

Prepared for the Sudden Second Coming

New Years Eve

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Bible Text: Matthew 24:29-51; Matthew 24:42-44

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Congregation, the text for the sermon this evening's hour, the last service of the year 2020, the text is from Matthew 24:42-44. Matthew 24:42-44 where we read,

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

So far.

"Prepared for the Sudden Second Coming." Three thoughts: suddenly; secondly, Christ is coming; and thirdly, being prepared. Prepared for the sudden Second Coming: first, suddenly; secondly, Christ is coming; and in the third place, being prepared.

Congregation, the Lord Jesus had ascended not only spiritually and with the soul or something but with his body and the disciples saw it happening, they saw that visually, visibly, historically, really. It was not just in their head, they saw it happening. The Lord Jesus left physically this world and ascended and the angels said that the same way he would return, the Lord Jesus would come back in his immortal body someday. So we know that that Second Coming of Christ will also be visible and local and bodily and personal, but also suddenly. He shall suddenly unexpectedly come as a thief in the night.

Children, thieves usually operate at night and they're sneaky, and they don't tell you they're coming, do they? They come unexpectedly when you're not at home and they just sneak into the house and break open the doors, and if you would have known, you would have taken precautionary measures but you didn't know when they would come. So they come unexpectedly and so the Lord Jesus will come unexpectedly. Sometimes God's people long for that day that he will come, and some of God's people have much longing for that, but only sometimes. But do we know when he will come? We don't know, even the angels don't know, but we know that someday he will come unexpectedly and sometimes in the Bible we find evidence that he will come quickly, that it won't take too long anymore, that we have to be prepared today. He could come today and certain texts

give the feeling that it can take years yet, there are so many things that first have to happen, and they seem to kind of contradict each other. Should we believe that he could come today? There are so many things that haven't been fulfilled, I haven't seen Israel repenting yet, I have not seen the stars falling from heaven yet, I have not seen such a tribulation yet, I have not seen those earthquakes and those pestilences yet.

So that looks contradictory. Let us first focus on those texts indicating that it could be today, tonight. Imagine the Lord or that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him and in an hour that he is not aware of. So it can be anytime, an hour that you're not aware of, in our lifetime, soon. Be ye therefore ready also. When? Should be ready within a couple of weeks or years? No, today. Be ye therefore ready also for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when you think not. You think, "Well, not yet. It's too early when he will come." So that can't be really very soon, right? 1 Thessalonians 5, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Also the Apostle Paul speaks about that, even the Apostle Peter, but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. However, as I said there are also texts indicating that it might take a while, that first many other things have to happen. Look, for example, at verse 6, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." So that gives the feeling no yet, the end is not coming yet, first many other things have to happen. Or verse 8, "All these are the beginning of sorrows." Only the beginning.

So again, certain texts tell us anytime, today, others say, no, not yet. It's just the beginning of what we see. So first we need to see earthquakes, famines, wars, the false prophet needs to come, the sun needs to be darkened, the stars falling from heaven, the Antichrist shall appear, Israel shall repent. That sounds different, right, from the imminent coming of Christ? So what do we have to believe? Most texts stating that he can come anytime or should we relax a little bit and say, "You know, there are so many more things coming first; we don't count on him coming too quickly yet." Well, of course, people have tried to reconcile this and some say that it will take awhile yet. Some say, "No, he's not coming soon because all those things first have to appear, first have to be fulfilled, all those promises, and then comes the end so relax, don't think he will come soon. He is not coming yet," some state. And others say, "Well, those things probably are already happening and have happened. Maybe Israel is repenting here and there. Maybe the pestilence we experienced with the COVID-19 virus, that's all part of it so we are halfway already, we're very close to the end."

So is he coming soon? Not yet? "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Not happening yet. Or Romans 11, "blindness in part is

happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." I don't see it yet.

