

September 25, 2005

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

"An Unexpected Event"

Rev 16:15 NLT

"Take note: I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their robes ready so they will not need to walk naked and ashamed."

Has a thief ever broken into your home, car or place of business? I have experienced that and many of you have also. Let me ask you, did the thief let you know when he or she was coming? I mean, did you get a notice in the mail, perhaps a post card saying, "I will be in your neighborhood to do some robberies during the last week of the month. I have your home scheduled for 2am Tuesday morning. It would help if you would be prepared. I would suggest leaving a window open and having your valuable readily available." Of course not! When you were robbed, you never expected it. Now, what if there was a rash of burglaries in your neighborhood and you were warned that a thief could break into your home? Well, you would be more prepared, because you knew he or she was coming though you did not know the exact day or hour.

Jesus says, "Take note..." Jesus is putting us on notice and says He will come as unexpectedly as a thief.

First did you know that Jesus was coming back. Most know that Jesus came to earth as a baby (Incarnation – God became man), He grew, did much good on the earth - healing, teaching/preaching and showing (modeling for) us how to live. Then, we know that He was put to death (by way of crucifixion) and He arose from the dead, alive and appeared on earth another 40 days after His resurrection before He went up into heaven (which we call the Ascension). But in this verse, and many others in the Bible, we are told that Jesus will come to this earth again.

Acts 1:10b-11 NLT

(as Jesus ascended into heaven)...two white-robed men suddenly stood there among them (the disciples). They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, *just as you saw him go, he will return!*"

1 Thess 4:16-18 NLT

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever. So comfort and encourage each other with these words.

Heb 9:27-28 NLT

And just as it is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died only once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. *He will*

come again but not to deal with our sins again. This time he will bring salvation to all those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Note: the first time He came to deal with our sins. He forgives the sin of all those who believe and ask Jesus to forgive them and be their Savior. But the next time He comes it will be to take all those who have accepted Him to be with Him in heaven.

As Jesus Himself said in John 14:1-4 NLT

"...trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."

So Jesus told us He is coming again, He just did not tell us the day or time.

Matt 24:37-39, 43-44; 25:13 NLT

"When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the Flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the Flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. (People will be going about their business, partying etc. not thinking of Christ's return...until it's too late).

"Know this: A homeowner who knew exactly when a burglar was coming would stay alert and not permit the house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time. For the Son of Man will come when least expected.

"So stay awake and be prepared, because you do not know the day or hour of my return."

Jesus makes a good point (He usually does), if you knew when the burglar was coming you would be alert and ready. If the thief sent a card saying he was coming Tuesday at 2am you would notify the police or you would stay awake waiting with a rifle in your hands.

Jesus warns us that His coming will be unexpected. But since we know He *is* coming we should be ready and prepared. As a matter of fact He says, "Blessed are all who are watching for me, (who are those who are watching for Him? Those) who keep their robes ready so they will not need to walk naked and ashamed."

What if the guest we are expecting is not a thief, but someone we'd welcome seeing? My dad was raised in Rochester. We have relatives there. We have always been very close to them. Over the years (you know how it is, you turn around and suddenly realize many years have gone by), while my parents have seen the Rochester relatives, I have not. A couple of years ago my sister and I, who had not seen some of those relatives for 30 years, took a trip to Rochester to bring my dad for a visit. When we got there they were all waiting for us. They saw us coming and joyously waved and ran up to us and hugged

us with tears. Some of the older relatives even got “dressed up” because it was a special occasion.

Another way in scripture that Jesus has describe Himself in His second coming is as a bridegroom. Those who are truly followers of Jesus make up the true church and the church has been called the bride of Christ.

(In Biblical times), on her wedding day, the bride would bathed and put on white robes, often richly embroidered. She put her bridal girdle around her waist, covered her face with a veil, and adorned her head with a garland.

The bridegroom, attended by his friends, set out from his house to the house of his bride's parents. The procession was a happy occasion, and was often accompanied by singers and musicians. He took his bride back to his own (or his parents') house accompanied by singing, the playing of musical instruments, and dancing.

