

**The Parable of the Watchful Homeowner**  
**Matthew 24:42-44**  
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**Alertness is instructed (24:42)**

Because no one knows the day and hour when Christ will return, we must “*be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.*” Alertness is a readiness to respond and expresses an anticipation for the Lord’s return. It comes from the confidence that the Lord’s promise of His return is reliable, even when the timing of it is uncertain.

Obviously, the Father could have chosen to reveal the day and hour of the coming of Christ if He so chose. In His wisdom, He decided not to divulge the timing for the greater purpose of stimulating the faith of His followers. He desires His people to express their faith by being alert for His coming and to not become complacent, such as the unbelievers in the days of Noah, who were swept away in judgment by the flood.

**Lack of alertness is illustrated (24:43)**

The lack of alertness is compared to a homeowner whose home is invaded by a thief, “*But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.*” The contrast “but” puts the requirement of alertness in contrast with the complacency of the unsuspecting head of the house suffering a burglary of his home because of his unpreparedness.

The use of the analogy of a thief who robs a house is used frequently in the New Testament. The reason we should store up our treasures in heaven is to protect them from thieves (Matthew 6:19). 1 Thessalonians 5:2 says “*the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night,*” while 2 Peter 3:10 says, “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away.*” When Paul uses this analogy in 1 Thessalonians, he refers to the events at the end of the tribulation period leading up to the Lord’s return (see also Revelation 16:15), and when Peter uses the analogy of a thief, he refers to the new heavens and the new earth after the one-thousand year reign of Christ. In Revelation 3:3 Jesus says, “*I will come like a thief,*” to make the point that He will come to judge the church in Sardis at a moment when they do not expect.

The point of the analogy of Jesus coming like a thief is consistent with the continuing theme that His return is not known. Just as no thief tells a homeowner when he is coming to break into his house, God will not reveal the hour when the Son of Man will return in judgment. Jesus is only comparing Himself to a thief in the sense of His unexpected return. Therefore, just as a homeowner must take steps to protect himself against thieves, the people of the tribulation era must be prepared for the return of Christ. Vigilance is essential in order to be adequately prepared for His coming.

### **Alertness is imperative (24:44)**

In verse 44, Jesus reemphasizes His point, *“For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”* Readiness means being alert at all times to the possibility of His return and well prepared for it. This involves living by faith, in humble obedience to the Lord’s will, in order to welcome His return. As Jesus said in Luke 18:8, *“when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”*

The signs of the tribulation era will serve those who are faithful to be heightened in their readiness, but there will be no way for anyone alive at the time of the Lord’s return to know the exact day or hour of His coming. In spite of Jesus’ repeated statement that no one will know when He is coming, false teachers continue to speculate regarding the timing of His return.

### **Conclusion**

Just as the people of the tribulation should be moved toward readiness regarding the Lord’s return, so should we do likewise today. Christ’s return for the church in the rapture is also imminent, for *“The Lord is at hand”* (Philippians 4:5), *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). Because the Lord’s return for us is imminent, we too must be alert, *“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers”* (1 Peter 4:7).

Since we know He may come at any moment, we are *“awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:7-8). We are then to *“strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near”* (James 5:8), by *“instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”* (Titus 2:12-13).