

Watch, Pray and Be Ready

by Wayne Dailey,
Founding Pastor, Bethel Revival Center

As in the Days of Noah

Matthew 24:36-39

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

As it was in the days of Noah: Noah and his family were the only righteous ones on the entire earth. There was a great falling away, until everything was so apostate that God was sick of the whole mess.

Genesis 6:5,6

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

God gives an example to show us what will take place at the very end of the age so we might be aware of the nearness of the end. The people of that day didn't know the reality of God's warning until the day Noah entered the ark and the flood actually came. They let His warning slip in one ear and out the other!

Hebrews 11:7

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Noah didn't build that ark in the dark; it was done out in the open, for all to see. He didn't build it overnight. God warned the people for 120 years, but no one wanted to believe.

Now, what were the people doing while Noah was building that ark? They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. And the Lord warns us that this is just the way it will be in the end. He warns us to watch and pray, that we be counted worthy to escape:

Luke 21:34-36

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

If we're not cautious, if we're surfeiting and taken up with the cares of this life, we might find ourselves in the same position they were in.

II Peter 3:3-7

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying,

Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

We can see a similarity of these conditions in our present day:

. . . marrying and giving in marriage. The church of our day is in a mess over this issue. Many preachers have no regard for God's Word in this matter. They encourage divorce and remarriage as a way of life.

Back in Noah's day, God's people were intermarrying with the unsaved and bringing down the judgment of God.

Genesis 6:1-3

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Now, when Noah and his family entered the ark and the door was shut, the people began to realize that God meant business! The ground broke up and the water began to gush out. Dark clouds began to roll in, and the rains came. And it rained for forty days and forty nights.

They all perished in that flood except those eight souls who were saved in the ark, able to ride above the storm in safety.

The Lord likens all of this to the end of the age, where all will perish but for those who are safe in Jesus Christ.

Live in Readiness

Recognize that hearing the truth is important, but acting upon what we hear is also important.

Matthew 24:40-42

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

You could be walking down the street with someone and suddenly be taken away, leaving them behind; or, if you're not ready, you could be the one left behind! This is why the Lord would exhort each of us to watch. It is our duty and obligation to watch unto the coming of the Lord.

We should always remember that it is our life, it is our soul, that is at stake. Yes, it is our heaven, or it is our hell — period!

Why watch? First of all, because it's your obligation to consider your soul in light of God's Word, that you might be ready. There are those who will end up in hell in spite of how much others pray and seek God for their souls. They'll lose out because they refused to repent and heed the warnings that came their way.

Many allow themselves to become careless in their living, disregarding eternal issues. It may be just little things, but they get careless in these areas, drawing away more and more.

The day and the hour of His coming are one of heaven's closely guarded secrets. Why? Because the Lord wants us to live in readiness every day. If they knew exactly when the Lord would return, many souls would get down to business that very day, and not one minute earlier.

But God hasn't stated when it would be: only that it would be, and that it would be a two-fold event:

First, Jesus is coming to take away those who are ready for His coming, and then judgment is going to fall on those left behind.

God has an obligation to the righteous. The righteous are the apple of His eye: they aren't appointed unto His wrath.

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.

We are to watch and pray, that we may be ready to escape. Watch, and pray, and be ready. That's as simple as ABC.

Ready for what? Ready for His coming.

Matthew 24:27

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Jesus is going to come quickly and suddenly! All will be caught unaware — except for those who love Him and are living in readiness for that moment. It won't catch them unaware.

It's not that we've got to recognize this day when it comes. No, it's that we've got to be ready when it comes: watching and praying, living in expectation, and, thus, caught up to meet Him in the air.

Many won't be ready. They'll be preoccupied with self, taken up with the cares and pleasures of this life, with no thought or time for the Lord. And a lot of these will be church people! churchy, but not serving the Lord in truth.

You don't want to be one of those! You want to be found watching and praying, living the life in readiness for His coming.

Of all previous generations, we see so much in our day that tells us we are at the end of the age. Everywhere one looks, prophecy is being fulfilled. Yes, all the signs are right before our eyes:

See Matthew 24:6-8:

- ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars
- nation shall rise against nation
- kingdom against kingdom
- famines and pestilences
- earthquakes in divers places

All these are the beginning of sorrows:

Wars and rumors of wars: Every where you turn it seems there is a war, or one brewing, ready to break out.