So what do you think? Young people at home, you read those texts, is the Second Coming imminent, I mean, could it be tonight? Shouldn't we be prepared for that, really? Or do you think it will take awhile yet? What is most biblical? Well, I find it very remarkable that both of those texts, the text indicating his imminent coming and the text that some other things first need to happen, are in the same chapter, the same chapter, Matthew 24. So it should not be contradicting each other. It's both, though, and it's likely, it's likely that it takes awhile but we don't know for sure. That's the summary of that. We don't think it's coming very straight and immediately but it could be, though. Maybe we are blind. Maybe we don't see those signs yet of the judgments of God, and maybe they come quickly and shortly after each other, one after the other and there is a rapidity of things happening suddenly so that we will see in the end the Lord is coming. And that could start tonight, right? Tonight the stars could fall. Tonight the moon could be darkened. Tonight earthquakes could start. So it's both through, it can take awhile, it's true certain things have to happen first but they could start happening immediately.

Are we blind? Anyway, it's so clear what the Bible says. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Verse 44, "Therefore be ye also ready." We have to be ready. Although certain things have to happen first, at the top of that even if Jesus comes after years, we yet have to be prepared today. Why? Why do we have to be prepared today if the Lord Jesus would come years from now? Because we could die and then our lot has been decided upon. So also think of your personal death. We read those texts, "Therefore be ye also ready," be ready, "for in such an hour as ye think not," you think, oh no, you don't count on it, and it comes suddenly and it falls over you and it's too late maybe.

Suddenly. Secondly, Christ is coming. To understand our chapter, we also have to think of Revelation 20. Revelation 20 is about the thousand year reign of Christ also called the millennium. So let me read a few verses from Revelation 20 and see how it fits in here. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key," a key in his hand, "the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him," so he couldn't get out, "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." So the Bible speaks of the time of a thousand years. I don't think we need to take it literally, a long time period. And during that time Satan will be bound. That's great. He cannot deceive the nations anymore. That's special. He's bound for a thousand years and then the church will reign with Christ as you see in the following verses, but then after that he's also loosed for awhile and then one thing after the other will happen.

The thousand year reign. Now there are lots of different opinions on that and I'm not giving you all the details, just a summary, but let me give you three theories about this, three ways of looking at the thousand year reign of Christ and first I'll show you those

pieces and then we'll see what we believe in and what the consequences of that are for our view on the future.

The first group of theologians we call amillennialists or non-thousand year people. They don't believe in a future thousand year reign. Of course, they believe in a thousand year reign of Christ but not in the future. They say the thousand years have come already, we are right in the middle of it, those thousands years have come and the Lord Jesus ascended or when he was sending his Holy Ghost. We live in the time of the millennium, the millennium is the time between Christ's First Coming and the Second Coming, that's a thousand years, that's the time that the Holy Spirit was poured out, it's the time of grace, it's the time that the Bible is translated into so many languages, it's the time that missionaries go out over the whole world. It's the time we live in and Satan cannot prevent it to happen, Satan is bound, he cannot prevent it to happen that the Bible is translated in many more languages and the churches in China and in Africa are growing.

So amillennialism or non-millennialism. We live in the thousand years right now and that's a good thing. Or some texts speak about during those thousand years God's children will reign with him but that must be God's children in heaven reigning with him. Nevertheless, when we believe in that theory, amillennialism, that we live in the thousand years now and that Satan is bound already, we have to admit that there will be a time that before the coming of Christ, before the Second Coming of Christ, he will be loosed and that there will be great tribulation, and that those things of Matthew 24 will happen yet. So we live in the thousand years but there's a difficult time coming. John Calvin believed this way. He was an amillennialist.

Others say the thousand years of reign are still coming. They are called post-millennialists. Post, what does post mean? Well, there is post-education, post-graduate studies, that's after, right? Post is after. So after the thousand years, Christ will come so there will be a time here on earth, a special time of the church to prosper and the Lord Jesus reigning in a special way and a remarkable growth of the church. For example, John Bunyan thought that. John Bunyan, for example, thought that the first two centuries are fine and then the centuries of the captivity of the church started up to the Reformation, 1600s, and then the time of great blessings would come. Bunyan thought that was the time he lived in. He was an optimist. He saw it happening on earth that the church would do great and be an influence of the whole world. So that thousand years did not start at Pentecost, did not start at the ascension day, but came later and Christ is coming after that. Also, Wilhelmus a Brakel of the "Reasonable Service" believed it this way, but they believed that the Lord Jesus would come after it.

