

“Be Ready – Part 1”  
Mark 13:28-37  
(Preached at Trinity, September 24, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After a period of intense teaching in the Temple Jesus turns to leave. As He was departing His disciples came to Him boasting about the beauty and greatness of the Temple structure. Jesus divulges to them that the entire system of Judaism was about to come crashing down. The Temple structure was going to be utterly destroyed. Every stone would be moved from its place. Of course, this occurred in 70 A.D.  
But Jesus' disciples asked Him more  
**Matthew 24:3 NAU** - "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"
2. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, however, was not the end of the age and the second coming of Christ. Christ would not return until many hundreds of years later. This entire period is called the interadvental period.
  - A. This period is characterized by wars, famines, natural disasters, and tribulation.
  - B. This period is also characterized by the church pressing on through persecution. Jesus tells us in this passage that after the church has endured and persevered through the persecution of this evil world He will return with power.  
**Mark 13:24 NAS** - "But in those days, after that tribulation"
3. This great Day will come at a time most unexpected
  - A. The ultimate sign will be the appearing of Christ  
**Matthew 24:29-30 NAS** - "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken,  
<sup>30</sup> and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky"
  - B. He will come forth in all His glory accompanied by His army of mighty angels – He will give forth an ear piercing shout and the voice of the Archangel will also heard and the sound of the trumpet shall go forth. It will be a loud and dreadful sight to the wicked
4. For the Christian we continue in a state of watchfulness; continual readiness.  
**Hebrews 3:12-14 NAS** - " Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;"

5. The warning at the end of this passage rings loud and clear:  
**Mark 13:35-37 NAU** - "Therefore, be on the alert-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- <sup>36</sup> in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> "What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!"
  6. Tonight I want us to consider this admonition to be on the alert, to always be ready.
- I. The first thing we find is the Lesson from the Fig Tree - **Verses 28-29**
    - A. Jesus is using the predictability of the fig tree once again as an analogy
      1. We saw it previously in **Chapter 11**  
**Mark 11:13 NAU** - "Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs."
      2. When a fig tree begins to sprout leaves one can know that spring time has arrived and summer is near.  
**Mark 13:28 NAS** - "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near."
      3. Jesus uses this as a parable to describe the sign of "these things"  
**Mark 13:29 NAU** - "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door."
    - B. Of what "things" is Jesus referring?
      1. Jesus is referring back to the signs that would mark the destruction of Jerusalem  
**Mark 13:14 NAU** - "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."
      2. Remember, there are no signs given to mark the second coming of Christ.
      3. **Verse 29** is an unfortunate translation in the NASB. The axiom, "Every translation is an interpretation" rings true here.  
 "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door."
        - a. The word for "He is" is from the Greek verb ἔστιν which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of the verb εἶμι
        - b. It can be translated "he, she, or it." They chose to translate it He with a capital H. It should be translated "it" as referring to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. This is how the KJV & NIV translate it.
      4. In other words, when they saw the Roman army encircling the city they were to flee quickly, suddenly. Don't stop to pick up any possessions.  
**Mark 13:15-16 NAU** - "The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; <sup>16</sup> and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat."
    - C. Jesus adds:  
**Mark 13:30 NAU** - "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

1. This has caused great confusion among many, especially for the futurists. It led to much date setting as many insisted the reestablishment of the nation Israel in 1948 began the clock ticking. They insisted that Jesus would return before that generation ended.
2. Two exegetical points must be made in order to properly interpret this verse.
  - a. First, “this generation” must be tied to the “when you see these things” in **Verse 29**. “This generation” naturally refers to the generation of Jews receiving these words. The contemporaries of that generation would be alive to see the fall of Jerusalem.
  - b. Second, **Verses 30 and 32** are set forth as contrasting verses. The “this” of **Verse 30** is contrasted with the “that” of **Verse 32**.
3. The destruction of Jerusalem was near at hand and would be preceded by the sign of the abomination of desolation. The second coming of Christ would be far off with no signs given.  
**Mark 13:32 NAU** - "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*."
4. If the second coming of Christ would come suddenly and unexpectedly with no signs preceding it, then Christians would need to be continually ready.
5. In Matthew’s Gospel this passage was followed by the Parable of the Ten Virgins.  
**Matthew 25:1-13 NAU** - "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. <sup>3</sup> "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. <sup>6</sup> "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.' <sup>7</sup> "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup> "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup> "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' <sup>12</sup> "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup> "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

## II. The Necessity of Being Ready Always

### A. Because He will return unexpectedly

**Mark 13:32 NAU** - "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*."

1. The precise timing of Christ’s return has not been given – neither could it have been for the timing is in the hands of the Father alone
2. This proves the sinfulness of those who try to set dates

B. Illustration of the Days of Noah – **Matthew 24:37-39**

**Matthew 24:37-39 NAU** - "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be."

1. Many use these verses to point to the wickedness of that generation. They say, "We are living in days just like the days of Noah" While this may be true, this is not the context of the passage. The teaching here points to the unexpectedness of the return of Christ
2. Life was going on as usual for the wicked of Noah's day They were eating and drinking. They were beginning new families and planning futures until the very end
3. Luke adds:  
**Luke 17:28-33 NAU** - "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; <sup>29</sup> but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup> "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. <sup>31</sup> "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. <sup>32</sup> "Remember Lot's wife. <sup>33</sup> "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it."

C. Illustration of the lost opportunity

When Christ returns every opportunity to be saved will be lost forever

**Matthew 24:40-42 NAU** - "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>42</sup> "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

1. People working side by side shall be forever divided
2. It will happen in an instant
3. Multitudes will be caught unprepared and be forever lost

**Mark 13:33 NAU** - "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come."

D. The Illustration of the thief

**Matthew 24:43-44 NAU** - "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*."

1. We lock our doors for robbers do not announce their arrival. They come at unexpected times – one is wise to always be prepared

2. Likewise it will be with the return of Christ. We must be always on the alert.

**Mark 13:33 NAU** - "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come."

**Matthew 24:44 NAU** – "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*."

E. Illustration of the Servants

**Mark 13:34 NAU** - "*It is* like a man away on a journey, *who* upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, *assigning* to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert."

**Matthew 24:45-25:1 NAU** - "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup> "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. <sup>47</sup> "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. <sup>48</sup> "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' <sup>49</sup> and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; <sup>50</sup> the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, <sup>51</sup> and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

1. Jesus has left us as servants with a responsibility to provide for His household – His church. Some see this a applying specifically to pastors but we would be better to apply it to all since the duty of faithfulness applies to all
2. The servant found laboring and watching for the Master's return shall receive a reward
3. The servant, on the other hand, that does not stay prepared for the Master's return shall be caught unaware.  
This wicked servant is characterized by:
  - a. Carelessness and a lack of concern for that entrusted to him – after all the Master will not soon return  
"My master is not coming for a long time,"
  - b. Lack of care for his fellow servants – those entrusted to his care  
"and begins to beat his fellow slaves"
  - c. Given to worldly lusts  
"and eat and drink with drunkards"
4. Suddenly the Master returns and catches him unprepared – the wicked servant is cut out of the heritage of the faithful and cast into the place reserved for the wicked

Conclusion: the warning is clear: "What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"