

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG88 – Suddenly!

You know, there are so many things going on around us today, in this day that we live in. When we see things on the news, and read in the newspapers what is transpiring, it is hard not to think about the end times, and what we should expect as Christians and believers as we walk through the days that are just before us. But you know, the end-time events and the return of Yeshua will happen at a time that you do not expect it – no matter how anyone tries to figure out those events by reading the Scriptures and trying to look into the times that are surrounding us, comparing what you read with what events you see. I know Yeshua talked about wars and rumors of wars, and different aspects that would be happening; but there is almost just an overriding concept that He taught, and that is that the return of the Son of Man would come at a time when you do not think it will. And so no matter how much you try to figure out what will take place, and what the signs of His coming and the timing of His return will be, I think one thing we can all count on is that He will come at a time when we do not expect. Therefore, if you want to talk about being prepared for the end times, one thing we should do is to be ready for the unexpected. And that is what I want to concentrate on in this podcast. I titled it, *Suddenly!* because we know that when the events of the end time unfold, they will unfold suddenly, and that is part of why people will be unprepared for them.

Yeshua taught quite a bit about this idea of how suddenly and quickly things would transpire. I want to start in the Scriptures, just from this standpoint, first from Matthew 25. At verses 1-5 it says, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.” Notice one thing about this story, it wasn’t just the foolish virgins who fell asleep; they all fell asleep. They were all overtaken by this time of delay. And I think that, as believers, this is something we all understand very well – it seems constantly as though we are dealing with the reality of delay. Why do things seem to be taking so long? We can say, “Well, you know, it has been over 2,000 years since Christ ascended into heaven.” You could qualify that as a delay. And during this time of delay, it is something that tends to lull everyone to sleep. Whether you are prudent, or whether you are foolish, this delay factor is something we all deal with. And I would say, without question, the delay is something that makes us all fall asleep and lose our focus.

Let's go on with the story. Verse 6: “But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’” We see that as we go through this time of the foolish and wise virgins, those who were foolish had no extra oil for their lamps; they had to go out and try to buy the oil. By the time they bought the oil and came back, the bridegroom had arrived, the doors were shut, the party was well in hand, and they were not allowed to come in. On the other hand, the prudent did make it into the party, because they had the oil that was prepared. But it is interesting, again, because of the fact that they all fell asleep; what made the prudent able to participate was the fact that they had prepared beforehand, and they were ready for this sudden event. It says, “a great shout came, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’” It happened very quickly after this period of delay. That is what I think we all need to

recognize about the Scriptures, and we are going to try to cover it well in this podcast: there will be delay. And in that delay, there will be this tendency to fall asleep, to lose your focus. Christ warns us to be on the alert, be ready. But this readiness that we have to have, in a sense, is a readiness for how suddenly things will happen when they begin to transpire; and they will probably take place very quickly, and yet after a time of delay. So if you are going to say, "Be on the alert," be on the alert beforehand, and be prepared for things to transpire suddenly. That is what we need to be prepared for. Matthew 25:13 finishes by saying, "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

We will go to Matthew 24, starting at verses 37-44, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the household had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." We need to wrap our hearts and our minds around this idea. Basically the Scripture is saying, you won't know when it will happen; you won't be ready when it is going to happen; because it will happen at a time you are not ready for it. Yet it tells us to be on the alert, and to be prepared. So the only way I can figure to be on the alert and to be prepared is to be prepared for something that will happen very suddenly, that you really are not ready for, and it is happening at a time that you didn't think it was going to happen. That is the preparation that we need to have, and that is what it is talking about here in Matthew 24, "it will be like the days of Noah."

See, before the flood, they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage. What is it trying to imply here? It is saying that life was going on just as life always went on. The people were not all of a sudden preparing, saying, "Oh, today is the day the Lord is going to come! So we are going to be on the alert, we are going to be waiting for the Lord to arrive, because we know today He is coming." No, you won't know the day or the hour, and it will happen at a time that you do not think it will. It says, "Two men will be out in the field"; and we know this has been used as a part of the teaching of the Rapture. The only reason this does not work well for the Rapture teaching is that in the days of Noah, it was the wicked that were taken away; Noah ended up staying on the earth. So, I don't know, you need to find some different Scriptures to prove out that doctrine, if that is where you are going with it. But what it does imply here is that there will be people going about their daily business – they will be grinding at the mill, they will be out planting and working in the field – and all of a sudden one will be taken, one will be left. But the events will transpire at a time these people are not at home, waiting for the Lord to arrive. It is not something where they understand, "Today is the day." It's a day, in fact, where they do not understand that, and they have no concept of it. Therefore, they are going about their normal daily function; and yet it happens in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. Suddenly, quickly, it takes place.

