

Jesus May Come Today

by John R. Rice

Jesus may come today, and we should be prepared and watchful for His coming at any moment.

Topics: "Imminent Return", "Christian Readiness"

Description

John R. Rice preaches about the imminent return of Christ, emphasizing the urgency and unpredictability of His coming, urging believers to be constantly watchful, ready, and prayerful. He refutes the idea that specific events must occur before Christ's return, stressing that no signs are needed for His imminent coming. Rice highlights the importance of focusing on Christ's imminent return rather than getting distracted by worldly speculations or false predictions. He reminds Christians of the apostles' expectation of Christ's return in their lifetime and the need to be prepared at all times.

Transcript

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matt. 24:42.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matt. 24:44.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matt. 25:13.

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Mark 13:33.

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:35-37.

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Luke 12:40.

"Behold, the judge standeth before the door." James 5:9.

"Behold, I come quickly." Rev. 22:7.

"The time is at hand." Rev. 22:10.

"And, behold, I come quickly." Rev. 22:12.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20.

Yes, JESUS may come today! The coming of Christ to the earth is imminent: it may occur any moment, day or night!

There is not a single event prophesied in the Bible which must come to pass before the Saviour returns. As far as we can know, no event, either political, economic or spiritual, need occur before Jesus comes. Not another war need be declared, not another gospel sermon preached, not another soul be saved, as far as can be told from the Scriptures, before the Saviour comes to catch up His saints into the air for the marriage supper in Heaven.

And I do not mean that signs of the Saviour's coming show that it is likely to be soon. Some say that Jesus must come soon because the little modern nation Israel is established in Palestine. I do not believe that is the restoration of Israel promised in the Bible. I do not believe one can tell from that even approximately when Jesus will come. I do not believe that wars, earthquakes, dictatorships, communism, or modernism are signs that Christ will come at any predictable time or within any given generation. My conviction is that we should look for Christ's coming simply because He said to look for His coming.

We should not look for Christ's coming because of meteor showers or because of numerals found in the bible and mistakenly applied to reckon when Christ will return. The Millerites went wrong on that in 1842. We should not presume that with a tape measure we can measure a passage in the great pyramid in Egypt and, making an inch mean a year, find when Jesus will come. British-Israelites were made a laughing stock by that false premise nearly twenty years ago. I know one who thus set a date for Christ's return and is now a scoffing infidel. No, let us stop looking in the newspapers for signs of Christ's coming and simply believe Christ may come at any moment because He said so.

At any moment we may expect Christians to be caught up into the air to meet Christ in the first promised phase of His second coming. We do not know when. We bring reproach on the blessed hope by speculations, but we can watch because Jesus said we should.

The Scriptures quoted above do not discuss any signs that might precede the coming of Christ but rather the fact that He may come at any moment. The Scriptures teach that Jesus might have come at any moment since He went away! Jesus Himself taught the apostles and all the Christians then living that He might return in their lifetime. They were commanded that He might return in their lifetime. They were commanded and entreated earnestly to watch and pray since they knew not the day nor the hour when the Son of man should return. At Pentecost the promised pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles took place and they began their witness for Christ. Since that day there has never been a moment but what Christians ought to have expected Jesus to return as He most certainly might have done.

All these Scriptures quoted above show that the coming of the Lord might have been at any time from Pentecost on until now. There is not one single sign for which Christians have needed to wait before they should expect the return of the Saviour. And not one single event has occurred or will occur definitely enough that any person can know the day or hour of His return.

I. Christ's Imminent Return Clearly Stated By Christ Himself

The Bible is full of teaching about the second coming of Christ and related events. Those of us who take the Bible literally and believe it all and are therefore premillennialists, expecting the literal, bodily, physical return of Christ and His reign upon earth are foretold in the Scriptures, have much to preach. We have the great themes of the resurrection; the rapture or meeting Christ in the air; the judgment seat of Christ; the great tribulation; the man of sin, or Antichrist; the glorious return of Christ with saints and angels; the battle of Armageddon; the restoration of the Jews to Palestine; the judgment of the living nations; the millennial reign of Christ on David's throne, etc. All these matters ought to be preached for they are clearly taught in the Bible. But, very strangely, we often neglect the greatest theme in connection with the Saviour's coming, and that is that His coming is imminent, and that every Christian is commanded to watch! watch! watch! for no man knows the day nor hour when He shall come.

