

READY OR NOT, HERE HE COMES

Key Verse: Mark 13:28-37

Key Thought: Jesus is Coming Back...Ready or Not!

One of the most memorable games from my childhood days is the game of hide and seek. On many occasions throughout the year, the family would gather at my parents' house. The children would usually start a game of hide and seek. When the game started, someone was chosen to be "it". A spot was chosen to be "base". Whoever was "it" would stand at "base", close their eyes and count to 100. The other players ran and hid. Then it was "its" job to find them before they could return to "base". The game ended when everyone made it back to "base", or when "it" found someone who was hiding. In the next game, the person who was caught became "it". The part of that game that still echoes in my mind is what "it" would say before he or she came looking for those who were hiding. "It" would always say, "Ready or not, here I come." When "it" said that, you had better be ready or you were going to be caught!

When I read this verse, that old childhood game came back to my memory. Jesus is telling His men that there will be a day when He will come again. That day will arrive whether people are ready or not.

This chapter began with the disciples asking Jesus about the end of time and about the signs accompanying that time period. The rest of this chapter is spent answering their questions. These closing verses offer a few warnings that people of all ages should take to heart. These warnings should especially be heeded by people who are living in these times.

Jesus is coming! Skeptics and scoffers deny that fact, but they can't change the truth of it. Jesus is coming, and He is coming soon. This is not a childhood game! Eternity is at stake!

I want to move through these verses today and preach around the thought, *Ready Or Not, Here He Comes!* Jesus is coming and you do not want to be found unprepared for that day. Notice these *warnings* with me today.

I. THE SIGNS OF HIS COMING

At the Mount of Olives, all around them were the signs of life that document the transitions of the seasons. Jesus uses a fig tree to illustrate the spiritual truth, He wanted His disciples to understand. When a fig tree puts forth its leaves, it is a clear sign that summer is on the way, and nothing can be done to change it. Summer is coming; so, preparations need to be made for summer weather. So, Jesus says, when people see the signs mentioned in these verses, they will know the end is near.

What signs has He mentioned in these verses? He has mentioned many things, most of which will be fulfilled during the days of the Tribulation. Let me give you a brief overview of the events Jesus said would come to pass in the last days.

- There will be many false Messiahs
- There will be wars and rumors of wars
- There will be turmoil among the nations of the earth
- There will be persecution of the people of God
- The Antichrist will come to power on the earth and will declare himself to be God, and he will demand to be worshiped
- The earth will pass through a time of divine judgment called the Tribulation Period

· The heavenly bodies will fall from their places, the sun and the moon will not give their light, and the universe will be plunged into darkness

Clearly, Jesus is describing the terrible days of the Tribulation Period, a time yet to come to this world. Even though this time is still in the future, we can already see all the pieces falling into place. This world is preparing itself for the fulfillment of God's prophecies. The signs are everywhere! Only the spiritually blind refuse to see what is as plain as day.

a) They Are Concluding Signs – Jesus says that the generation that witnesses these things will not pass away until they have all been fulfilled. This prophecy has been the subject of much debate down through the years.

One of the symbols of the nation of Israel is the fig tree, and some people have concluded that Jesus is comparing them, saying that when the fig tree, or Israel, begins to show signs of life, *that generation* will witness the return of the Lord. Well, Israel became a nation again after 1,878 years on May 14, 1948. The nation was destroyed in 70 AD and ceased to exist. Some people believe the final generation began then. Of course, that was 61 years ago and a generation in the Bible is about 27 years.

Others believe that Israel began to put forth her leaves in 1967 after she defeated her Arab neighbors in the Six Days War. Of course, that was nearly 42 years ago.

Another school of thought holds that the word “*generation*”, which can refer to “*a wicked race*”, refers to the spiritual condition of Israel. In other words, Jesus could be saying, “*The Jews will continue in their unbelief until I come.*” This interpretation certainly fits with the facts. Israel is back in their land, and they have all the signs of life.

