

# Are You Sleeping or Awake?

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Do you believe that Jesus is coming? How serious are you about His return? God is very serious about it! His seriousness is reflected in His Word. A lot of time is spent in the scripture on His return.

Luke 21:31

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

This great warning is taken very lightly by many of God's people. We are told to never let our hearts get overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, or the cares of this life.

Notice the warning—TAKE HEED—lest at any time you allow your heart to overflow with these things. Now, suppose you only allow your heart to be overcharged one time! Suppose you only have one fling—but in the midst of that one little fling the Lord should return.

You must give earnest heed to what the Lord is saying here: don't permit your heart to become overcharged—lest the day of the Lord come on you unawares.

Listen, that day will come upon many unawares because they're not ready; they're not looking or living in the expectation that the day will come suddenly and unannounced.

## Watch for the Snare

Luke 21:35

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Do you know what a snare is? It is a cunningly devised trap to catch animals and birds. And it can also catch a man unaware. A snare is a trap that is set off quickly, suddenly. And when it is set off there is no time to withdraw and avoid getting caught.

When you make a snare, hook it and bait it, you then wait for something to be lured in. As soon as the prey takes the first bite, the snare is set off— and before the prey knows what happened, they are caught. Yes, a snare is a fast device, giving no time or chance for escape.

And Jesus' coming is a snare upon the whole earth. His coming is going to be so sudden that many are going to be caught unawares. Everyone who is taken up with the cares of this life—or eating and drinking—will find this day come on them like a snare.

My, if the Lord speaks about this so seriously, I believe that we too should take His coming seriously. If the Lord has taken the time to give warning that this day is fast approaching, we need to give His warning a lot of thought and consideration.

It's so easy to just drift. As a Christian, it's easy to drift along—until you hardly pray or read the Word. It's easy to get into the rut of thinking that you're just too busy to have time to care for your soul. It's easy to get too tired to go to church time after time, until you stop going at all.

Yes, it's easy to get into situations in this life where you begin to drift and pull aside, drawing further and further away from the things of God. It's very easy to let the situations in your life get into your heart and begin to control you. After a while you find that you no longer live for the coming of the Lord.

Surely the Lord knows there are struggles in this life. But, in the midst of them, we should recognize our constant need for the Lord. We can't afford to lose sight of Him for one moment.

## **Watch on the Battlefield**

Luke 21:36

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

WATCH! I'd hate to go to sleep on the battlefield, while other Christians stand watch over me. I wouldn't last the night! I wouldn't more than get to sleep before they'd be dozing, too!

Some people just don't seem to understand that the Lord warns us here for a serious reason. Why should He take the time to warn us of His sudden coming, and the importance to be found ready? If it doesn't make any difference, then why do we need to be warned? We need to understand that the coming of Jesus is near at hand. This is why we are warned so strongly to watch and pray—always.

You may talk about the coming of Jesus. You may testify about it. You may even think about it during the day. But are you living what you claim to know about His coming? Are you reflecting His coming in your daily life? Are you watching and praying? Are you watching your life, not allowing it to get overcharged?

Are you watching with your heart, lest things slip in and draw you away? Are you watching the door of your heart to keep out things that bog you down?

It's not hit or miss. You've got to watch—and you've got to pray.

How much do you pray? Most Christians have a very shallow prayer life, if any. Judge your own life. You've got to have an up-to-date experience with the Lord, and such an experience requires that you watch and pray.

The Lord tells us to watch and pray that we be counted worthy to escape all that is coming upon the earth. It's coming as a snare. Great trouble is coming, and who is going to stand? According to God's Word, those who stand are those who watch and pray.

Now, first of all, you must be born again. You'll never make it into the kingdom of God unless you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. And after you have done this, you must also be in tune with the message the Lord gives us to watch and pray, ready and waiting for His coming.

Note that He doesn't just tell you to pray: He tells you to watch and pray.

## Watch for the Signs

Luke 21:25-28

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Have you ever looked down the barrel of a gun? Does this passage of Scripture sound like we ought to be playing church? Some morning the sun isn't going to shine. It will be totally dark—you won't be able to see your hand in front of your face!

Men's hearts will fail them for fear during such a time. Heart attacks will be more common than colds. People will drop dead from fear and exhaustion, worrying and fretting over the things that come to pass.

Yet, with all this taking place, many will still be playing church. I trust you won't be among them.

Now, Jesus said that when that day comes, it will come as a snare. It will happen suddenly! All of a sudden it will be upon the entire world. There will be no warning nor announcement just before it comes. Jesus already warned us, already foretold it.

