

Are You Really Ready for Christ's Return?

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be solemn and sober so you can pray" (1 Pet. 4:7).

As time draws nearer to the coming of the Lord, our attitude should be one of soberness and watchfulness. Every righteous generation of saints has eagerly anticipated the Lord's coming. The biggest reason He has not come yet is understood in 2 Peter 3:9:

"The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness. But He is patient with us, because He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance."

The Lord does not want anyone to be lost. His delay is based on His love and patience for all mankind to allow them time and space to repent. Nevertheless, every true Christian is to anticipate the Lord's coming with desire and eagerness.

Early Christians and every righteous generation since then expressed a heartfelt desire for Christ's immediate return. Along with this desire are exhortations to live a holy life, especially in the light of the Lord's return drawing nearer:

"So that you are not lacking in any gift while waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7-8).

Here is a great promise the Lord will keep us firm until the end so that we will be blameless at His coming.

Notice the same pattern in the following scriptural references. At the mention of the Lord's coming is almost always an exhortation to holiness. As the Lord's return draws

near, we are to cast off the works of darkness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for the lusts of the flesh.

“Furthermore, knowing the time, now is the moment to awake from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed [this speaks of our complete salvation which includes our new resurrected bodies]. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us take off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in immorality and wickedness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:11-14).

Notice this next Scripture. Once again, we see as the day of the Lord’s return draws near, not only are we to maintain an anticipation for the new heavens and new earth, but we are exhorted to live holy and godly lives, making every effort to be found living peaceful, pure, and blameless lives.

“The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness. But He is patient with us, because He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat. The earth also and the works that are in it will be burned up. Seeing then that all these things are to be destroyed, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, while you are waiting for and desiring the coming of the day of God, in which the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will be consumed by intense heat? But, according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:9-14).

We are admonished in the following verses again to keep the commandment Paul just gave in the preceding verses, without spot and blameless until the Lord comes.

“But you, O man of God, escape these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, to which you are called and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. I command you, in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and in the sight of Christ Jesus, who testified a good confession before Pontius Pilate, to keep this commandment without blemish, blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:11-14).

In this next Scripture, we are encouraged to abide in Him so we'll have confidence and will not be ashamed when He comes.

“And now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him when He comes” (1 John 2:28).

In these following verses, notice how the hope of being like Him when He is revealed at His coming has a purifying effect on our lives. This is not just a natural hope, but it is a living hope, a hope that presses into being conformed to His image. As we behold the glory of the Lord in our hearts we are changed (2 Cor. 3:18).

“Beloved, now are we children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He 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).

This pattern is so consistent and so clear with every New Testament writer. In nearly every reference to the Lord's coming is a strong exhortation to holiness and sanctification, as well as a certain looking forward to and expectation of His

return.

There are so many of these Scriptures that we cannot refer to all of them. But I'm giving you a good number of them so you can be fully convinced and persuaded of the unmistakably clear pattern of this theme in all the apostolic letters. Let's look at three final verses:

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and in godliness in this present world, as we await the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for Himself a special people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

"May the very God of peace sanctify you completely. And I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

"And let us consider how to spur one another to love and to good works. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but let us exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Are you getting the full picture from these Scriptures on what our position is to be at the Lord's return? And if He does not return in our lifetime, we are to have this same position when we depart and leave this earth to be with the Lord.

What the Lord sees in our lives is the position of our hearts—the longing, the yearning and the burning desire for Him. The memorial in your life as a Christian is what you are doing inwardly in your heart toward God. That is called sanctifying the Lord in your heart (1 Pet. 3:15).

May it be so for every one of us called by His name. Pursuing and perfecting holiness is the main theme of all the apostolic letters, and all the more so as we see the Day approaching. It is time that all the churches emphasize what the early apostles emphasized.

The separation is here. While many are departing from the faith, many are stepping up their pursuit of God. May our hearts burn with His holy fire.

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