

END-TIMES ISSUES

#3 The need to get ready (2).

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1

WE'VE ALREADY LEARNED...

THREE THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS' RETURN:

1. Jesus is coming back. (It's a *fact*.)
2. We don't know when.
3. 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)

TODAY'S GOAL IS TO FINISH THIS.

2

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.)

SHORT REVIEW

① **Waking up / not drowsy / alert / watching.**

- ✓ Mental alertness; often contrasted with being asleep or being caught off-guard (such as by a thief).

TODAY

② **Seeing / looking** (for what you need to look for).

- ✓ Can be translated as "being on guard"; but the emphasis is on *seeing*, using your eyes (used figuratively in these verses).

③ **Being on guard / on the lookout** (for something).

- ✓ Emphasis is on being *constantly* alert.

④ **Being ready / prepared** (for Jesus' coming).

- ✓ A general statement.

3

WHY?

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

SHORT REVIEW

- This first concept **occurs more often** than all the others.
 - ✓ Perhaps because it is so easy to disobey, by simply NOT doing it (inactivity)! Then this happens... →
 - ✓ Without alertness, the other commands can't be obeyed.
- **When Jesus returns, it will be too late to start** becoming alert!
 - ✓ His return is compared to a *thief*, who brings horrible consequences for those who have not been watching for him.
 - ✓ Those who are willing to be alert now have nothing to fear.
- Watchfulness is **an ongoing attitude**, not a one-time act.
 - ✓ Scripture passages that focus on this issue often include instructions for developing this attitude.

4

"Staying awake and watchful" is often linked to certain other concepts. So is its opposite. Examples:

Being **alert/watchful** is linked to being *alive, awake, clothed*; and in the *light, day*. Also: *sober (self-controlled) and receiving salvation*.

Being **not alert/watchful** is linked to being *dead, asleep, naked*; and in the *darkness, night*. Also: *drunk* and *suffering wrath*.

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.
- Scripture mentions **NO** time period when this focus is not needed.
- **IN OTHER WORDS:** Scripture gives us **NO** opportunity to excuse ourselves from this obligation!

5

WHY?

② **WHY do we need to be "seeing / looking" for it?**

- We don't know the **exact timing** of Jesus' return... but there are many things we can – and must – recognize *before* that time!

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

Mark 13:33 (BSB)

Some translations say "**watch out.**" The emphasis is on seeing it and **recognizing** it for what it is.

- There is also the **danger of being led astray**, if we *don't* recognize certain things.

Jesus answered, "**See to it** that no one deceives you."

Matthew 24:4 (BSB)

6

- We can be "aware" of the facts. These things can be *recognized* ("seen"). Jesus used a parable to illustrate this.

Then Jesus told them a parable:
"Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, **you can see for yourselves** and know that summer is near.
So also, **when you see these things happening**, know that the kingdom of God is near."
Luke 21:29-31 (BSB)

THE THINGS MENTIONED IN THE EARLIER PART OF THE CHAPTER.

- Because of this, *we have no excuse*. We need to be *watching for them!*

So **be on your guard**; I have told you everything ahead of time.
Mark 13:23 (NIV)

- Because of this, *we have an obligation*. We must "spur" and "encourage" each other to pursue righteous living!

We cannot do these things if we are unwilling to interact with each other!

And let us consider how we may **spur one another on toward love and good deeds**, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **encouraging one another**—and all the more **as you see the Day approaching**.
Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

- This obligation is based on what Jesus is going to do in the *future* – *at his return*. (See also vs. 22-23, which give us two other obligations, based on what Jesus did in the *past*.)

WHY?

③ WHY do we need to be "on guard / on the lookout"?

- We are in danger of becoming preoccupied with the things of this present life.

This can involve *anything* that keeps us distracted. It could be entertainment; it could be anxiety. Or anything in between.

