

God's Measure Of Our Watchfulness

Luke 21:34-36, Mark 13:35-37, 2 Timothy 4:8, Revelation 3:10, Revelation 22, 2 Peter 3:3-4, 1 John 2:28, Matthew 24:33

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In this series, I have shown you the many ways how God'll measure our lives. One of the special things God will most certainly be looking for is whether or not we eagerly watched for His return.

The sad truth is that the overwhelming majority of Christians in America today aren't looking for the soon return of Jesus.

If you're looking for the return of Jesus Christ, you're among a very small minority.

This is why God commands all Christians to understand the times in which they live. Every Christian should have some understanding of where we are on God's prophetic timetable.

Knowing all that would unfold in our generation, Jesus gave two compelling words of wisdom of how to live in these final days; His two words of wisdom are, watch and pray.

Today, I want you to see, from God's Word, how He'll measure your life by your watchfulness and prayers.

Luke 21:34-36, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Mark 13:35-37, *“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”*

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In the eyes of Bible prophecy, there are two groups of Christians; those who’re watching for Christ’s return, and those who aren’t. There are those who understand the times we live in, and those who don’t.

But here’s the point that really needs to sink in, one of the key things Jesus will be looking for is how faithful we were in watching for His return.

The reward for those who faithfully watch for Christ’s return is so great that Paul said:

2 Timothy 4:8, *“Now there is in store for me the Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

So, are you watching for Christ’s return? The Bible says those who love His appearing and are watching for His return will be rewarded with the Crown of Righteousness.

This Crown of Righteousness is truly one of the great rewards of heaven, and it’s reserved only for those whose love for the Lord is so great, they’re constantly watching for His return.

The big question is, “Are you watching for Christ’s return?” Paul says only those who so love Christ’s appearing so much, that they long for Him, will receive the Crown of Righteousness. This crown is so magnificent that Jesus said:

Revelation 3:10-11, *“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”*

Did you catch that last phrase, *“so that no one will take your crown.”* He’s talking about the Crown of Righteousness.

This eternal crown is so valuable that Jesus warns us to hold onto it and we do that by watching and praying.

Don’t listen to those who mock and scoff at Christ’s return. Regardless of what the world says, and regardless of the time that has passed in the last two thousand years, Jesus will return.

Three times in Revelation 22, Jesus promised, *“I am coming quickly...”* So, are you watching for His return?

I know some will say, *“Why?”* Others may say, *“I’ve been hearing about the return of Jesus for 50 years and He hasn’t come yet, so why should I watch for His return now?”*

Do you know every time someone says that, they’re fulfilling the prophecy from 2 Peter?

2 Peter 3:3-4, *“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”*

When He examines our life at His judgment seat, will He find that our love for Him was so great that we anxiously watched for His return.

We, the body of Christ, should be watching for Christ's return with the knowledge that today could be the day.

Jesus said His return would happen when the world least expects it. I can tell you the world today isn't expecting Christ to return, nor do they care.

He said it would happen so suddenly that it will catch the world by surprise like a steel trap and that's why we must watch and pray.

So, what's the big deal about watching for Christ's appearing? Why is that so important? One big reason is because He commands us to watch, and for all who do watch, He promises an eternal crown that will last forever.

But there's another reason why we should watch and be prepared for Christ's return. It's found in 1 John.

1 John 2:28, *"And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming."*

Besides the wonderful Crown of Righteousness, John tells us that we need live in such a way that when Jesus appears at the rapture, for His church, we won't be ashamed or embarrassed.

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Imagine the embarrassment and shame of not being prepared when Christ returns. If you're not watching for Christ's return, then most likely you're not prepared for that moment. This is why we must watch and pray.

Another big reason why it's vital that we watch and pray is because we're the first generation to experience all the signs Jesus listed for the end times.

Matthew 24:33, *“Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”*

There’s absolutely no doubt we’re that generation. Jesus said watch and pray so you won’t be caught by surprise. This is why watch and pray should be the heart cry of every believer.

Jesus also said, don’t be caught off guard. Don’t be caught unaware. Don’t be caught sleeping. Watch and pray.

Mark 13:36-37, *“If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”*

God’s call on our life in these final days is to watch and pray. When we hear of wars and rumors of wars don’t live in fear, instead watch and pray.

When we see the rise of plagues, famines, and earthquakes, watch and pray. When we see immortality sweeping the world like a cancer, don’t lose heart and give up hope, but be faithful to watch and pray.

We can’t stop what’s coming; that ship has already sailed, that train has already left the station. The only thing we can do is watch and pray.

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Which brings us to this twofold question. First, for what should we be watching, and second, about what should we be praying?

There are a hundred thoughts that go through my mind at this point, but without overloading this message, I want to give you three prophetic things that should be on your radar so that you can watch and pray and not be caught by surprise.

