

What Kind of People We Ought to Be

There has been a lot of speculation about the end times lately, especially in light of recent storms. I saw firsthand the devastation and carnage that accompanied the fierce, deadly tornadoes that swept across the South and the Midwest this spring.

I've seen lots of disasters in my lifetime, but the scenes that I witnessed in Alabama and Missouri were among the most horrific I've encountered anywhere.

Many are asking if the seemingly growing numbers of such catastrophes could be an indication that the return of Christ is drawing nearer. Jesus said that such tragedies—in addition to wars and persecution—are indeed the “beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:8), and these certainly appear to be increasing in frequency and intensity.

Just a few months ago, the owner of a Christian radio network forecast that May 21 would be “Judgment Day” for the world. I was amazed at the extensive national coverage given to this prediction, even though the Bible says that only the Father in Heaven knows the exact date of the Savior's return. It was hard to view a news program or read a newspaper without a prominent reference to this event.

While I'm grateful that there has been some renewed discussion given to the return of the King, I'm afraid that such a superficial focus can divert our attention from the primary thrust of Scripture regarding His coming—are we living holy, godly lives on earth, diligently waiting and working until He comes?

As Peter described the day of the Lord when the “heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire”

(2 Peter 3:10, NIV), he wrote what kind of impact such news should have on us now. "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12).

One day—and I hope it will be soon—Christ will return and establish a new heaven and a new earth. He will come in the fullness of His glory, to execute His wrath on those who have rejected Him and to receive into His glorious presence those who have believed in Him. It will be a moment in time like no other—the final moment for the world as it now.

Since we will be made fully like Christ at His coming, our lives on earth should be a constant process of allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us into His likeness. "But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

We don't know when Christ will return, but we do know that He will come again. Are we ready to meet Him? Have our sins been washed away by the blood of the Lamb? If not, our names are not written in the Book of Life, and we will be cast forever into the lake of fire.

If we have trusted in His atoning work on the cross, are we cultivating a deep, abiding relationship with Him so that we may be "confident and unashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28)? If so, then we may echo with the saints, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

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