says in the 43rd verse: But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

These two illustrations enforce the lessons, and the first is the illustration of a man who owned his house, and he simply says this, that if he had known what time the thieves would come, he would have watched. He would not have allowed them to come in and plunder his house. The householder did not realize that wise thieves don't advertise their coming.

Now unwise thieves do. If you read the *Dallas Morning News* this past week you noticed a very interesting and amusing case of some thieves who weren't wise thieves. In fact, I told my wife after seeing it that if those thieves had been students of the Bible, [Johnson laughs, all laugh] they wouldn't have been caught. But they made the mistake of advertising their coming. One of the business establishments in North Dallas is a men's store and they had been plundered and robbed, burglarized twice this year already and were very much upset over it, and were about to lose their insurance. And during the week, just preceding this, some men had called in and asked, “Are your leathers in yet?”—the leather coats and other leather garments that some men wear. And the tone of voice gave them away to the manager and the owner, and they decided that they weren't really calling about making purchases but were really setting them up. So they went in the store and waited. It was on the front page of the *Dallas Morning News*. And so they waited in the how in their store night after night for a few days, and sure enough they had their shotguns loaded with birdshot, and they were behind the counters, evidently, and at three o'clock one of the mornings this past week, they saw a man get out with a brick in his hand. And he threw it through the plate glass window and two men climbed through and began to help themselves to the men's silk shirts and the leathers.

And they rose up from the back of the store with their shotguns and told them to throw up their hands and one man froze—he was wise—not wise enough to not give himself away, but wise enough to know when he was caught to stand. The other tried to escape, and they fired at that person and it turned out what afterwards when he was caught at Parkland Hospital, that they had shot him full of birdshot from his back up through his head. Wise thieves don't let one know when

they are coming. So I say, if they had read the Bible, they might have been successful in their burglary. [Laughter] That’s a very simple little story, but of course, you can see the point of it is that when our Lord comes at his Second Coming, it’s going to be a surprise. It’s going to be sudden.

The time of his coming is uncertain, and so the exhortation is directed to us in verse 44: “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

Uncertainly ought to lead to readiness. Now he has in view, primarily Christian life, and he’s saying simply this, that since we don’t know when our Lord is going to come we ought to be ready for his coming.

Now there are two basic sins I think that are revealed in these two little stories. One is that an unready believer invites surprise. A person who is not concerned about spiritual things, particularly the coming again of our Lord Jesus, but who lives in spiritual drowsiness, is going to gain when our Lord does come, a very sad surprise. He’s going to be ashamed before him at his coming, perhaps. Spiritual torpor besets most of us, and it would be well for us to consider, if we really are, deep down within, expecting the soon return of the Lord Jesus. I’m afraid that many of us—I speak for myself, too—are often sunk in spiritual slumber, and are not really expecting the soon return of our Lord Jesus, because like the evil servant we say our Lord delays his coming.

Now the other spirit is a spirit that also leads to disaster, and that’s the spirit that says there’s plenty of time, yet. As illustrated in this second story that our Lord tells particularly, but it illustrates that procrastination in spiritual things is a very, very deep enemy of all of us. I want to be procrastinated at the next corner, said the passenger to the bus driver. You want to be what? demanded the bus driver. Read your dictionary young man, said this highbrow passenger. You’ll discover that procrastinate means put off. [Laughter] You may have—I knew you wouldn’t like that particularly, but I kind of liked that [more laughter].

There is a story of a young man who was listening to a lecture that his father gave him. I can understand this, because I rarely ever get to sleep before two o’clock at night. I usually stay up until one, at least or one-thirty, and my closest friends—that includes all of you—you feel free to call me

until twelve o'clock anytime, because I'm usually up, and usually up until one or one-thirty. Well, a father was lecturing a son for the evils of late morning rising, and finally he said to him in his climax of his little sermon he was giving this boy who was listening, "You'll never amount to anything unless you turn over a new leaf. Remember it's the early bird that catches the worm."