As we watch the final days unfold, the first and the most important thing I would tell you is to keep a watch on Israel. Why? Because Israel is God's timepiece of the ages.

All end time prophecies, including the return of Christ, could not happen until Israel had returned to their land.

The moment Israel became a nation, God turned over His hourglass and started His countdown for the end of the age. It's by watching Israel that we can know where we are for the final days.

We watch Israel because there are several end time events that will happen in the very near future in Israel and because of Israel.

These events include The Magog War of Ezekiel 38-39; the destruction of Damascus, the building of a third temple, and the signing of the treaty with the antichrist that starts the tribulation. This is why we must watch what happens in Israel.

A day is to come when Israel will be hated by all nations and the world will seek to destroy her. Also, Israel will be involved in several wars on several fronts fighting for her existence. That's Bible prophecy and we're seeing that happen right now in real time.

We're living in the final days and what's happening in Israel, and to Israel, reveals just how close we truly are to the end of the age and the rapture of the church. The thing is that most Christians aren't prepared for that moment.

Jesus said when you see these things happen, watch and pray.

The second great sign to watch for is what I call a convergence of signs. There are numerous signs that, just by themselves, are evidence that Christ's return is very near.

However, for me personally, one of the greatest signs of our generation, besides the return of Israel as a nation, is the sign of convergence.

The sign of convergence is when numerous signs all happen at once and continue to happen so frequently, they can't be numbered.

This is not a prophecy that may happen sometime in the future. This prophecy is happening right now, in this generation, in our lifetime. The sign of convergence is happening on every level of society.

Worldwide social unrest, the breakdown of the global economy, war in Israel, war in Russia, massive earthquakes and volcanic eruptions all over the world, the distress of nations, and the increase of lawlessness and spiritual deception.

All these point to why the church should be watching and praying and looking up for Christ's return.

The one point that we must not overlook is that we're the first generation to experience all these signs at the same time. No other generation in previous history has ever seen what we're seeing today.

Matthew 24:33, *"Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."*

Jesus said the generation that sees these signs will not pass away until all these signs are fulfilled.

We're that generation, and amazingly, in spite of the avalanche of worldwide signs, the world and many in the church are absolutely clueless to what's coming.

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Third, all signs are important, because all the signs point to the return of Christ. However, there's one other sign that we should clearly watch for and that's the sign of deception.

Jesus warned that the final generation would be flooded with lies and great deception. However, what we see today is nothing compared to what's coming.

Jesus warned several times about deception, because He knew the final generation would face a level of evil deception unlike anything the world has ever known.

Sadly, one of the great deceptions of the end times is the apostasy in the church. The Bible clearly warns of an end time falling away in the church that will be marked by moral decay, and deep spiritual darkness.

That's what we're seeing now. Right after the elections in November, there was an article in the press that read, "*Evangelical leaders celebrate Trump's victory as a prophecy fulfilled!*" The question is, "*What prophecy do they believe was fulfilled?*"

What is the deception and apostasy in the church? I don't have time to give you a full list, but here are a few examples of some very destructive themes being taught in the church, that clearly rejects the truth and teaching of God's word.

For example, there is the teaching that there are many ways to heaven. There are churches and pastors who are teaching there are many ways to God; that you don't have to go through Jesus. That's deception!

There's a false teaching that says everyone will go to heaven, including atheists who hate God and curse Him. That's deception!

There's the teaching that the church has replaced Israel, and that God has rejected Israel. That is absolutely not true and it's deception!

Another terrible deception in the church is that we now call what God says is sin and evil as being good, and what God calls good as being evil. That's evil deception and it's in the church.

Again, when we see these things, we're to watch and pray and watch for Christ's return.

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Conclusion

In closing, not only are we to be watchful for the signs that point to Jesus' return, but the closer we come to His return, the more we're to pray and live a life of prayer. Prayer in the end times is so important that Jesus said:

Luke 21:36, "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

Jesus said to pray that we'll be able to escape all the terrible and evil things that are about to happen on the earth.

The only way we can escape all that is about to happen is only by a pre-tribulation rapture of the church, which could happen at any moment.

We're to watch for the signs of His return, and we're to pray He'll return and deliver us from the evil that's coming upon the whole world.

Today, in Jesus' name, I encourage you to watch for Christ's coming. I encourage you to pray that His return is soon and, that on His return,

He'll find you faithfully watching for Him, and reward you with the glorious Crown of Righteousness.

To watch and pray is God's call for you in these final days and as you pray:

- Pray that you are ready to meet the lord Jesus Christ
- Pray that at his return, Christ will find you doing His will

In all that you do in these final days, watch and pray, for Christ's return is as certain as the rising of the sun.