**“Those Days”**

Isaiah 51:4-6

# Jude 20-25

Romans 3:19-28

Mark 13:(14-23) 24-37

 Last Sunday of the Church Year, Nov. 20/21, 2021

Jesus said: “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 the heaven.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

The Sermon Title for today is the same as it will be for next weekend. Though today we’re **ending the rhythm of a church year** and next weekend (assuming the Lord doesn’t return first), we’ll **begin** (at least) **a new cycle (the formal) Advent Season**, the **environment** for His Words to us in **both cases** are called “**those days**”. They are days most to be **watched for**: the days (“**those days**”) of **His** **approach**.

For this “**ending**” of a Church Year cycle, the environment (or context) is what we read just a moment ago as “**after that tribulation**”. The reason why this end of the year and the beginning of Advent has the same Sermon Title is that each time’s environment (or context) is not **too different**. The **specifics** may be; but only **slightly**. **“Tribulation” (either personally in it or helping people to get out of it, that is similarly known)**. The (both Advent) **Promises** are the **same**. “**Salvation it is … and it’s to us in this world that it’s about to come**”. One of those will be **unable to be missed**. The other? Well, heaven didn’t miss it, but there was a hiddenness without the following of the signs about it. A **baby was foretold and was born to this earth in the Middle Eastern town of Bethlehem. He then grew and became baptized into us and into His task of saving us, tempted from that task all along the way until beating that temptation down with the victorious words “It is finished”, giving Himself into death but it not holding Him, rising from death so as to usher in the way for other people to anticipate their rising**.

**Text**

The Promise of **salvation coming**, **THAT** **would be here** **after** the “**tribulation**”. We’re **around it now (still) to tell people stuck in it that they needn’t be … and we have rescue to look forward to / enjoying that hope now**. What this world faces (for the moment anyway) might get worse in turns of “tribulation” maybe … or (possibly) the ugly things of this world might be, now, showing themselves as bad as they ever get, humanity **asleep of “tribulation awareness” maybe more than anything else**. It’s why, maybe, everybody can’t see the signs **obviously**, since apathy (or **sleepiness**) has lulled all but the most discerning to a slumbered state. “Stone won’t stand upon stone” then, Jesus said. Yet maybe **people** are the ones not so firmly built and crumbling, yet **oblivious to that**.

Jesus began: “**In those days, after that tribulation**”, “**be and stay awake” for what comes** **after**. What’s this world to be awake for? The temple and all of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and that decisively put to an end to Jewish sacrifices of men’s best efforts. What most missed there in that hiddenness was the burning to the ground of every amount of **human** best efforts was abolished like stones falling (not one upon another). In other words, no one ought to suppose that they can adequately prepare for God by human effort. **God (in both timing and method) would make “strong covenant for the short time” with people who’d receive that. Much like Daniel foretold way before even the Christmas event, SALVATION begun, gathered into, then perfected would be all God’s work to be prepared and awakened into**.

But “**be on guard; keep awake”, you who He’s awakened for that preparation and awareness. “For you do not know when the time” of perfection “will come**. Concerning **that day** or **that hour**, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”. On that day, “after that tribulation”, **ALL “will SEE” what only the observant are prepared for in** “the Son the Man coming in clouds with great power and glory, sending out the angels and **gathering His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven, like a man going on a journey, when He leaves home and puts His servants in charge,** **each with his work, commanding the doorkeeper to** **stay awake**. **Stay awake, therefore—for you do not know when the Master of the House will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning**—lest He **come suddenly and FIND YOU ASLEEP**. So **what I say to you I say to all:** **‘STAY AWAKE!’**”

Jesus’ disciples asked what signs there would be to determine **when** the end would come. He said to **look for the signs (like “the fig tree when summer is near”)**. “The Gospel must be first proclaimed to the ends of the earth” (so make sure to do that), “**THEN** the end will come”. All that need **awakened must be first, then kept that way**, and then the opportunity will be at hand.

Baptized into salvation, and hearing and receiving and believing God’s Words, “**Each have our work to do in this preparing of the rest, doorkeepers (in the speaking and watchful voices of pastors and heads of Christian households) must awaken people and encourage them to “stay awake”**. God says through Isaiah specificically “**Give attention to Me, My people, give ear to Me, My nation**; for a Law will go out from Me” (about His Son and how salvation is happening). “I will set My Justice (in Jesus / Him crucified, risen, reigning, and returning) for a light to the peoples. But My righteousness **draws near**, My salvation **has gone out**, and My arms will judge the people; the coastlands hope for Me (all nature even), and for My arm they (it) waits, so **lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath**; **know** that the heavens will vanish like smoke and the earth will wear out like a garment and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but” know this too: “**My Salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will never be dismayed**.”

“Those days” will never be a time of **human** bests, but **God’s best**. We prepare for it (“stay awake”) by the **telling of** **GOD’S best**. There’s not been a time yet where **more of the world has at least** **heard the Gospel … we’re almost there**. The **time (“those days”) “after tribulation”, are pretty much upon us**.

## Application

So “**stay awake**”. **Tell** the Good News of the Gospel to everyone (young, old, of any race or location, neighbors immediate or distant; make sure that message has arrived to the ends of the earth). The Lord is coming to bring a completion to salvation … and that **after** **everyone He will gain has been** **with our proclaiming help**.

If you’re not sure **you’re “awake”** for the time that’s coming, know that, at least, Jesus is awake enough for you. Baptized into **Him**, we’re baptized into **His** “**alertness**”. Perhaps the neatest part of this text is where Jesus said even He doesn’t have the return on His calendar: “concerning that **particular day or that hour**, **no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father**”. So “Stay awake!” Jesus commands to **Himself …** and **He is**.

I see Him (who is **perfect at “staying awake”**) on the edge of His seat **anxious** **for us**. Everything He does, He does **for us**, and **in this it’s no different**. When we think that we’re too distracted and maybe lazy, He make up the difference; we’re ready and even alert by relation to Him. And I picture Him on the edge of His seat, much like (when I was a kid on a long car ride, naggingly asking mom and dad “are we there yet”). Well, Jesus does that with His Father, not probably naggingly, but with one eye that’s most certainly upon the Heavenly Father **watching for the nod while about His “till then” work caring for us … He, remember, is the Master Doorkeeper**.

When He “gets the nod”, “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.” ….

One last thing I’d like to **reiterate**. People **have this thought** that (towards the end of time / Christ’s return), things will **be** **obviously** **horrendously bad**. Since Jesus tells us to “**stay awake**”, I think that **the opposite might be true** / that society will, more likely, be **lulled to sleep by Satan and our own interests, and there will be some semblance of prosperity** **rather than obvious physical “tribulation”**. The Old Testament Children of Israel had their **worst times ahead** when **prosperity and a (quote) “happiness” seemed to be their situation**. It’s at **those times** when most are **most vulnerable** … where the “shoe falls” **when we least expect it**.

I’m worried about **complacency**. The Lord warns against it **most** in these discussions about the end times. **Dreamily sleeping** might even be the world’s ‘drothers when His “**too soon**” **might not be desired since there’s things we’d miss** even though Paradise is the replacement. **In spite** of our wrong-thinking that any kind of good now is at some level **similar** **to God’s completing all things**: “**Come, Lord Jesus**”. ….

….

Where I’d like to leave today (and this Church Year) is with the **God’s instructions through Jude:** “**Build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Now to Him who’s able to keep you from stumbling and will present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy” (COMPLETE SALVATION IN US), to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever, in +Jesus’ name. Amen.**”