

END-TIMES ISSUES

#2 The need to get ready (1).

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PREPARING FOR JESUS' RETURN.

THREE THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS' RETURN:

- Jesus is coming back. (It's a *fact*.)
- We don't know when.
- We need to always be ready – on guard and alert.

[People] **will see the Son of Man coming** in the clouds with great power and glory.

No one knows about that day or hour ...

Be on your guard and stay alert! For you do not know when the appointed time will come.

Mark 13:26, 32a, 33 (BSB)

YES, there are SIGNS.

➡ They point to the time/event.

- ✓ As Jesus' return approaches, they will probably *intensify*.
- ✓ *But they are NOT the time/event itself. They come before it.*

They may point from a distance...

They may point when the time has almost arrived...

... **they don't mean that the end has come. ...**

... **he is near, at the door.**

Matthew 24:6b, 33b (GW)

Either way...

➡ **Our need is to be on guard and alert** (Mark 13:33).

Our need is to be on guard and alert.*

Several concepts come together (in different passages) that show us our need. (These concepts often overlap.)

- Waking up / not drowsy / alert / watching.**
 - ✓ Emphasizing mental alertness.
 - ✓ The opposite of drowsy or sleeping.
 - ✓ Many passages contrast this with being asleep or being caught off-guard by a thief.
- Seeing / looking** (for what you need to look for).
 - ✓ The emphasis is on seeing, using your eyes (used figuratively in these verses).

➔ MORE ➔

* [Different Bible translations may use different words, but will all have the same focus on being aware.]

- Being on guard / on the lookout (for something).
- Being ready / prepared (for Jesus' coming).

The first three concepts focus on our *awareness*; #4 focuses on our *response* to that awareness.

As we look through the New Testament, we discover ...

- ➡ This end-time focus applies to *both* Jews and Gentiles.
- ➡ **NO** group of Christians is said to be "exempt" from this focus.

WHY? ① **WHY** do we need to stay awake / be alert / watch / not be drowsy?

- This first concept occurs more often than all the others we have mentioned.
- WHY?** Perhaps because it is so easy to disobey!
 - ✓ Obedience requires *action*; disobedience doesn't. You can disobey this command without doing *anything*!

HOW CAN YOU SAY I SINNED?

➔

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!

➔

THAT'S EXACTLY HOW!

- Also, if we are *willing* to obey this command, obeying the others will be more natural.
 - ✓ You can't obey them if you are unwilling to obey this one.
You can't look for something if you're unwilling to wake up!

- It's easy to become "sleepy" in fulfilling our obligation to be awake and alert!
 - ↳ What Jesus' disciples did *physically* might be an illustration of what we are inclined to do *spiritually*.

FALL ASLEEP? I'D NEVER DO THAT! I'M TOO SPIRITUAL!

Jesus' disciples demonstrate physically what we may be inclined to do spiritually.


- ✓ **What Jesus said to the disciples.**
(A short time after they had all expressed complete loyalty to him – see vs. 35.)

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
Matthew 26:41 (NIV)

- ✓ **The disciple's response.**

The disciple's response?

[Jesus] again found them **sleeping**, because their eyes were heavy.
Matthew 26:43b (NIV)



The word "watch" (in v. 41) is one of the same words used to describe how we should prepare for Jesus' second coming.
Might there be a reason for this? (Could this event be a visual picture of a spiritual issue - of how easy it is to not obey this command?)

We can talk about being ready and watchful.
But it's easy to become *desensitized* to the signs that remind us that he is coming soon.

This is all the more reason for the many warnings about being awake and alert!

- Jesus' return will be sudden. Many will be caught by surprise.
- Even though signs exist that point to his return, a "relaxed" attitude may make it easy for us to overlook them.

✓ **HIS RETURN IS COMPARED TO:** A thief in the night, resulting in destruction when people aren't ready.

✓ **OUR RESPONSE IS COMPARED TO:** Being awake vs. sleeping. Also day vs. night; light vs. dark, etc.


BUT I'M SAVED! I'M READY! THERE'S NOTHING ELSE I NEED TO DO!

Wrong!

Scripture describes it as an ongoing attitude, not a one-time act.

THAT'S LIKE SAYING, "THE BANK IS SECURE, SO I DON'T NEED TO STAND ON GUARD!"

"Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake..."
Revelation 16:15a (NIV)



Our tendency is to have a HIGHER opinion of ourselves... Higher than reality.

↳ Consider these warnings (below), which are given to people who claim to be saved! (There are dozens of similar warnings.)