We have to be prepared for that eventuality. That is what the wise virgins had. They were prepared for something to happen suddenly and they could not go to the store. But they were already beforehand prepared, because they knew, when it took place, it would happen at a time when they were not ready, when they did not think it would; and they otherwise would not be able to prepare, it would be too late. Luke 17 goes on, in verses 26-28, to say, "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also

in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building” – life goes on as normal. There is a preparation we have to have for this reality. We plan on missing the moment – when you think it will happen is not when it will happen. There has to be a readiness in us for this sudden, quick event to transpire at a time that surprises even those of us who believe we are ready and expecting it. So we need our hearts to be prepared for this type of an event. Verses 29-30 say, “But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.” So again, remember, these are all warnings from the Lord Himself telling us that it is going to happen in this way.

Mark 13:33-37 says, “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all, “Be on the alert!”” This is the alertness that we have. If we want to define alertness, as the Lord is teaching it, we are on the alert for a sudden event which we are not expecting to transpire. That is what we must prepare for.

Going on from the teachings of Christ Himself, we look at Peter. Peter warned about the days we are living in. These verses sound very much like what we face today: the unbelief of people, when they are saying, “All things have continued on all these years. Why should we believe that the Word of God will ever be fulfilled or come to pass?” We see it in Second Peter, starting at chapter 3, verses 2-6: “That you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.” He talks about this reality that there will be, in the time of His return, the fact that people are so conditioned to nothing happening, nothing going on, that they just don't believe anymore that the Word of God will ever come to pass. And I think we are in that day. I hear people talking about that: “Well, how can you believe in these things? How long will you hold on to what you feel are the promises or the prophecies that God has given? Why don't you just let go? It has not taken place all this time, why do you think it is going to ever take place?” Well, because I believe. The Word of God will not return to Him void without accomplishing that which He sent it to do. So He will return. He will come, just as He has spoken.

In verses 9-10, this goes on to say, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” Why does it seem like He is slow? Why does it seem like God is delaying? Because of His grace – He doesn't want anyone to perish. And God keeps giving time and grace upon grace for all to be able to come to the knowledge and the understanding of His truth and His salvation. When you look at the delay that transpires, and all of these

Scriptures that even the Lord was speaking about in Matthew, a lot of times it is confusing; but we need to understand this reality: the Lord is not slow about His promises. He is not just in some delay. He is waiting. He is hoping patiently for all to come to the knowledge. He doesn't want any to perish, but all to come to repentance; and He gives time, and He gives time, for that to transpire. So it is not really delay, it is grace; grace for people to find Him and believe in His Word and come to repentance. But don't think it is slowness; and don't feel like it is a delay because the Lord is not fulfilling His Word. His Word will be fulfilled. And at the moment when He is done waiting, it will all transpire very quickly.

Paul likewise talks about this. Paul gives great warning about the suddenness of destruction. Beginning in First Thessalonians 5, verses 1-4, it says, "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief." So we see that when people are saying, "Peace and safety!" "Oh, don't worry about it, it's never going to happen. The judgments, the dealings of God, they are never going to take place. God is not going to move." I wonder if they felt that way in Egypt? You know, after 400 years of being slaves in bondage to Pharaoh, they forgot the Word of prophecy that it would be that long. God had shown that to Abraham, and it was a true reality that there were 400 years; and for those living in those times, it must have seemed like an excruciating delay. And so coming into the generation when God was about to move, how many people were tainted in their faith, saying, "I know God promised, and He prophesied, but I just can't believe anymore. It has been too long." But while they are saying, "It's never going to happen," destruction will come suddenly like labor pains on a woman.

In Hebrews 10, verses 35-38, Paul talks about the fact, "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him." You cannot lose your faith. He is coming, in a very little while, and He will not delay. And the righteous ones will live by faith, faith in what? Faith in the promises, faith in the prophecies, faith in the Word of God we have of what He is about to do in this generation. We can't shrink back in that faith, because if we do, we will be part of those who endure the destruction that takes place when He begins to come very suddenly.

If we leave the New Testament Scriptures, we can go back to the Hebrew Scriptures and see that this concept was not new, and it was not just introduced in the New Testament. It was something very alive and real in the Hebrew Scriptures. I will start with the prophet Isaiah. In chapter 47, verses 6-11, it says, "I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage and gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy to them, on the aged you made your yoke very heavy." I like this prophecy, because it talks about how God is going to treat Israel and how Israel has been treated, you know, by Babylon, by the Assyrians. It talks about how He was using them to correct His people, but how they abused what He wanted them to be vessels of, and how He still is going to bring a blessing on Israel, and then how He will bring judgment on Babylon. He was angry with His people, and He did profane His heritage, He disciplined them. But He said, "You didn't show them mercy." And I feel like this Word that was a Word to Babylon, and to those who took Israel captive, is now a Word to the nations that surround us today, that are also relating to Israel in today's world.

