

and serving Him in all your ways. Jesus tells about the faithful servant who does his master's will, and how when a person so lives, the master will be pleased with such and give His reward for all such. But if on the other hand, a person is evil and not living in the way of true conversion, and then Christ suddenly comes finding that person living in sin, there will be no hope for him. Jesus forewarns in verses 50-51, *"the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Those are solemn words from the gracious Saviour out to seek and to save sinners. Jesus came to open a fountain for sin and uncleanness and with Him is plenteous redemption. But He will not be mocked. If you won't come to Him truly, nor follow Him really, and you won't live for Him wholly, you are despising the inexpressible gift of God, and if you should live on so and die suddenly or otherwise so, then you are not ready for Christ's second coming.

To be ready always is all about being truly converted and living your life always being truly converted, abiding in Christ and serving Him in and with all, and above all! John writes in his first epistle, chapter 2:28, *"And now, little children, abide in Him [Christ Jesus]; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."* Indeed, the way to be ready to meet Christ in His second coming is to live in relationship with Him as He is revealed in His first coming as the Saviour of sinners and the Shepherd of His sheep, even for as many as hear His voice and who come to Him and follow after Him. Are you so living?

Ready? Ready for what? Ready for what counts above all! Ready for Jesus' second coming that is coming, indeed, that is near even at the doors! Listen, says Jesus, *"...be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."* [Matthew 24:44] Amen.



BEING READY

Ready? For what, you ask? When you hear the word "Ready?" you might think of "ready for school, ready for work, ready for marriage, ready for that house deal.... But when I ask "Ready?", I don't mean now ready for anything here on earth in our daily life, but I mean are you ready for Christ's second coming, who knows how soon now and who knows when? The emphasis of the latter half of Matthew 24 from verse 29 on is about being ready for the great day of the Lord's return.

This text passage divides itself under the theme of being ready, very clearly and simply under three headings.

1. The call to be ready
2. The need to be ready
3. The way to be ready

If you think about these points as brought out from the text, it is actually very gracious and kind of God so to direct us in connection with His second coming. We sometimes say to each other, "Ready or not, here I come!", but God says to us, "Be ready for when I come. Make sure you are ready because not to be ready when I come will be most horrible, even eternally so, while being ready when I come will be most wonderful, even forever and forevermore." So let us be thankful that now also we may be reminded of Christ's second coming.

Ready? Why do we have to be? Why bother with that question? Well, because it is a call from God and His Word. From the signs of the times, when you see and observe those very things that Christ spoke of in the verses prior, we need to see Christ's second coming is approaching, and it is imminent. *"...it is near"* says Jesus in verse 33, *"even at the doors!"* What an expression that is in reference to Jesus' second coming. *"...it is near, even at the doors."* On certain occasions you may get friends and family visiting from other cities and even from other provinces or countries. As they get close to your place, they may call on their cell phone and say, "We are near, almost at your door." Christ says His second coming is not all that far away. No, in fact it is near, at the doors even, almost here!

The Saviour underscores the call to be ready when He mentions how in common everyday life when the buds spring forth and the leaves come out and the grass grows again, we know that spring and summer are around the corner. Jesus urges that as we can read the seasons in daily life and follow

Hans Overduin, Radio Pastor

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)

the weather patterns, so we should see the signs of His second coming and be sure to be ready. Jesus makes clear the call to be ready is not just for the people at the end of the world, the last generations in history, but it is really for every generation. The fact is every generation since Christ's ascension does in some measure experience the signs of the times, and no generation can say with absolute certainty Christ won't come yet. Jesus very significantly says in verse 34, "*Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*" Here Jesus is again weaving together the facts of His second coming and details of the destruction of Jerusalem and it's temple in 70 A.D. There have been times in the past among the generations of Christians where it was thought and said, 'Now the end of the world is about to come surely'. The point is, Christ's return is coming much closer and as long as it doesn't happen yet only reinforces all the more the call to be ready, for it is near, at the doors, indeed. Notice how Jesus underlines the call to be ready for His second coming with the words of verse 35. "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*" What Jesus emphasizes here is, 'Don't you fall into the trap of thinking that Jesus' delay in coming means probably He won't come for a long time yet, if at all even. Oh, the devil works hard to have people not think at all about Jesus' return, and the world, with every day and year of Christ not yet returning, more and more laughs and scoffs at the teaching that Jesus will ever return. But He will come, indeed, He is coming quickly. Jesus Himself told us this, and He cannot and does not lie.

