A regular occurrence for me is to get a phone call from someone with questions about our church.

Many of the questions are practical – do we have homegroups – what ministries do we have for youth or women – what is our worship service like?

But many of the questions are theological.

Probably the most common questions have to do with where we stand on issues like:

- Spiritual gifts
- Women in ministry
- Reformed theology

But twenty years ago – one very common question was where our church stood on the end times. How we envisaged the history of the world playing out between now and the new heavens.

I still get asked that question – but nowhere near as regularly.

End times was once among the hottest of theological questions. Today, it is still a hot burning issue for some – but for most it is merely a lukewarm issue – they are curious but not too bothered.

A growing number describe themselves as panmillennialists – the future will all pan out in the end.

I think what happened is that the church realized that we were missing the real point of the end times. We were focusing on getting the sequence right – the timing of end time events – reading the signs in the world.

And we realized that this was never Jesus’ main emphasis – and that this misguided focus was divisive.
So slowly and quietly, eschatology – teaching on the end times – was moved to the periphery.

It became more of an academic curiosity.

This was a mistake.

This morning I want to suggest to you that we all need to rekindle our interest in the end times. It should be a hot burning issue in our lives.

This topic is addressed in most New Testament books and was very prominent in the ministry of Jesus.

It has serious gospel implications. It is a major impetus for how we live our lives.

But – the focus needs to be where Jesus puts it.

Whenever the Bible speaks about the end times – the focus is not on getting the sequence right – instead it focuses on this truth:

Jesus will come back a final time with wrath for those who rejected Him and with blessing for those who loved Him.

This is the overall take home message of Mark 13. It is something everyone who loves the Lord should agree on.

Last time we looked at the first half of Mark 13 which taught us that:
When you despair over the calamities of this life – stop and remember – these are signs that Jesus is coming to restore this broken world.

This week we come to the second half of this chapter where Jesus gets very practical and we find that:

**Jesus will most certainly come back a final time – so the people of God must live in constant readiness for His return.**

Eschatology – the doctrine of the end times – *is* important – but what is important is that our lives are ever ready for Jesus’ return.

Let me remind you where we are in Mark.

We are in the second half of Mark chapter 13.

This chapter began with a disciple commenting on the splendor of the Temple to which Jesus gave an unexpected retort. The Temple will be destroyed so thoroughly not one stone will remain untouched.

This stunning statement led the four disciples closest to Him to come and ask Him – when will these things be and what will the signs be?

Jesus answered by outlining this very general sequence of events:

First – Repeated Birth Pangs vv. 5-13

Then – Final Birth Pangs vv. 14-23

Finally – Messiah’s Return vv. 24-27

So – Be Ready vv. 28-37
Finally – Messiah’s Return vv. 24-27

So – Be Ready vv. 28-37

**First,** there will be birth pangs. The pains a woman feels before birth are a warning that the birth will most certainly come.

Jesus gave four examples of these birth pangs:

- **False Messiahs**
- **Wars**
- **Natural Disasters**
- **Persecution**

Signs that this is a fallen world and only the Messiah is needed to restore this world.

**Then,** Jesus says that right before Messiah comes again – there will be a series of final great birth pangs – set off by the revealing of the final great Antichrist – leading to the worst cataclysms in history.

These events declare that Jesus’ return will be imminent.

And what an incredible day that will be.

**Finally – Messiah’s Return vv. 24-27**

Look with me at the return of Jesus in judgment and blessing. Mark 13:24–27:

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Remember that in verse 20 we saw that the tribulation would become so bad that if Jesus didn’t appear – no one would have survived.

It is hard for us to imagine how bad things will get.

There have been times in my life when I have called out for God to intervene. Life has seemed bad – really bad. A mess in the church, a health problem in someone I love, sin in someone’s life or my life.

Things were terrible – but nothing like the dark days of the final tribulation.

The end of the world – the death of every man and woman – seemed imminent and inevitable.
Sin running rampant, natural disasters, persecution, death everywhere, the heavens seemed to be imploding – Christians crying out for God to save them.

And then in the darkest of times – when all hope seems lost – **then:**

> The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

What does this mean?

There are three main views on how to understand this.

The **first** is that these are literal heavenly events that foreshadow Jesus’ return – meteor showers, eclipses and the like.

At times God does affect the heavens to demonstrate His power over the world. For example – the ninth plague of Egypt was darkness for three days. Or the darkness that came on the land while Jesus was crucified.

A **second** way to understand this is to say this is purely metaphorical language.

The Old Testament often speaks of the wicked heavenly powers – Satan and the demons – in terms of heavenly bodies – sun, moon, stars.