So post-millennialism and the difference with the first one is that the millennium, that the thousand years are yet coming or are just starting. Reformed theologians have tolerated that view, never defended it. Our forefathers were respectful of Brakel and let him say that and let him teach that if he did not push it too hard, and they thought this is a minor thing, our salvation does not depend upon it, but their forefathers like them that wrote our Forms, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort, and the Confession, they did not support that. They think that the thousand year reign is the time we all live in already.

Then the third one is the pre-millennialism, not "a" and "post" but "pre." So they teach that the Lord Jesus will come first, suddenly he will come and then the thousand year reign, that he comes again, the Second Coming, and then there will be eternity. And our forefathers are really against that, against pre-millennialism as if Christ would come twice and they said, "No. We read it so clear in the Bible that the Lord Jesus comes back once and there's not one chapter indicating he's coming twice." For example, Johannes Piscator or Fisher taught that in the 1600s as well.

So where do we stand? I think it's the safest to stand with Calvin. I think his papers are the best and our forefathers supported that. So we believe that the thousand years of reign of Christ have come already and we live in a very blessed time. It's kind of double, right? A very blessed time we live in because it's the latter days, it's the days that Satan does not deceive the people so much anymore. He's bound. He's still alive, he's still working, he's still a danger, but he's bound, he's limited. That's what we believe in. Satan is on a chain. Satan cannot do what he wants to. Satan will be loosed someday but not yet, we believe. So a time of grace, a special time of the Holy Ghost we live in, a special time that we need to study, that we send out missionaries over the entire world to let people repent and see the Lord and believe on his name.

So it's kind of double. How does that fit in with Matthew 24? Well, in Matthew 24 we read so clearly that the Lord Jesus is coming and that there are many things that will happen. "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." So, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." That's all in 24, all in Matthew 24. So we believe that we live in a very special time, the time of grace, the Holy Spirit really working hard to save people, more people. The candlestick as we place in one place to another place, that's true, but it's a millennium of a thousand years of real church growth worldwide and that might be true. So the sudden coming of Christ, it is suddenly, he will come suddenly and yet things need to happen.

Prepared for the sudden Second Coming. Suddenly, but Christ is coming, and in the third place, being prepared. Congregation, having heard this, that the Lord Jesus will return and that it could be anytime and that Satan needs to be loosed first, what is our response to that? "Watch therefore," therefore refers to all those things we have mentioned, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And verse 44, "Therefore be ye also ready," be ready, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Be ready. We may have lived a good life and have behaved but are we ready for the Second Coming? Are we ready for death? If we would be taken away today, would it be well with us? Because suddenly it can be over and that's very sad for them that stay behind especially when it's so suddenly, not being able to say good-bye, but if we can die, if we have our sins forgiven, it will be peace with God.

Therefore watch and be prepared. Remember, children, King Belshazzar who was feasting and partying and drinking wine from the golden vessels taken from Jerusalem,

taken from the temple? Remember that hand that wrote on the wall, "Mene, mene, tekem, upharsin"? Oh, he was scared. I read in Daniel 5, "Then the king's countenance changed," he became pale, "and his thoughts troubled him," you saw panic in his eyes, "so that the joints of his loins were loosed," he could hardly stand anymore, he was wobbly and stumbling, "and his knees smote against each other." He could not keep his legs straight anymore. He was so scared to death. He was not prepared.

So when we get that message, prepare your house for you must die, will we also be shocked and say, "I'm not prepared yet. I don't have my sins forgiven so far. I can't die yet. I need more time. I need a time of grace. I haven't been seeking the Lord. I have not found the Lord." Would you panic and say, "I have wasted my time!" Watch therefore. Therefore be ye also ready. Not others need to be ready, you need to be ready. I need to be. "Therefore be ye also ready," the Lord Jesus said.

