

The Second Coming

In 1 Cor. Paul had to correct the Corinthians on many different things; unity, condoning of sin, things that might have brought their spirits down, but Paul understood that they needed to be disciplined by the Word of God so that could move forward and grow in the service of the Lord. That's why he gives them such great encouragement as he ends his writings. In...

1 Cor 16:13-16

1

13 Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. **14** Let all that you do be done in love. **15** Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), **16** that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.

Paul is urging them to be strong in their faith and commitment to doing God's will. He concludes his writing of the first letter to them with...

1 Cor 16:21-24

2

21 The greeting is in my own hand—Paul. **22** If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. **24** My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The early disciples longed for the return of Christ. Paul, and quite frankly, I believe the rest of the Apostles all felt exactly the same way. They understood that when Christ returned the promises of eternal life given to the followers of Christ, Christians, would be fulfilled. The other day I was trying to illustrate a great tragedy that I see in the world of religion today. What is the goal of the so-called religious world of today? Not all that long ago it was the stated goal of the world's religions to achieve heaven. This was true for just about every religion out there and it could be seen in the things that they did and in what they taught. That is why that at one point most every group you talked to felt that they were the one and only way. But somewhere along the way, religions began to seek after unity, and not just within themselves, but with other philosophies of practice and teaching. The goal of reaching heaven became blurred in the goal of being like the world or others around them, entertaining people to draw more people to attend, being politically correct, or even trying to not be so strict or legalistic in what they taught. The problem with any of those things is failing to understand that the ultimate goal is what defines the path. If you decide that you want to be a doctor, you must pursue the path that leads to be being a doctor, schooling, internship, and all of the other things that are required to achieve that goal. If you decide that you want to represent and defend your country as a member of the armed forces you must go through the process of enlisting, boot camp, disciplining, and training that is required to make one a soldier. We understand this dynamic, no one is recognized as a doctor unless they have accomplished the prerequisites, no one pick up a gun and goes to another country to defend the United States unless they have become a soldier. The goals of being a doctor or soldier defined the path of the person who had decided that was what they wanted to do.

Why then, do people, who have decided that they want heaven as their goal, ignore, sometimes completely, the only path that can get them there?

That is the point Paul is making in verse 22. There was a reason for the Corinthians to fix their problems and for them to be strong in their faith. Christ is coming again to take His own to the promise of eternal life in heaven. And if there is someone who has chosen to not love the Lord, they will be accursed. The following is an article from Vines Dictionary of New Testament words...

Maran-atha (NT:3134)

An expression used in 1 Cor 16:22, it is the Greek spelling for two Aramaic words, formerly supposed by some to be an imprecatory, derogatory utterance or "a curse reinforced by a prayer," an idea contrary to the intimations conveyed by its use in early Christian documents, e. g., "The Teaching of the Apostles," a document of the beginning of the 2nd cent., and in the "Apostolic Constitutions" (vii. 26), where it is used as follows: "Gather us all together into Thy Kingdom which Thou hast prepared. Maranatha, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh, etc." The first part, ending in 'n,' signifies "Lord"; as to the second part, the Fathers regarded it as a past tense, "has come." Modern expositors take it as equivalent to a present, "cometh," or future, "will come." Certain Aramaic scholars regard the last part as consisting of "tha," and regard the phrase as an statement of force, "Our Lord, come," or "O Lord, come." The character of the context, however, indicates that the apostle is making a statement rather than expressing a desire or uttering a prayer.

To me, this points to the idea that Paul is saying that there will be those who believe and show that belief in their love for Him, but there would also be those who have chosen to not love Christ and are therefore lost, regardless, Paul makes the statement that Christ is to come. When Christ comes both the just and the unjust will receive their reward.

Rom 2:4-6

3

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? **5** But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, **6** who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

Not only is Paul saying that the Day of the Lord is coming, but he is speaking to his desire that it comes quickly. There is a thought in this statement that is interesting. Can you see that Paul and the rest of the believers in that first century had an expectation that they might be around when the Second coming occurred? Note what he says in...

1 Cor 15:50-52

4

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **52** 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.

As we look back on this some 2000 years later we might have a better understanding than they did then, but it does seem that at the least, Paul's statement might be interpreted as meaning that some of those there that Paul was talking to, would be among those who would be alive when Christ returned. We now know that what Paul was saying was that the followers of Christ did not have to

worry about whether they were alive or dead when Christ returned. The reward of heaven is not reserved just for those that might still be breathing at the return, and that is Paul's point. Whether still alive or dead, the faithful in Christ will all be changed, given an immortal body to join with their immortal soul to live for an eternity. Paul wanted Christ to come quickly...

5 *“Maranatha”*

2 Peter 3:10-12

6

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. **11** Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, **12** looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

Peter speaks to the same desire when he speaks of...

