

## Romans 13:11-14 – A wake-up call to live the way Jesus wants

### **It's time to put on His values and live as those who are His**

11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

*"Do this" – everything Paul instructs in Romans 12:1-13:10 about practising love as a diverse but gifted body of believers, living in grace and harmony in a Christlike way, respecting God's order in all the various authorities and fulfilling the law in unconditional love towards others.*

*"Our salvation" – there's the salvation we gain in new life when we receive Jesus as Lord and trust Him with our lives; and there is the final salvation at the end time. Then, the Lord Jesus will usher those that are His to a kind of 'green channel' while others will have unredeemed sins to declare in the judgment of what we might imagine as the 'red channel'.*

12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light

**IN PRACTICE** Isaiah has given us a long-range view of Christ's return. Jesus has taught about being always ready for the event, so unpredictable that even He doesn't know when it will happen. And now Paul tells us to actively look to the future and anticipate it in how we live – and especially how we relate. This short passage is a summary of the great teaching about living in Christ-like relationships that precedes this – with an urgency. Daylight is coming and we want to be found doing what is right, not what is wrong. We show ourselves to be His by being clothed with His nature, living (and loving) His way. This is the down-to-earth practical challenge of being ready for Jesus, whenever He comes down to earth for the second and final time. *Too late then to bow the knee in submission, to plead His blood for our selfishness and independence! We need to know we are His now, and be living like we mean it.*

**QUESTION** *What do we really believe about the second coming of Jesus, apparently so long delayed? Where are we on the scale, from passively complacent to appearing a little obsessive about readiness?*

**PRAYER** Lord, we join with billions of Christian believers in declaring the ancient prayer: Maranatha! Come again, Lord Jesus! And help us to reach some others for You first. We pray this to Your honour and glory, Amen.

*"The day is almost here" – a good NT example of living in anticipation of Christ's imminent return. The early Christians were not mistaken about expecting Christ's return, but saw His death and resurrection as history's turning point that began the last days. However long the night may seem, it is the connection to the next great event, Christ's second coming, and therefore "nearly over".*

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

*"Behave decently, as in the daytime" – more literally (NKJ): "Let us walk properly, as in the day [of salvation], not in... lust... strife and envy." In other words, live as those anticipating that climactic day when Jesus Christ will again appear in majesty.*

14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

*"Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ" – in other words, accept His lordship, put on His values and willingly live by His guidance rather than allowing the selfish drives of the flesh nature.*

# The Living Word

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Bible readings for Sunday, December 1, 2019, with commentary notes

Bible study on Revised Common Lectionary passages for **Sunday, December 1**  
*Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching*

### **Advent Sunday theme: Be ready for Jesus**

Isaiah 2:1-5 – In a future time the world will be looking to its Lord together with: Psalm 122

Matthew 24:36-44 – Make Jesus your Lord and be ready for His coming

Romans 13:11-14 – A wake-up call to live the way Jesus wants

## Psalm 122 – In a future time the world will look to its Lord

### **A picture of the last days with nations seeking the peace of the new Jerusalem**

1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

*"I rejoiced with those" – the voice of a pilgrim who has gone up for one of the three annual festivals, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.*

• **For further study on the festivals**, see Exodus 23:14-19; Leviticus 23; Deut. 16:1-17.

2 Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.

*"Standing in your gates" – a metaphor for entering the Lord's presence.*

3 Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.

*"Compacted" – or "built as a city that is bound firmly together" ESV, metaphor for God's heavenly dwelling, free of politics, enjoying unmarred unity.*

4 That is where the tribes go up – the tribes of the LORD – to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel.

*"The tribes of the Lord" – an expression found only here. As well the more tribal pilgrimages, the meaning covers families who from time to time needed to worship the Lord in the holy city.*

5 There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

*"Thrones of judgment" – religious and civil issues*

*were intertwined and Jerusalem was also the place where civil judgments were decided.*

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure."

*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" – Hebrew wordplay. Jerusalem means 'city of peace' or 'city of shalom'.*

7-8 "May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you."

*"May there be peace" – a form of words invoking a blessing on the city, appropriate for the place where God's presence was particularly celebrated.*

9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.