And when God intervenes to thwart evil and overthrow the forces of evil – it is often couched in terms of God working wonders in the heavens.

For example, in Isaiah 13 God promises destruction on Babylon. And in verses 9-11 we find this:

> Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger ... For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil.

The destruction of evil Babylon and sinful men is described in terms of God overthrowing heavenly powers.

Or consider Ezekiel 32:7 when God promises to destroy Egypt and Pharaoh:

> When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light.

These are just a few of many examples.

So in Mark 13:25 – when Jesus says – the powers in the heavens will be shaken – He may be speaking of Satan and his demons and the overthrow of their power in heaven and on earth.

A **third** view is that it is both literal and metaphoric.
When Jesus comes – there will be signs in the heavens which are an indication of the overthrow of all powers that have opposed God. It marks the end of Satan, evil, the effects of the fall.

I tend to lean toward this view – but it doesn’t really matter. The point is clear – Jesus’ return rocks heaven and earth to its core. The One who will finally restore this world has arrived.

Revelation 6:12–17 describes this time with some very sobering words:

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Imagine the horror of those days. Anyone still alive is certain they are about to die a terrible death.

Imagine the sun going dark, moon turning to blood, sky vanishing.

Imagine meteors reigning down on the earth.

Imagine mountains and islands moving.

Imagine the heavens shaking.

Imagine the dead bodies and destruction surrounding you.

Even the most powerful men on earth are calling for the mountains to fall on them.

Non-Christians are looking up at this end of days scenario watching the heavens torn apart. The remaining Christians are looking up at this end of days scenario.

Then when all seems lost – the sound of the trump of the archangel – and there amid the clouds – in great power and glory comes the King – the Lord Jesus.

The One the world despised and killed now returning in glory.

And from every corner of this earth His angels deliver the elect – the surviving Christians from out of this fallen world.

It is my understanding that it is at this time that Jesus destroys every enemy – Satan and sin and even death.
He institutes His judgments – the sheep and the goats – the saved and the lost. And then banishes the lost into the lake of fire and welcomes the saved into His glorious kingdom.

Every sword is destroyed, every tear is dried up, every illness and pain is vanquished – only holiness and joy and praise remain.

Talk about going from the greatest darkness to the most glorious light.

This is awesome – but the question everyone wants to know is – when will this be?

God knows when this will occur. This date was fixed before the world was created.

But God has never revealed this date? Why?

There are many reasons – but one of the major ones has to do with our fallen hearts.

What if instead of verses 28 to 37 Jesus said this:

The abomination of desolation will be revealed at 4.00pm Jerusalem time on September 27 in in year 2053. And after a short time of great tribulation – then the Son of Man will appear.

If He did this – for 2,000 years men and women would be born and die – knowing Jesus would not return in their lifetime.

And you know what man’s sinful heart would say:

Awesome! I can indulge every sin – every passion. I just have to make sure I don’t die suddenly.

Then whenever death approaches – I will have time to repent and get holy.

I can have this world and heaven too.

And what about us? 2053 is 37 years away. Most of us will live to see that date. So how would we live now?

You know our sinful hearts would say – 37 years is a long time. All we have to do is get right six months before the date.

And since we have to go through that final tribulation we might as well live it up now while we can.

Removing immanence leads to the removal of holiness.

Giving any specifics about His return would be a disincentive to godly living.
But the certain return of Jesus should have exactly the opposite effect – it should encourage holiness.

That is why Jesus does not give specifics:

Instead He warns – **Be Ready!**

The point is this:

Jesus will most certainly come back a final time – so the people of God must live in constant readiness for His return.

Look with me at verses 28-31:

> From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

This particular verse has a great deal of significance for me. In 1985, I was a very young believer and was prone to accept anything that was preached from the pulpit.

One Sunday evening the associate pastor at the church I was attending, preached a message based on this text.

He said that in Scripture, the fig tree always represented Israel and a generation was seen to be forty years. Israel had officially become a nation in 1948. He said this was the fig tree putting forth its leaves. This meant that there was a good chance that the Lord would return somewhere around 1988.

In other words, he said I was in the generation who would not pass away but would see the coming of the Kingdom of God with power – most likely in just three years time.

I have to say – that sermon inspired me to make sure my life was right … for a time.

Suffice it to say – 1988 came and went.
While this was a very popular way to understand this passage in the early 1980’s – it passed into obscurity.

Yes – in some passages – Jesus does use the fig tree to represent Israel – we saw this in chapter 11 of Mark.

However, here He is just using it as an illustration – a saying.

Any Jew would know that when the fig tree starts to bud – it is a sign that summer is near.

