

WAITING FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

The Scriptures indicate that “the day of the Lord” will come quickly, like a thief in the night (Zeph. 1:14-15; 2 Thess. 2:2), and therefore Christians must be watchful and ready for the return of Christ at any moment.

Peter expands upon it in his letter. (Read 2 Peter 3:10-18)

These words of Peter’s are good ones for us to consider during this Advent season as we prepare to commemorate the anniversary of Jesus’s first coming. When Jesus was born the people had been without a king for almost 600 years. God had promised that they would one day have a king again, one descended from King David. Many people were waiting but most of them missed it. Jesus wasn’t what they were expecting. They were waiting but they were waiting without expectation.

Before He died Jesus told His disciples that He was going ahead of them into heaven to get things ready for His followers and that one day He would return to bring them home. The first generation of Christians lived with the expectation that Jesus would return within their lifetime. The gospels and the various letters tell us Christians how we should live while we are waiting for Jesus to return.

Peter challenges us to consider how this coming certain destruction of everything transitory should cause us to live. We need to live with the expectation that Jesus *will* return.

We’ve been waiting for almost 2,000 years for Jesus to return, longer than the nation of Israel waited for Him to come the first time. That’s a long time to wait. And Peter says there will be people who scoff at the idea that Jesus will return. “Where is this coming He promised?” (2 Peter 3:4) And they go about doing what they want.

I believe Jesus will return. I don’t know when, but I do not believe it will be in the near or immediate future. There are still many prophesied events that need to happen before He will return. Will Jesus return in my lifetime? Perhaps. I would be surprised if He returns within 15 years. He might, but I don’t see that as likely.

However, even though I don’t believe Jesus will return anytime soon, that doesn’t give me license to live the way I want to, thinking there is still time to repent later. It doesn’t mean that I don’t have to be alert, pray and stay close to God. However, believing and knowing Jesus will not and cannot come back soon should not change anything about needing to “always be ready” and not backslide into sin. The reason is that we all are mortal and can lose our life tomorrow. King Solomon reminds us that no one knows when his hour will come. (Eccl. 9:11-12). Because we can “meet our maker” at any moment we always need to be ready as Jesus taught. We are to be constantly vigilant so as not to allow ourselves to backslide.

Peter says we are to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. Living a holy and godly life means that we should hate what Jesus hates, love what He loves, and evaluate everything in our lives and relationships by the standard of God’s Word. John tells us to “continue in Jesus so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28, NIV). Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

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