We also read about that "now be ready" in Revelation 6. When the Lord Jesus comes, so many will just see something of the anger of God and of the anger of the Lamb even, and that will be so unbearable to feel lost and have no time left and eternity coming. You will pull the hairs out of your head and you can't stand the Lord looking at you so you ask the mountains to help and say, "Fall on us! Hide us! I can't bear this, hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

So we need to be prepared and also in the adjacent chapters we read about that. Remember Matthew 22 about the parable of the wedding? That all things need to be ready or rather all things were ready? All things were ready, the same word, all things are ready. The table is set. The guests are invited. All things are ready, "Come," and didn't come. So don't think that you have to get ready yourself as if you can prepare yourself for that, think that something has been prepared and is ready. You don't have to cook something yourself. The table is set. All things are ready. And that will be the hardest thing if you die unprepared knowing that you could have been saved, knowing that all things were ready and that you despised them, that you have not obeyed the gospel, that you have not highly esteemed the Savior, that you did not esteem him, that you despised him. But we live in the time of grace yet.

Also Matthew 23 speaks about the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins, and you know the difference. They all 10 slept but five were foolish and five were wise and in the middle of the night, so suddenly, so late actually, they had not expected him to come so late but he came and five had enough oil in their vessels and five not. They were too late. They were not prepared. They were not ready. They all had fallen asleep, that's right, so God's people can fall asleep as well, but the thing is do we have enough oil in the vessels? Doesn't that mean the Holy Spirit?

To be prepared is to be reconciled with God, it means to be delivered from sin and guilt so we can meet with our Maker without terror, so that we can meet him in peace. So how does someone become prepared, that's the question so let us take some time for that. What does that mean, "Therefore be ye also ready"? Do you know how it starts, how the Lord makes people ready? To let them feel, in the first place, that they are not ready and

that hits as a rock and it's very shocking when the Lord reveals that to your heart, "You're not ready. You're without God in the world." You can die this way. You cannot meet the Savior this way. He'll be your judge, the wrath of the Lamb. Prepare your way. Prepare because you must meet your Maker, you must meet God. And you feel, "I'm not ready at all." And you try to make yourself ready, you begin to do your best to just avoid sin and to seek the Lord and to read the Bible and to pray, and you do your utmost, you begin to seek the Lord because you want to be ready, and sometimes you feel hope but most of the time you don't. You feel kind of so unconverted, so lost, so poor, so unprepared, and it's such a danger and you feel kind of, "I can't live this way and I cannot die this way. I must have a new heart. I must have a Savior." And you begin to see the Lord and you begin to repent of your sins, you begin to mention them all. "Lord, I did this and I have been doing that and it's so wrong, and I regret it now. Now I see it was wrong and I've been so foolish." And you begin to confess to the Lord who you are, that you're not ready, and what you don't know is that the Lord looks at a person who is poor and needy and he cannot help himself, he's so lost, the Lord is working in the heart and makes it even more impossible, and let's him experience that this is a dead-end way, that they cannot ready themselves. They cannot.

Or it is more and more an impossible case for them and they read those texts, "Watch therefore," and they kind of do, they watch therefore, "for ye know not what hour your Lord shall come," and in the morning they open the doors and they open the windows and the curtains and they see the light of a new day and they say, "I've been spared." It's a wonder to them sometimes that they have been spared, that they're still living in the time of grace, still live in the time of the Holy Spirit, that the end has not come yet, that others are taken away out of their life young and that they are at their age still in the time of God's mercy.

Or they begin to confess and they begin to humble themselves and they begin to admit to the Lord that they have wasted their time and that they have been busy with so many other things, they have preferred them over God and Christ, and they feel so foolish and so, again, unprepared.

Therefore be ye also ready but they are not, and they know that and they feel that. They say, "If I die this day, I am perishing and it is deserved," and they fall on the Lord's side and say, "Lord, I'm not prepared," and they see that the Lord has prepared things for them on the table of the gospel and that they have neglected and ignored such a salvation and they say, "Lord, I have despised thee. I have turned my face away from thee. I have not esteemed thee." We all like sheep have gone astray, lost, not ready, and then come so close to them, "Therefore be ye also ready," and they hear "be ye also ready" and they don't know how to get ready.