In the same way – every university student here knows the sign of the Jacaranda. When the Jacaranda begins to bloom – it means that end of year exams are about to hit.

Jesus’ point is clear. When you see these things taking place, then you will know that He is near, at the very gates.

But what things is Jesus talking about?

The answer to this is tied up with the understanding of verse 30:

    Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Any of you who have studied this passage knows there are so many views on what this means.

Let me give you a summary of the main views:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These Things</th>
<th>This Generation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD</td>
<td>Generation alive in Jesus’ day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth pangs</td>
<td>Generation of the church age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final signs</td>
<td>Generation that sees Antichrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything from 70 AD to Second</td>
<td>Every Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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The things are tied to the generation.

As we saw last time – this passage has some events that seem to clearly refer to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD – other parts seem to refer to the whole church age – and some to the very end of the age.

When the disciples asked – when will these things be – they were speaking of the destruction of the Temple.

So many say Jesus is only speaking of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD – and the generation who would see this were the disciples and those alive when Jesus spoke these words.
Others say – the things Jesus speaks of refer to the birth pangs that happen throughout history. He is warning the church – the generation alive in every age – to be ready. When you hear of disasters and cataclysms and persecution – remember – Jesus will most assuredly come back.

Others point out that it is when Antichrist appears and the final great birth pangs occur that Jesus is near – about to return. So, it is that final generation who will see Him return.

However, I think Jesus was intentionally ambiguous in His language.

When He says *all* these things must take place – that *has* to refer to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the birth pangs that echo through history and the unveiling of Antichrist and the final great birth pangs.

Last time looked at what I termed prophetic echoes:

**Prophetic Echoes**

- **Final Fulfilment**
- **Birth Pangs**

Events with some similarity that echo through history leading to a final fulfilment.

**Birth Pangs**

- **Final Great Birth Pangs**

Events such as the birth pangs – false messiahs, wars, natural disasters and persecutions.
We looked at the echo of antichrists who persecute God’s people – leading to the final great Antichrist.

We saw echoes of judgment on Jerusalem leading to the final great judgment.

My understanding is that Jesus is speaking to every generation in every age.

Those at the beginning, middle and end of church history had signs that remind them that Jesus will most certainly return.

We do not live in the first century. We are not yet in the very last days. But we have signs that tell us He is near.

Every single day – there are signs – wars, rapes, persecutions, cyclones, deaths, plagues – that tell us – Jesus is coming back – and it may be soon.

Brothers and sisters – end times discussions are interesting – they can be divisive – they can be difficult – you may not have understood anything of what I just said – but in one sense the timing and sequence of events is irrelevant.

The truth that you need to take away – that all Christians can say amen to – is that Jesus will most certainly come back to this world to restore it. He will come to judge those who oppose Him and rescue those who love Him.

**Nothing** is more certain.

How do we know this?

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
This is happening. Jesus will come back.

I can’t tell you if anyone sitting here this morning will be in the final generation – the one that sees Antichrist and is alive to look into the heavens and see the return of the Son of man.

We might be.

But what is certain – if we don’t see Him come back – we will meet Him when we die.

So – Jesus tells us – be ready!

Be ready for that day.

Verse 32:

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

I have had Christians, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses challenge me about this verse.

If Jesus is God – how come He didn’t know the timing of the end?

The answer is not that hard.

In the incarnation – in God becoming man – Jesus humbled Himself.

He took on the attributes of man.

He is God – but He could grow hungry, suffer and die.

His strength was that of a man. He needed rest.

Jesus had to grow in wisdom, stature and strength.

And in terms of knowledge – He learned like a man and His knowledge of things beyond the scope of this world was limited to what God the Father revealed to Him.

Becoming man – identifying with us – limited Him.

But, as soon as He rose from the dead in power – He once again assumed all the attributes of deity – including omniscience.

In Acts 1 – the disciples asked Him – is this the time when You will restore the kingdom to Israel? Jesus says – it is not for you to know the times or seasons – the Father has fixed them by His authority.

He no longer says – the Son does not know the times.
But these discussions can take us away from the point Jesus is making – verse 33:

Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

When I was young and broke – before I became a Christian – I joined the army reserve.

Boot Camp was brutal. Day after day – only one or two hours sleep.

During the second week we were taken into the bush in the early evening and placed in hiding along a path.

We were told that sometime throughout the night – ‘the enemy’ would come down that path. We were to wait till they reached the middle of the ambush site and then all rise up with our rifles pointed at them.

I lay there for hours waiting. I think the only thing keeping me awake was being bitten repeatedly by a squadron of mosquitoes.