"Aha!" said the little boy, "How about that worm? What did he get for turning out so early?"  
[Laughter]

And the father had the last word. He said, "My son that worm hadn't been to bed all night; he was on his way home!" [Sustained laughter, Johnson laughs]

There is an old parable or fable of Satan's conversation with three of his demons. And they were apprentice demons and so they were getting ready to begin their work of troubling us down here on the earth, and Satan was having a review with them before they left, and he asked them what they were going to do. And one of the demons said, well, I'm going to tell men that there is no God. Satan said, that won't deceive anybody, because most of them are already convinced that there is a God. The second demon said, well, I'm going to tell them that there is no hell. And he said, that won't delude many men either, because most men know that if there is not a hell, there ought to be a hell and most of them really do know that there is a hell. And finally the third one says, I'm going to tell men that there is no hurry. And Satan said, go! you'll be very successful. Procrastination.

And unfortunately in the Christian body, there is a great deal of this attitude with reference to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus and the consequent necessity of faithfulness in Christian service. Listen to the story which is our Lord's illustrative appeal to faithfulness. He says, who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. This is a kind of question that we are to answer ourselves, that's why the Lord says, who is a faithful and wise servant? And in the case of this faithful, wise servant who was placed over the Lord's household to give them food in season. That

was the test of faithfulness, and because readiness implies faithfulness, the Lord tells his story right at this point.

Incidentally, some have thought that because he says, here, the Lord has made him ruler over his household to give them food in due season, that he’s speaking about the office bearers in the church. That is, he’s speaking about the elders who are responsible to feed the flock or the gifted men, such as the pastor-teachers or the teachers or the evangelists or the those that have the gift of exhortation. They are the ones who are responsible to give the household food in due season. But the Lord doesn’t really make that point. He’s just simply telling an illustration, and he’s saying in effect that there is a wise and faithful servant who is given responsibility who, when the Lord returns finds him engaged in doing what he is supposed to do.

Well what does the Lord do for the servant who is doing what he is supposed to do when he comes back? Well, he gives him a reward. Well what kind of reward is it? I think it’s very, very interesting that in verse 47 he says, verily I say unto you that he shall make him ruler over all his goods (that is give him more work). He was faithful in the work that he was given to do, and he is going to be given more work. He was given the responsibility of feeding the household, but now he is going to be made steward, representative over all the property of the Lord. In other words, for doing work faithfully, one is going to have more work of a nobler and grander kind, and in the days that follow this life that we live, now the faithful and wise servants who are waitful and watchful and who are dominated by the hope of the coming again of our Lord Jesus, at any moment it is they who shall be rewarded and given this nobler and grander and wider opportunity in the life that lies before us.

What about the evil servant? Well, the evil servant says in his heart, my lord delays his coming. Incidentally, this picture presupposes that there is going to be a long period between the present time and the time the Lord returns. Last week, when we were talking about verse 34, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled, I mentioned to you that some interpreters of the Bible have said that the Lord Jesus made a mistake, that he thought that he would return again

while this generation was living, but he was wrong about that, and we cannot really say that the Lord Jesus was inerrant.

You can see in this little story that he tells that he presupposes there is going to be a considerable period of time between the present moment and the time of the Second Advent, because he tells the story in which an evil servant has the opportunity to say after a lengthy period of time, my lord is delaying his coming. So you see, it's evident our Lord did not have that in his mind at all when he said, this generation shall not pass away. He did not believe that the Second Advent would occur while that generation was still alive.

This man, incidentally, this evil servant, is evil because he said this, but he said it because he was already evil. He was already in his heart a person who now did not believe the promise of the Second Advent. He had lost confidence in the Word, and having lost confidence in the Word, he had lost confidence in our Lord's coming, and as a result of losing confidence in his coming, he began to act immorally. That's always the case.

Our unethical, our immoral, our corrupt ways of activity are the result of corrupted doctrine always, always. What we do reflects what we think. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. That's why we stress biblical doctrine in the preaching of the Word of God, because right doctrine, while it doesn't always issue in right life, no right life can come forth if the doctrine is not sound. So it is important for us to realize that we shall never be prepared, we shall never be ready, we shall never be faithful if there is not burning brightly within our hearts the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus. It's one of the great purifying hopes of the Word of God.