*"For the sake of the house" – the attraction of OT Jerusalem was the house of worship, the place God had chosen for Himself, 1 Kings 11:36.*

### **Isaiah 2:1-5**

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

*"What Isaiah... saw" – a repetition of the title of Isaiah 1:1 suggesting that chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the whole book.*

2 In the last days, the mountain of the LORD'S temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

*"In the last days..." – These verses 2-4 are almost identical to younger contemporary Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah and Micah shared the same prophetic expectation of God's purpose in a future time of divine messianic rule with the people of the earth coming to learn the ways of God.*

3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

*"Teach us His ways... walk in His paths" – our "walk" is the way the Bible describes our relationship with the Lord, not static or passive but dynamic and developing. The nations coming in would be ready to do God's will, a contrast with Judah which had known*

**IN PRACTICE** We tend to see the Advent season as a preparation for Christmas, but that association was only thought up in the Middle Ages. Much earlier, it was a season to prepare and teach new disciples who were getting ready to make a public declaration of their faith and go under the water of baptism, to symbolise death of the old life and rising again to new life in Jesus. This took place early in the New Year, around Epiphany, a season that recalls the first coming of the incarnate Son of God – and looks ahead to His second coming. So the seasonal hymn "Come, O come Emmanuel" is a prayer for the God who is with us to hasten His return. The pilgrims singing psalms of ascent like Psalm 122 were thinking about the coming of the Messiah the first time, but Isaiah's vision of the Last Days takes a much longer future perspective. We are preoccupied about what happens in the next few weeks or months, with deadlines broken and deadlines to come. *God works on an eternal timescale, and He is with us for the long haul. He encourages us to look to Him, to look to His eternal purpose, His kingdom – and pray it in.*

**QUESTION** *How do we view the Advent season? What does the long view, sharing something of God's perspective, look like?*

**Matthew 24:36-44** – Make Jesus your Lord and be ready for His coming

**He will return unexpectedly and will gather His own to Himself**

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

*"About that day or hour" – after teaching in the temple courts on the seven woes against the Pharisees and teachers of the law, Jesus left for the Mount of Olives where He answered the disciples' questions about the end of the age and His return – which He said had not been revealed to Him or the*

*the word but not obeyed it, in that walk or relationship.*

4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.

*"Swords into ploughshares" – or hoes. A picture of a world of genuine peace with the Holy Spirit enabling everyone to live showing God's character.*

5 Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

*"Come... let us walk in the light" – Isaiah calls for a return to the covenant and living in the "light", or revelation, of God's law, that shows the path leading to the promised future peace of the vision.*

*angels in heaven. In coming to earth and incarnate, Jesus (who was fully God) surrendered many divine attributes to become at the same time fully man, fully filled with the Holy Spirit.*

• **For further study on the key understanding of Jesus laying aside His glory and 'emptying Himself'** or making Himself nothing, see John 17:4-5, Phil. 2:5-8. For Jesus' superior insight and revelation, see John 2:25, 16:30, 21:17. Was this within the compass of spiritual gifts of revelation exercised by Christians today, or something more?

37 "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. "As... in the days of Noah" – a hint that Christ's return will suddenly break in to a time of unbelief and indifference.

38-39 "For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

*"They knew nothing... until the flood came" – a picture of indifference and unpreparedness. By contrast, Jesus' disciples are enabled to live as those prepared and ready for the unexpected.*

40-41 "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

*"One... taken... the other left" – a stark picture of separation at Christ's return, with the strong implication that some will be gathered by Him and others judged. However we understand this, the point is about the separation of those who belong to*

**IN PRACTICE** Jesus, in His last few days where He has been teaching publicly and controversially in the Temple precincts, now gives His close disciples further teaching about living in daily expectation of the end time and His return. It was a lot for them to process. They were still trying to face up to the death He has talked about, and now He was teaching about being ready for His return. As well as the 'keep watch on the house' parable, He gave them three others in quick succession, of which the prepared and unprepared young women, waiting outside the banquet, is the most memorable. This was difficult, and shocking, especially in the context of what was happening all around. But this teaching was not just for those first disciples; it was given to them, to be passed down to us. *Now we have to make the choice – do we belong to Jesus, as His disciples? And are we ready for Him?*

**QUESTION** *How ready are we? If this is the season of preparing to be counted as Jesus' disciples, how is our appraisal looking?*

*Him, from those who have not made that choice.*

• **For further study**, see John 3:14-17, John 6:47, Romans 10:9-10, 2 Cor. 5:17, Col. 2:6-7 or more fully at <https://www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/10-bible-verses-accepting-christ/>

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

*"Therefore..." – The summary and application of verses 36-41. Believers have been tasked with the work of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:19-20, as an active watch, being always ready for Christ's return, 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:2-18.*

43-44 "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him."

*"You... must be ready" – further emphasis on being prepared for the unexpected, like a wise householder who does not leave the home unprotected against a burglar's opportunistic raid. This is the first of four parable illustrations about readiness. See also the good and wicked servants, the 10 virgins, and the talents, Matt. 24:45-25:30.*