

# Why Must We Be Spiritually Ready?

by Stephen Kaung

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*We must be spiritually ready for Jesus' return, which is near, and we can be prepared by being watchful and following God's promises.*

**Duration:** 1:13:17

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:32-40, Matthew 24:42-44

**Topics:** "Readiness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of the summer being near and relates it to the coming of the Lord. He explains that in the oriental culture, being at the door does not mean immediate access, but rather signifies being close to the final destination. The preacher emphasizes the need for readiness and vigilance, as the Son of Man can come at any unexpected hour. He also references a song written by Watchman Lee during the persecution in China, expressing the deep feelings of the saints throughout generations. The sermon concludes with a reference to Matthew chapter 24, where the disciples inquire about the timing and signs of the Lord's coming and the end of the age.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to Matthew chapter 24. We'll read from verse 32 to verse 45. Matthew 24, 32 to 45.

But learn the parable from the fig tree. When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves, ye know that the summer is near. Thus also ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near at the doors.

Verily I say to you, this generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place. The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, but my Father alone.

But as the days of Noah, so also shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day on which Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took all away, thus also shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two shall be in the field, one is taken, and one is left.

Two women grinding at the mill, one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour your Lord comes. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief

was coming, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be dug through or into.

Wherefore ye also be ye ready, for in that hour that ye think not, the Son of Man comes. Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his Lord has set over his household to give them food in season? The song that we just have sung always touches me very deeply. This was a song written by our dear brother Watchman Lee.

During the persecution in China, he wrote this song to express not only his own feeling, but also the feeling of all the saints throughout the generations. And hopefully this same feeling will be in each one of us. The more we look into what's going on in the world, the greater the cry of our heart, O Lord, Generation after generation, believers, true believers, those who love the Lord, they have been waiting for the long promise of his return.

But somehow he is delayed. We remember what Peter said, to God a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. It is not that our Lord delays his return.

It is because of his long suffering, how he suffers long for his own bride. As long as his bride is not ready, he has nothing to come to, to return to. So dear brothers and sisters, how important, not for ourselves, but for our beloved Lord, that we be ready.

He will not delay even a moment if his bride is made ready. So this is the reason why we gather together this time. I do feel the importance of this hour.

Everything seems to indicate to us that his return is imminent. We cannot go on. The world cannot go on any longer.

Every sign shows that his return is very near. And brothers and sisters, may we be a generation that have the privilege of welcoming him in our time. And I hope that this will be prayer of our hearts.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we do praise and thank thee for gathering us together here this time. We thank thee for thy long suffering.

We thank thee for thy loving kindness and tender mercies. Lord, thou hast created within our heart a longing for thyself. How much more, Lord, the longing, the waiting, the desire in thy heart to come and to receive us to thyself.

Oh dear Lord, do deliver us from being so unwatchful, so complacent. Forgive us for being occupied with so many things that are transient. Lord, do capture our hearts that there is only one thing in our heart.

It is thou, oh Lord. Use this time to prepare us. We thank thee that during thy first coming, thou hast prepared a few here and there whose hearts are really prepared the way of thy coming.

Will thou, Lord, in these last days, thou will also raise up people here, everywhere, throughout the whole world that will cry unto thee, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Use us to bring back the King. Privilege us, Lord, with this privilege.

We offer ourselves once again to thee, working us, prepare us. We ask in thy precious name. Amen.

I do thank the Lord for the theme of this gathering. I feel that it is not so much having another conference. It is good for us to come together once in a year for fellowship, but to me I feel this is a very special time.

And I thank the Lord that the theme for this time is really timely, spiritual readiness. Now when you think of spiritual readiness, the first question probably you will ask is, why? Ready for what? There is nothing more important in the world to be ready than what we are going to share together. To me, I feel there is only one reason, one and only reason for spiritual readiness.

It is to be ready to welcome the coming of the Lord. You know from the very beginning of human history, after Adam and Eve sinned, God came to the garden and He gave man a hope. In Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 it says, the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head and the serpent will crush his heel.