He said, "On the aged you made their yolk very heavy. Yet you said, "I will be a queen forever." These things you did not consider nor remember the outcome of them. Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me. I will not sit as a widow, nor know loss of children." But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells. You felt secure in your wickedness and said, "No one sees me." Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you; for you have said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." But evil will come on you which you will not know how to charm away; and disaster will fall on you for which you cannot atone; and destruction about which you do not know will come on you suddenly.'" This is a warning, I believe, to the nations today. They are so given to their power, to their own charms and sorceries, their ability to make everything go like they wish. The world leaders are able to manipulate their peoples and their economies, and they are able to oppress Israel. And we see anti-Semitism growing around us in amazing measures. But I'll tell you, the destruction will come, about which you do not know, and it will come suddenly. But it will come.

Isaiah 48:3 says "I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.'" This is what will happen with the Word of God today. The Word has come forth from His mouth. He has proclaimed it, and suddenly He will act, and that Word will come to pass.

Isaiah 29:5, "But the multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust." Here is a great promise for Israel, and all of us that are grafted into Abraham: "The multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away; and it will happen instantly, suddenly." The things that are going to happen in these end times will happen instantly, and suddenly. That is what we must be alert to, and be prepared for.

Isaiah 30, verses 10-13 says, "Who say to the seers, 'You must not see visions'; and to the prophets, 'You must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.' Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, 'Since you have rejected this word and have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them, therefore this iniquity will be to you like a breach about to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant.'" Boy, those that are saying, "Don't talk to us about the Word of God. Don't talk about these prophecies of judgments, these things are to come in the end time, into the world today that we are living in. Don't prophesy those things. Don't repeat those Words to us. Give us illusions, prophecy about the wonderful things that are going to transpire. We don't want to hear anymore about the Holy One of Israel." "Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, 'Since you have rejected My Words, you have trusted in these other things, the collapse is going to come upon you suddenly in an instant.'"

Isaiah 60:22 speaks about the blessing. He says, "The smallest one will become a clan, and the least one a mighty nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time." I know sometimes it seems to us, as we are walking with the Lord, like, "Where are the blessings? Where are the promises? Where are the things that the Lord said we would be able to have and receive and move in?" They too seem to be under a delay. But the Lord said, "I will hasten it in its time." Just keep believing.

The prophet Malachi paints a picture of the end-time return, and it really is beautiful. In Malachi 3, starting at verses 1-3, it says, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the

covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the Lord of hosts. 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.'" And we look forward to this – the day of the Lord in its coming. And it will come suddenly. He will come to His temple, and as He comes, He will perfect His people. He will refine us as silver and as gold, so that we will be able to present our worship to Him in righteousness. We await that day, Lord. We are on the alert. We wait for You to appear suddenly in Your temple.

Verses 4-6, "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,' says the Lord of hosts. 'For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.'" As He comes and draws near, He will be a swift witness against these things. And we wait for that. So we see both things transpiring in the day of the Lord: the purification of His people, that we may offer worship in righteousness to Him; and we see His judgments upon the adulterers, those who swear falsely, those who oppress the widow and the orphan, and turn aside the alien. A swift witness will come.

Okay, we are almost done with this, and I want to read the last chapter of the last book of the Scriptures, Revelation 22. I want us to notice how often there is reference to this reality that things will take place quickly. Revelation 22, starting at verses 6-7, says, "And he said to me, 'These words are faithful and true'; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.'" Let us hold fast in our hearts the Word of God, because He is coming quickly, and blessed are those who take heed according to the Word of God.

Going on in Revelation 22, at verse 10, "He said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.'" Remember how He told Daniel to seal up the books, because it wasn't close to the time? Now He is saying, "The time is near. Take the seals off the books," so we can see and understand what He is saying. And we believe and know that is true. The time is near. Revelation 22, verses 12-14, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.'" Lord, grant that. Let us wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb, and let us be those who have a right to the tree of life. But don't forget this: He is coming quickly.

Following on in verse 20, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all." The final words of the Scriptures, "I am coming quickly." We believe, Lord, that You are coming quickly.

Just a few points to illuminate at the end of this podcast. The first is that all of these verses at the beginning, go and review them. Yeshua warns us to be on the alert. And to remain alert is difficult for us – whether we are one of the wise virgins or foolish virgins, they all fell asleep. Remaining alert is difficult. Lord help us to be alert. The wise virgins, however, were prepared for things to happen suddenly, and quickly. When God moves, it will be suddenly – will you be ready? Let's reach in to Him, and be prepared for Him to come quickly. Amen.