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!
1 Corinthians 10:12 (NIV)

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought ...
Romans 12:3b (NIV)

... so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises.
Hebrews 6:12 (NASB)

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
Galatians 6:3 (BSB)

★ **Here is what Jesus says about being awake/alert.** ★
(As recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke.)

After a description of end-time issues, Jesus tells us:

- ⇒ We don't know when it's going to happen; but it's going to be a catastrophic event. (Matthew 24:36-41; Mark 13:32; Luke 17:26-35)
- ⇒ Therefore, be on guard / alert / watching! (Matthew 24:42, repeated in 25:13; Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36)

Therefore **keep watch**, because **you do not know** the day on which your Lord will come.
Matthew 24:42 (BSB)

Be on your guard and stay alert!
For **you do not know** when the appointed time will come.
Mark 13:33 (BSB)

⇒ **Luke's account** focuses on the need to "escape" what is going to happen, and to be able to stand in Jesus' presence.

"**Be always on the watch**, and **pray** that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke 21:36 (NIV)

Luke's end-time account ends after this statement. He has already mentioned many of the other issues in previous chapters... so there was no need to repeat them here.

⇒ **Mark's account** shows us that this command applies to ALL, not just to the apostles.

"And what I say to you, **I say to everyone: Be alert!**"

Mark 13:37 (CSB)

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MORE reasons to be alert / watchful.

① **We each have a job to do!**

❖ **In Mark:** *Don't be caught sleeping on the job!*

"It's like a man who goes on a trip and leaves his house in the care of his servants. He gives each one a special job to do. He tells the servant guarding the door to **always be ready**.

And **this is what I am telling you now**. You must **always be ready**. You don't know when the owner of the house will come back. He might come in the afternoon, or at midnight, or in the early morning, or when the sun rises.

If you are **always ready**, he will not find you sleeping, even if he comes back earlier than expected.

I tell you this, and **I say it to everyone: 'Be ready!'**"

Mark 13:34-37 (ERV)

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❖ **In Matthew:** *The contrast between the faithful servant (who remains watchful) and the disobedient servant (who doesn't) – a parable.*

⇒ The faithful and wise servant:

If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a **reward**.

Matthew 24:46 (NLT)

⇒ The foolish and disobedient servant:

His master will return unexpectedly. Then his master will **severely punish** him and assign him a place with the hypocrites. People will cry and be in extreme pain there.

Matthew 24:50-51 (GW)

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② **When the time comes, it will be too late to get ready.**

❖ **In Matthew:** *Further warnings, contrasting those who share in the wedding banquet vs. those who are shut out – a parable.*
(This parable is based on the wedding customs of Jesus' day.)

⇒ Those who were prepared and ready:

Those who were ready went in with [the bridegroom] to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

Matthew 25:10b (BSB)

⇒ Those who were NOT prepared and NOT ready:

They said, 'Sir, sir! Open the door to let us in.' But the bridegroom answered, 'Certainly not! **I don't even know you.**'

Matthew 25:11b-12 (ERV)

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★ **The "thief" concept: A description of Jesus' return.** ★

Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

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.

So you also must **be ready**, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matthew 24:42-44 (NIV)

Two main emphases:

- It will be sudden; so we need to be ready.
- It will be catastrophic for those who are not ready.

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❖ **According to Jesus:** *Merely claiming to be saved is not enough!*
(A warning to the church at Sardis.)

⇒ God sees past our pretensions... and into our hearts.

I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, yet you are dead.

Wake up and strengthen what remains, which was about to die; for I have found your deeds incomplete in the sight of My God.

Revelation 3:1b-2 (BSB)

⇒ The necessity of repentance (if you want to be ready).

Remember, then, what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you do not **wake up**, **I will come like a thief**, and you will not know the hour when I will come upon you.

Revelation 3:3 (BSB)

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❖ **In the book of Revelation:** *Being ready is likened to being clothed.*

"Look, **I am coming like a thief**. Blessed is the one who is **alert** and remains **clothed**, so that he may not go around naked and people see his shame."
Revelation 16:15 (CSB)

⇒ The significance of this goes *beyond* our external apparel (or lack thereof). Consider what clothes signify in this verse: ⇨

Concerning the "bride of Christ" (= the church), we are told...

"Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."
Revelation 19:8 (NIV)

➔ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

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❖ **Paul reminds us:** *We who are ready have the confident hope of salvation!*

⇒ We know that the day will come without warning.

⇒ It will be a terrifying day for those who are not ready.

⇒ But we are ready, and will not be overcome by it.

