

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Admonitions and Applications From Jesus

by Dan Trygg

“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.” Matthew 24:32-33

“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: ²⁷ they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ 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; ²⁹ but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ 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. ³² Remember Lot's wife. ³³ Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. ³⁵ There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. ³⁶ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.’ ³⁷ And answering they said to Him, ‘Where, Lord?’ And He said to them, ‘Where the corpse is, there also the vultures will be gathered.’” Luke 17:26-37

“Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ 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. ⁴⁴ 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. ⁴⁵ 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? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” Matthew 24:42-47

As we looked at the teachings of Jesus in the gospels, we saw that His comments regarding the end were consistent with what had been prophesied in the OT. The kingdom of God will spread throughout the entire world (Matt. 24:14; Dan. 2:35). Armies will gather around Jerusalem (Lk. 21:20; Ezk. 38,39; Zech. 14:2). The city will be captured and destroyed (Matt. 24:2; Dan. 9:26). There will be an abominable thing that will defile the Temple (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). There will be a great tribulation, such as had never been experienced before (Matt 24:21; Dan 9:12; 12:11). Believers will be present during that time (Matt. 24:22; Dan. 9:12,13). There will be persecution and affliction of the saints (Matt. 24:9; Dan. 7:25). Immediately after the tribulation of those days, there will be signs in the heavens (Matt. 24:29; Isa. 13:6-13). The sun and moon will be darkened. The stars will disappear from sight. Then the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 24:30; Dan. 7:13). He will come with the sound of a trumpet (Matt. 24:31; Zech. 9:14). He will destroy the wicked, and gather His people (Matt. 24:30,31; Zech. 9:14-16; Isa. 27:13).

Jesus added some important details, however. Aside from mentioning a number of things that would take place throughout the age, He highlighted one important thing that must take place before He returns: **The good news of His kingdom must be preached as a sign to all nations, ...”then the end will come.**” He also clearly stated, in agreement with the OT, that the “elect” of God will be present during the tribulation period. They will be persecuted throughout the age, but *their presence during that end time of great affliction that will come upon the world is the very reason that God does not destroy all life* (24:22). Instead, when the appearance of the sky changes, and the sun and moon are darkened, *people will be able to see the sign of the Son of Man coming toward the earth* (cf. Rev. 1:7). The nations will mourn, because they will recognize that He is coming in judgment. As He comes, He will send out His angels to remove the wicked, and to gather His people from the ends of the earth (Matt. 13:38-43; 24:30,31).

Jesus followed up His teaching about the end times with some important admonitions and applications (Matt. 24:32-25:46, and parallel passages in Mark and Luke). Let's briefly look at what He had to say:

We are to be paying attention to the signs of the time. He used the word picture of a fig tree to illustrate how we can recognize when circumstances will indicate that He will come soon. “When the branches of a fig tree become tender, and it puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.” In a similar way, **we should be able to discern the events that will indicate that the end is not far off.** Although no one knows the day or the hour of His coming, we should be able to tell as that time approaches. He said, “When you see these things happening, recognize that He is near” (Matt. 24:33). **Most people, at that time, will be going about with their daily lives in a normal fashion, living as though nothing were happening. They will not be mindful of God, or aware of the significance of the tell-tale signs that Jesus is coming soon.** They will be like the people who were alive at the flood, disregarding and mocking the preaching of Noah. They will be like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were unaware of their impending doom. Jesus says that it will be the same when He returns. People will be buying and selling, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, oblivious and unconcerned about the signs that point to Jesus' coming. **They will be**

caught unawares. Notice that the verses that state, "Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left" (Matt. 24:40-41), are *not* talking about being taken to be with Jesus. **They are talking about being taken away by catastrophe!** The parallel passage in Luke makes this even more clear (Lk. 17:26-37). The disciples ask, "Where are they being taken?" Jesus says, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will be gathered." In Matthew, Jesus went on to say, "**Therefore, stay awake**, for you don't know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, if the master of the house knew the general time a thief was planning to break into his house, he would have stayed awake to prevent him from doing so. On account of this, you also be ready, because the Son of Man comes when you might not suppose." The point is, **we may not know the exact time, but we should be able to see when the prophesied signs indicate that things are coming together, and be especially watchful.**