Who cares? So what if the sun doesn't shine? Why should I get excited about that? So what if the moon turns to blood? Why should I get all worried about that? Why should it bother me if the stars fall down to the earth?

This is the attitude many have.

Not me! I've got a soul, and I intend to take care of it. I want to make eternal life. I know that Jesus is coming for a glorious church without spot or wrinkle—and I want to be part of it. I want to be numbered amongst the faithful: right up to the end.

God said the day was coming when He would take the heavens and the earth, and shake them. And when He does, everything that will shake will move and fall. The only things that will remain standing are those things which are unshakable. We should be watching and praying, that we may be amongst the unmovable ones.

## Watch for the Storms

Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Our life is built upon a solid foundation: the Rock Christ Jesus (or it *should* be built upon Him). And those who are built upon Him will be able to withstand the strongest of shakings. Yes, Jesus Christ is the solid Rock, and will not shake in that day—with Him as our foundation we will not fall.

But all who are not built upon the solid Rock Christ Jesus will shake, topple, and fall when the storms come.

Realize that there's a great storm coming upon this earth. Jesus told us it is coming. He gave us warning. And He told us what to do to prepare for it.

What is your house built upon? Are you building upon the Lord Jesus Christ? Be sure that you're not kidding yourself somewhere along the line. Be sure you're not playing around and taking this thing lightly.

Jesus warned us to watch and pray; we'd best take Him seriously.

Have you ever seen a warning sign that said Danger! High Voltage! What did you do when you saw that sign? Did you reach out and grab the wires? Why not? You couldn't see any voltage (whatever that is). Listen, the sign warned you, and if you are foolish enough to ignore the warning then you'll pay the consequences.

Warnings are put on pill bottles—yet look at all the drug addicts who ignore the warning. Why don't they heed? Warnings are put on cigarette ads and packs. There is a clear warning from the Surgeon General that smoking is dangerous to your health, yet the cigarette sales are still soaring.

In God's Word, He is warning us to be ready for the coming of Jesus. This is the most serious warning ever given—yet many of God's people don't want to pay heed to this solemn warning straight from the mouth of God.

It's about time we buckle down and give earnest heed to these words from the Lord. If you're not saved, you're in trouble. If you're not praying, you're in trouble. If you don't have a consistent prayer life, you're in trouble.

If you're too busy for a prayer life, you'd best readjust your schedule. If you're too lazy to pray, you'd best get diligent. Don't kid yourself. Jesus told you that you needed to pray.

Now, He also told us to watch. This takes more time than praying does. You might not spend all your time in prayer; but you must spend all your time watching.

We're living in a dangerous, serious hour: and God is warning His Church to get ready. There are some things which will come to pass on this earth that some of you just are not ready for. You're not giving earnest heed to the warnings of the Lord. Jesus gave us this earnest warning to prepare our hearts, but you are not heeding His warning.

He warns us because He doesn't want us to fail. He doesn't want us to be left behind at His coming. He doesn't want us to be carried away by the floods of pressure.

But if we're building on sand, then a storm will wash us away. Our house will not stand.

The Lord told us to watch, but some are so sanctimonious that they don't know how to watch. They speak of the Lord's coming someday, but never stop to consider just how bad things really are. They feel trouble will come upon the earth after they've gone home to be with the Lord.

We can relax and take things easy if we can convince our hearts that nothing will happen until after Jesus comes. That would be nice, but that's just not the way it is. If we open our eyes and watch, we'll know that things aren't that way.

Other Christians have had to go through many hard things. Why should we be any different? Do you know how many Russians have been persecuted for their faith? Things weren't always that bad. Yet the true church was forced underground. Christians were no longer free to openly read their Bibles or worship together. Many were put to death or kept in prison and tortured for their faith. Many had thought such a thing could never happen in Russia—but it did.

One of the busiest mission fields in the entire world—until the 40's—was China with its teeming millions of souls. What happened? The thing that many thought could never happen in China! Nothing like that could happen until after the coming of the Lord—but it did. Millions of Christians were put to death when the nation fell to communism.

What about our nation? How many believers are watching and praying? How many are obeying the apostle's writings and praying for our leaders?

## **Watch, Like Noah**

Luke 17:26,27

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all..

Eating? Surely one has to eat if they want to stay alive! Drinking? You'd die of thirst if you stopped drinking. Jesus wasn't speaking of our eating and drinking each day to stay alive: He was referring to surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of this world.

He warns that the generation at the time of His coming would be like this. And our present generation is filled with these things. It is totally given over to them. Who is found watching? Who is praying?

"I can't watch and pray right now—I'm going out on the town!" Eating and drinking are the order of the day—people are out to have a good time.