So, doubt leads to sin, it leads to carelessness, cruelty, and carousing, all set for here by the Lord Jesus. But the coming ends the fun, and leads to the helpless rage and despair of having our portion appointed with the hypocrites—he was a hypocrite because he said, my lord delayeth his coming. My Lord. He wasn't his lord at all, practically. He was a hypocrite. He delays his coming. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And incidentally, this text points out that it is not

extinction to which unbelievers move it is life, eternal life, but under the judgment of God. His portion is with the hypocrites.

I think when I was preaching on chapter 13, I made reference to a time when a preacher was preaching to a congregation and he announced to the congregation in the midst of his sermon there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth among the wicked, who pass on to the next world. And a member of the congregation said, what about those who haven't any teeth? And the preacher said, teeth will be provided. [Laughter] There is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Robert Murray McCheyne was a great Scottish preacher. Mr. McCheyne's influence still abides in Scotland among the believers. He was a very godly man who died at a very young age, but influenced Scotland very deeply. Mr. McCheyne was one night speaking with some friends concerning the Advent, and they didn't seem to have much of a hope of the Second Advent, and so he quizzed a few of them. He said, “Do you think the Lord Jesus will return tonight?” “The man said, I think not. He said “Do you think he will return tonight?” He said, I think not. “And do you think?” He said, I think not. And then he said, therefore be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

We're not talking about idle things this morning. We're talking about things which may have a fulfillment before the Cowboys tee it off against the Buccaneers at 1 o'clock. Our Lord Jesus Christ's second return is an any moment thing. Are you ready? Are you prepared? Have you been a wise and faithful servant of the Lord? We're living between the times—the time of the first coming and the time of the Second Coming—and it's a time of hope, and it's a time of occupation in his service. It's proper to have an imminent hope. John Calvin, who didn't understand eschatology as we think that we understand eschatology, four hundred years later, had a very vital hope of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus, and in fact, actually said in his commentary on 1 John that there is nothing that remains but the Second Coming to wind up the story of redemption.

Now this hope should issue in labor and faithfulness and readiness. That means that we cannot persist in worldliness, in fleshliness and also in yielding to Satanic deceptions. Did you notice



this week in the paper? I think it was yesterday morning. There was a most interesting story of a woman who was seeking three divorces at once. She had been married, and she had left that husband but she hadn't bothered to get a divorce, so she married another one. And she didn't bother to get a divorce from that one, so she married another one. She actually had married three times, right in this area; As a matter of fact from that city west of us [laughter]. Three divorces. So this past week she went down to get three divorces at once. I couldn't help but think what an illustration that is of the marriage that so many of us have to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Now what God would love for us to carry out is a determination to be divorced from three things that so often are our masters at once: the world, the flesh and the devil, and to give ourselves to wholehearted service to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is soon coming, perhaps. May God help us to be ready.

If you're here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus, we remind you that your responsibility is to, by the grace of God the Holy Spirit, to recognize your sin and guilt and condemnation, and to recognize that the Lord Jesus has offered an atoning sacrifice for that sin and has made it possible for you to have forgiveness of sins, justification of life, to be a member of the family of God, a son of God. That, the church of Jesus Christ preaches, is the Word of God. And if in your heart God has been working, you may have at this very moment, as you turn to him and thank him for what Jesus Christ has done for you, everlasting life. May God speak to your heart. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity to hear again the words that our Lord Jesus spoke to the disciples. O Father, may these words have their intended affect in our lives by Thy grace. Deliver us, Lord from worldliness and fleshliness and satanic deception. Enable us, O God by Thy grace to be prepared and ready, and may O Lord our service be service that is faithful, that Thy name may be lifted up and honored and glorified.

“Knowing the Days, But Not the Day of His Coming” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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If there are some here who have never come to faith in Christ, O God, we do ask that Thou wilt work in their hearts at this very moment and bring them to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal.

May grace, mercy, and peace go with us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.