We will not know the precise day or hour, but we are to stay alert and on task in our service for God. Jesus told a parable about **two different kinds of servants. One was faithful and wise, and continued to do what he was assigned to do**, even though his master was gone. His master will reward him for his faithfulness, when he returns. **But, if he begins to think that, because His master was delayed, he could slack off on his duties**, and even misuse the master's property for his own pleasure, and mistreat the other servants, **he will be caught unawares by his master, and will be punished severely.** Blessed are those servants who are obediently carrying out their Master's assignments, when He returns. Those who selfishly disregard the Master's instructions, and live lives of lavish self-indulgence, *will be surprised by His coming*, and be judged for their disobedience (Matt. 24:45-51).

We are to be prepared for His coming. It will be too late to prepare *when* He comes. Those who are wise will be prepared *before* He comes. Those who are unprepared may discover that they really did not know Him, at all, ...*that is why they were not ready for His coming* (25:1-13). **If we aren't ready to meet the Master before He comes, we will not be prepared when He comes.** In the parable of the virgins, **the wise virgins were "thinking, mindful, sensible, practical". They were aware of their circumstances, mindful of their potential need, and they took action.** The same word for "wise" was used by Jesus in Matthew 7:24, for the person who *heard and obeyed* what Jesus taught. Jesus said, "This person is like a wise builder, who digs deep in order to construct his house upon the bedrock. When the storms come, that house will stand up against the elements." **The "foolish virgins", like the "foolish builder" in Matthew 7:26, were living in the moment, and did not think ahead.** As a result, their half-way choices were insufficient to meet the true need of the moment. **They were unaware of the inadequacy of their choices, unprepared, and experienced great loss.** The foolish virgins were not admitted to the wedding. The Bridegroom even told them, "I don't know you."

We are to be productive with what He has entrusted us with. In the parable of the talents, the master gave each of his servants a sum of money. Each one was supposed to work with what was entrusted to them. The first two worked hard, and doubled what they had received. The third one, however, was lazy, and buried his master's resources in the ground. **In the end, each one had to give an account for what they had done with what had been entrusted to them.** The first two were commended for their faithful and productive efforts, and were given more opportunity and responsibility. The third, however, was rebuked for being wicked and lazy. The resources he had were taken away from him, and given to the one who was most productive. He was cast out for his uselessness. **God will hold us to account for what we do with our lives.** Those who are productive for the Master will be commended, but those who do nothing with what the Master had entrusted to them will be rejected and punished (25:14-30).

Furthermore, **we will all be accountable to Him for how we treat others** during our lives. **The last image Jesus paints for us, in His teaching about His return, says that He will come in glory, with all His angels with Him** (25:31). He will sit on the throne of His glory, and **all nations will be gathered before Him. He will separate them into two groups**, like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Aside from different outward appearance, goats tend to be independent and much more destructive. They will eat a field totally bare, and also strip the bark off of trees. **While sheep need to be watched because they are defenseless, goats need to be tended because they are destructive.** It was not uncommon that they may pasture together, but **goats had to be separated at night, because they would bully and terrorize the sheep.** In the parable, the "sheep" will be directed to Jesus' right, but the "goats" to His left. The "sheep" will be invited to inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world. They are referred to as ones "who are blessed of My Father". Why? Because of the way they treated Jesus when He was in need. When they ministered to even the least of the poor and outcast, it was as if they ministered to Him. Then, turning to the "goats", He declared, "Go away from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Why? Because they did *not* minister to Jesus when He was in need. He said, "To the extent you did *not* do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." (Note, again that they were *unaware* of spiritual reality.) **Our treatment of others is a reflection of our heart toward Jesus. Those who treat others honorably and graciously will be commended**, but those who disregard others, and do not help them will be rejected and punished (25:31-46). **The clear message is that Jesus is expecting us to live as if He is going to return, and that we are going to be accountable to Him.**