Like a fig tree in the late spring, they are in full leaf. Still, they have no fruit. They have yet to bow to their Messiah.

In my opinion, all that Jesus is saying in verse 30 is the appearance of the signs He has mentioned will be a signal that the end is very near. As I said a few minutes ago, all the pieces are in place. Everything is lining up like Jesus said they would. He is coming! Are you ready?

b) **They Are Confirmed Signs** – This verse is a simple confirmation that everything Jesus says will come to pass. The Word of God is an eternal book, *Psalms 119:89*. Every word in it will stand forever, *Isaiah 40:8*. Every promise in God’s Word will be met, *Deuteronomy 4:21*. Every prophecy will be fulfilled, *Matthew 5:18*.

What does this mean for us? It serves to remind us that we need to take the words of the Lord to heart! What He says will happen, will happen. What He promises, He will do. This is a call for people to believe the Bible!

Jesus says that He is the only way of salvation, *John 14:6*. Jesus says that there is a Heaven to gain and a Hell to shun, *John 14:1-3; John 3:18*. Those things are true and every person in this room will answer them one day. Jesus also says that He is coming again, *John 14:3*. It is a promise that is as sure as the sun coming up in the morning and setting in the evening. Ready or not, here He comes

II. THE SECRECY OF HIS COMING

a) **It Is a Hidden Time** – Jesus is coming, but no one knows when that event will take place. When Jesus gave His men this prophecy, He told them that even He didn’t know the hour of His Own return. The point He is making is that it is foolish to try and set dates concerning the Lord’s return.

For example, the retired NASA worker who wrote the book “88 *Reasons Why Jesus Will Return In 1988.*” He predicted that Jesus would return on either Sept. 11, 12, or 13. When the Lord didn’t return in 1988, he wrote a new book that declared the Lord would return in 1989. He didn’t come then either. No one knows the time when the Lord will return. There is no point speculating about it.

But, while we are on the subject, let me just remind you that Jesus is talking about His Second Coming in these verses. He is talking about the *second part of the Second Coming*. Jesus is talking about the time He will come to defeat His enemies and rule on the earth. Did you know that He is coming back before that?

He will not actually set foot on the earth when He comes for the first part of the Second Coming, but He will appear in the clouds above the earth. We call this event “The Rapture.” It is predicted in *John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians, 4:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.*

In the Rapture, Jesus will return in the clouds above the earth, and He will call His redeemed people unto Him. Every saint of God who has died in faith in Christ will be with Him when He comes. He will raise their bodies from the grave, reunite body and spirit, and take both home to Heaven. Every living child of God will be “*caught up*” in the air to be with Jesus. These sinful bodies will become like His glorified body. All the saved people from the resurrection to the Rapture will leave this world in the Rapture.

I am ready and looking forward to that event. How about you? Unlike the Second Coming, there will be no signs that will precede the Rapture. One minute the people of God will be here, and the next minute they will be with Jesus in Heaven. Those who are left behind will have to face the terror of the Tribulation.

If you are going to be ready for anything, be ready for the Rapture.

If you are going to be looking for anything, be looking for Jesus in the Rapture. If you miss the Rapture, you will probably not be alive when Jesus comes the second time. If you are alive when He comes, you will face Him as Judge and not Saviour. Your only hope is to be saved today!

b) **It Is a Heavenly Time** – The only One Who knows the timing of the Lord’s coming is the One who planned His coming. God knows when these events will take place. He knows because He has planned the precise instant when Jesus will return to this earth.

God keeps this a secret because He does not want people caught up in an end times frenzy. He wants us to look for Him every day and He wants us to live for Him every day. He wants us to live like He might return at any moment and work like He is never coming back.

The fact is, God will not put a commercial on television to let people know that the end is near. He will not take a full-page ad in the Newspaper, He will not announce it on the radio, nor will He drop flyers from the Heavens. We have the only warning we are going to get. The Word of God is clear: Jesus is coming! The pieces are all in place. The end times players are all lining up. The stage is set and the Father’s hand is on the rope. We are nearing the end of human history. Jesus is coming. The question you need to answer in your heart today is this: Are you ready?

