

# Session 1

## THE UNEXPECTED DAY

*Luke 21:25-38*

### Memory Verse

*But be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”*

– LUKE 21:36, CSB



## The Unexpected Day

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** Although the return of Christ is sure, it has not been made known to His followers when that monumental event will take place. Therefore, Christians must be ready and alert, living in obedience to their Master as they await His return.

 Have you ever heard of any restaurants that have a secret menu?

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 Why do you think these types of secret offers are intriguing and desirable to customers?

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Lots of restaurants have secret menus. Sonic, Chipotle, Burger King, McDonald's, and many more all have secret menus. These contain items that may be ordered if you are privy to that knowledge, because you won't see it displayed anywhere in the building or on the restaurant's website; it's a secret.

Most of these aren't so secret and are really more of a way to entice customers' business than anything else. You can find more secret menus than you can imagine with a simple Internet search. But it's not hard to see why this gimmick would attract people. People love to have insider knowledge, to have access to something that others don't.

When it comes to eternity, there is no secret menu for salvation. The Bible says that it is appointed for man to die once and then face the judgment (Heb. 9:27). At judgment it will be decided by God whether the person will spend eternity in heaven or hell. There is no secret menu, no third option.

## Session Summary

The Advent season has been a part of the Christian calendar since the 6th century. It is impossible to identify the exact origin of the practice. Advent includes Christmas day itself as well as the four preceding Sundays. While the Christmas holiday has grown to include many cultural traditions that often crowd out the spiritual significance, the simple purpose of Advent is to foster a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the birth of Christ (looking back) and the return of Christ (looking forward).

The Christmas season means different things to different people. For Christians, however, this season should be a joyous expectation and grateful celebration of God made flesh in the person of Christ, as well as His imminent return. There are many diversions that the world offers to distract Christians from the significance of this holiday, but church families must spur one another on to reject those things that detract from their devotion to Christ and embrace that which enhances it.

An often-overlooked facet of the Advent season is its emphasis on Christ's return. Followers of Jesus place heavy emphasis on His birth, but it is also a time to reflect upon His second coming so that their hearts may stay humbled for His appearing. In our study today, we will look at a passage in which Jesus taught about His return.

### 1. There Will Be Signs (Luke 21:25-27)

Jesus taught His disciples that there would be signs that would precede His second coming. He promised that after the signs had taken place, then the world would “see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” What a joyous and exhilarating thought for all those who are in Christ!

**?** Did Jesus explain these signs to His disciples so that they could predict the day and hour of His second coming? Explain. If not, what might be the purpose of this teaching?

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It wasn't Jesus' intention to give His followers a riddle to solve in order to discover the date of His return. Jesus taught that no one knows when His return will take place. He emphasized that point by saying that neither the angels in heaven nor the Son Himself knows the day and hour. The Father alone knows (Matt. 24:36).

Instead, Jesus gave these signs as an assurance that He would indeed return. The worrisome mother is put at ease if she can be assured of her child's return home, even if she doesn't know the exact hour. Christians today can be assured of Jesus' return and even look for signs. However, an examination of signs for the purpose of predicting a day and hour is misguided. Christians know Christ's return will happen and should live accordingly.

**?** Why would God withhold this information from His people? Is it unkind to do so? Explain.

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It is not unkind or unwise of God to withhold this information. First of all, God is all wise and full of lovingkindness. If something about God seems unwise or unkind from our vantage point, it is because we are drawing conclusions from incomplete information. God sees reality from the beginning to the end. God has proven His faithfulness, goodness, and wisdom over and over. Christians have no reason to doubt God's wisdom in this case.

Not only can Christians trust God's faithfulness in this matter, but they can also see some reasons why it is good. Perhaps one of the most beneficial consequences of withholding of information is that it teaches Christians to be humble in their station. What does this mean? It means that people, even Christians, have a tendency toward dethroning God so that they might become their own sovereign. The human heart

is naturally rebellious and self-exalting. The unbelieving heart resents and rejects the rule and reign of God. Remnants of that old self remain in the Christian.

Some of the greatest mercies of God toward His people are those things that show them their limitations and neediness. John Piper said, “Sleep is a daily reminder from God that we are not God. . . . Once a day God sends us to bed like patients with a sickness. The sickness is a chronic tendency to think we are in control and that our work is indispensable. To cure us of this disease God turns us into helpless sacks of sand once a day.”<sup>1</sup> The Christian’s need for sleep and lack of knowledge are mercies toward them because these remind them of their need for God and help them to depend upon God more. The more a Christian depends upon God the greater their joy, peace, and gratitude.

 **Application: What are some other mercies of God that remind you that you are not God?**

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## 2. Your Redemption Is Near (Luke 21:28-33)

The thought of the return of Christ is indeed a joyous and exhilarating prospect for those who are in Christ, but for those who find themselves opposed to God and His only begotten Son, this is a fearful reality. For the Christian, redemption is near. For the unbeliever, condemnation is at hand.

In these verses, Jesus promised that He would return and gave further evidence of His return by referencing a fig tree. Just as we can tell the changing of the seasons by the behavior of a tree, so will Christians be able to recognize the coming of Christ by the signs He gave. In verse 33, Jesus gave further assurance by reminding His followers although heaven and earth shall pass away, His words will remain forever. We can have absolute confidence in Jesus’ promised return.

 **What are the two possible outcomes of Christ’s return for each person?**

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While there are varying perspectives among Christians concerning the order of events at the second coming, there is no doubt or debate about the fact that some people will rejoice to see Christ because they know Him as their Savior, and others will gnash their teeth because they hate Him and will be condemned by Him.

