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Are You Staying Alert?

By Phil Johnson, MCE

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

“Watch out, stay alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is. 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 alert. Therefore, stay 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—so that he does not come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all: ‘Stay alert!’” (Mark 13:31–37).¹

“But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 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. At that time 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” (Matthew 24:36-41).

Be Ready for His Coming

“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 house 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 must be ready as well; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household slaves, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and he eats and drinks with those habitually drunk; then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know, and he will cut him in two and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:42–51).

At Christmas we looked at the Scripture that told us about Jesus’ first coming. That event happened about 2000 years ago. His coming changed the world and He boldly stated that no man can come to the Father except through Him. He is the only sacrifice whose blood could satisfy the requirements of the law. And almost all things are cleansed with blood, according to the Law, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.² He is our redeemer meeting all the requirements: He was sinless and without blemish, He was our kin (He was human), He was willing to redeem us with His own life and blood, He obeyed God’s will. There was no other person in the universe who could meet the requirements to save us. By His resurrection He proved He also had the power to overcome death and hades. He conquered both, once and for all! He showed to the world He has the authority and moral right to rule the earth and all of creation. He created it and gave it to Adam to fill and rule over. Adam sinned and gave the rule and authority over to the devil and the devil is the ruler of this planet now. This is only because

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² Hebrews 9:22

God allows it for a season. Jesus made us many promises: that he would be with us always, He was going to prepare a place for us, He would provide us a way out of temptation, He was coming back for us and was going to establish His kingdom that would last forever.

So what did He tell us to do and what would be the signs of His coming back for us. We all have heard that wars and rumors of wars, famine, pestilences would be the beginning of birth pangs. Jesus told us many things concerning His return. He warns us to be aware:

“...for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will provide signs and wonders, in order to mislead, if possible, the elect. But beware; I have told you everything in advance” (Mark 13:22–23).

We have already seen the beginning of birth pangs, famines and earthquakes have increased, many signs He told us would take place.

In the last year we have seen much change. Many things are falling into place to usher in the antichrist. Global systems of population control through electronic surveillance have increased, corruption is prevalent everywhere, hopelessness abounds, and despair is growing in the peoples of the earth. An increase in the ideology that depends on the government to provide for the needs of people will help usher in a leader who will be happy to give them what they want, but the price will become their very souls. There is nothing to look forward to unless you know Him who is able to save.

“See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will mislead many people.

“Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. And at that time many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people. And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will become cold. *But the one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved.* This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:4–14).

When I was in college I was surrounded by a group of “moonies” one day. Somehow the conversation got

around their belief that Moon was the Messiah. I made it plain that I considered that impossible to which they replied that they did not want to make the same mistake the pharisees made and miss Him coming. I told them everyone on this planet is going to know when Jesus returns! When power and great glory appears, no one will miss it! And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then *all the tribes of the earth* will mourn, and *they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.*^{3,4}

Many Old Testament books as well as New Testament books talk about the Lord’s return. The Old Testament writers were never told by God about the church age, and it was a mystery to them that was revealed after Jesus established the church. Paul reveals to us:

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all people as to what the plan of the mystery is which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; so that the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:8–10).

In the book of Daniel, we learn about a dream and its interpretation.

The King’s Dream

“You, O king, were watching and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary radiance, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its chest and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued watching until a stone was broken off without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed to pieces all at the same time, and they were like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the entire earth” (Daniel 2:31–35).

the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen” (Revelation 1:7).

³ Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27, Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62

⁴ “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of

The Interpretation—Babylon the First Kingdom

“This was the dream; and now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the honor; and wherever the sons of mankind live, or the animals of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has handed them over to you and has made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold” (Daniel 2: 36–38).

Medo-Persia and Greece

“And after you another kingdom will arise inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth” (Daniel 2:39).

Rome

“Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; just as iron smashes and crushes everything, so, like iron that crushes, it will smash and crush all these things. And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have within it some of the toughness of iron, since you saw the iron mixed with common clay. And *just as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of pottery, *so* some of the kingdom will be strong, and part of it will be fragile. In that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in their descendants; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not combine with pottery” (Daniel 2:40–43).

The Divine Kingdom

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Just as you saw that a stone was broken off from the mountain without hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is certain and its interpretation is trustworthy” (Daniel 2:44–45).

Daniel also had visions about what was to come. Isaiah and Jeremiah along with many other prophets tell about the Lord’s coming. Sometimes first and second comings of the Lord are revealed together in the same passage. All

the prophesies about His coming will be fulfilled; we have already seen many fulfilled by His first coming. When Jesus was here before He told His disciples many things about His return. These are recorded in the gospels.⁵

The Apostle Paul also gives insight into the Lord’s next coming:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18).

