

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO IN THE END TIMES?

1. INTRODUCTION

a. The following comes from an email forwarded to me, original source unknown.

If, as Jesus said, we cannot know the hour or the day [of his return], yet we also see the signs, how are we to be both ready to go and resigned to wait?

According to the apostle Peter, the scoffers say: "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. ... Where is this 'coming' he promised?" (2 Peter 3:4; all Scripture quotations from the NIV). But he reminds us that the Lord's tarrying means salvation for more. Still, Peter poses the question: "What kind of people ought you to be ... as you look forward to the day of God?" (3:11-12).

His answer: "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God ... looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth" (3:12-13).

Here is a story that can fill in what "looking forward" might mean.

When our middle son, Ben, was much younger, he had heard more than one sermon about the importance of surrendering our lives to Christ. Ben seemed well-attuned to the heart of God; he

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exhibited the selfless and kind tendencies that would take some—like his mother—a lifetime of sanctification to acquire. So it disturbed my husband and me when Ben stubbornly resisted our invitations for him to give his life to Christ. He would offer no explanations; he would simply tell us in his preschool English that he wasn't ready.

He resisted for several months. Then, one morning as we sat around the kitchen table eating our Cheerios, little Ben announced that he was ready to give his life to Christ. He then got up from the table and went upstairs. My husband and I looked at each other and followed him. I guess we expected to find Ben on his knees in prayer. We didn't. Instead, we found him folding his Star Wars pajamas into his Sesame Street suitcase.

We said, "Ben, what are you doing?"

He answered, "Packing."

"Why?" we asked.

"To go to heaven," he said.

We then understood why our child hesitated to give his life to Christ. He thought that in so doing, he would have to leave us and take up residence, literally, with Christ in heaven.

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We should all possess the faith of little Benjamin: we should have our hearts so fixed on Christ's appearance that the attachments of our earthly life pale in comparison. For we are "aliens and strangers on earth ... longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13).

Source of the story above about Benjamin: Wendy Murray Zoba, "Future Tense," Christianity Today magazine (October 2, 1995)

- b. What are we waiting for? We start by preparing now, as if it would be tomorrow.
- c. We wait as if it will yet be another thousand years.

2. BASE SCRIPTURE

(Revelation 22:1-22 NIV) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more

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night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. "Worship God!"

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has

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done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

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- a. Together these last four weeks we have looked at Biblical prophesy and heard from God's Word what is to come.
 - i. Are those events frightful? Yes!
 - ii. Will they be tough? Yes.
- b. God has a plan. God Wins. We will be okay.
 - i. Rather than stopping in the middle of the story, we must look at the end.
 - 1. The river of Life.
 - 2. The city of God.
 - 3. The Tree of Life.
 - 4. The throne of God.
 - 5. The very presence of God.
 - a. Perhaps we can take a walk in the garden with him.

3. WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN DO?

- a. First, recognize the Word of God is true.
- b. Claim your faith!
 - i. What is it you truly believe?
 - ii. Don't be a wimp about it.

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c. Accept your doubts. Seek the truth.

d. Second, follow the words of Jesus when he sends his disciples out.

(Matthew 10:16 NIV) I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

e. When we are warned that a hurricane is in the Gulf, we:

i. Prepare (Materially)

1. Food.

2. Clothing.

3. Shelter.

4. Protect our family as best we know how.

ii. We do not panic.

iii. We warn our friends in case they have not heard.

f. We prepare spiritually.

i. Read God's Word.

ii. Worship

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1.Revelation – The angel says, “Worship God!”

iii. Pray for strengthening of your faith.

iv. Claim your faith! Live your faith!

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4. HOW IS THIS DONE?

(Matthew 22:37-40 NIV) Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

a. What is it we love?

- i. Treat others with respect.
- ii. Be humble.
- iii. Encourage through your words and actions others to seek truth.
- iv. In addition:

(Matthew 5: 23-25 NIV) "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the

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judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

b. Make peace with your brothers and sisters.

c. Let not the sun settle with a dispute between you and another.

(Matthew 5:43-48 NIV) "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

d. Recognize that others are of God's creation.

i. Love them by praying for them.

e. To the best of your ability, lead lives worthy of being called children of God.

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f. Claim the gifts of God. Here. Now.

- i. Baptism
- ii. Repentance
- iii. The Lord's Supper
- iv. Ask God to send help in any way.

1. Ask for his angels to go before you to prosper the way in God's Word.

5. ANGELS

- a. I know, your thinking, "Has he gone over the edge?"
- b. Answer, no.
- c. A sermon series could be done regarding Angels, but that is for another time.
- d. Briefly:
 - i. Angel or angels appear 207 times in 195 verses of the scripture.
 - ii. Their tasks.
 1. To do the bidding of God
 - a. By bringing messages
 - b. By bringing guidance.

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c. By protecting the people of God.

i. Angels go before us to prosper the Word of God.

6. DO GOD'S WORK

(Matthew 28:18-20 NIV) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

a. Share your faith

i. In humbleness.

ii. In openness.

iii. From your experience. Too many people feel they have to be able to rattle off scripture from memory. They may not be gifted in memorization.

1. Simply share and invite.

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7. CONCLUSION

a. JESUS' WORDS ARE AN INVITATION.

- i. He invites us into relationship.
- ii. He invites us into new life.
- iii. His is an act of love shown through his love of the Father and of us.
- iv. Hear the words of Paul as he brings to a conclusion his letter to the Romans.

(Romans 16:20 NIV) The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

- v. Amen, come Lord Jesus!