The Bible teaches that all people are born into sin and are separated from God. All people who remain in their sin are enemies of God (Rom. 5:10). They are children of the devil and under the wrath of God (John 8:44; John 3:36). The people who remain in this state of sin and condemnation when Christ returns will hate His appearing and find Him only to be an enemy.

On the other hand, when people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, place their faith in the finished work of Christ, and turn away from their sins, then they are born again. Being born again is when a person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus. This profound change takes place by the power of God. The Bible teaches that salvation is a work of God by the mercy of God for the glory of God. Those who are reconciled to God through Christ have a new nature, new wills, and new affections. Those who hated God and the things of God before now love God and desire to know Him, love Him, and obey Him.



**How should anticipating the second coming of Christ during the Advent season affect a Christian?**

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There are two primary responses that a look toward the coming of Christ engenders in a follower of Christ: joy and pity. Christians experience joy when they consider the coming of Christ because they love Christ and they long for His return when all things will be set right. Christians don't fear the return of Christ; they long for it. They know that the coming of Christ brings them closer to their eternal home with their Savior, their God.

But Christians also experience pity toward those who are not in Christ. Christians yearn for the coming of Christ, but their hearts break for those close to them who have rejected Christ. Christians pity those who will weep at His coming instead of rejoice. This pity is accompanied by urgency and, hopefully, this urgency will translate into a

clear, consistent, and passionate presentation of the gospel. Christians who anticipate the coming of Christ should also do all that they can to testify about Jesus Christ to those who are far from God.

**?** Application: Who are the people in your life who will gnash their teeth at the coming of Christ (Luke 13:28)? When will you have another opportunity to have a gospel conversation with them? Have you been praying that the Lord would save them?

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### 3. Be Alert (Luke 21:34-38)

Jesus told the disciples that there would be signs of His second coming that were not meant to exactly locate the day and the hour, but instead to give assurance that His return would surely come to pass. With this knowledge, what is it that Christians should do as they wait?

**?** What did Jesus say that Christians should do as they wait for His return?

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In verses 34-36, Jesus said to “be on your guard” and “be alert.” This, of course, makes logical sense. Jesus used an example to help His listeners understand His point in Matthew’s account of this teaching. In Matthew 24:42-44, He explained that if a homeowner knew what time the thief was going to break in, he would be ready. If a homeowner would care about the protection of his property, how much more should those who fear God be alert and ready for the coming of Christ?

**?** What does it mean to “be alert” during the Advent season?

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In Luke 12:35-40, Jesus told another parable that is similar to our passage and sheds more light on what it means to “be alert.” In that parable he explained that those who are alert are like the servants who are both waiting for the master as well as doing the will of the master. Not only did they sit up waiting, but they lit lamps and they girded their loins for service.

This helps us to understand that those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and now live treasuring the gospel do two things. First, they joyfully anticipate the return of their Savior. This is a matter of the heart. Their affections are distinctly different than those who are not redeemed. Instead of hating and despising God, they love Him and long to be with Him. Christian affection for Christ is awakened at salvation and is sustained as they re-preach the gospel to themselves. Their hearts are drawn out to Christ and now they live with Him. Christians stay up and wait for Christ because they are compelled by love for Him.

Second, Christians stay alert by faithfully laboring in obedience to His orders. There are things to be done in and around the Master’s house while He is away. We complete these assignments with joy and humility and care because they are valuable. They are valuable to us because they are valuable to the Master. So, during this season, Christians can choose to be alert instead of distracted. They can rejoice that Christ came and is coming instead of running themselves ragged. They can faithfully labor in the business of the Master instead of investing their time and resources in those things that won’t matter in eternity.

 **Application:** Has it been difficult for you in years past to keep your heart and mind focused on Christ during the Advent season? If so, why?

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## Conclusion

The Advent season is an opportunity for Christians to rejoice in the coming of Christ and to be about His business, but it won’t happen naturally and you can’t rely on the culture to encourage this. Therefore, Christians must spur one another on to this good work. Christians don’t know when Christ will return, and this is actually

for their benefit. It helps them to remember that they are not God and are dependent upon God. Christians do know, however, that when Christ returns they will be secure in the favor of God because of Christ's work on their behalf. At the same time, Christians recognize that the coming of Christ will be a terror for many. Thus, they are compelled to share the message of Christ with everyone they can.

**?** What things in your life cause you to depend upon God? Does it bother you that God keeps some things from you? Why or why not?

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**?** What will be your response when Christ returns? Do you look forward to it with joy or fear or disdain? What can you do to make sure you don't miss the meaning of the Advent season?

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**?** How can you "be alert"? How is that connected to seeking gospel conversations with others?

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**CHRIST CONNECTION:** For those who have found the treasure of the gospel and trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross for their righteousness, they look forward to the return of their Savior with expectant joy.

**MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** The urgency in this passage ought to motivate Christians not only to examine and watch for their own souls, but also to be diligent to warn their family, friends, neighbors, indeed, the whole world of the coming judgment and to tell them of the free offer of salvation.



# FOR NEXT WEEK

## Prepare the Way

### Main Passages

- Luke 3:1-6

### Session Outline

1. Sacrificial (Luke 3:1-2)
2. Bold (Luke 3:3)
3. Humble (Luke 3:4-6)

### Memorize

*But be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.*

- Luke 21:36, CSB

### Daily Readings

- Monday - Matthew 24:36-44
- Tuesday - Genesis 6:17-24
- Wednesday - 1 Thessalonians 5:2
- Thursday - Hebrews 10:23-25
- Friday - 1 Peter 1:13
- Saturday - Revelation 1:7

### References

<sup>1</sup>Piper, John. *Taste and See*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2016.