Whatever Jesus taught about His second coming, the point of His message was always this: that His coming is to be sudden, unexpected, and surprising so that every Christian should be ready for His coming at any moment.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, after thirty-five verses concerned with the second coming, then Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

From verses 36 to 51, the last sixteen verses of the same chapter, Jesus earnestly urges the unexpectedness and imminence of His coming. In verse 42 He says, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And in verse 44 He says, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

The angels do not know when Jesus will return. Jesus Himself, while in the flesh, did not know when He would return as He Himself said in Mark 13:32.

Then in Mark 13:33 He said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."

And in Mark 13:37 He repeats again His warning, saying: "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

In Matthew 25:13 Jesus closes the parable of the ten virgins, saying: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

In Luke 12:40, after warning Christians that they should be "like unto men that wait for their Lord," telling them "And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants" (Luke 12:38), and next reminding them how a man should be constantly watching lest the thief should break in and steal (vs. 39), then Jesus said, "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Only one honest meaning is possible in these Scriptures: Jesus may come today!

If the Bible is a trustworthy book, then Jesus might have returned even in the lifetime of these New Testament Christians, He might have returned any time during the centuries since then, or He may return now at any moment. If the Father Himself has set the time, then He has not revealed it even to the angels and certainly not to any man. He may come today. There is no other possible meaning to these Scriptures.

He has put no promised event before the Saviour's coming. There are no Scriptures yet to be fulfilled before Jesus comes, and we are commanded plainly, repeatedly, insistently to watch for His coming.

If you do not believe that the coming of Christ is imminent, then you make Christ Himself a deceiver. It would have been cruel and insincere for Jesus to have all the apostles and New Testament Christians earnestly watching for His return if it were already a settled fact that He could not return for thousands of years. No, the words of Jesus were true words, and they are as good today for us as they were the day they were uttered to the apostles. Jesus may come this very day, yea, this very hour. We may hear the sound of the trumpet and may feel ourselves suddenly changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air where we will be gathered with the saints of all ages and carried to the Father's house of many mansions while the unsaved are left on a wicked world, turned over to sin and to the man of sin until we shall return with Christ to reign. Today I may see Jesus! Today I may see my mother, my father, my baby brothers! Today I may enter into the reward of my labors. Today I may lay down my burdens, lay down my sorrows, lay down my weaknesses, lay down my disappointments, lay down my frail, sinful body! Today I may be clothed upon with a glorious body like that of our Saviour! Oh! today I may see Jesus and report and bring in my sheaves rejoicing, and kiss His dear feet! May God grant that I will not be ashamed before Him at His coming but that I may be watching with my lamp trimmed and burning when I hear the great shout, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!" Jesus may come this very day! Hallelujah!

II. His Imminent Second Coming Illustrated By Jesus

How precious this doctrine is to the Saviour and how important to His disciples we can see by the way He repeated it and illustrated it. Notice the illustrations the Saviour gave.

1. The second coming will be like the flood in the days of Noah. Jesus said: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matt. 24:37-39.

The fact of the coming flood had been clearly foretold. For one hundred years Noah had been building an ark and preparing for the flood. You may be sure that everybody in the inhabited portion of the earth knew of God's warning. You could no more keep the ark a secret than if in the Panhandle of Texas or in the mountains of Arkansas men should work for a hundred years building a ship like the Titanic or the Queen Mary! Noah's preaching "got over" yet the people did not know when the flood would come. They did not believe it. Noah himself did not know when. The Lord gave no definite date. Noah went into the ark when he was commanded, and God shut the door. Even then the flood did not come for seven days. There were no preceding signs by which they could be sure of the exact date of the threatened deluge, even if they had believed it was coming, so the men of that age "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark." That is the way it will be, the Saviour says, when He comes. People will be as unprepared and His coming will be as sudden and unexpected.

2. The Saviour's coming is likened to the coming of the bridegroom whose bridesmaids have been waiting until far into the night (Matt. 25:1-13). Some of the bridesmaids had no oil and expected their dry wicks to burn until he came, but their lamps went out. All of them, the wise and the foolish, those with the oil of salvation and those with only the lamps of profession, "slumbered and slept." And then at midnight His

coming was so sudden and unexpected that those who had no oil did not have time to secure it but were left without and missed the wedding.

And so there could be no doubt of His meaning, for the closing verse of the parable says, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

The point of the parable of the ten virgins is this, that the coming of Jesus is imminent. He may come today, so therefore be ready.

