



“No-One Knows”

Introduction:

All of us, at some point, have asked ourselves the question, “When will the world end?” Those of us who follow Jesus Christ believe that the world as we know it will indeed come to an end, and that it is Jesus himself who will bring about that end. In today’s scripture text, Jesus describes for us the nature of his return (i.e. what his return is going to be like). The focus of this this short, two-week series - “The Return of the King” - will be to examine seriously the words of Jesus regarding his return, and reflect on how, in the light of this teaching, we ought to live our lives.

Today’s Scripture Text Matthew 26:36-44

Sermon Points

#1. Christ’s imminent return will be unexpected

- **Read Matthew 26:36, 44.**

Jesus states emphatically that no-one (including his incarnated self) knows when he will return, and that this knowledge is the preserve of the Father. We should therefore not waste time trying to predict dates and times, but rather accept that Jesus’s return will be unexpected - a complete surprise, unlike anything else in history - and consider what the ramifications of this are for how we live.

- *What does Matthew 26:36 teach us about the relationship between the Father and the Son?*
- *To what extent do you seek to control the details of your life (events, timings, circumstances, other people)? Based on verse 36, what is the example that Jesus sets for us? Is there an area of your life in which the Holy Spirit is nudging you to follow Jesus’s example?*
- *How does your heart respond to the prospect of Christ’s sudden, imminent return, and all that God has told us it will entail?*
- *Based on your knowledge of scripture generally, how will Christ’s second coming differ from his first?*

#2. Christ’s imminent return will be sudden



- **Read Matthew 26:37-39**

Jesus tells us that his return will occur suddenly, as did the Flood in the days of Noah. God was grieved by the sin of the people, and determined to destroy them in an act of righteous judgment (except for Noah and his family, whom he chose to save). The people were going about their lives as usual, and fully expecting that life would continue as usual, when the Flood came suddenly upon them. In the same way, ordinary human life will be suddenly and irrevocably interrupted by Christ's return.

- *In what way does the account of the Flood demonstrate not only God's wrath, but also his mercy and grace?*
- *Unpack the statement: "Jesus is our Ark".*
- *Why does the Christian apocalyptic sit uncomfortably alongside modern culture's concept of the trajectory of human civilisation and development?*

#3. Christ's imminent return will separate

- **Read Matthew 26:40-41**

When Jesus returns, many people will be separated from one another, regardless of how close a relationship they may have. Wherever people find themselves, there will be some who are taken, while the rest will be left behind.

- *What is the basis upon which people will be separated?*
- *What does this foretold separation mean for your relationships? For example, are there people in your life, with whom you have a close relationship, from whom you would be separated?*
- *Might the prospect of such a separation cause you to be more pro-active in sharing the gospel? Why?*

#4. Christ's imminent return should shape our world view

- **Read Matthew 26:42-44**

What are we to do as we await Christ's return in a world whose pleasures seduce us, and whose pressures burden us? Jesus's loving plea is that, firstly, we "stay awake" and secondly, that we "be ready" - we need to remain alert and prepared at all times.

- *What does it mean for us to "stay awake"? How might we do this?*
- *What is the warning that we receive in verse 42-44?*
- *What can you do today, to ensure that you are ready and prepared for Christ's return?*
- *Do any of your usual pre-occupations or worries seem less important, in the light of this teaching? What do you think you should be devoting less attention to?*
- *Personal Reflection Question:*

THE RETURN OF THE KING



Can you imagine what it would be like to be separated from God forever? Consider the pain of separation from the Father that Jesus went through on the cross. In your quiet time this week, give thanks that Jesus endured that agony, so that you would not have to, and praise God for leading you to faith in his Son.

Also, ask yourself honestly whether you have been living like a son or daughter of the King, and consider how you can prepare for his glorious return.