Now about the times and seasons, brothers, we do not need to write to you. For you are fully aware that the Day of the Lord will **come like a thief in the night**.

While people are saying, "Peace and security," destruction will come upon them **suddenly**, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they **will not escape**.

But you, brothers, are not in the darkness so that this day should overtake you like a thief. For you are all sons of the light and sons of the day; **we do not belong to the night or to the darkness**.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 (BSB)

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This leaves us with a great responsibility... and a great privilege!

⇒ We cannot live like the world does. If we claim to be saved, we need to live like *saved* people!

⇒ Whether we are *physically* dead or alive, our future hope is secure!

⇒ We have good reasons encourage each other!

So then, let us not sleep as the others do, but let us remain **awake** and sober [= self-controlled].

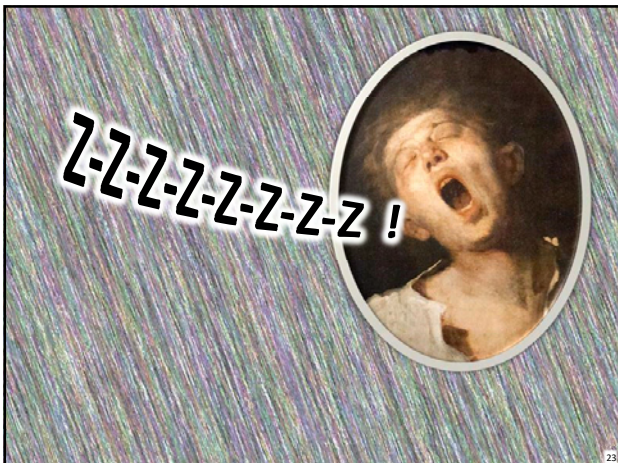
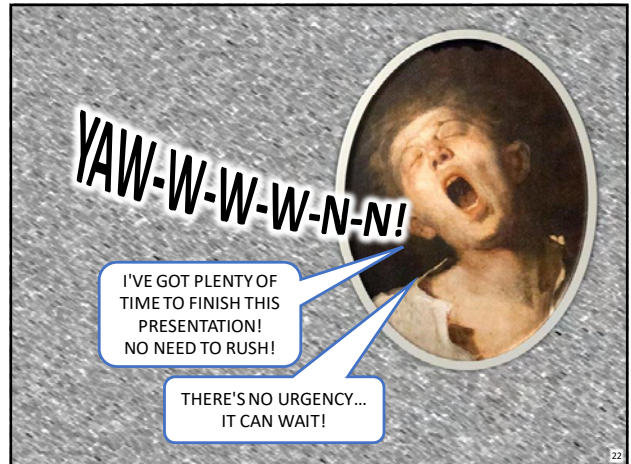
For those who sleep, sleep at night; and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since **we belong to the day**, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of our hope of salvation.

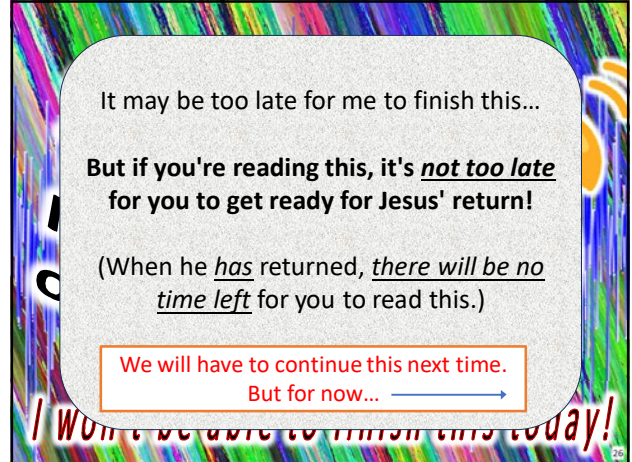
For God has not appointed us to suffer wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

Therefore encourage and build one another up, just as you are already doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-11 (BSB)

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YOUR MISSION!

Do you want to be ready?
Are you willing to get ready?
You can find out how!!!

- ✓ **Some of the verses we have looked at** (and their contexts) tell us some of the things we must do.
- ✓ **Luke 12** is also a good passage to read. It is a collection of issues related to living NOW, and to preparing for ETERNITY. (It also mentions the "need to be ready" and the "coming as a thief" concept.)
- ✓ **2 Peter 3** (mentions the "Day of the Lord" and the "thief" concept); and **Romans 12-13** (defines what "love" is; also the urgency of living a life of love, in light of Jesus' coming).

Credits (1)

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