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That is a wonderful illustration of what it will be like when Jesus comes to take His bride, the church, with much joyful celebrating.

Like the bride we need to bathed and put on white robes. We need to be ready for the bridegroom, Jesus, to come, because He will come unexpectedly. Wouldn't it be terrible if the bridegroom came for his bride and she said, “Oh, it's today? I'm not ready I haven't bathed or put on the proper attire for the wedding.” That would be awful! Imagine if she said, “I don't have time to bathed, or get properly attired, I'll just throw something on real quick.” That wouldn't happen. She can't go to her wedding improperly dressed.

"Robes" refers to a life that has been cleansed by Jesus. We have been clothed by Jesus. Clothed with salvation and righteousness. It is a gift you receive by faith in Jesus. My son graduated from St. John's University. On graduation day they gave him a robe to wear. Because of his achievements at the school, he was given a special robe to wear. He earned the right to wear that special robe. But some robes are given as gifts (not the one you got the last time you were at a hotel – that was not a gift!). But the robe Jesus gives us – that of a life forgiven, a life clothed with salvation and His righteousness *is* a gift.

In Biblical times a robe was an item of clothing that was a distinctive Hebrew outer garment, made of two pieces of thick woolen material sewn together, with slits rather than sleeves for the arms.

In Old Testament times the robe was usually brightly colored. Joseph's "tunic of many colors" was probably a robe of woven, bright strips. (Gen 37:3-4 NLT) “Jacob loved Joseph... So one day he gave Joseph a special gift--a beautiful robe.” Joseph did not earn this robe. It was a gift given to Joseph by his father, because his father loved him.

A handy, one-piece garment, the robe protected a person from the weather. [just as our relationship with God through salvation by Jesus protects us through the storms of life.] The typical Hebrew slept on the floor with his robe used as a covering to keep him warm. This was especially true for travelers, shepherds, or poor people, so a person's robe was not to be kept as collateral for a loan (Ex 22:27) [you were not to take a someone's robe because it was so important to him].

The Lord commanded the people of Israel to add blue tassels to the corners of their outer garments (robes), as reminders to obey His commandments (Num 15:38). This custom degenerated into a mere outward show of piety, and it was condemned by Jesus (Matt 23:5). [But originally had a good purpose to remind the people to keep the commandments. We are not to just have an outward show of religion but a practical one. Jesus gives us salvation and a new life. He forgives our sins. It is a gift, but then we must live for Him, obeying His commandments.]

You will be blessed or “so happy” to be ready when Jesus comes again. Don't let Him find that you have laid your “robe,” your righteousness aside so that your spiritual nakedness is seen, for you will be ashamed. Always be clothed in the salvation of Christ ready for His sudden return.

Just like the soldier who was away at war. The war ended, but he didn't tell anyone when he was coming home. He wanted it to be a surprise. The first place he went was to the home of the women he loved. But, as he approached her house he started to worry. Had she waited for him? Would she be glad to see him? Did she forget him? Did she give her love to another? He knocked at her door and when she answered there was sadness on her face and tears in her eyes. But her sadness quickly turned to joy as she saw him and threw herself into his arms. Then the soldier discovered that she had been sitting on the floor of her living room. Spread around her was all the letters he had sent to her. She had saved them all and she was thinking of him and reading his letters. And she was wearing a beautiful dress that he had bought for her.

How can you be ready:

Ask Jesus into your life (ask Him to clothed you with His Salvation.)

Then make Him Lord of your life (keep Him first in all things)

Resisting temptation and be committed to God's moral standards.

Be able to discern the deception of idolatry, which can be disguised as wealth, pleasure, or security.

Put off any and all sin.

Don't be lazy spiritually (devotion, worship, discipleship, service and witness)

Be a person of prayer, Know the Bible and obey it (i.e. maintain a relationship with Him).

In what ways does your life show either your readiness or your lack of preparation for Christ's return?

Focus on living for God and serving Him, not yourself and fulfilling your own desires.