

Lesson 13

Preparing for the Spiritual Harvest of the Future

Looking for His Return

Introduction

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work, John 9.4.

There should be a sense of urgency regarding our work in the Kingdom.

Our mission is clear:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age, Matthew 28.19-20.

One day, as Jesus said, our time on earth will be finished. Either physical death will come, or our Lord will return. Since these things are inevitable, the Christian's challenge is to see life from an eternal perspective. This world is not all there is. There is more, much more. Truly, the best is yet to come.

In almost every New Testament book, there is a reminder that Jesus will return. How often do you reflect on this fact? Does your pattern of living reflect your realization that He could return at any time?

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only, Matthew 24.36.

If He were to return right now, are you ready? *And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming,* 1 John 2.28.

Looking for His Return

One of the best starting points for discussing the need to look for His return is found in Matthew 25.14-30. As we apply the parable to us, Jesus is the Master. We are the servants who have been entrusted with His property. In the story, each of the servants were entrusted with *talents, . . . to each according to his ability*. They were to work in view that at some unknown time, the master would return. In the meantime, two servants used what they had been given, and profited by making more talents. One servant, however, buried his talent and was ultimately condemned, 24.24-25, 30.

Another passage to consider is Mark 13.33-37.

“Watch! Be alert! For you don't know when the time is coming. “It is like a man on a journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, gave each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to be alert. Therefore be alert, since you don't know when the master of the house is coming—whether in the evening or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster or early in the morning. Otherwise, when he comes suddenly he might find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Be alert!”

As you read the passage, have you ever struggled with spiritual sluggishness? How did you overcome? Also consider these passages: Luke 21.34-36; 1 Thessalonians 5.1-7; and Romans 13.11-14.

Longing For His Return

It is one thing to look for His return and plan accordingly, but there is something higher than this that we need to consider. Our relationship with Christ should be such that we *long* for His coming so that we will be in His presence for eternity.

Think of how this principle is established in 2 Corinthians 4.16-5.7. Paul and his associates experienced great tribulation and trial. As they struggled physically with day-to-day persecution, they elevated their sight to something higher and permanent. They:

- Longed to experience an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 4.17.
- Wanted to possess a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, 5.1.
- Groaned, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 5.2.
- Desired to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life, 5.4.
- Walked by faith, not by sight, 5.7.

There is another passage we should consider before closing. It is the usage of the Greek word *maranatha* in 1 Corinthians 16.22. There are two possible meanings of the word, depending on how it is pronounced. (1) "Our Lord is coming!" (2) "Our Lord, come!" The consensus of many Bible scholars is that the second definition is the one Paul had in mind here. It was a prayer, addressed to Jesus, for Him to return. Similar language is found in Revelation 22.20.

How often do we pray, asking for Jesus to return? Do you think this would raise our consciousness regarding His return? Why/Why not?