The virgins knew the bridegroom was coming, but just when, they did not know. He might have returned at once. They ought to have been ready at any moment.

It is strange that people would so pervert the Scriptures as to miss the very heart of the Saviour's teaching here. Yet a few years ago the story of the ten virgins was given in the International Sunday School Lessons but only the first twelve verses were printed. The thirteenth verse where Jesus gives the conclusion and lesson of the parable was omitted entirely in the Sunday School quarterlies that I saw. The Saviour's second coming was not even mentioned! The parable of the ten virgins is not simply a lesson on preparedness. It is a lesson on preparedness - not for usefulness, not even for death primarily - but preparedness for the second coming of Christ. The lesson is that Jesus may come at any moment, so watch and be ready!

3. The second coming is as imminent as a master returning to his home after a long journey. Jesus used this illustration more than once. In Matthew 24:45-47 Jesus said: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

The return of such a master is imminent. That is, he ought to be expected at any moment, and it is a faithful and wise servant who earnestly does his duty day by day looking forward to his master's return.

But there are those who say that "my Lord delayeth His coming," and that we ought not to expect Him momentarily now. For such the Saviour continued the same parable in verses 48-51 as follows: "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This is a picture, perhaps, of an unsaved one. But the unsaved are as much accountable to Jesus as the saved. All a sinner has he gets from God, and he must give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ whether he loves Him or not. This world belongs to Jesus Christ and one day He is going to claim it. Meantime, all who read this had better be ready for Jesus to come for they shall certainly have to give an account for their stewardship even if they have not been converted.

And what a sad teaching this is! Don't you see that one who says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," is not right in his heart? He is not anxious for Jesus to come, perhaps is not willing for Jesus to come, and therefore does not watch. This Scripture indicates that it is always unbelief and sin that keeps one from eagerly watching for Jesus to come.

Jesus taught the same matter in Mark 13:34-37, and verse 35 says, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning." Surely the coming of Jesus may be today, may be at any moment.

The imminence of the Saviour's coming He illustrated by the unexpected thief.

In Matthew 24:43,44, Jesus said: "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

In Luke 12:39,40, Jesus said: "And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

The coming of a thief to break in and steal is a matter that people ought always to be forewarned and forarmed about. There is no set time for the thief to come. He may come at any moment. Therefore every householder ought to be prepared and constantly watching. Just so the coming of the Saviour may be at any moment, and the only way for us to be safe from embarrassment and shame when He comes is to be watching and ready. The saved who slumber and have their lamps smoky will be embarrassed; the lost who have no oil of salvation will not only be ashamed but will be left behind and will miss the wedding.

III. Sinner, Take Warning!

Let the unsaved readers observe the note of solemn warning in all these passages where Jesus spoke of His coming. Every time He mentions that we should watch because He might return any hour of any day there is a thrill of joy for the Christian, and yet there is a solemn and fearful thought for the unsaved.

"As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," Jesus said. And remember that all the world, except eight souls, perished in that terrible flood because of their wickedness of which they did not repent!

And when Jesus spoke of the return of a master to call his servants to account after a long absence, He warned of the fearful punishment that would befall the unfaithful servant who began to eat and drink with the drunken and to beat the other servants, etc. The coming of Christ for His saints will be a sad day for every unsaved soul.

His coming is likened unto a thief in the night, and like the householder who, being not ready, has his home broken up and his goods stolen, so every sinner who has not trusted Christ will find himself bereft of the most precious things in this world - his loved ones who are Christians. Many a man will have mother, father, wife, babies or dear friends taken away in an instant, and he be left to face a world gone mad in sin with every single Christian removed at one stroke!

Some few will be saved during the great tribulation, but even then they cannot miss the tribulation. Some of the virgins who had no oil in their lamps may go back and get oil, but when they come to knock at the door where the wedding is, they will find the door is shut and they are left outside. Some will be saved, I say, during the great tribulation, but at what terrible cost! With churches closed, preachers gone, loved ones gone, they will be left as poor, crying babes in a wilderness of sin without a single man of God to

teach them, without an older Christian to comfort them or give them strength.

And saddest of all is this fact: when Christ comes and takes away all His saints, then most of the good influences will be taken out of this world and most of those who reject Christ will then plunge headlong into such sin as they never before dreamed of. The Antichrist will be so deceptive and his power so terrible that few will oppose him. None can buy or sell without taking his mark, and those who take his mark will never be saved. Many of those who are saved will endure the fiercest persecution, hunted like wild beasts and put to death for the cause of Christ. Those who are unsaved when Jesus comes for His saints, will be left behind and most of them then will never, never, never turn to Christ for salvation.