This is the promise of God to the sinful world. This is the only way to save and to deliver us. God promised this from the very beginning of human history.

And then you find this promise was reiterated, reinforced many, many times through the Old Testament, through the prophets, that God's promise will be fulfilled. For instance, in Isaiah chapter 9, it is prophesied unto us a child is born, a son is given, and government shall be upon his shoulder. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.

Of his government and of peace there shall be no end. He shall sit upon the throne of David and his government shall be established in judgment and righteousness from henceforth forevermore. And the zeal of Jehovah shall perform it.

And yet at the same time, you find in Jeremiah chapter 53, we have a whole chapter on the coming Messiah. But he will be a suffering one. He will be rejected.

His life will be taken away. He will bear the sin of the world. He will be crushed.

Therefore, those in the Old Testament times, they just couldn't understand. Why is it that God promised the seed of the woman to be a reigning one, a glorious one, who will establish his kingdom forevermore? And yet at the same time, it is prophesied that this Messiah will suffer, and even unto death. So to the Old Testament people, they were confused.

They could not reconcile these two sides of the Messiah. Among the Jews, they even questioned whether Isaiah 53 referred to another person, because at that time, it was not yet revealed. Thank God, he is always faithful to his promise.

After about 4,000 years, one day, a child was born of the woman. A son was given. The world became flesh.

God came to become man, tabernacles among man, full of grace and truth. Christ has come. But during his lifetime, it seems as if he is interested only in the spiritual condition of his people.

He does not seem to be interested in the physical condition of his people. In the beginning, the Jewish people welcomed him, thinking that he might be the long-promised Messiah. But gradually, they lost their faith.

Why? Because he does not seem to be the one that will fulfill all the promises that government shall be upon his shoulder, that he shall sit on the throne of David, and he shall rule over the nations. You remember when our Lord Jesus first began his ministry. He went into the synagogue in Nazareth, and they gave him the scroll of Isaiah.

He opened it up. He read Isaiah 61. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

He has anointed me to preach the glad tidings to the poor and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Then he stopped. He didn't finish Isaiah's prophecy.

He did not continue on with the day of vengeance. He left something behind. Why? Because our Lord Jesus, in his first coming, he is as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

He is to bear our sins and our sorrows. He is to be our substitute before God. He is to redeem us.

That is his work while he was on earth. As to the reigning part, as to the glorious part, he leaves it, as it were, beside. Instead, he says, my glory, the day of my glory, refers to his crucifixion, not to his enthronement, because in the first coming of our Lord, he concentrated himself on the first necessary work.

But even though you find in the Gospels, sometimes he will try to leak out something, but in a parable, he did not speak openly and frankly how he will come back and rule over the nations. But in parable, for instance, in Luke chapter 19, we find a parable of the nobleman. The nobleman went away to receive his kingdom, and before he left, he gave ten minas to ten servants and said, trade with it until I come.

Then one day, he comes back, and he reckons with his servants. And you know the story, one earned ten more, one earned five, and one was unfaithful. So in other words, you find that he did give hints that there will be a returning.

And even while he was on earth, especially you find towards the very last, one day he left Jerusalem, and his disciples pointed out to him, the beautiful stones decorated the temple in Jerusalem. You know, the Jews took great pride in this temple. It was so magnificent.

And yet, when our Lord left with his disciples from the temple, he quietly said, yes, but one day, not a stone will be upon another stone. Now the temple was built with massive stones, so solid, and yet our Lord said, one day, not a stone upon a stone. The disciples heard it, but they dare not say anything on the way, because this will be such a shock to the Jews.

But after our Lord arrived on Mount Olive, he sat down, and four of his disciples came secretly to him, and said, Lord, Master, when shall these things be, and what will be the sign of thy coming, and the end of this age? You know, to the disciples, they combined all these three things into one. Now, if the temple is destroyed, and completely destroyed, that means the end of the world, and that will be the sign of the coming of the Messiah. But our Lord Jesus began to teach them.

