**1. Motivate**

What activity or event are you looking forward to in the next few weeks?

* Super Bowl
* coming of spring
* vacation out of the cold

A video introduction to the Bible Study is available. Watch it at <https://tinyurl.com/bdczazvh> If you don’t have wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video file to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/kvcxhvsw>

* a special concert
* a wedding
* visit to grandparents
* winter retreat
* basketball/vollyball season

**2. Transition**

We all have events in life that we anticipate with both expectation and maybe trepidation.

* One milestone event that faces every person in the world is the Second Coming of Jesus.
* Today we study the reality that Jesus will return to establish His eternal kingdom.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 His Return is Near

Listen for what stays and what disappears.

Matthew 24:32-35 (NIV) "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Consider changes in nature of which we take note:

* Fall colors
* Blooming flowers in spring
* Snow which hinders travel
* Viewing migration of birds

What lesson did Jesus teach through the parable of a fig tree budding?

* when the twigs get tender
* when the leaves come out
* then you know summer is **near** – fig trees are one of the last plants to bud in the spring

The word “near” can mean physical distance or soon in time … which do you think Jesus is meaning here? Why?

* time seems more likely
* the context of the fig tree budding and summer coming

So, what is the “it” that is near, right at the door in verse 33?

* may be two prophecies here – temple destruction 70AD and Jesus’ return
* events previously described have already taken place
* nothing much more must happen before He returns
* only a few things yet to take place
* maybe only the advance of the gospel to the “few” remaining people groups

To what do “these things” refer?

* Jesus compared this spring phenomenon of the fig tree to His coming
* when events like He has been noting happen, you know his coming is near
* you know it is “right at the door”

The Lord accentuated this point using a common image—at the door.

* Jesus told the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:20), “I stand at the door and knock” (figuratively), asking to come in and dine with them.
* When someone hears a knock at the door, he or she knows someone is standing right outside, waiting to come inside.
* This word picture clearly emphasized the closeness of a coming event—in this instance, the return of Christ.

Jesus said, “*this generation* will not pass away until all *these things* have happened”. The generation represented by the disciples is long gone. So, what was Jesus talking about?

* remember the whole conversation started with the disciples remark about the temple and Jesus’ prophecy about its destruction
* the temple destruction occurred in 70 AD
* most of them would normally still be alive in less than 40 years

Jesus contrasts the demise of the temple with the permanence of His words … “my words will never pass away”.

* What Jesus *says* is eternally true, trustworthy, and authoritative to the fullest.
* Disciples of Jesus are to …
	+ Submit to the authority of His word,
	+ Live in conformity to His message, and
	+ Teach it to others faithfully.

When has God’s Word proven true in your life?

* promises about prayer – God answers prayer
* promises about peace
* assurance about changing lives
* “by His stripes you are healed” … physical healing
* spiritual healing
* emotional healing

3.2 His Return Will Be a Surprise

Listen for a comparison to Noah.

Matthew 24:36-39 (NIV) "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus points out who knows and who does not know God’s timing.

* People do not know
* Angels do not know
* Jesus (as a human) did not know
* God the Father does know

What does this imply about Jesus’ limitations here on earth?

* Jesus gave up or limited Himself as a human
* He was not omnipresent as a human
* He was limited to time and space as we are
* He says He was not omniscient as a human – some revelations He spoke of were given to Him by God’s indwelling Holy Spirit
* He was not omnipotent as a human – miracles were performed by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in His life
* He dealt with similar limitations as we do – but we have the same indwelling Holy Spirit as He did

What does the reference to the days of Noah mean?

* Noah had preached for many years that a flood was coming
* even though the world at that time had not experienced such a weather phenomenon
* people went on with life … working, raising families, living normal lives
* Noah believed and communicated what God had told him
* others didn’t, they went on with their lives in a state of unbelief

Why is that historical event an apt illustration of the coming of the Son of man?

* same today … life goes on
* Jesus promises His return … some people believe, some don’t … but life goes on
* when He does return, believers’ faith will be rewarded, unbelievers will be left

How should the warning in these verses change the way we live?

* pay attention to what God is saying … in His Word, to you as an individual
* live paying heed to spiritual Truth, life is more than just work and play
* be involved in the world wide spread of the Gospel – some people have never heard of Jesus

3.3 So, Get Ready

Listen for why to be ready.

Matthew 24:40-44 (NIV) Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Note the life principles Jesus gives concerning His return.

* Keep watch
* Be continuously prepared
* You don’t know when Jesus will return

How does He illustrate that principle?

* it’s like anticipating a burglar breaking into your house at night
* if you know he *is* coming, you can prepare
* watching for a burglar is a negative experience
* watching for Christ is a very positive experience
* in either case you are ready for what will happen

We use the term “imminent” to describe Jesus return. Some synonyms would be: *looming, pending, on the horizon, just around the corner …* Contrast believing in the imminent return of Christ with an attitude of “whenever … who knows?”

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| --- | --- |
| Whenever … who knows? | Imminent Return |
| * won’t affect me in my lifetime
* my actions won’t have any effect on making it sooner
* not much I can do to make it different
* I’ve got plenty of time to get right with God
 | * affects how I live
* I will be careful to make right choices, be in right relationship to God
* involvement in faithfully serving God
* live like it could be today, work like it could be far off
* view current events with anticipation of Christ’s soon return
 |

How would an alert believer live his or her life differently in anticipation of Christ's *imminent* return? What is involved in getting ready?

* thoughts often include the anticipation of His coming (like anticipating Christmas)
* make preparations, "cleaning up"
* set life in order
* remind other people of the impending event
* be involved in communicating the gospel message to others
* make careful choices about what you do, where you go

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Read.

* Set aside time this week to read all of Matthew 24
* Make notes about Jesus’s return.

Meditate.

* This week, read John 14:1-3 and meditate on these comforting words.
* We don’t need to be troubled by Jesus’s absence but be encouraged.
* He’s been preparing for our reunion for thousands of years.
* He is coming again. It must be an awesome new place for us all.

Share.

* Get together with some friends and talk about what you discovered from your readings from Matthew 24 and John 14:1-3.
* Spend some time praying together for friends who need salvation

Fallen Phrases Puzzle

We have letters down. This time it’s an alien from the planet Verdorf. He (she?) zapped the billboard letters with that ray gun and a bunch of them fell straight down. We need your help. Start with the columns where it’s only one or two letters. Then work on the two and three letter words. Put in letters that make sense. When you have repaired the billboard, send the solutions to Spiros the Spy. He will want to coordinate the response to the attacks in other recent incidents. Technical help and other fun Family Activities are available at <https://tinyurl.com/kvcxhvsw>