You who read these lines, then, make sure that you are saved now for Jesus may come today. It is terribly dangerous for any unsaved sinner to live one day without Christ. It will be a thousandfold more dangerous to go into the great tribulation without Jesus when all the saints have been taken out at the coming of the Saviour.

IV. Objections Answered

Here I can imagine that some reader says, "I know that the words of Jesus seem to teach that He may return at any time. But certain other Scriptures appear to contradict that." Some good Christian people do not understand certain passages of Scripture relating to the Second Coming, and so stumble at this blessed teaching that the Saviour may return at any moment. Therefore they do not constantly watch as He commanded. They miss the joy of "the blessed hope."

However, since the Bible never contradicts itself, it will not be difficult to reconcile these Scriptures, and that I will try to do and show that there is no prophesied event to come before the return of Christ.

(1). It is sometimes said that the gospel must first be preached to all the world before Jesus comes; that He cannot return for His saints until the evangelization of the world is completed.

The Scripture quoted for this is Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

The mistake here is in supposing that "the end" is the coming of Christ to take away His saints. Rather, "the end" is the end of the tribulation time. In the same passage, verse 8 tells about "the beginning of sorrows," which I believe is the time just after the rapture of the saints. Verse 21 in the same passage says: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Remember that there are two phases of the coming of Christ. First, He will come into the air and call out His saints to meet Him. This is the first part of His coming, the part always referred to by Jesus when He said, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" and made similar statements. Then on the earth there will intervene the seventieth or last "week" of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27). On the earth then there will be "the beginning of sorrows," and in the last half of the "week," three and one half years of great tribulation while the Antichrist rules the world. Then Christ will return from Heaven, coming literally in the clouds with the saints and angels to fight the battle of Armageddon, destroy the kingdoms of the Antichrist, and reign upon earth. During the great tribulation this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all the world and then will come the end of the tribulation in the

battle of Armageddon when Christ comes to set up His kingdom. That is what Matthew 24:14 means. The gospel or good news of the coming reign of Christ will be preached by a newly converted remnant in all the world after Christ comes and takes away His saints.

But in any case, the gospel has already been preached "in all the world for a witness unto all nations." At Pentecost we are told that "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven," that is, those who had come to abide there temporarily during the feast, probably from the time of the Passover through Pentecost. We are told that these heard the gospel by the Spirit-filled Christians and they were "out of every nation under heaven."

At a Bible Conference where I answered many Bible questions, came a full-blooded Indian from Oklahoma who asked for an interview. He had heard me on the radio and was sent by his tribe from northern Oklahoma to ask me this question. Opening his Bible to this verse, Acts 2:5, he said, "My people want to know if any of those devout Jews were from America, among the Indians and prehistoric races in America at that time." His question certainly astonished me, and for a time I did not know what to answer. He continued to tell me how traditions had come down through the years from father to son among his people about God, the creation, the flood, and even some faint glimmer of ideas about the Christ. All I could tell him was that I believed the statement of the Scriptures, though I did not know whether the Scripture meant that there were Jews present who had lived among the American Indians or not. In any case, the gospel was preached to representatives in all the world when it was preached at Pentecost.

Again we are told about the church at Rome that "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8), and Paul wrote to the Colossians about "The gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world" (Col. 1:5,6). So the gospel has already been preached in all the world. Even if Matthew 24:14 referred to this age, then it has already been fulfilled. We ought to do all we can to get the gospel to every creature, but the second coming of Christ need not be delayed awaiting evangelization of the world. Jesus may come at any moment. No prophesied event is to intervene before the coming of Christ to take away His saints.

(2). Some people believe that the coming of the man of sin, the son of perdition, or Antichrist, must precede the coming of Christ. They have in mind the warning of II Thessalonians 2:1-3 as follows: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

The above Scripture plainly warns that "the day of Christ" is not "at hand." Some had evidently written in Paul's name, and others had evidently quoted Paul as saying that the day of Christ was at hand, that is, impending soon. Paul urged them not to be deceived since this day of Christ cannot come until there comes a great falling away and the man of sin or son of perdition (the Antichrist) be revealed.

