

Gospels, Christ makes this a special reason for consistent Christian living. In ^{the} twelfth chapter of Luke, a section with no particular stress on details of eschatology. Christ urges the disciples to be like men that serve a Master who may return at any time (v. 36-40). He stresses the happiness of those who are found engaged in faithful service when their Lord comes back, whether His return be early or late. "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not".

This emphasis of Luke 12 is by no means isolated. Matt. 24:36, 42 and 44; Matt. 25:13; Mark 13:32, 33, and 35; and Luke 21:36, all contain similar injunctions and declarations that no human being is able to know just when Jesus will come back. In I Thess. 5:1-8 Paul takes up this note. Declaring that the return of the Lord is as impossible for a human being to predict as the coming of a thief in the night, he urges Christians to be always faithful, so that it will not come upon them as something for which they are not ready.

In I Thess. 4:4-18 Paul ^{gives} ~~gave~~ a detailed picture of the phase of the return of Christ which relates to believers. He declared ^o that at the return of Christ the dead in Christ ^{will} ~~would~~ rise first; then the living believers and the newly resurrected Christians ^{will} ~~would~~ be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. Matthew Henry called this event, "this rapture into the clouds". It would seem, then, that this rapture of the saints is the first recognizable event connected with Christ's return.

If this conclusion were based upon one passage alone, it might be feared that a mistake of exegesis could lie at its foundation. When, however, we find it taught that even in the days of the apostles men were to expect Christ at any time and to be ^{prepared} ~~ready~~ to meet Him ^{whenever He might} ~~when He comes~~, and when we find this teaching repeated over and over, we have no right to seek to evade its clear implication. It is true that some of the statements, ^{mentioned above,} in Mark and in Luke 21, are parallel to some of those in Matthew. Nevertheless, the fact that the Holy Spirit thought it important to record so many of the statements of Christ on this theme, and to cause more than one Gospel writer to preserve some of them, is surely proof that