Suddenly, I heard all this noise and yelling. I was totally disorientated. It took me a few moments to realize where I was. I had no idea what time it was. I knew I had dozed off.

The Sergeant called us in. He was beside himself with rage.

The soldiers playing the enemy had walked through the entire length of the ambush site. Nothing.

So they walked back and forth several times – talking – louder and louder – before they stopped and began yelling.

It seems everyone in my entire platoon had fallen asleep and missed the coming of the enemy.

It is hard to stay constantly vigilant.

But that is what Jesus calls us to do.

More than that – it is what Jesus demands we do. It is a sign of whether we are truly His.

Verses 34-37:

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.
If the master heads off and says – I will be back in nine months – then after eight and a half months of being slack – the servants will have a flurry of activity getting the house clean – set up for the master’s return.

But if the master merely heads off and the servants don’t know if he is gone a day, a month, a year, ten years – then they are obligated to be ready every day.

And it is not just every day but every minute of every day.

Even in the night hours – the watches of the night – the hours of rest and sleep – they need to be ready lest the master return and find them asleep.

So stay awake!

What does this mean?

In Matthew’s account of the Olivet Discourse – he adds a number of passages that tell us exactly what Jesus means.

Being ready requires:

1. **Constant vigilance for God’s return**

   In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells a parable about ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom.

   Five of them were prepared – they had their lamps trimmed and filled with oil.

   But five of them were slack.

   When the bridegroom did come, the unprepared ones had to try and run out at midnight and find someone who would sell them oil.

   They missed the marriage supper.

   Maybe I could put the point this way – being ready means not constantly procrastinating.
Are you one of those people who are always going to get your spiritual act together – one day? The spiritual procrastinators.

It just can’t be today because right now is a bad time – busyness, kids, career, paying the mortgage, marriage problems, health problems, family responsibilities, too young, too old – it is just not a good time. **But**, when things settle down then I do plan on getting my act together.

Brothers and sisters – I have yet to meet someone for whom the – I’ll get right tomorrow strategy – has worked.

The easier day **never** comes. Tomorrow always arrives with its own problems.

Single, studying broke – I’ll get right later.

Then, marriage brings new challenges.

Kids bring new busyness.

School adds so many activities.

Business gets more complicated.

When the kids leave home – your career is at a peak.

Retirement comes and you need a rest.

**Today** is the day to get ready. Be ready night and day because He comes like a thief in the night. You may not have a tomorrow.

As a young man – Jonathan Edwards set himself to be ready. He wrote seventy resolutions to live his life by. Read them sometime – but here are a few:

5. **Resolved**, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.

6. **Resolved**, to live with all my might, while I do live.

7. **Resolved**, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

17. **Resolved**, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

19. **Resolved**, never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do, if I expected it would not be above an hour, before I should hear the last trump.

37. **Resolved**, to inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent, - what sin I have committed, - and wherein I have denied myself; - also at the end of every week, month and year.
52. I frequently hear persons in old age, say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again: *Resolved*, that I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age.

That is life ready to meet the Lord!

Edwards did not live to old age. He died relatively young – complications of a smallpox immunization – but he was ready. Are you?

Are you regularly in the Word and prayer?

Are you in fellowship and under accountability?

Have you disciplined your life to make sure the Lord is the most important thing in it?

Don’t put it off – today is the day of change.

So – be careful with the Netflix, throw away the X-Box, carve out time for the Lord, make a life plan, find someone to share with, find someone to disciple – or you will hear the sound of the last trump and and cry out – no, no – not yet – Lord – can you give me a day because I was going to be ready tomorrow – truly I was!

Readiness to meet the Lord takes a lifetime – but it starts today.

What are you going to do today, this week, this year – to be ready for His return?

Being ready also requires:

2. **Conscientious use of God’s resources**

   In Matthew 25:14-29 Jesus gives the parable of the talents.

   The servants are entrusted with resources – and after a long time the master returns and asks what each servant did with the resources entrusted to them.

   Everything we have – **everything** – comes from God.

   Our bodies, our minds, our families, our wealth, our abilities, our talents, our resources, our time.

   There is **nothing** you have that God did not entrust to you.

   Sometimes I wonder what the Lord will say about my stewardship of His resources.

   How did I spend my time?

   How did I use my house, my money, my abilities?

   Did I train my children to leave a legacy for God?
I know I could have done better.

Notice in this parable that it is not just using resources selfishly – it is failing to use them at all!

The wicked, slothful servant didn’t spend the money on himself – he buried it and returned it to the master.

In this church – in every church I know of – there are men and women of extraordinary talent and abilities and resources – who are doing very little for the kingdom. You know who you are.