III. THE CHALLENGE OF HIS COMING

a) **We Are Challenged to Watch** – The word “*watch*” appears three times in these verses. Jesus wants His people to be on the alert. We are to live every moment in anticipation of His return.

What does it mean to “*watch*”? The word means “*to keep awake, to be attentive, to be ready.*”

It has the idea of a watchman who dares not fall asleep while he is on duty. He keeps his eyes and ears open. He always stays alert.

While this prophecy is primarily for believing Jews living during the tribulation, there is a word here for us as well. While we live in these days leading up to the Rapture of the church, we should spend our time watching!

Jesus is coming and we need to be on the alert. Our enemies are seeking ways to infiltrate our churches and turn us from the old paths. The world is seeking and wants to grab our attention and captivate us with its treasures. Satan wants to lull us to sleep by telling us that we have plenty of time.

The truth is, Jesus is coming, and His people need to be awake and watching. I do not want to be found sleeping when He returns! We are also commanded to “*pray*”, v. 33. One of the best ways to stay awake in these dark days is to stay in close contact with headquarters. The more time we spend with Him, the more alert we will be spiritually.

b) **We Are Challenged to Work** – In verse 34, Jesus describes Himself as a house owner who leaves his business in the hands of his servants. This man assigns each of his servants a specific task and then he takes his journey. The servants do not know when their master will return, so they are encouraged to work at their tasks diligently, so that they will not be found avoiding their duties when their master comes back.

When Jesus saved us, He saved us to go to work for Him! When He saved us, He gave each of us a specific assignment. In other words, Jesus gave you a job to do and He gave me a job to do too. Our duty to Him is to faithfully do those things He has called us to do until He comes for us.

There is much to be done while we wait on Jesus to return. His will is that we serve Him faithfully and diligently until He comes for us either in death or in the Rapture. Let's stay faithful until Jesus comes!

c) **We Are Challenged to Weigh** – In verse 37, Jesus makes these verses very personal. He may be making a prophecy to the nation of Israel, but here He speaks to every individual who will ever live. He is calling upon every person who reads these words to look at themselves in the light of His coming. In other words, what will His coming mean for you?

If the Rapture were to take place today, would you go up to meet Jesus in the clouds, or would you stay behind to face the Antichrist and the Tribulation? Will the Second Coming of Jesus be a blessing to you, or will that be the day of your doom? If you miss the Rapture; and if you happen to survive the wrath of God, the hatred of the Antichrist and the horrors of the Tribulation; and if you are alive when Jesus returns as King, it will not be a good day for you. Since you rejected Him on the day of grace, He will reject you on the day of judgment. He will not come as your Savior, but He will come as your Judge. The only hope you have is to come to Jesus today and be saved by the grace of God. If you reject Him now, you will not receive Him then! Ready or not, Jesus is coming! I urge you to be ready!

Are you ready for His coming? If Jesus were to return today, would He find you faithfully serving Him and carrying out His will in the world? Or would He find you skating around the edges, holding hands with the world? Would He find you inactive in the church? Would He find you doing His will or doing as you please? I challenge every believer in this room to look at yourself and your walk with the Lord in the light of His coming. Do you want Him to come while you are living the life you are living right now?

So, in Closing... What can we take away from all of this? Jesus is coming, whether we are ready or not! If you aren't ready, you can be! If you are ready, be watching and be working, for the Master is at the door!

I don't know where a message such as this finds you today. If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior and you would like to be saved, I invite you to come to Him today and be saved. If you are saved, but the Lord has shown you that you are not ready for Him to return, come to Him and get that right today. If He has spoken to you on any level, please come to Him right now and do what He would have you to do!

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30

Date: June 16, 2024 (Father's Day)

After Service Song: The Lion and the Lamb