Do you hear the call to be ready for Christ's second coming? Notice further, however, not just the call to be ready as Jesus gives it, but the need to be ready. This comes out surely in the next section, verses 36-44 of Matthew 24. These verses give several sure reasons concerning the need to be ready. Notice for one how Jesus underscores, several times over, about not knowing the time when exactly Christ will return. In everyday life if you are to be picked up by a bus and you are told the bus will come some time between 10:00 and 10:30, you need to be ready by 10:00, for if you become ready only at 10:25, you may have missed that bus! Since we don't know the exact timing of Christ's return, something that only God in heaven knows, you see too, don't you, how then you can't afford ever not to be ready at all times. You need to be ready all the time, so that when Christ would return any time sometime, you won't be not ready and still unsaved, but in fact watching and waiting for Him! Verses 36, 42, and 44 all say the same thing; Jesus gives the same point three times over. Since you don't know when it will be, be ready all the time so that at no time you are not ready. Jesus says in verse 44, "*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.*" Do you see with me from this the need to be ready always, because you can't afford never not to be ready always, in case Jesus comes when you least expect Him?

Are you ready for Christ's second coming? The need for that is great, supremely great, because the time for His second coming is not exactly known and neither is your time to become ready at all known. The Bible says, "*Today is the days of salvation...remember now your Creator in the days of your youth*". You can't bank on tomorrow, or next year, or any time in the future at all, for it may not be given to you, you never can tell for certain. How frail our lives are, as a flower, as a vapour, the Bible says. How many people started this year 2007 but now are no longer here with us in the land of the living. How many were here last week even, but now their life on earth is past, and the day of grace, the day of becoming ready and being ready, is over.

The need to be ready comes out too in these verses in what Jesus says about the day of Christ's return being as in the days of Noah. When God came in Noah's time, it was a time of judgment for sin. The people were warned, even for 120 years graciously so, but the vast majority would not hear about the coming world-wide calamity and divine judgment of God. When Christ returns again, He is coming for His final judgment of all mankind. His second coming unlike with His first coming will not be to bring about salvation for sinners and to offer that still to the lost and unsaved. No, but then Christ will gather all His people, as many as did and do repent and believe on Him, and they will be forever saved, washed whiter than snow through Jesus' blood and clothed with robes of righteousness freely obtained from the Saviour. But in that same day also, Christ will judge and forever condemn all the unbelieving and wicked of the earth in all their generations. How many in that day of Christ's return will perish forever under God's just wrath against sin and unbelief.

Thus Jesus warns in Matthew 24:37, "*But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*" So many think and say and act as if there is nothing to worry about for the future and they call Bible believing gospel preachers who also speak of Christ's second coming as doomsayers and hell and damnation preachers. But the fact is on the day of Christ's return there will be a great separation of the sheep from the goats, the saved from the unsaved. Just thinking of the people in Noah's day who would not take seriously Noah's preaching and warnings, and of them all drowning in the rising waters, how will it be to be forever under God's righteous wrath for sin, with no hope of ever coming out from under it? What a warning word Jesus gives us here to be ready when He comes again for that last and final judgment day.

Are you ready to meet Christ when He comes again, who knows how soon now? You hear the call to be ready, and you see and hear the need to be ready, now let me expand yet about the way to be ready. The way to be ready comes out in verses 45-51 of Matthew 24. The way to be ready is ever to be looking to Christ and living by His Word and Spirit, following after Him