

Constant Readiness

One of the main motivations for living a godly life is that Christ could appear at any moment. We are to be constantly ready.

Five Reasons Christ Could Return At Any Moment

1. **The _____ (Apostles) Believed It.**
 - a. *“After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” I Thessalonians 4:17 “For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay.” Hebrews 10:37*
 - b. *“The Lord’s coming is near...the judge is standing at the door.” James 5:8,9 “The end of all things is near.” I Peter 4:7 “Dear children, this is the last hour.” I John 2:18*
 - c. Universally, the apostles believed the return of Christ could happen while they were still alive. Every day they thought, “Could this be the day the Lord returns?” This should be our attitude too.

2. **_____ (Jesus) Taught It.**
 - a. *“No one knows that day or hour...Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come...” Matthew 24:36,42*
 - b. *“Suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time’ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.” Matthew 24:48 “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” Matthew 25:13*

3. **The _____ (Church) Lived It.**
 - a. *“If I want him (John) to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?...Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die.” John 21:22 Expectancy of Christ’s return was at a fever pitch throughout the first century.*
 - b. *“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?...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 1:6,11 Kingdom fever also prevailed during the first century.*
 - c. *“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.” I Thessalonians 4:15 Christ’s return was a hot topic among the Thessalonian believers, with deep concern expressed about those who had already died.*

4. **_____ (History) Trumpets It.**
 - a. Throughout church history, the doctrine of Christ’s imminent (any-moment) return has been taught.
 - i. Clement of Rome (96-97 AD)

- ii. Ignatius of Antioch (117 AD)
- iii. The Didache (second century church document)
- iv. After Augustine (late 300's), imminency became the minority view, still promoted by leaders such as Chrysostom and Firmicus.
- v. Joachim of Fiore reignited end-times teaching in the 1100s.
- vi. Martin Luther (1521ff.) taught the imminence of our Lord's return, but often focused more on the Antichrist, whom he equated with the Pope.
- vii. Beginning in the 1600s, date-setters (in defiance of the Lord's teaching) came and went, culminating with William Miller prophesying that the Lord would return on October 22, 1844.
- viii. John Nelson Darby (1830) wrestled with reconciling imminency with biblical passages teaching that signs must occur first (e.g., II Thessalonians 2). Darby concluded what many others had hinted at (including Ephrem of Syria over a thousand years earlier) – the church will be raptured (I Thessalonians 4:15-18) before the tribulation period begins!
- ix. In the late 1800's and 1900's, with the fulfillment of prophecies in the Holy Land, pre-tribulationalism became the dominant view among evangelicals.

5. The _____ (Godly) Proclaim It.

- a. Bible scholars from Moody Bible Institute, Northwestern College, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School were front and center in the evangelical movement heralding the soon return of Christ.
- b. The post-tribulational view faces the following problem: If Christ returns after a peace treaty between the Antichrist and Israel is signed, beginning the tribulation period (Daniel 9:27), and after there is an abomination of desolation that occurs midway during the tribulation period (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15), and after there is a great falling away among believers, and after the Antichrist is revealed (II Thessalonians 2:3), and after all of the horrors unfold as depicted in Revelation 6-19, ***why was the New Testament church expecting his immediate return? Why do so many Scriptures teach imminency? If all these signs must happen first, why is the church commanded to fervently look for Jesus?***
- c. *“Wait for his Son from heaven.” I Thessalonians 1:10 “Eagerly wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” I Corinthians 1:7 “We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 3:20 “We wait for the blessed hope- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Titus 2:13 “Maranatha! (Come, Lord Jesus!) I Corinthians 16:22*

The New Testament church was looking not for the Antichrist, but for the Christ! They were looking not for the wrath of God, but for deliverance from the wrath of God! They were looking not for signs, but for a Savior! They were ready at any moment – are you?

“No one is qualified to be an evangelist or pastor unless he believes in the second coming of Christ in such a sense that He could come even before the end of the sermon.” G. Campbell Morgan