

Sermon 11- 19-2017 Ready for the Lord I Thessalonians 5:1-11

Dear Ready for the Lord's Return:

William Miller predicted that Christ would return within a year after March 21, 1843.

- He traveled across the nation warning people of Jesus' return
- By 1843 he had 50,000 followers
- His followers sold or gave away their possessions
- As March 21, 1843 drew near his followers donned white robes and stood on hill tops ready for the Lord's return

Back in 2011 a radio pastor, Harold Camping, said that Jesus would return on May 21, 2011.

- He put up billboards all over the nation warning people of Jesus' return on this date
- His followers traveled all over the nation putting fliers on car windows warning people of the last day on May 21, 2011. I had one on my car window at the YMCA.
- His followers got rid of all their possessions and stood outside on May 21 waiting for Jesus to return.

When asked why Jesus did not return on May 21, Harold Camping finally admitted he had sinned by predicting the end of the world on a specific date.

People predicting Christ's return is nothing new. It's been happening ever since the angels told the disciples that Jesus would return as He ascended into heaven: "Men of Galilee why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

There are 2 truths that we need to heed.

- Jesus is coming back someday

- We don't know when that day will be

The Bible says that no one knows the day or the hour of Jesus' return. Matthew 24:36

The Apostle Paul says in I Thessalonians 5 that we are not to get all caught up in times and dates about Jesus' return. V1 Paul exhorts us to live our daily lives in light of the coming of the Lord. Rather than be focused on "when" just be ready.

What is important is that we be ready when he returns!

What if Jesus were to return tonight or tomorrow?

- How would the Lord find us to be?
- Would we be ready?

Are we ready to meet him?

The Bible makes it very clear that we are to live each day with "eager anticipation" of Jesus' return.

The Apostle Peter says: "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the Day of God and speed its coming...in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness." II Peter 3:11-12

Day of the Lord

The Apostle Paul calls the return of Jesus as The Day of the Lord. This phrase is used throughout the Bible as the Day when God will intervene directly and dramatically in the world's affairs.

This Day of the Lord was predicted in the Old Testament 19 times. (4 in NT)

- "The Day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty" Isaiah 13:6
- "I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke." Joel 2:30

- “The great day of the Lord is near---near and coming quickly” Zephaniah 1:14

The Day of the Lord will include...

- The punishment of unbelievers who rejected Jesus’
- The blessings of believers who received Jesus by faith
- The judgment of sin and this sinful world
- The setting up of the Lord’s eternal kingdom
- Lord will return as a thief in the night

The Day of the Lord will be inevitable. Paul says this Day will come on people suddenly like labor pains for a pregnant woman.

- Once they start you can’t turn back
- Once the Lord returns the time of grace will be over
- If the Lord comes back and one is not a believer then one will face destruction
- 2nd Coming is inevitable – inescapable – painful for the unbelievers

“Suddenly”

Paul says this destruction will come upon unbelievers “suddenly” and they will not escape. Vv2-3

This is why it is so important right now...

- To confess our sins against God
- To believe in Jesus as our Savior
- To receive God’s grace and forgiveness
- “We urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain...I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” II Corinthians 6:1-2

Paul says that all true believers will be ready for the Lord’s return. Vv4-6

“Stay awake and alert”

Paul calls us to “stay awake and alert” for the Lord’s return. We find this admonition throughout the New Testament by other Biblical writers, too:

- Romans 13:11-14 “Understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed...the Day is almost here...put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently...clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- James 5:7-11 “Be patient...until the Lord’s coming...stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near...the Judge is standing at the door!”
- II Peter 3:11-18 “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 and speed its coming. That Day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat....Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

V6 Don’t sleep in spiritual indifference – Be alert to spiritual issues!

We don’t want to behave like the unbelieving world while waiting for Jesus to return. Unbelievers are engulfed in a mental, moral, spiritual darkness because of sin and unbelief.

“For those who sleep, sleep at night, at night and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.” V7 To believe in Jesus removes a person from spiritual darkness.

Rather we want to be ready and spend our time in God’s Word and living out our faith. Vv8-10

The Apostle Paul in Ephesians gives us this exhortation to be ready for Jesus. Paul pictures the life of faith in military terms – sober – alert – equipped.

“Put on the full armor of God, so that when the Day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground...stand firm...with the belt of truth buckled around your

waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace.” Ephesians 6:13ff

What can we do to prepare ourselves for Jesus’ return? The Apostle Paul gives several specific actions in the verses that follow our text for today in vv11-23 of I Thessalonians 5. Paul says be ready for Jesus’ return... vv11ff

- By encouraging one another and build up each other in the faith
- Give honor to the leaders of the church and cooperate with them in doing the Lord’s work
- Live in peace with each other
- Warn the idle and encourage the timid in faith; help the weak and be patient with people
- Resist personal revenge and work at being kind to each other
- Be joyful always --- that is be confident in God’s promises
- Pray always...
- Give thanks in everything
- Do not smother the work of the Holy Spirit by rejecting God’s Word
- Receive God’s Word from those who preach and teach it
- Test everything and be able to distinguish between right and wrong
- Hold on to the good and avoid every kind of evil
- Count on God’s constant help for you

When you finish a foot race how do you feel?

Remember those days of youth when you would run and run? As a runner nears the end of his race...

- His legs ache
- His throat burns
- His whole body cries out

As you run the race of faith you will need the support and encouragement of your fellow believers. Paul says in verse 11 “Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

- God's desire is that we are saved from hell v9
- God's desire is that we will live with Him forever v10

What are the signs of Jesus' return? What should we look for as time nears the end?

- The Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world Matt 24:14
- There will be wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences and signs in the heavens which will indicate God's divine judgment. Luke 21:9ff
- There will be tremendous opposition to God's Word Luke 21:12ff
- Many people will fall away from the true faith Matt 24:10-12
- There will be many false preachers and teachers Mark 13:22
- There will be signs of the Antichrist II Thessalonians 2:3-4

Jesus 2nd Coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Realizing that the earth is going to be burned up and remade we need to put our confidence in what is lasting and eternal.

- Do we spend our time on earthly possessions or God's Word?
- Does our time and energy put earthly things above spiritual things?
- Are we concerned about the fate of our soul and the souls of others?

As believers we look forward to the Last Day...

- A Day of God's judgment
- A Day of God's restoration
- A Day of the new heavens and the new earth

As believers we express an eager expectation of Jesus' return...

- What would we like to be doing when Jesus returns?
- How are we living each day in expectation of Jesus' return?

But we are looking forward to God's promise of new heavens and a new earth!

Afterwards, there will be only goodness and perfection.

Psalm 5:11-12 "But let all who take refuge in You be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield." Cf II Timothy 4:8; I John 2:28