Famines: a common word in world news today.

Earthquakes: Some weeks it appears the earth is rumbling from one continent to another with major earthquakes.

The Lord said it would be like this as the end approaches. How did He know? Because there isn't anything He doesn't know. And He takes time to tell us so we might be aware of the time we are living in — and that we might watch and pray.

Israel – The Greatest Sign

I believe the greatest sign we have to go by is the restoration of the little nation of Israel and the return of the Jews to their homeland. The very existence of that nation is crucial to world history. Realize that Israel wasn't reestablished just yesterday. God brought this to pass over sixty years ago.

Of all the things you'll see that tell the end is at hand, the fact that Israel has been restored is a sign the end is very near. For nearly 2,000 years there was no nation of Israel — from 70 AD right down to 1948. Every time you hear any news about the nation of Israel, let it's very existence be a sign to you of the shortness of the hour.

Luke 21:24

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

This is a sign unto us Gentiles to realize that our days are numbered, just like the generation of Noah's time had their days numbered.

God is getting prepared for the end, for the climax of all time. He has the stage all set. Whenever you hear or see that name "Israel," let it be a sign unto you that the end is very near.

Matthew 24:32,33

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

This parable of the budding of the fig tree refers to God bringing His people back together and bringing forth Israel as a nation again. Yes, this is the most pronounced event of our generation in this end time.

Know the season: God wants us to recognize the season we are living in. When the fig tree begins to shoot forth buds, it tells you something: Summer is near at hand. And as we look at the signs of the time being fulfilled, we can know that the end is at hand.

All of this should tell the church to put great emphasis upon watching and praying.

Matthew 24:34

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Do you remember 1967? What took place in that year that was so outstanding? The war that lasted only six days and then it was all over with. The newspaper read like an Old Testament account of wars in those days.

My, if Israel loses a war, they will be lost as a nation: but God isn't about to let that happen, for Israel plays a prominent part in God's end-time plans. God said this generation wouldn't pass till all these things are fulfilled. And He says He will wind all of this down to a showdown in one generation.

Serious about the Coming of the Lord

Do you have any time *not* to be serious? If you don't make it to heaven in that day, whose fault will it really be? Will it do you any good in hell to blame someone else? If you wind up in hell, there will be nobody else to blame — it will be your own fault.

What do you suppose it's going to mean in the Day of Judgment when people tend to make excuses? "Lord, it's not my fault that I didn't live for you!" And what will the Lord say? "You're here, aren't you?"

That is why we are warned in His Word to be ready, to be found watching and waiting.

Matthew 24:42

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Now there is one thing you can know for sure: He is coming!

Matthew 24:44

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

When is this hour going to take place? When is it going to be? . . . When? When you least expect it.

Have you given any thought to His coming? Could it be today? You don't know, do you? Does that mean you can take a chance and live the way you want for a bit longer? After all, He didn't come yesterday, so it's unlikely that He'll come today . . . so you say.

An hour we think not! Don't waste time in trying to figure out when the Lord is coming. The thing you *can* do is this: Take time to get ready for His coming — and stay ready!

Someone as great and mighty as God is — someone as powerful as He is — what will He do when He looses His power to bring forth His wrath? The book of Revelation (see Revelation 19:11-16) gives us insight into what He will do — but we don't want to be here to find out first hand!

Now, the world is going to get worse — every day, right up to the end. Some of those conditions are going to be very subtle to turn many aside.

What are we going to do? Well, if we are ready, then we have nothing to worry about. But it's so easy to play church — easy to get one's mind all taken up with other things — and think we're all set for the coming of the Lord.

Revelation 3:16

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.

You can't afford to grow cool, to get lukewarm, for that opens you up to the temptations of the devil. The lukewarm have just enough to cause them to think they're all right. They have just enough to keep their head above water, doing as they please and assuming nothing is wrong with their soul.

Listen, it's not enough to be a churchgoer, to simply be religious. You have to be born again and then go on to live in expectation of the coming of the Lord.

I trust this message has helped you to see the seriousness of being ready, and if you're not ready, to take steps to get ready.