7 *“Hastening the coming of the day of God”*

Make no mistake, Christ will return, He will take His Church home to their reward with Him. The only question that remains is our reaction to the fact of that coming.

There are five parables of Christ that address our response that we want to look at with the remainder of our time in this lesson.

8 1) The parable of the doorkeeper

Luke 12:35-38

9

35 "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. **36** "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. **37** Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. **38** Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

The picture this parable paints is founded in loyalty, trust, and devotion. These servants are loyal to their master, they trust the fact that the master will return, and they are devoted in their service to Him. This is how the Christian is to be towards Christ. He must stand firm in his faith, enduring the tribulation of the world for Jesus. He must trust in the fact that Jesus is coming back for His followers, and he must be devoted in his faith to obeying all that Jesus has said and commanded.

1 Tim 4:10

10

10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

The parable illustrates how we are to be waiting for Christ to come again. We, like the servants, have been given tasks to do and we must focus on doing them to be found faithful when He comes.

11 2) The parable of the homeowner

Luke 12:39-40

12

39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into." **40** You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

The story of this parable is simple, if you know someone is coming to rob you, you don't leave your home unprotected. The homeowner here is you and I. If we knew when Christ would return, the need for faith becomes useless. People would wait right up to the last minute to try and come to Him in obedience. We don't know when Christ is coming so faith becomes our alarm system. It is what protects us from the unknown. The idea that Christ is coming like a thief in the night is seen throughout the New Testament. Christ is coming, we just don't know when. Doesn't it make sense to be prepared?

13 3) The parable of the servant

Matt 24:45-51

14

45 "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? **46** Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. **47** Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. **48** But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' **49** and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; **50** the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, **51** and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Here again, we see the unexpected return of the master finding his servant acting unfaithfully and punishing him for that unfaithfulness. This is an interesting thought here. This servant has apparently found favor in the eyes of his master and has been given responsibility because of that. Then when the master returns, he finds the servant acting unfaithfully. All of this because the servant didn't think the master was coming.

15 4) The parable of the ten virgins

In Matt. 25, beginning in verse 1, we read of the parable of the ten virgins who were waiting for the return of the bridegroom to enter into the wedding feast. Five had been foolish and had not come prepared, while five had been wise and brought extra oil for their lamps. The five foolish run out of oil and beg the five wise for some of theirs. They don't get any and go to find some, of course that is when the bridegroom comes and the foolish don't get to enter the feast.

What preparations have we made concerning the coming of Christ?

16 5) The parable of the talents

Also in Matt. 25, beginning in verse 14, we read where a man is leaving to go into a far country and gives his servants money to utilize while he is gone. When he returns he asks for an accounting of what they had done. The servant that had received five talents had doubled it. The

servant that had received two talents had also doubled it, but the servant that had received one talent had done nothing. He had buried his talent and gave back to the master what he had been given. This servant was condemned for his lack of effort. God has given each of us talent, ability, and He expects that we put this talent to work, for Him. So many use their talents to work for anything other than God, and they will be condemned for it.

We've covered a lot of different thoughts here; let's see if we can tie them all together.

In the parable of the doorkeeper we saw that a faithful servant waits for the return of his master, preparing for that return. In the parable of the homeowner, we looked at the dynamic of expecting the unexpected. Had the homeowner known when the thief would come, he would have stayed home and waited for him. But since we don't know when Christ is coming, we must be prepared at all times. In the parable of the servant we see the servant that had found favor in the eyes of his master and had then turned away from his faithfulness to doing those things which were not obedient to the master's wishes. He was punished for his unfaithfulness. In the parable of the ten virgins we saw the importance of being prepared and in the parable of the talents we saw the importance of using the talents that God has given us.

Now think about these things in relationship to the coming of Christ and where we are at in our relationship with Him.

- 17**
- A) The doorkeeper – Are we spiritually prepared and waiting for Christ to return?
 - B) The homeowner – Have we accepted the fact that Christ is coming back? Are we prepared for that coming?
 - C) The servant – This one is disturbing because it illustrates for us that we can be found favorable and then fall away. Have decided that when we made the commitment to follow Christ through obedience to the Word have also decided to maintain that commitment at all times, even when it seems that the master is away?
 - D) The ten virgins – Are we prepared at all times to do God's will? Preparation is our responsibility, not someone else's. This is vitally important for us to understand. I alone am responsible to work out my salvation. I alone will stand before Christ in judgment. There can be and will be no one else there to take responsibility for anything I have done. No one else will be punished for my disobedience. Only...

I ALONE

- E) Have we put to work for God the talent and ability that He has given us? We don't want to be like the one talent servant that buried his ability and did nothing. That servant was condemned.

Christ is coming, make no mistake, He is coming. Will we choose to use our God given abilities for Him or against Him. Will we be prepared to meet Him at the door and welcome Him or will we fear His coming because we are not ready? The choice is ours.