I would like to encourage you to think of God's law, to go over the 10 Commandments yourself and to see how much you have sinned against those commandments, and to realize that you are not ready. I encourage you to confess to the Lord all your sins, everything you can remember. That's part of becoming ready, to be honest, to be open to God, to not hide anything anymore, to confess your sins wholeheartedly. May the Holy

Spirit work that, to seek the Lord, to open that Bible and seek for the solution to become ready. And how is that? Well, I hope you will find the Lord Jesus in the scriptures, the Bible being the cradle and the Lord Jesus in there. He's the only one who can make you ready and he has given his life, he has given his blood, he is exposed to the wrath of God on Golgotha in order to give peace to people and to prepare sinners to meet with God because he is the Mediator. So he prepares sinners to be reconciled to God and to be close to him again. He makes ready a people on the day of his power.

Now what is the heart of it, of that becoming prepared yourself? That is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, not to just hope for the best, that he is your Savior, but to find him, to highly esteem him, to love him, to take refuge unto him, to touch the hem of the garment of that Savior and to rely on him, to completely rely on him, having nothing yourself. You forfeit all those blessings and you have not prepared yourself at all and you cannot even... it's a hopeless case, and then he says and he tells you that he has prepared all things and that you're welcome to come to the table, and then I see a people coming to the table that was not prepared and they may come without money and without price. All things are ready, all things prepared.

You know, on the day of a wedding the bride prepares herself and she hopes that he will like her dress and her outfit, the way she looks. She's prepared as a bride for her husband and so the Lord's people become prepared for the bridegroom and he prepares, he does, and he will make sure that they look great, white as snow. Or what will that be, being prepared? When the Lord Jesus comes, when he separates the goats from the sheep, and if you're maybe on that side, on the right side of God belonging to the sheep, if you may hear the voice of God, "Inherit the kingdom. Come in, ye blessed of the Lord." John Bunyan would say the chimes of heaven will ring when God's people are coming in. They're ready. Not ready in themselves but ready through him who obeyed, who paid the price, who did everything for them. They have not done anything themselves but he did it all for them. What a relief for them.

And then entering in, into the joy of the Lord and having no sin anymore and always being with him. What happiness of the church in God. What happiness of God in his church. Can I say that, happiness of God in the church? Does it not say that like a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee? When the Lord looks at that prepared people, prepared by his Son and his work, then he loves that people and he is happy with that people. I read in Zephaniah 3 something special about that, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy." He will rejoice over you with joy, that's double, right? "He will rest in his love," keep his love, "he will joy over thee with," God speaking, "he will joy over thee with singing." Oh, that will be heaven when the Lord Jesus comes back. There will be a new earth after the time of tribulation, after the time of the stars falling from heaven, after the time of all those problems and things described in Matthew 24 have happened, and then the Lord Jesus comes back in great power, with the trump, and he will divide the people and he will have his church on the new earth, under a new heaven. He will joy over them with singing. He will prepare them.

So living as a Christian is living as being ready. That should be on the mind of God's people every day. Are you ready? What if he would come today? Are you ready? Are you sleeping? Christian life is to be on your way home, to say, "Thy kingdom come," to redeem the time because the days are evil, to pray without ceasing, not being like the wife of Lot who was leaving Sodom and Gomorrah and looked back and she was not supposed to and she could not let go. Oh, remember the wife of Lot.

Congregation, are you ready? Some of you say hesitantly but yet confidently, "Sometimes I believe so. Sometimes I'm ready. Sometimes I don't feel ready at all but sometimes I feel ready when the Lord opens the word and I see something of his face, and I see all things are in him, that he makes all things ready. If I see that, that he is doing the work, then I can say again I'm ready through him, through him only." And others say, "No. I'm not ready." So you're hoping, right, that it will take a while before you die, you're young and strong, it will take awhile before the Lord Jesus comes back because you don't have, you haven't seen those signs and marks yet, but you know, the Bible says for a reason, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

Children, what did I say before? Did I talk about a thief in the night? You don't have to be afraid for that because we are protected in our homes and the doors are locked and your father and mother are keeping you safe, but you know, yet there is God who can also give you safety but it is a God you need to be reconciled with, that God needs to become your God and he wants to be your God. Seek him. Seek him in the Bible because you need to be ready. Someday you have to leave this life, right? Someday you will have to meet with your Maker and stand before God and give account of all you have done and said and thought. It will not be good if you're not prepared.

"Watch therefore. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." In conclusion as my closing sentence, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not," it could be tonight, tomorrow, you don't think, you don't think that that's today, it's unreal, "in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh." Amen.