

“Ready or Not!”

Matthew 24:32-44

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- The childhood game of “Hide and Seek”
- Our desire to be prepared for guests if we know they are coming.
- “*Ready or not, Jesus is coming*”
 - The first phase of His second coming, the **Rapture of the Church**.
 - John 14:1-3-- *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17-- *“the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. “*
 - The second phase of His second coming, the **Revelation of Jesus Christ**.
 - Matthew 24:29-31--*“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*
- Background on Matthew 24
 - Teaching in response to the disciples’ question.
 - Matthew 24:2-- *“Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”*
 - Matthew 24:3-- *“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’”*
 - In Matthew 24, Jesus outlines what to expect in the last days.
 - Matthew 24:21-22-- *“then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”*
 - Matthew 24:27-- *“As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”*
- Jesus applies His teaching regarding His second coming with a series of parables

“Ready or Not”

A. The Parable of the Fig Tree

- Matthew 24:32-35-- *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*

1. **Misinterpretations of this parable**
 - a. The "Fig tree" is Israel. The "budding of the tree" refers to either Israel becoming a political state or signifies a spiritual awakening in Israel.
 - b. "this generation" is the generation alive when Israel became a political state, that is, you and I.

2. **Simple, uncomplicated, normal explanation:** Budding fig trees indicate that spring has sprung, and that summer with harvest is right around the corner.

3. **The Parable applied to Christ's Second Coming.**
 - Matthew 24:33-- *"So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!"*

 - a. *"These things"* refers to the events of the tribulation.
 - b. *"it is near"* refers to either the return of Jesus Christ, His second coming, or to the establishment of His kingdom which will occur at that time.
 - c. **Identity of "This generation"**
 - Matthew 24:34-- *"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place."*

 - 1) Refers to Jesus' generation that He is addressing-- 1st Century Christians
 - a) View of those who believe that the events of Matthew 24 were fulfilled when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in AD. 70
 - b) Objections to this view:
 - (1) *What event surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem could possibly symbolize the second coming of Jesus Christ?*
 - (2) The first century generation would experience God's judgment.
 - Matthew 21:43-- *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."*
 - (3) If "this generation" is the first century generation, then Jesus Christ must be mistaken regarding the timing of His second coming.
 - (a) Jesus Christ, while on earth, was not privy to the timing.
 - Mark 3:32-- *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*
 - (b) But if Jesus Christ is mistaken about His second coming, could it mean that He was also mistaken about everything else He said or taught?

 - 2) Refers to the generation alive during the tribulation period.
 - a) They are assured that when they see the events described in Matthew 24 happening, then know that Jesus Christ is soon returning at His second coming.
 - b) This generation will be composed of both Jews and Gentiles left behind at the rapture of the church.

4. **Jesus' guarantee:**
 - Matthew 25:35-- *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*

 - a. Heaven and earth will pass away.
 - 2 Peter 3:10-- *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."*
 - Revelation 21:1-- *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea."*

 - b. But *"My words will by no means pass away"*

B. Importance of Being ready for Christ's return

- Matthew 24:36-44-- *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*
1. **No one knows the day nor the hour of Christ's Second Coming**
 - Matthew 24:36-- *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."*
 - a. The general time frame will be known by...
 - 1) The events of the tribulation period which show that spring has sprung, and that summer is coming.
 - 2) From the timetable revealed in the prophetic Scriptures
 - a) The 490-year plan for Israel's restoration and the fact that seven years remain in that plan.
 - b) The abomination of desolation occurring in the middle of the seven years, leaving 1,260 days until the end of the tribulation.
 - c) Daniel 12 reveals a time frame of 1,335 days, 75 days more than the 1,260 days, during which time preparations will be made for the establishment of the kingdom.
 - b. **But the specific time of Christ's second coming will not be known in advance.** Possible reasons:
 - 1) The days of the Great Tribulation are shortened.
 - Matthew 24:22-- *"And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."*
 - 2) Our tendency to put off making decisions until the last moment
 2. **The need to be ready for the Lord's return**
 - a. **Emphasized in the following parables.**
 - Matthew 24:42-- *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."*
 - Matthew 24:44-- *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*
 - Matthew 24:50-- *"the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of."*
 - Matthew 25:13-- *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"*
 - b. **The Second Coming of Christ will be like in the days of Noah.**
 - Matthew 24:38-42-- *"For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."*
 - 1) For most, life will go on as normal. Eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage.
 - 2) Most will refuse to heed the warnings of impending judgment and will make fun of those who do.
 - 3) Judgment will come suddenly, and at that point it will be too late to repent and trust in Jesus.
 - a) Those "taken" are taken in judgment
 - b) Those "left" will enter into the kingdom

- 4) Need to understand the times for Jesus is coming,
- c. **The Second Coming of Christ will be like a “thief in the night”**
- Matthew 24:43-44-- *“But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*
- 1) Believers during the tribulation are like the householder who is ready for the thief’s arrival.
 - 2) Jesus compares Himself to a thief not in character but in stealth and unexpectedness.
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3--*“For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”*
 - Revelation 3:3-- *“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”*
 - Revelation 16:15-- *“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”*
 - 3) Jesus Christ is not coming to rob the believer, but the unbeliever of everything he holds dear, of all the things they cherish in life or trust in. It will all be taken from them.
3. **Being ready for His Second Coming primarily refers to being spiritually prepared** to meet Christ as the Lord and King, rather than as Judge.

Application for us today?

1. Proper interpretation and thus primary application is for the generation living during the tribulation period. But secondary applications apply to us today.
2. Like the tribulation believers awaiting Christ’s second coming do not know the hour nor the day, so we, who are waiting the first phase of His second coming, the rapture of the church, do not know the day nor the hour He will come for us. Nothing prophetically needs to be fulfilled. His coming is imminent.
3. Like the tribulation generation is advised by the parable of the fig tree to observe and consider the events during the tribulation which signal that Jesus’ second coming is near, so we too who await the rapture of the church can look for signs that the tribulation period is near, for the rapture of the church will occur prior to the tribulation period.
4. Just as the tribulation generation gets ready for Christ’s second coming by being spiritually prepared, so we too must be spiritually prepared for Jesus’ coming for us at the rapture of the church. For Ready or not, Jesus is coming!