

The Motivation of Jesus' Return

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One of the major topics of the Feast of Trumpets is Jesus' return or second coming. This occurs at the sound of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 8:1-2, 6; 11:15-18), also known as "the trumpet of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17), the "great sound of a trumpet" (Matthew 24:30-31), and "the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Does the knowledge of Christ's second coming have any influence on our day-to-day lives? It should! In examining the following scriptures, we see that Jesus' return should motivate us to change our sinful behavior, and live godly lives.

Jesus' second coming should motivate us to be spiritually awake and ready for His return. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus says, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. . . . Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. . . . Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Matthew 24:36-44).

Christ's return should inspire us to use and develop the "talents" and spiritual gifts given to us by God. Later in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus tells us, "For it [the kingdom of Heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. . . . Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master'. . . . He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying . . . 'I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours'. . . . his master [said] . . . 'You wicked and slothful servant! . . . So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 25:14-30, for more information on the use of spiritual gifts see; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11).

Jesus' return should move us to love others by helping them in their time of need. Jesus concludes the Olivet Discourse, by telling us about a future judgment taking place after His return, in which those who have fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, cared for the stranger, provided clothing to the needy, visited the sick, and those in prison, will "inherit the kingdom." Jesus tells those who fail to help those in need, to "depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Son of Man's second coming should motivate us not to be ashamed of Him and His teachings. Jesus says, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the

Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

Christ's return should inspire us to not let our lives be weighed down with the cares of this world. He says, "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34-36).

The return of Christ should encourage us to be at peace and not have a troubled heart. Jesus told the apostles, and as an extension, those of us today, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going" (John 14:1-4).

Jesus' second coming should inspire us not to judge the motives of others. Jesus will take care of this at His return. In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul says, "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Christ's coming and the glory we will share with him should motivate us to put to death our sinful habits. Paul tells the Colossians, "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:4-10).

The return of Jesus should move us to live holy lives by loving one another. Paul, writing to the church in Thessalonica says, "Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13).

Knowledge of the second coming should give us hope and comfort during times of mourning for the death of a fellow believer. Later in his letter to Thessalonians, Paul writes, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The apostle Paul also tells the Thessalonians, as well as modern Christians, to stay spiritually awake, "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).

The return of Christ should encourage us to spiritually endure and not give up. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews states, "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, 'Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

Jesus' return should inspire us to patiently wait for His coming. The apostle James in his letter "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (KJV) says, "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (James 5:7-11).

Christ's second coming should motivate congregational elders to take care of God's people. The apostle Peter writing in his letter to "to the strangers [Christians] scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (KJV) says, "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your

charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Jesus' second coming should motivate us to:

- *Be spiritually ready for His return.
- *Use the talents and gifts given to us by God.
- *Love others, helping them in their times of need.
- *Not be ashamed of Jesus.
- *Stop letting our lives be weighed down with cares of this world.
- *Be at peace, and have a trouble free heart.
- *Avoid judging the motives of others.
- *Put to death sinful habits.
- *Live holy lives by loving one another.
- *Find comfort during times of mourning.
- *Be spiritually awake for His return.
- *Spiritually endure and not give up.
- *Patiently wait for His coming.
- *Encourage our elders to take care of God's people.

The knowledge of Jesus' second coming should influence how we live our daily lives.