

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: BE YE ALSO READY

Scripture: Matthew 24:36-44

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

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Can ye not discern the signs of the times?

At this hour last week, we pointed out that God always gives warning of impending events through the voice of his prophets. We said that when the disciples asked Jesus to tell them what would be the signs preceding three events -- the destruction of the temple, his second coming, and the end of the world, the gospel historians grouped all these signs together, thinking that all three events would be simultaneous. This makes it somewhat confusing to determine what are the signs of the second coming of Christ.

We said also that certain signs and portents are common to all apocalyptic literature -- that they precede and accompany the judgment and downfall of any civilization, nation, race, or people. They seem to come in cycles -- to be repeated in each time of crisis. Therefore there are certain parallels between the signs portending the downfall of Jerusalem, and the signs of Christ's coming in judgment to make the kingdoms of this world his kingdom. Is that day near?

One of the signs which appears in every time of great crisis, and which will appear again to indicate the imminence of Christ's second coming, is that men shall say "Lo here, and Lo there." False Christs and false prophets shall arise, giving great signs which if possible will deceive the very elect. In our

day the sects of Christianity have multiplied until we have something over 250, saying "Lo here," or "Lo there." There are several sects which claim that their founder or leader is a re-incarnation of Jesus Christ, or that he is a new Messiah. There are other sects which teach that Christ has already come in some mysterious, spiritual, esoteric way. There are still others who have set dates on which to expect his coming, but whose followers have been disappointed. There have been nations in our generation which in desperation have followed false political messiahs who promised peace, prosperity, and a place in the sun, but who brought only doom and destruction.

Another sign of Christ's imminent coming was "wars and rumors of wars." "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." In the original Greek, the word translated "wars" has a larger meaning. It may mean war, strife, contention, battles, insurrections, commotions. It is a word that describes perfectly the conditions of our day, with its cold, undeclared wars, its infiltration by subversive groups, its internal strifes, contentions, commotions, revolutions, and insurrections, as well as its major conflicts between great nations.

For almost a generation now we have lived in a more or less constant state of

crisis, tension, and fear, and rumor, not knowing what was coming next to a troubled world. Military leaders, concerned with the defense of our country, have given us dire warnings of things which may come, and have deliberately sought to build up our apprehensions. We are constantly beset by fears. Yet we have lived so long and so closely with these crisis and tensions and fears, that as a nation we seem to be largely unconcerned today. No one can seem to generate any real enthusiasm for civil defense. We have adopted a fatalism which refuses to think about tomorrow. We eat and drink; we marry and are given in marriage; we divorce and marry again. Business is good, and all is well. We do not need Christ so long as we are prospering under our own wisdom, and buying protection against our enemies with borrowed dollars that circulate freely. The love of many for Christ waxes cold. Communism, which controls two thirds of the land area of the globe, teaches men to betray father, mother, or dearest friend. The love of man for his fellow-man waxes cold. Iniquity abounds. Millions have been slaughtered in battle, in bombing raids, in gas chambers, in concentration camps. Our crime rate, and the slaughter on our highways are a shame and an astonishment. Two great world wars in our generation, and the cold war following, have brought famine and suffering, destruction and privation such as the world has never seen before. We leave you to decide whether these things portend the imminence of a great crisis which shall be as decisive for the whole world as the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was decisive for the Jewish nation and people.

There is another series of signs which must appear before the final coming of Jesus in glory. The gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness, in order that men may have opportunity to repent, to confess Christ as Lord, and to acknowledge him as King. The "abomination of desolation" will again defile and desecrate all that is holy. Following this tribulation, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken." When these signs appear, "This generation," the generation in which the signs begin to appear, "shall not pass away until all things are fulfilled." "Then shall appear the signs of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of earth mourn. And they

shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

That coming will not be secret, nor unobserved. As the lightning flashes from one end of heaven to the other in plain sight of all, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. He will come to gather out his elect from the four quarters of the earth. From the meager picture given of that gathering in scripture, it seems that it will occur simultaneously all over the world. If it is night in our part of the world, two shall be sleeping in the same bed; one shall be taken, and the other left. In other parts of the world the day's work will be going on. Two shall be grinding at the mill or working in the field; one shall be taken, and the other left. No man knows the day and the hour when these events will suddenly occur, but we are commanded to be ready every day -- to live each day as if that might be THE day.

The perilous and unsettled times in which we live can easily breed hysteria and a sort of morbid obsession with "last things" -- a demand to know "when." Such times also produce scoffers who answer "never!" It produces others who are so busy seeking signs that they neglect or forget to prepare for the events which the signs foretell. Times of crisis always produce some inspired and trustworthy leaders who keep their heads when all about them are losing theirs; but such times also produce false messiahs and self-seeking, fanatical leaders, who exploit the people in the name of high patriotism or religion, and lead them to doom and destruction. We have seen all these kinds of men in our generation.

Whether the coming of the Lord be near or far, early or late, our task and obligation is to live always as those who wait for their Lord -- to be ready every day -- to be watchful -- to live as if he might return today. We can be prepared and ready only if each day we use the talents, gifts, and resources entrusted to our care as if an accounting might be required that day. We must never allow the delay of his coming to make us so discouraged or so indifferent that we begin to live as if he would never come at all.

Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.