"Be careful not to spend your time having parties and getting drunk or worrying about this life. If you do that, you won't be able to think straight, and the end might come when **you are not ready**."
Luke 21:34 (ERV)

This is a *real* and *serious* danger to look out for!
People who claim to be following Jesus can do things like these without actually claiming to deny Christ!
THIS IS HOW MANY PEOPLE BECOME CHURCH-GOING FAKES.

Scripture gives us many warnings about this danger.

- ✓ The apostle John describes such people as still **being in love with the world***. *Such people do not have the Father's love in them.*

THE WARNING! ⇨

About those who love the world.

NOTE THE CONTRAST

About those who love God.

Don't love the world and what it offers.

Those who **love the world** don't have the Father's love in them. Not everything that the world offers—physical gratification, greed, and extravagant lifestyles—comes from the Father. It comes from the world, and the world and its evil desires are **passing away**.
But the person who does what God wants lives forever.
1 John 2:15-17 (GW)

* (They demonstrate this by the way they pursue what the world offers.)

- ✓ Such people **may actually look saved**... for a while.

EXAMPLE: DEMAS.

For a while, he worked with the apostle Paul.

My dear friend Luke, the physician, and **Demas** greet you.
Colossians 4:14 (GW)

Epaphras, ... and my coworkers Mark, Aristarchus, **Demas**, and Luke send you greetings.
Philemon 1:23a, 24 (GW)

But eventually his *greatest* love won out.

Demas has abandoned me. He **fell in love with this present world** and went to the city of Thessalonica.
2 Timothy 4:10a (GW)

- ✓ "The Parable of the Sower" (a farmer who is planting seeds) shows us that these people may look saved. But they have become **preoccupied with the affairs of this present world**.
Note the contrast:

THESE PEOPLE LOVE THE WORLD.

Other seed fell among **thorns**, which grew up with it and **choked** the plants. ...
The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are **choked** by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they **do not mature**.
Luke 8:7, 14 (NIV)

THESE PEOPLE LOVE JESUS.

Still other seed fell on **good soil**. It came up and **yielded a crop**, a hundred times more than was sown. ...
But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who **hear the word, retain it**, and by persevering **produce a crop**.
Luke 8:8, 15 (NIV)

✓ The days of Noah and the days of Lot give us examples of people being **preoccupied with "daily life."**

- In both cases, we read (in the Old Testament) about the wickedness of the people.
- In both cases, we read (in the New Testament) about the types of activities that they were preoccupied with.

① **Days of Noah:** Preoccupied with the daily activities of life.

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark.

Then the flood came and **destroyed them all.**"

Luke 17:26-27 (NIV)

13

② **Days of Lot:** Preoccupied with the daily activities of life.

"It was the same in the days of Lot.

People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.

But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and **destroyed them all.**"

Luke 17:28-29 (NIV)

③ **Application to Jesus' return:** MANY will be preoccupied with the daily activities of life.

↳ **But there is ONE big difference:** Today, we have *many more options* for being distracted—activities, entertainment, hobbies, goals and careers... even "church activities."

"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

Luke 17:30 (NIV)

14

✓ Church-going fakes often have "divided interests"; but it is **NOT** the same as the "divided interests" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7.

NOT THE SAME

The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.

But the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife—and **his interests are divided.**

1 Corinthians 7:32b-34a (NIV)

- This "divided interest" involves two legitimate concerns—*both of which can be done for the glory of God* (as Paul instructs in 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- In contrast: Church-going fakes may focus on God at certain times during the week; but most of the time, they are choosing to do things with no concern over whether or not those things are honoring to God.

NOT THE SAME

15

WHY? ④ **WHY** do we need to "be ready / prepared" (for Jesus' coming)?

Simply because of the things we have already learned:

- Jesus is coming like a thief... and we don't know when.
- Our natural inclination is to NOT expect him, and to NOT be ready.

Therefore, you, too, **must be ready** because the Son of Man **will return when you least expect him.**

Matthew 24:44 (GW)

- His coming will result in a horrible catastrophe for those who are NOT ready: They may claim to be saved; but the door will be shut to those who aren't ready (explained by a parable, Matthew 25:1-13).