Paul also gives us this insight:

Now I say this, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:50–57).

Christians do not completely agree on the timing of events when Christ returns. Some say there is a rapture of the church that takes place removing the believers from the earth that ushers in the Great Tribulation period. This is the pre-tribulation position. Some claim the rapture of the church takes place three and a half years into the Great Tribulation. This is the mid-tribulation position. Some also say there is no rapture before the Lord comes to establish His Kingdom on earth, which for all practical purposes there is no rapture, just the coming of His Kingdom and the Day of the Lord. There are those who look at the Scripture and cannot dogmatically know which is correct and these would be the pan-tribulation position. They say as long as I keep my eyes on Jesus, it will all pan out. Whatever you believe about the Lord’s coming does

⁵ Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 17, 21

influence the decisions you make. Every Scripture given will be fulfilled, we must study and be led by the Spirit to understand what God has revealed for us to know. Jesus said he did not want us to be unaware.

Many times Jesus warns us that He is coming as a “thief,” or totally unexpected. He compared it to the coming of the groom to get his bride.

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take extra oil with them; but the prudent ones took oil in flasks with their lamps. Now while the groom was delaying, they all became drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there finally was a shout: ‘Behold, the groom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. But the foolish virgins said to the prudent ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ However, the prudent ones answered, ‘No, there most certainly would not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the groom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Yet later, the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ Be on the alert then, because you do not know the day nor the hour” (Matthew 25:1–13).

Since the church is the Bride of Christ, it is not unusual for the Lord to relate His relationship with both the church and the individuals in it to the marriage relationship. In the Jewish culture during Biblical times, when a couple was betrothed, they did not know the date they would be married because the father of the groom helped his son prepare for his bride and when the father decided the preparations were complete, he would send his son after the bride and the marriage feast/ceremony would begin. The Bride would have to be ready when the groom came, just as the Lord told us to be ready when He came.

The revelation that God gave to His son to show His bond servants was faithfully recorded by John on the island of Patmos in the book of Revelation. It has a divine blessing given:⁶

Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near (Revelation 1:3).

It also has its own outline:⁶

Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things (Revelation 1:19).

Chapter 1 being the things John has seen, chapters 2 and 3 are the things that are. These chapters talk about the church age and many scholars believe that each letter represents the history of the church as it progressed since Jesus established it almost 2000 years ago. Chapter 4 through the end of the book are the things that take place after the church age.

One thing Jesus tells every one of the seven churches He addresses: The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Jesus also tells the churches to repent, as repentance is the first step to pleasing the Lord. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to reveal to us as a church and as an individual what the Lord is telling us in His Word and to give us guidance in what we should be doing and how to live a holy life. Jesus made it clear, apart from Him we could do nothing!⁷

When chapter 4 of Revelation gets started John was called up to heaven in the spirit. God is outside of time and space; He is not bound to the physical creation or dependent on it. He existed before He created it so cannot possibly be subject to it. Was John transported to the actual time these events were taking place and was seeing the actual events when Jesus is inaugurated as King of kings and Lord of lords. Quite possibly, he interacted with those around him and was not just a spectator like a vision. After chapter 4 the church is no longer mentioned until it returns with Jesus as He sets up His Kingdom on earth. Since Revelation and other Scriptures give a timeframe of His return when certain events take place, it points to His taking the church with Him at a time before He returns to set up His Kingdom, that includes both the church and those of Israel who are saved through the Tribulation period.

Whatever you believe, believe that Jesus warned us to be on the alert. Why? Are you going to be living a sinful lifestyle if you are truly alert and looking for His coming? If you do sin, will you not repent quickly since He could come at any time? Would you want to be living with unrepentant sin when He comes? If you are alert, you are

⁶ Watch the Revelation series by Pastor Kevin Edwards at <https://www.calvaryclayton.com/teachings>. “Read the Scriptures so you will know that the man talking from the

pulpit is speaking correctly.” “Turn off the news and let Scripture tell you what is happening.”

⁷ John 15:5

focused on what you are doing and what is going on around you, and you are trying to anticipate events around you. Being focused on the things of our Lord is a 24/7 proposition. If you are not totally committed to Him, it would be very easy to be distracted. Anytime Jesus tells us to do something He will empower us to do it if obedience is what we desire.

Watch, therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.⁸ He is coming soon! He is coming at a time when least expected! He warned us to be on the alert for His return! Stay alert! ☪

COMING EVENTS

TASC Zoom Meeting, Thursday, February 11, 7:00 pm EST

In February Phil Johnson will lead our meeting and discussion about staying alert, the beginning of birth pains, and our Lord's second coming. We will discuss Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and other Old and New Testament Scriptures related to His coming.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4430308956>

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⁸ Luke 21:36