

Watch and Pray

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Although I believe that most of the people reading this article have had the correct view of "watching" for most of their Christian walk, I wanted to remind my friends of the importance of watching.

Some people identify watching as merely watching world events. While watching world events can have wonderful value, it should not be the main emphasis for watching.

At this time, I want to mention two approaches to avoid concerning the area of watching world events.

- Watching does not give people permission to push their personal opinions about prophecy upon other people.
- Watching does not give people permission to set prophecy dates on behalf of God.

Pushing personal opinions

Jeremiah 23:16—"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord.' "

Jeremiah 23:21—"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied."

Setting dates for God

Matthew 24:36—"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

Staying awake

I believe that Matthew 24 shows that there are two lessons about staying awake.

- Stay awake by watching world events.
- Stay awake to promote proper behavior.

If watching world events does not lead to proper behavior, it is of little value.

Watching events

I believe that Bible students understand the following basic ideas.

- Watching events should be a motivation to influence people to have proper behavior.
- Watching events should not increase a person's negativity within himself or toward other people.
- Negativity within oneself often manifests itself as fear.
- Negativity toward other people often manifests itself as condemnation.

Let's notice the obvious references in Matthew 24 about watching events.

Matthew 24:3—"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Matthew 24:15—"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand) . . ."

Matthew 24:32-33—"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!"

Proper behavior

Let's notice the obvious references in Matthew 24 about how watching should lead to proper behavior.

Matthew 24:16-18—"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes."

Matt. 24:42-44—"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Matthew 24:45-47—"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods."

Matthew 24:48-51—"But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

- Matthew 25:1-13 mentioned the parable of the 10 virgins.
- Matthew 25:14-30 mentioned the parable of the talents.
- Matthew 25:34-46 mentioned helping the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned.

Luke's version

Luke 21:34—"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly."

Luke 21:35—"For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth."

Luke 21:36—"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."