



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

“Why we should watch for Christ’s return”



This is our first study in what I believe will be an interesting and beneficial series of prophetic studies which we have entitled — “The things which will announce, accompany and follow after the return of Christ.” Over the next few weeks we will look at God’s revelation of the events, which He has said will take place, just prior to the return of the Saviour to rule this world. We wish to start our series by looking at why we should consider such a subject.

Some might believe that it is folly to stare into the future and try to anticipate what will happen amongst the nations. If such a study is folly then the folly began with the Lord, Who revealed these things to us and commanded us to give consideration to what He said.

Perhaps we could start there.

I. ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN US BY DIVINE INSPIRATION FOR OUR BENEFIT THROUGH STUDY.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness , 2 Timothy 3:16. We profit from God’s Word by studying it, becoming acquainted with it, heeding it and obeying it.

1. It may surprise some to hear that eschatology is the most prevalent subject in the Bible. This is something that Peter made clear when he preached to the crowd that gathered around him, following the healing of the lame man. *And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began , Acts 3:20-21.* All the prophets spoke of the times of restitution and Christ’s return. Many portions of the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Psalms and the minor prophets are taken up with the events that precede and follow after the return of Christ. Many of these portions are missed or overlooked due to the process of spiritualising such portions of God’s Word. Prophecies referring to Israel and Jerusalem and what will take place there in the last days and in the days of the Saviour’s millennial reign, are interpreted as referring to the New Testament Church. Such a system of interpretation robs the Word of God of its full power and meaning. There is such a thing as legitimate spiritualisation. We may and should see an application of God’s Word to believers today, in the words of the prophets that are intended primarily for Israel in a future day but we must not rob God’s Word of its primary meaning. I may drink from the cup of prophecies directed to Israel, but I must not forget the cup belongs to God’s ancient people -- Israel.

From the beginning of time, believers have studied the second coming of Christ and those matters related to it. That is clear from the fragment of Enoch’s ministry that has been recorded and preserved for us in Jude: 14-15. *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which*



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ungodly sinners have spoken against him . From then on this subject dominates the Bible. It has been the prophets' subject since time began. Peter wrote of this. *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour* , 2 Peter 3:2. Those words specifically were words about the last days as the next verse in Peter's epistle demonstrates. The words of John in the book of the Revelation likewise indicate this truth. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets* , Revelation 10:7. The last trumpet will see fulfilled that of which the prophets have all spoken.

2. You cannot make sense of the Bible without a right understanding of the prophecies of the last days . I say that on the basis of the emphasis that Paul placed upon the subject when teaching new converts. Paul spent no more than four weeks teaching the believers in Thessalonica, as a comparison of Acts 17:1-2 and 10 indicates. During that time, he taught them the cardinal truths of the gospel. That which he taught them in that short time included the events that were related to the rise of the Antichrist and the return of Christ. Please read 1 Thess 5:1-2; 2 Thess 2:1-5 and see that eschatology was indeed a matter the apostle dealt with when teaching these heathen converts. If we had but three weeks to teach those just converted, would we include the topic of those prophecies dealing with the Antichrist and the Saviour's return? There are ministers today who believe that it is unnecessary to touch upon such truth at any time! Such an attitude leads to the neglecting, misunderstanding and misapplying of much of God's Word and robbing the people of God of that which God has given us for our edification, instruction and comfort.

3. Ignorance of prophecy is dangerous. Was it not the failure of the Jews to believe the prophets that led to their rejecting of Christ? Acts 3:17; 13:26-41. Here is a question for us all: *Believest thou the prophets?* Acts 26:27. Was it not the slowness to believe the prophets which led the early believers into folly? Christ certainly blamed the foolish behaviour of the disciples on this. *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,* Luke 24:25. That same ignorance will blind men and women and rob them of readiness for the great and terrible day of the Lord. *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,* 2 Peter 3:1-4.

II. IT IS CERTAIN THAT IF THE BELIEVERS IN THE FIRST CENTURY WERE REQUIRED TO WATCH FOR CHRIST'S RETURN, THEN WE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY ARE MUCH MORE OBLIGATED TO DO SO.

Believers in the first century were expected to watch for Christ's return. It was a feature of the faith of first century believers. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:10.)

A call to watch is amongst the last words of Christ. Ought not they therefore to be of special significance? Nothing should be of such importance as to drive the contemplation of



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the return of the Lord Jesus to this world out of the mind of the child of God. Rather, what is going on around us ought to act as a stimulant to our longings for the Lord Jesus to come back again. We should ever be fervently praying John's prayer: *Even so, come, Lord Jesus* (Revelation 22:20). His return will mean so much to the Christian. It is then that we will enter into our eternal rest, being glorified with Him. It is then we will see justice and truth reigning in a world presently dominated by lies and deceit. The voice of the liar will be silenced and the trade in wickedness will end. We here in Northern Ireland surely must have a special motive for watching for that to happen.

1. Forgetfulness of the return of Christ leads to worldliness amongst Christians.

The parable told by the Saviour in His wonderful Olivet prophecy illustrates this (Matt 24:42-51). Thoughts of that bright world to which we are going, and of the account we must give to its King, tend to faithfulness and sincerity.

2. Forgetfulness of Christ's second advent leads to unfaithfulness amongst preachers. The references in Paul's writings to the events linked to Christ's return and faithfulness in preaching serve to illustrate this. *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*, 2 Corinthians 5:11. That day ought to be kept before our eyes and be what we look out on from our pulpits. Such a vision tends to earnestness and zeal. For this reason Paul wrote to Timothy and brought before his eyes the return of Christ. *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*, 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

3. Forgetfulness of Christ's return breeds defiance amongst sinners. This is what gives the brazenness to the words of the scoffers mentioned by Peter in 2 Peter 2:3-4. The present spirit of lawlessness that is pervading society springs from a forgetting of God and the return of Christ. How eagerly the false prophets and ecumenical clerics clamour to have us forget the God of the Bible and substitute Him with the gods of their inventions. When such a sinful thing happens, then all forms of wickedness can be introduced without resistance from those who fear the Lord. Woe unto the world when it forgets the truth of the return of Christ! Its defiance of God will know no end.

III. THE TIME OF HIS RETURN IS NEAR TO HAND.

Something approaching 6000 years have passed over this earth. Allowing for the necessary margin of error in any calculation of today's true date, we believe that we are not far from the seventh millennium. Given the place that seven periods of time have in the order of God, it is not unreasonable to assume that the earth's Sabbath of rest, the Millennial Reign of Christ, will soon dawn. While we cannot be dogmatic on the point, we nevertheless are sure that God observes precise order and design in His universe. *As in the fulness of the time . . . God sent forth his Son* (Galatians 4:4), so in the fulness of time Christ will return. We surely can say today: *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*, James 5:8. *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer*, 1 Peter 4:7. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*, Romans 13:11.