

Just Checking In - Sooner or Later Oct 15, 2009

JCI Anticipating the Immediate, Prepared for the Eventual



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As I read through the gospel of Matthew recently I was struck by the number of times Christ warns us to be ready for His return. Don't worry, I'm not about to predict the time of His return. But I am going to interact with you about the extreme necessity, repeatedly emphasized by our returning King, to

ANTICIPATE THE IMMEDIATE

AND

PREPARE FOR THE EVENTUAL

Think about it. Both are essential for His followers. To live anticipating His immediate return fills us with motivation to live lives of purity and passion for His glory. To live prepared for His eventual return (perhaps yet scores of years away) fills us with patient perseverance and strength to endure long days of difficulty without despair.

Consider both truths in the following parables

Matthew 24:36-42 LIKE IN THE DAYS OF NOAH Anticipating the Immediate

The appearance of durative normalcy lulled the antediluvian population into complacency that led to their destruction. The experience of long-standing normalcy lulled the antediluvian population into complacency that led to their destruction. The danger here described is that of not anticipating the immediate return. Succumbing to

this danger is seen in such excuses for unrepentant living as “I’ve got plenty of time,” or “one of these days,” or “yeah, yeah... they’ve been saying that forever”... Beware of the danger of habit and normalcy, ***the deadening influence of complacency produced by commonality*** that dulls the heart and blinds us to the extreme necessity of being altogether ready for His return NOW!

Matthew 24:42-44 LIKE A THIEF Anticipating the Immediate

The point is similar, with one aspect being emphasized here... Christ’s return will be at an unexpected hour. It will be sudden, unexpected, and without time to make adjustments. This parable is intended to consider the reality that His return will leave us without time to remedy our unpreparedness, and without any ability to regain what will be lost by our failure to anticipate His sudden return. Do what you need to do now, because **later will become “one day too late.”**

Matthew 24:45-51 LIKE AN UNPREPARED SERVANT Anticipating the Immediate

Again, the reality of a ***careless attitude*** not anticipating an any-moment return of the Master led to careless living and godless relationships with fellow-servants.

Matthew 25:1-13 LIKE TEN VIRGINS Prepared for the Eventual

This parable holds the same idea of an unprepared response, but the point to be emphasized is the other aspect of preparedness.... prepared for a later return. All ten were anticipating the immediate coming of the bridegroom, but only five of them were ***equally prepared for an eventual return***. A failure to prepare for a later-than-expected return left them as unprepared as the earlier failures.

Matthew 25:14-30 LIKE SERVANTS WHO RECEIVED A STEWARDSHIP

This parable focuses on the necessity of investing present resources for eventual reward. Being prepared for an eventual return (a time lapse is in view here) includes attention to present opportunities to ***do what we can with what we have*** while we can. Anticipating the return of the Master does not lead us to stop our efforts as stewards, but rather to get busy investing in view of certain accountability.

Matthew 25:31-46 SHEEP AND GOATS

This parable brings us face to face with ultimate judgment but put in the context of the needs of other people. As the previous parable focuses on resources, this parable focuses on people in need. Those who are truly anticipating the immediate return and prepared for an eventual return don't overlook other people in need. This parable completes the "preparedness" parables by focusing on our own personal responsibility to *do what we can for who we can* while we can.

Christ is Coming!

Anticipate the Immediate but Prepare for the Eventual.

Questions to Consider:

1. If you knew Christ were coming back tomorrow at 2:46pm, what would you do right now? Why?
2. If you knew Christ weren't coming back for 50 years, would that make any difference in your present decision making? What? Why?
3. Since you know when Christ is coming back (when you don't expect it!!! Got ya!!) what words would you use to describe seeing Him face to face?

For Further Study:

Make a list of at least 10 other verses that refer to Christ's return and see what important applications you can make from them. Consider such books as 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter, and 1 John.

O Coming Savior, cause me to anticipate your immediate return. For if I do, I know it will transform my motives, my relationships, my stewardship, and my values. I want to have the eager anticipation of the Bride who is ready for the shout "The Bridegroom Comes!" and also the steady preparation of the five Bridesmaids who were ready for a long wait if necessary. I long to live with a constant, ready anticipation for Your return. I also want to be faithful, steady and persevering if I must first walk the dark valley to see You face to face. Amen."

Remember, you are very special to us and we are praying for you. May you find in Christ your joy complete, your strength sufficient and your vision clear... all the way to "that day"!

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4 **Ron & Val Berrus** rsb@abwe.org

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable, changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows, spending our time on eternity, owning nothing yet possessing everything that matters and lasts. We are Pilgrims in Paradox. Welcome to THE JOURNEY.

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