But we must not confuse "the day of Christ" and the coming of Christ for His saints. The day of Christ here means the same as "the day of the Lord," a term used many, many times throughout the Bible. That term refers always to that future time when Christ will visibly, bodily, personally and literally return to the earth, destroy the armies of the Antichrist at the battle of Armageddon and set up His throne at Jerusalem and there begin His millennial reign. "The day of Christ" or "the day of the Lord" includes all the millennial reign of Christ until He shall turn the kingdom over to His Father. The day or period of Christ means the time of

His rule. But the term, "the day of the Lord," or of Christ, never refers to Christ's coming into the air as a Bridegroom for His bride when the Christian dead will be raised and living Christians will be changed and all caught out together to meet Christ in the air. The rapture, the hope of the church when we will be caught out with Jesus for a honeymoon in our Father's house of many mansions which Jesus is now preparing for us, comes before "the day of Christ" or "the day of the Lord." After Christ takes out His saints, and the Holy Spirit who makes His abode in the bodies of the saints is taken away, then the man of sin will be revealed and will run his short and terrible course. The Holy Spirit who dwells in Christians now hinders the man of sin so that he does not appear and is not revealed to the world as yet. But as soon as we are taken out, then the man of sin will be revealed. Following him then will come the day of the Lord or the day of Christ.

The coming of Christ to the earth when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, when He shall fight the battle of Armageddon and sit on His throne at Jerusalem is NOT imminent. The coming of Christ into the air to call out His saints, both living and dead, to meet Him, IS imminent. With this in mind, you can see that this passage of Scripture does not contradict the many plain passages where the Saviour warns us that His coming will be like a thief in the night or like the flood on the unsuspecting wicked in Noah's day, or like the unexpected return of the master to judge his servants after a long absence.

After the Rapture of the saints, then there is a well-defined train of events foretold in the Bible, and those on the earth may know if they will read the Word of God about when the Saviour will return to destroy the man of sin and set up His kingdom. They may know about when the day of the Lord will come. But before that is the sudden coming of Jesus into the air for which all of us are to watch earnestly since no one knows that day nor the hour and since He may come at any moment.

After studying the Scriptures which prove the imminence of Christ's coming, it becomes evident that the saints must be called out of this world before the great tribulation. In order that the rapture may be the great surprise which is foretold in the Scripture, then the rapture of the saints must be the next event prophesied in the Bible. It must come before the battle of Armageddon, come before the reign of the man of sin, or the great tribulation time. The thing that every Christian should watch for next is not the appearing of the Antichrist, not the restoration of the Roman Empire, not the mark of the Beast, not the great tribulation, not the last great war and battle of Armageddon, and not the reign of Christ at Jerusalem; but the coming of Christ for His saints.

V. New Testament Christians Expected Christ to Come in Their Lifetime

We have given about many of the plain statements of Jesus in the gospels concerning His imminent coming, but the rest of the New Testament is equally clear. New Testament Christians expected Jesus to come at any moment.

The people at Corinth were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" as the Apostle Paul wrote by divine inspiration (I Cor. 1:7). The people of Thessalonica "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:9,10). After people were saved in New Testament times, Paul properly taught them to be looking for and waiting for the coming of the Saviour! They knew His coming might be at any moment.

Writing to the Phillipians, Paul said, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body..." (Phil. 3:20,21). Paul himself was continually looking for the coming of the Saviour. He had in mind here the time of the rapture when he would have a changed body, caught out to meet Christ.

To Paul was given the highest revelations in New Testament times, we suppose. He wrote fourteen books of the Bible (if we include as his the book of Hebrews, which I think we should). He was not only a great teacher, but was himself so filled with the Spirit that he was caught up into the third Heaven and received revelations that were not lawful to utter. He was the most used of God of any New Testament character, and will meet more souls whom he won to Christ than any other apostle. And it was constantly in the mind of Paul that Jesus would come, possibly in his lifetime, so he looked for Him steadily.

When Paul wrote about the rapture of the saints, that event when Christ comes into the air to receive His own, he wrote of himself as being among the living. In I Thessalonians 4:15 he said, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep."

"We which are alive and remain!" Paul expected to be alive and remain until Jesus came. Again in the seventeenth verse of the same passage he said, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." The Christian dead are mentioned in the third person, but the living are mentioned in the plural, first person. It was Paul's confident hope, nay, his expectation, that he should be living when Jesus should come. That is how clearly the apostles were taught the imminency of Christ's return. They knew that He might return any moment.