Now, without going into details, probably it will be a help when you read Matthew chapter 24 and chapter 25, the so-called Olivet Discourse. Generally speaking, you can divide these two chapters into three sections. The first few verses, of course, is the background.

The disciples ask the Lord about, when shall these things be? When shall the temple be totally destroyed? And then, follow with, what is the sign of thy presence, and the end of this age? Now, in answering their questions, our Lord seemed to answer these questions towards the three sections of the world, the Jews, the Church, and the nations, because the world is composed of the Jews, the Church, and the nations. So, it seems as if, from chapter 24, beginning with verse 4, until verse 31, it seems as if this section is addressed especially to the Jews, because if you read carefully, you find everything is literal. The Lord

does not use parables, and everything will be fulfilled, literally.

And then, from verse 32 to chapter 25, verse 30, this will be a section when our Lord addresses the Church, because there you'll find parables of being used. It is a spiritual emphasis in that section. The first section is literal, physical.

The second section is spiritual, in essence. And then, of course, the last section, chapter 25, verse 31 onward, to the end, that is addressed to the nations. So, if you remember this properly, it will be a help to your understanding of these two chapters.

But, do not forget that even though our Lord seems to be addressed to three different people, and yet there are many things that overlap, and many things that happen to all. So, if we remember this properly, it will be a great help. Even towards the end of the life of our Lord, during His last supper with His disciples, He said, I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come back and receive you to Myself.

When He was judged by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the High Priest, clear first, said, Are you the Son of God? Our Lord said, you say this, and you shall see the Son of Man coming on the cloud. So, here you'll find our Lord did hint of His return. Even in John chapter 21, after His resurrection, He appeared to the seven by the Sea of Tiberias, and He said to Simon Peter, Come, follow Me.

So, Peter followed Him, and then another disciple also followed. So, Peter turned and said to the Lord, What about this man? Of course, he refers to John. And you remember our Lord said, If I want him to wait until I return, what is that to you? So, you'll find hints here and there, even during His first coming, He hints about His return.

He finished the first part of His work, and there is another part He has to finish at His second coming. So, brothers and sisters, to us today, His second coming is evident. There are two comings of Christ, two comings of the Lord.

In His first coming, He came as a Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world. But at His second coming, He will come as the Lion of Judah, and He will judge the world with righteousness, and reign over the world. His disciples gathered around Him on the Mount of Olives, and there He was taken to Heaven.

If you read Acts chapter 1, you will notice that our Lord Jesus was standing on Mount Olive. His disciples were around Him, and then you find He was taken up. He left Mount Olive.

He ascended, and the disciples look at Him, see Him going up, until a crowd, they could not see Him anymore. But they were still looking up, and at that time, two men in white appeared, and these two men said, men of Galilee, why are you looking up? Don't you know that the same person, Christ, who has taken up, He will come back in like manner? Of course. The disciples, they saw the Lord going up, but then the crowd took Him.

They couldn't see. Now, did the Lord really arrive at the throne? Thank God, He did. How do we know? Well, number one, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven, and 120 disciples were waiting in that room, were baptized into one body, and that is the evidence that our Lord has arrived at the throne.

Why? Because the Bible tells us, and even Peter, he said it, he said, what you have seen and heard proves one thing, that God has made Him Christ and Lord. After our Lord Jesus arrived at the throne, then

God the Father anointed Him with oil, with the Holy Spirit, and as the oil upon the head of Aaron, it flows down to His beard, and it covers the whole body to the skirt of His garment. That is the picture.

So after our Lord was anointed in Heaven as the High Priest, then you find the same oil, the Holy Spirit, came down upon the 120, and not only the 120, but to the very end of any member in the body of Christ. That is a definite proof, and not only that, we find in Revelation chapter 5, John was in the Spirit, and the Heaven was open, and he saw a vision. He saw the throne of God.