People will be getting married right up to the time of Jesus' return. And there's nothing wrong with marriage between a man and a woman. But today we see one person being given in marriage over and over, as many as five or six times!

Marriage with the same partner for life was ordained by God. Yet even in the church multiple marriages are prevalent and accepted as the norm.

One of these days the great crowd is going to find out that somebody yanked the rug right out from under them. Their house is being built on the sand, and great will be the fall of it. It will be too late. They should have been concerned and taken the sayings of Jesus to heart.

Let's not be naïve. That's the worst thing we can be. Let's not take these warnings lightly. When the Lord says, "Warning! High Voltage!" don't stick your finger in to see if He really means it. He warns us so strongly— yet many take His warnings with a grain of salt.

Some tend to be like ostriches, burying their head in the sand, ignoring all that's going on. They don't want to hear anything that may make them worry. They don't want to listen to any sermons that might wake them up to admit the hour that they're living in.

"Take it easy! Don't scare anyone with the facts." They want to be lulled to believe that nothing like that could ever happen. They want to sit in a rocking chair, and have someone sing them to sleep. They're satisfied to continue sliding along just the way they've been going.

Do you want to be like that? Or, do you want to endure till Jesus comes, and be found ready? What did He tell you to do? Watch and pray. Those are His words, not mine. I'm just telling you what He said.

## **Watch, Unlike Lot's Wife**

Luke 17:32

Remember Lot's wife.

Why does Jesus tell us to remember Lot's wife? She turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back as she was leaving Sodom. Her heart was overcharged with surfeiting. She had her mind on Sodom, and all that she was leaving behind. She had her mind on all the things she enjoyed back there. She loved living in that wicked city.

Now, she had been warned not to look back as she fled for safety. Yet, she couldn't bear it any longer and looked back! She only looked for a moment, and was instantly turned into a pillar of salt.

What a solemn warning this is for us. This is why Jesus told us to remember Lot's wife. I have a wife, and she's very close to me. It would be awful to think that I'd go to heaven, and she would be left behind. It happened to Lot's wife, and we must be cautious that it doesn't happen to us.

Many have been saved from the beggarly elements of this world, yet are looking back. Their heart is still back there in the world. One day they will be in great distress when the Lord comes because they were not ready. They were found looking back.

Luke 9:62

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.

You'd best keep your hands on the plow and watch where're you're going. Keep your eyes on what you're doing. Don't turn around to look back at where you've already been.

This is the Lord's way of saying, "Look, I've called you to make it into the kingdom. I've called you to separate yourself from the world. I've called you to come out from the world, and walk with Me. If you don't want to obey Me, you will miss the call."

You're not fit for the kingdom unless you are willing to come out from the world and serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

## Watch over Your Heart

I John 2:15

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

It's hard to give up the things that you love. People have a hard time giving up this world because they love it so much.

Once again I would exhort you from the Word to watch and pray. When Jesus went to pray in the garden, He told His disciples to watch and pray for just one hour.

An hour is just sixty minutes—two half hours—four periods of fifteen minutes. A lot of people stay up at night to watch a late movie—yet can't find time to watch and pray.

Now, Jesus was facing an awful trial. He was at the conclusion of His earthly ministry. The Father had revealed to Him that the time had come to be offered up. Jesus knew what was coming. He knew of the sufferings which lay ahead. And He went to prepare Himself in prayer. He was hurting inside, and wanted His friends to stand with Him in His darkest hour.

## Watch Through the Night

Mark 14:33-41

And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.

And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him. And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

These disciples were exercising their prayer life. And this is the normal prayer life for many Christians—lying in their prayer closet, sleeping. Well, sleep on!

Jesus told the disciples to watch and pray. He tried to bring them around to realizing why He asked them to do this. Yes, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. That's the problem!

Lack of discipline made the disciples weak. It's easy to be slack. It's easy to give yourself over to surfeiting. What happens when you decide to fast? The flesh cries out for food. So, instead of fasting and praying as you intended, you decide to just pray.

The flesh is weak because it wants its own way. And it is determined to have its own way. Nothing but spiritual discipline will put it in its place. "Listen, old man, I'm going to pray whether you like it or not. I'm going to give myself to prayer. God said to watch and pray, and that's just what I intend to do."

Listen, there's no other way: you've got to discipline yourself. If you don't, who will? After all, who is the keeper of your soul? Jesus may have promised to keep you, but His hands are tied unless you cooperate.

Because Jesus had Himself under subjection in the garden, He didn't lie down. He not only had a spirit willing to go to Calvary, but also had a body that was under willing subjection.

Take this message to heart, and realize that God's people have to watch and pray. They've got to get with it or they will not be ready for the coming of the Lord.