

Message #87**Matthew 24:42-51**

As we come to this text of Matthew, we absolutely must understand that this passage deals with the Tribulation and Christ's second coming, and not the Rapture. Although this is a profitable text and a motivating text and a practical text for those of us who live in the Church Age, this text is aimed at Israel and has to do with the second coming of Jesus Christ. The issue at stake in this passage is going into the kingdom or going to a place of fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now the Tribulation will feature very specific and distinct signs which have been carefully pointed out by Jesus Christ. To be living at the time of the Tribulation and not recognize the signs and not want to be right with Jesus Christ at that time would be an indication, not only of stupidity, but complete unbelief. In the Tribulation, the whole world will know that the judgments are coming from God. In fact, 144,000 Jewish evangelists will take the Gospel of the kingdom (not the Gospel of grace) to the entire world (24:14). So to reject all of these signs and to reject the message of the Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation is the ultimate level of unbelief.

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE SPECIFIC MOMENT OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING IS NOT KNOWN, THOSE WHO ARE IN THE TRIBULATION NEED TO BE ON THE ALERT AT ALL TIMES FOR THIS DETERMINES IF ONE IS A BELIEVER HEADING TOWARD AN HONORABLE KINGDOM LIFE OR AN UNBELIEVER HEADING TO ETERNAL FIRE.

We do not know the day of the Rapture and we need to be on the alert for it today. However, the reason why we are on the alert is not because if we aren't we will go to hell. We are on the alert because we want to face the Lord with confidence and not shame (I John 2:28). We are not alert so we can go to heaven; we are alert so we will be rewarded in heaven. That is a far different issue during the Tribulation.

SECTION #1 – The command to be alert. 24:42-44

The verb "Be Alert" is a present imperative, which means it is a command (imperative) for those who are in the Tribulation to continually (present tense) be watching in the sense of being awake and alert. When the signs begin to take place, everyone in the world will know the second coming of Jesus Christ is very near. Now the signs of the Tribulation are specifically spelled out and they are known. What is not known is the exact time and moment that the Lord will return. Therefore, as soon as the Tribulation begins and signs unfold, people need to be on the alert. Now **verse 43** gives an important piece of information to us, namely, if a head of the house knew the exact moment a thief would break into his house, he would be prepared. Now notice carefully how **verse 44** begins: "for this reason." For what reason? Because God does not want us to know the exact moment of Christ's return so we will be alert at all times.

SECTION #2 – The characteristics and outcome of the faithful slave. **24:45-47**

The faithful and sensible slave is one who spots these events and lives life expectantly waiting for Christ's return. Alertness naturally means one is faithful as one waits for Christ's return. **Verse 46** says this slave is blessed because when His master returns He finds him "so doing." The word "doing" is one that means to be continually doing, continually carrying out or continually performing (Smith, p. 369). In other words, when Christ returns, the faithful and sensible servant will be continually performing in life as a faithful servant of God. The continual, habitual and consistent pattern of life persists as an alert, faithful child of God. The reward for being consistently faithful to the Lord is he is put in charge of many of the King's things in the kingdom (**v. 47**).

SECTION #3 – The characteristics and outcome of the unfaithful slave. **24:48-51**

Carefully notice that this slave is classified as "evil" (**v. 48**). This refers to a Jewish person who sees all the things happening in the Tribulation and does nothing about preparing for the King's return. This servant uses as a basis for his unfaithfulness the argument that the master delays His coming and then he beats his fellow slaves and lives a wicked life (**v. 49**). In other words, the evil person is one who mistreats the godly person and lives an evil life, with the idea that he has all the time in the world.

The King says that when He comes, it will not be expected and He will cut the person to pieces and assign him a portion with the hypocrites (scribes and Pharisees) and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The image of weeping and gnashing of teeth in Matthew refers to one who is judged, condemned and punished to a painful, eternal, fiery hell (Matt. 13:42, 50).

Evil people are cruel and they indulge in all excess, truly believing that Jesus will never come to call them to accountability. But tucked away in the book of Numbers is a little verse that says, "be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23).

Do not ever, in any dispensation, make the fatal mistake of assuming God will not call us to accountability.

KEY PARTING THOUGHTS:

1. Prophecy is focused on the literal return of Jesus Christ.
2. We must occupy our time carefully understanding the Word of God so we may interpret future events in view of it.
3. We must always be on the alert, lest the Lord comes and finds us sleeping. This is a fundamental point for any dispensation.
4. If the Jewish world, with specific signs stands in danger of not being alert, how much more the Christian church, which does not have specific signs.