He saw in the hand of God a scroll, which is the title deed of the universe. Satan may occupy this world as a usurper, but he never been an owner. The ownership is always in the hand of God, and then John saw a Lamb, newly slain, standing.

That means resurrection, and the Lamb is the only one who is worthy, because he has overcome. He has overcome Satan and all the power of darkness, and he is worthy to receive that scroll, and to open it. Thank God.

You know, this is a review of the ascension of our Lord Jesus. So by these two evidences, we are sure that our Lord has reached the throne. He is now sitting at the right hand of God, waiting for his enemies to be his busto.

Dear brothers and sisters, if his first coming is true, his second coming must be true. If you read the epistles, the writings of the apostles, you find the return of the Lord. The coming of the Lord is everywhere.

For instance, the first epistle we have in the Bible by the apostle is 1 Thessalonians, and in 1 Thessalonians, as you read that five chapters, in every chapter, you find the return of the Lord. The coming of the Lord is mentioned. God has saved them, delivered them from idol worshiping, to believe in the one true God, and to wait for the return.

Paul told the Thessalonians, you will be my joy and my crown at the coming of the Lord. One day the Lord would come with his saints in chapter three. In chapter four, the trumpet was sound, the dead in the Lord would be raised, and those who are living, still living, will be changed, and they will be caught up into the air to meet the Lord who has descended from the throne to the air, and they will be with the Lord.

And it is the prayer of the apostle, Paul, for the Thessalonians believers, that the God of peace will sanctify them wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and be preserved, blameless, at the coming of the Lord. Brothers and sisters in the early church, the coming of the Lord is their blessed hope, especially when the church was in persecution. The believers, they met each other, greeting each other, comforting each other, saying, the Lord is coming, the Lord is coming, throughout the centuries and the generations.

The promise of the coming of the Lord is the hope of the church. Generation after generations, believers are waiting for his return. Even in the first generation, they waited for his return.

Were they mistaken? No, they were right. Their spirit was right. The more you read the Bible, the more you feel that his coming cannot be too far.

Remember, even in the first century, when you read the book of Revelation, you find that in the first chapter, chapter 1 verse 3, it says, the time is near, he is coming. And if it is near in the first century, how much more nearer now we are in the 21st century. No one knows when he is coming.

Our Lord Jesus himself told us, no one knows, not even the angels, not even the Son of Man. The Father alone knows, even though no one knows. But one thing is sure, he is coming.

He gave us signs to indicate how close he is coming. For instance, the Lord said, look at the fig tree. When it begins to bust and to have leaves, you know the summer is near.

So the Lord said, when you see these things, you know it is near at the doors. You know, in the lifetime of our Lord Jesus, he cut a fig tree. At the end of his ministry, he came to a fig tree full of leaves.

He thought there must be fruit, but there was nothing, nothing to satisfy the longing of his heart. He cursed it and he dried up, withered up and died. Why? Because the fig tree is a symbol of the Jewish nation.

He had come to work upon that nation for three years and a half, and they produced no fruit. Only leaves, a big show, but no reality. Satisfying to man, but utterly unsatisfying to God.

The Jewish nation was set aside as it did for almost two thousand years. But the Lord said, look, when you see the fig tree begin to bud and to produce leaves, the summer is near. When you see these things happening, you know it is near.

I'm near at the door. In 1948, after almost two thousand years, the Jewish nation came into being. It is the surprise of the world.

No race, no nation has ever been revived after so many years, without land, without government, and yet it did happen. The summer is near. How near it is? At the doors.

Now I believe you have to be oriental to understand this parable. Because in this country, when you are at the door, one door, open the door and you're inside the house. But in the orient, it wasn't so.

You find that in the orient, you have many courts, door after door. The richer you are, the more courts you have. And the family live at the very end.

So you don't need, you don't see the family until you cross all the doors. But as soon as you're at the front door, you are near. Brothers and sisters, that the Lord is already at the doors.