Busyness, career, family, life – sucks all you have. You keep telling yourself – one day you’ll use get around to using those great resources.

You are burying your talents – and God is unhappy.

Others of you might be saying – I’m not that talented.

Jesus has a word for you. If you really are a two talent Christian – not a five talent Christian – then use what God gave you to His glory. You have still got use what He entrusted to you.

As Robert Murray McCheyne said:

> It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.

But the reality is in terms of resources, time, training, opportunity – we are among the most blessed saints in history.

Make an inventory of the resources you have and ask yourself how you are using them for the kingdom?

Don’t get to the end of your life and realize you wasted your life.

You can’t take your resources with you – so use them – today!

You only get one life – you never get to repeat one day.

Every day brings you closer to the day you die or the last trump sounds.

Being ready also requires:

3. **Concerned love for God’s children**

Jesus ends Matthew 25 with the parable of the sheep and the goats.

What is stunning is that the Lord doesn’t quiz them on theology – He doesn’t ask – Who is an amill, who is premill, where are the posts?
OK only you guys got it right – so you can come in. The rest – bad luck goats.

Jesus doesn’t care.

He says show Me your faith by your life.

Who did you feed?

Who did you clothe?

Who did you visit?

If you have no practical love for the brethren – then the love of Jesus is not in you.

If the love of Jesus is in us – it must overflow in acts of love and kindness – not in selfish indifference. This is the point of 1 John.

We love our brothers – our friends – our families – and even our enemies.

If your eschatology – your understanding of the end times does not shape your life into readiness – it is useless.

And if that doesn’t shake you enough – here is the part that should keep you and me up at night.

What if we are not ready?

Is it just snooze you lose? We just miss out on the best plots of land in heaven?

If only it were that trivial. The consequences are eternal.

Listen to what Jesus says about anyone who fails to live in constant readiness:

Matthew 24:48–51:

But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ … the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:10–13:

The bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Matthew 25:30:
Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:41–46:

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

If you are not ready for a test at school – you fail – but you get to do the test again.

If you are not ready for a task at work – you get a reprimand or the sack – but life goes on.

When I fell asleep in the army reserve waiting for the pretend enemy – I had my ear chewed off – we had to run laps – we had to do more sentry duty – but life went on.

This isn’t like that. These verses give me cold chills. They should sober you up.

Jesus is not saying:

You are all My servants – but strive to be one of the good ones who are ready for My return.

No – the stakes are much higher. Jesus is saying:

My servants are ready for My return. Anyone not ready when I return was never My servant – I don’t know them.

They are wicked and worthless.

They are excluded from the marriage supper and can never enter.

They are cursed – cast into the eternal fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Readiness is a mark of our salvation.

Our love for Jesus should keep us ready – night and day.

Our longing for Him to come and fix this broken world should keep us ready.

But if that isn’t enough – then these verses should terrify us enough to do whatever it takes to get our lives in order for the return of the Lord.

Think of how wonderful – how amazing – how glorious the return of Jesus will be – if you are ready.

Think of how shameful – how terrifying – how dreadful the return of Jesus will be – if you are not ready.
Think of how you want to be living when He returns.

Think of hearing Jesus Himself say – well done good and faithful servant.

And let this drive you to – stay awake! – to be ready – today!
Main Point: Jesus will most certainly come back a final time – so the people of God must live in constant readiness for His return.

Read: Mark 13:24-37

- Why do you think eschatology – the doctrine of the end times – is not as prominent as in years gone past?
- What have been the less helpful emphases on eschatology?
- What have been the more helpful emphases on eschatology?
- Why do you think there will be a final great tribulation before Jesus returns?
- What are you looking forward to about that day?
- What are you concerned about that day?
- Why didn’t God tell us the date of the Second Coming? How would knowing the date affect the way we live?
- What are the signs in our world that Jesus is coming again?
- Do you ever doubt that Jesus will return? How can you know for certain He will come back?
- Why is it so hard to be awake and ready all the time?
- Are you a spiritual procrastinator? Are you always going to get your life right one day?
- What are the biggest challenges you need to undertake in your life?
- Do you have a spiritual life plan?
- How are you using God’s resources? Are you burying some of those resources?

Home application: Do a spiritual inventory of every resource you have. How are you using them to God’s glory?

What needs to change today – in terms of time, money, family, work – to use His resources wisely?

- Why is practical love one defining test of salvation? How are you showing love?
• Why is being ready one defining test of salvation? Why is being unprepared a sign of being unsaved?

• If Jesus returned today – would you be happy with the state of your life – what needs to change?