... 'I don't even know you.'

Matthew 25:12b (ERV)

16

★ Questions & Answers ★

- Why all these warnings about needing to get ready?**
 - ✓ It's easy for us to forget things; so we need reminded!
 - ✓ The fact that it's an *obligation* means that the devil will try to get us to disobey! Our old nature also wants us to disobey. God has given us the power to fight back, but we must be *willing* to do so... and *doing so takes effort!*
- Those warnings can't apply to me, because I'm saved!**
 - ✓ Anyone can make *claims* about salvation; but Jesus evaluates us by our *lives*.
 - ✓ Saved people *choose* to heed the warnings; mere talkers—the fakes—don't.
 - ✓ Saved people may trip and fall; but they get back up and continue their "journey" of heeding the warnings.

17

- Many people lived and died without Jesus returning! Why did they need to get ready? Wasn't that a waste of all their effort?**
 - ✓ Our *willingness* to be ready demonstrates our love for Jesus. We are developing values and habits that will remain with us *beyond this present life*.
 - ✓ Even if we don't understand why, it's much wiser to obey Jesus, than to disobey him!

Those who live ready will die ready ... and will remain ready for Jesus' return.

Those who live NOT ready will die NOT ready ... and will remain NOT ready for Jesus' return.

18

- **How can I know if I'm ready? (Answer #1)**
 - ✓ If you are pursuing the life that Jesus requires of you, then you are ready.
 - ✓ A "ready" life will require sacrifice and value changes.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. *

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

Matthew 13:44-46 (NIV)

* (Based on modern-day situations, some may disapprove of this person's actions. But evidence suggests that it was considered a perfectly legitimate response in Jesus' day.)

19


- **How can I know if I'm ready? (Answer #2)**
 - ✓ You can't, if you are unwilling to take time to find out.
 - ✓ How important is the Kingdom of God/heaven to you? How much do you *value* it?
 - ✓ If you just want a quick answer, so you can "get on with life" – then you're not really interested in it.

- **What if I do these things, but accidentally slack off in the last moment before I die? Does that mean I'm going to hell?**

- ✓ Jesus knows our weaknesses. At the judgment, the issue will be your life-pattern, not an inconsistent moment.
- ✓ Has "following Jesus" has become the goal of your life? Are you trying to develop a *habit* of pursuing his will? Or is it an "add-on" that you do on occasion (such as once a week)?

20

SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING READY

- Here are our suggestions from last time:
 - ✓ **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 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).
- Here are some more suggestions;  but just about *any* New Testament passage about "how to live" will teach us something applicable to this issue!

21

MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING READY...

- ✓ **Some of the verses we have looked at today** (and their contexts) tell us things we must do.
- ✓ **1 Peter 4:7-10** gives us some specific things to do. And if we are suffering persecution for following Jesus, we can consider what **1 Peter 4:12-19** says. (The situation may be difficult at the present; but in the long run, it will be far worse for those who don't know God.)
- ✓ You may also want to consider passages that describe the "signs of the times." What do you see happening in the world around you? Such evils have always been present, in varying degrees; but they will probably intensify as the end approaches. **1 Timothy 4:1-2** and **2 Timothy 3:1-5** are two examples. **2 Peter 3:3-9** also warns us that people will *mock* the idea of Jesus' coming, because it hasn't happened yet. (Verses 8-9 explain *why* he hasn't returned yet.)

22

YOUR MISSION: "CHOOSE!"

We can't choose the **CONSEQUENCES** of our actions.

We can only choose the **ACTIONS** that *lead* to those consequences.

Anyone can say they want the consequences of "being ready."
But most will be "too busy" to do the actions that *allow* those consequences to exist.

Consider this: If you knew for certain that Jesus was going to return *tomorrow*, would that change the way you live *today*?

If so, then that should influence the way you live now, even if he doesn't return tomorrow!

23

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24