How close, how near. Suddenly, He's there. Would that be a great surprise to you? A pleasant surprise.

Without going into details, one thing we are sure. You may read the scripture, all the prophecies about the coming of the Lord, the second coming of the Lord. So far as we understand, all the prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord, before His coming, have been fulfilled.

There are still prophecies left to be fulfilled. But they will be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord and after the coming of the Lord. But everything that is before the coming of the Lord, they all have been fulfilled.

That is to say, the Lord can come at any time. Now the problem with God's people today is because we do not have a real understanding of the meaning of the coming of the Lord. You know, the Bible used different words to describe His coming.

But one word that is used often, and is used here in Matthew 24, the coming in Greek is parousia. And the word parousia means presence. Today the Lord is absent, physically speaking.

Of course we know He is with us in spirit, but physically speaking, He is absent. But one day He will be present, physically. And those who understand Greek, tell us this word *parousia*, presence, is a word that covers a period of time, including a series of events.

In other words, the word presence has a beginning and has an end. It is not just something that happens suddenly, immediately, once, and it's over. No.

It covers a period of time, but that time must be short. And it has a series of events being happening during His presence. Now let us try to explain it.

You remember the two men in white in Acts chapter 1, verse 11? Men of Galilee, why do you look up? He who is taken up. The word taken up means received. Received up.

He will return, come back in like manner, in the same way. So His presence is in two parts, as His departure was in two parts. When He departed from this world, from Mount Olive to the cloud, visible.

From the cloud to the throne, invisible. Therefore, when He shall come back and return, it will be in the same way. From the throne to the cloud, invisible.

From the cloud to Mount Olive, visible. And that is the reason why you find there are two different signs being given. One is the sign of a thief.

When the Lord shall come, He will come like a thief. Why? Because He will come quietly, hiddenly, suddenly. He comes and He leaves.

But when the thief comes, what will you take? He will take your treasure. He will leave your garbage. And that is exactly what will happen when the Lord uses that kind of metaphor.

It is clear that He wants to show us that His presence from the throne to the cloud is invisible, like a thief. A thief will never blow a trumpet. I'm coming, brothers and sisters, for the Lord to come from the throne to the cloud.

He will be like a thief coming. No one knows when. At the hour that you think not, He comes.

And when He comes, He steals away the treasure of His heart. Then two women will be grinding. One is taken, received.

One is left. Two men working in the field. One is taken, one is left.

Two men, two men who are sleeping. One is taken, one is left. Now remember, when the Lord says these things, He refers to the church, not to unbelievers.

He refers to those who are still living at the coming of the Lord. We are still living. We may have the privilege of being raptured, taken, without going through death.

You remember, in Revelation chapter 12, John saw a vision. The vision of a woman in travail, and then a red dragon waiting there. That dragon is not concerned with the women at that time, but he is deeply concerned with the man-child in the womb of that woman.

He is waiting there, trying to swallow that man-child. But the Bible says, as the man-child is born, he is taken right to the throne. Brothers and sisters, this man-child is what God is looking for.

The church is supposed to be the overcoming church. But unfortunately, God's people do not fulfill what God purposed for. Therefore, out of the travail of the church, through the ages, God is looking for a man-child, the overcomers.

The overcomers are not someone special. The overcomers are the normal Christians. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

They will be taken because they are the treasure to the Lord. But believers beware, if we are not watchful, if we are laden, if we are eating and drinking, and the cares of this life, we may be so rooted to the world, we cannot be taken and left behind. This taken is taken to the throne.

They are the welcoming party to the beginning of the presence of the Lord. And immediately after the man-child was taken to the throne, in Revelation 12, there will be war in the cloud, in the air. Michael and his angels will come and fight with Satan and his angels.

And there will be no place for Satan because the air is his headquarter. He will be thrown from the air to the earth. The air was cleared.

