

The Commands of Christ

Command #31

“You Better Be Ready”

(Matt 24:42-44)

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (43) “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. (44) “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Tonight what we are going to look at are a series of commands all concerning the “Second Coming of Jesus Christ” which begin in verse fifteen.

This whole series of teaching came as a result of the fact that as Jesus left the temple after teaching, his disciple drew his attention to the beauty and grandeur of the temple (24:1), he remarked that which so captivated their imaginations could and would one day be destroyed (24:2). Jesus’ response only perplexed and disturbed them more. He told them that as magnificent as the stories were that made up the temple, they would be cast down and the temple destroyed. That troubled the disciples so much that they asked him. “How will we know when the end of age has come?”

According to Matthew 24:3, the disciples asked Jesus a three part question; (1) When will these things come to pass? (2) What will the signs of your coming? And (3) What will be the sign of the end of the age?”

The Specific Commands that Are Given Concerning the Great Tribulation. (vv.15-)

In verse nine Jesus begins to outline the series of catastrophic events that will culminate in His Second Coming. In the coming verses Jesus gives three commands to outline a response for those living in Israel at the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

The first command is found in verse 15 in connection with correct interpretation of the “abomination of desolation.” “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads let him understand.)” The command in verse fifteen is – “let him understand” (noeito) underline that phrase in your Bible. This sign is so important that Jesus wants everyone to understand its significance.

The real sign of the end will be the Tribulation period. There is coming a man who will desecrate the temple and abolish the daily sacrifice there. The term “Abomination of desolation” meant an act so detestable that it would cause the temple to be abandoned by the people of God and thus result in desolation. That had already happened 150 years earlier when

King Antichus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem and forced them to stop the sacrifices and sacrifice a swine on the altar. But as awful as that was, it did not completely fulfill the prophecy. The ultimate fulfillment awaits the rise of the Anti-Christ who will again stop the sacrifices and erect in the temple an image of himself and command that it be worshipped "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day will not come*, unless the falling away comes first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess.2:3-4)

The temple was in fact completely destroyed as Jesus had predicted in A.D. 70 when General Titus led an army against a rebellion in Jerusalem. There has never been a temple in Jerusalem since that day. But Jesus speaking of the desolation of the temple means there has to be a temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. This is why believers have always followed with great interest any mention of the reconstruction of the temple.

When this sign, "the abomination of desolation" appears there will be immediate and terrible results. The next (second) command is found in verse sixteen, in the phrase – "let them flee" (pheugetosan). The immediate danger is so great for those in Israel at this time that Jesus says, "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." In fact he reinforces this command in verse eighteen with yet another (third) command, this time a negative command, where he says "let him not return" (epistrepasato). The urgency of this sign is so great that Jesus says that wherever people are and whatever they happen to be doing they must flee immediately.

The time of Great Tribulation is described in (vv. 19-22)

3. World wide religious deception (vv. 23-27)

The Preparation that is Commanded For His Coming. (vv. 32-42)

The preparation for His coming is found in series of four commands. The first command in preparation for His coming is found in verse thirty-two, in the verb – "learn" (mathe). "Now Learn the parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. (33) So you also, when you see all these things; know that it is near – at the doors!"

Jesus says just as surely as the trees putting forth buds is a sign of the changing of the seasons, the signs he has given of the end of the age are just as reliable.

He goes on in verse thirty-four to say, "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place (35) "Heaven and earth will pass away. (36) "But of that day and hour no one know, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (37) "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (38) "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, (39) “and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (40) “Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. (41) “Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.”

Having established the suddenness of his coming Jesus next (second) command is found in verse forty-two where he says, - “Watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord is coming.” The command to watch (gregorete). The logic of this command is given in yet another (third) command in verse forty-three “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.” The command is in the work “know” (ginoskete). Any rational person if he knew that his house was going to be burglarized – even if he did not know the specific time but knew the general time (watch out) – he would be keenly alert and watchful. The last (fourth) command in this section is found in verse forty-four, “Therefore you also “be ready” (ginesthe). This call for readiness is a call for personal readiness for it says, “you” plural or all of you. The only way to be prepared for the coming of Jesus is to maintain a state of readiness. Charles Swindoll tells the following story, “I worked in a Machine Shop for four and a half years alongside a fellow named George. His job was to sweep and clean out the shavings underneath the huge lathes and machines we were running. I remember hearing him sing hymns as he worked. Many of them had to do with the coming of Christ, such as “In The Sweet By And By” and “When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder.”

Late on Friday afternoon about ten minutes to quitting time when we were all weary, I looked at Goerge and said, ‘George, are you ready?’ He said, ‘Uh-huh.’ But he was all dirty. He was just obviously not ready. In fact, he looked like he was ready to keep on working. I said, ‘Aren’t you ready to go home?’ He said, ‘Yeah, I’m ready.’ I said, ‘Look at you Man, you’re not ready. You’ve gotta go clean up.’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘let me who you something’ So he unzipped his coveralls and underneath were the neatest, cleanest clothes you can imagine. He had them all ready. All he did when the whistle blew was just unzip and step out of the coverall, walk up, and punch his clock and he was gone. He said, ‘You see, I stay ready to keep from getting ready – just like I’m ready for Jesus.’ {Charles Swindoll. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 other Stories. (Dallas: World, 1998) pp. 506-507

Similarly, the only way to be prepared for the coming of Jesus is to maintain a state of readiness. In closing let me just give you three things to do in readiness for His coming.

First, we must be alert as we wait, alert that we don’t get deceived.

Secondly, we must be diligent as we wait. Those who are looking will be those who are working. In Luke 19 Jesus told the parable of “The Unfaithful Steward” in this parable a nobleman called his servants together and gave each the same instruction. “Occupy – literally do business until I come.” When he returned he called each of the servants in to give an account of what he had been entrusted with. God has given us a job to do, and “to watch,” and to “be ready” means to be engaged in doing the will of God.

Third, we must live in daily anticipation of His return. "Watching" and "Readiness" is more than a call to spectatorship and passivity. Proper watchfulness is a powerful stimulus to right living. Paul spoke of this to Titus when he said, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" (Titus 2:12-13)

Does Christ's return impact your daily life? It should. It can if you allow the Lord to impress upon you the reality of His coming. One day people are going to be busily occupied with the daily affairs of this life when the heavens are rent in two and the trumpet of the Lord sounds. Some will wonder what is happening. Others will realize the end is at hand. Falling to the ground in agony many will realize that the Lord they had rejected is real, that the sermons they heard were true, and that it is too late for them. Others will turn their heads toward heaven with a smile. They will be ready to receive the King, because they have been serving Him for years. While others hearts cry out in anguish, their hearts will cry out for joy, "Come Lord Jesus." Are you ready? You can get ready today.