Why? For the Lord, brothers and sisters, is going to happen. Suddenly, anytime, today, may it be so, all over the world, some disappear. Blessed are those, they are ready, spiritually ready.

He will come like a thief. At the time that you think not, he comes and steals away the treasure of his heart. And then you know, when Satan was thrown upon this earth, what will happen? But a great tribulation.

And unfortunately, Christians, many will still go through that great tribulation. But thank God, in one sense, it will be difficult because it will be a great tribulation that the world has never known before. We have seen enough, but no, there will be the great tribulation we have never seen before.

But thank God, God gave us another chance. Even those who failed Him will be given another chance. And then, the trumpet will sound.

As the lightning, as our Lord said, people said, Christ is here, Christ is there, don't listen to it. Because His coming is like lightning. His flesh is from the east to the west.

The whole world will see it. He will come with a trumpet sound, with the angels, in the twinkling of an eye. Those who are dead in Christ will be raised, and those who remain and still live will be changed, and all will be caught up to the air.

Not to the throne, but to the air. Brothers and sisters, every time I sing hymns, singing about our blessed hope is when the trumpet sound, and we shall be taken to the air. I feel too late, too late, too late.

How much better, as the Bible says, because you keep the word of my patience, I will take you away from the time of the tribulation that will come upon this whole world. How much better is that? And that's true. That's the second part of Parousia.

His feet will come upon Mount Olive. Mount Olive will be divided into two, and the Jewish people, His chosen people, will see Him and repent it, and He will come to deliver them. Dear brothers and sisters, don't you think it is time that we wake up? What will happen if He returns? What will happen when we as believers, as the church, will all be gathered in the air to meet the Lord in the air? What will be going on in the air while the seven vows, the wrath of God, was poured upon this earth? What happened in the air?

The Bible tells us, the judgment seat of Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank God, because our Lord was judged for our sins on Calvary's cross, we will not be judged anymore for life or death, eternal life or eternal death, at the great white throne of God. In other words, judicial judgment was passed. He has saved us out of judgment, out of death into eternal life.

Thank God for that. That doesn't mean that believers will not be judged. There will be a judgment seat of Christ.

It is called a judgment seat. It is not a throne, because throne is judicial, and it determines life or death, eternal life or eternal death. But it is a seat, bima, and what does bima mean? Again, you find it is the oriental background.

In the orient, you have big families, and in the big family, you have the head of the family, maybe a grandfather, maybe a great-grandfather, head of the family, has authority over the whole family. And once in a while, there will be a family gathering. Only members of the family could attend.

They will gather in a room, and in one part of the room, there will be an uplifted platform, and the head of the family will sit there, and there he will judge the members of the family. Those who have done something that add glory to the family will be recommended and rewarded, and those who has brought shame to the family will be punished, chastised, disciplined. That's bima.

And in Romans, chapter 14, verse 10, 2 Corinthians 5, verse 10, they all speak of the judgment seat of Christ, the judgment seat of God. And his family will gather around our Lord Jesus and will be judged according to all that we have done, not before we are saved, but after we are saved and receive his life. How do we live before him? Brothers and sisters, to those who are ready, it is the most blessed time.

It is a time that all tears will be wiped away. It is a time that all misunderstanding will be cleared up. It is a time that a cross you bear through the years will turn to be a crown.

How the Apostle Paul looked forward to that. But to those who are not ready, it is a time to be feared. Brothers and sisters, that's why we must be ready, spiritually ready.

It is not an outward physical readiness. Through the years, there are instances where people prophesied Christ is coming today, or tomorrow, or a certain date, and people left their homes, go to the wilderness, clothes in white, waiting for his return. He didn't.

Not physical. Do not be afraid to go to sleep tonight. Do not give up work and stop working.

Because the Lord is coming, why do you work? How can you sleep? Brothers and sisters, readiness is not in these things. In your spirit, in your heart, are you spiritually ready for the coming of the Lord? Oh Lord, make us ready, not just for fear, but for love's sake. We want you back with us in thy precious name.

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