Likewise, in I Corinthians 15:51,52 Pauls says: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but WE shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and WE shall be changed."

Again Paul spoke of the dead in the third person, "The dead shall be raised," but he spoke of himself with all the living, saying, "And we shall be changed." Again you notice that this is the time of the rapture when Christ calls His saints out to meet Him in the air. He is not speaking of the day of the Lord, a little later when Christ returns with all the saints to destroy the Antichrist and reign on the earth.

In James, the fifth chapter, are several references to the coming of Jesus as if He might come at any moment. To Jewish Christians scattered abroad, the inspired writer says, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (verse 7). In verse 8 he says, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. In verse 9 he says, "Behold, the judge standeth before the door." These statements would only be true for that generation (or for any other generation, for that matter), if Jesus might be expected at any moment. It is the clear testimony of all the New Testament that we should expect Him at that hour or any time since the time of the apostles.

The imminency of the coming of the Saviour, and of course of the things that follow, are clearly taught by the Apostle Peter. In I Peter 4:7, we are told, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." We are reminded of the exhortation of Jesus to "watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." The coming of the Saviour was at hand in the sense that He might come at any moment; and in the same sense His coming is still at hand.

The book of Second Peter was written primarily with this in mind to stir up the people, reminding them of the promises of the apostles and prophets concerning the coming of the Saviour. Here is what that book

says: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" - II Pet. 3:1-4.

And then follows in verse 9 the inspired explanation of why the coming of Christ has been postponed.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The coming of the Lord is at hand: it is only God's mercy that delays His coming so that others may be saved!

One should notice, too, that it is scoffers and unbelievers who will not believe that the Saviour is likely to come soon. These scoffers and unbelievers walk after their own lusts (verse 3) and do not believe in direct creation and other miracles of God (verse 5). Dear reader, do not put yourself among these scoffers! Believe the Word of God that Jesus is coming. We believe He is coming very soon; we know that He may come at any moment.

VI. The Closing Testimony of the Bible

Today I have been greatly impressed with the powerful exhortation given us in the last chapter of the Bible concerning the coming of the Saviour. Here God's revelation to man is finished; the canon of Scripture is closed. And in the last chapter of Revelation at least five times we are warned that the Saviour is likely to come at any moment. Verse 6 says, "These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things WHICH MUST SHORTLY BE DONE."

Any honest interpretation of that verse must agree that it means the events pictured in Revelation must shortly be fulfilled, that is, every reader should look forward and expect Him soon. And remember that the next thing on God's calendar is the coming of the Saviour to take away His saints.

And then in verse 7 the Saviour said, "BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

Jesus is coming quickly. Is not that meant for a warning that you must be ready? Does not that mean that Jesus is likely to come at any moment? Unless this Bible is a fraud we must understand it so. The time is not named, but we are warned to be on our guard, to watch and be ready.

Again, in verse 10 the Lord said, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for THE TIME IS AT HAND."

The time is at hand!" That is what Peter said (I Pet. 4:7). The coming of the Saviour is at hand.

Then in verse 12 we are warned again, "AND, BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

And then the last verse in the Bible besides the closing benediction is verse 20 which says, "He which testifieth these things saith, SURELY I COME QUICKLY. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Conclusion: Are You Ready?

Quickly! Quickly! QUICKLY! Jesus is coming quickly! He may come at any moment; it seems certain that He will come soon. Brother, are you ready?

I beg every Christian to lay aside the cares and covetousness and pleasure of this world that would prevent you from being happy if Jesus should come today. Here we must return to the words of the Saviour in Luke 21:34-36.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Notice these commands, "Take heed to yourselves." "Your heart will be overcharged with the eating and drinking, and the cares of this life, and so that day will come upon you unawares," the Saviour said, "if you do not beware." "Watch ye therefore, and pray always" is the next command of Jesus. Christians are to take heed about their lives. They are to watch hopefully, expectantly for the Saviour's coming, and they are to pray often for His coming. Jesus gave it in the model prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That prayer asks for the return of Jesus and for His kingdom and all the related events. And John, the beloved disciple, as allowed to use the impassioned and Spirit-directed prayer of his heart when he cried out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). So, Christians, take heed, watch and pray. Do not lose your testimony. Do not be too busy about making money. Do not get too absorbed in pleasure. Do not eat too much or drink too much. God will destroy both the belly and the meats, Paul says. Rather, look for Jesus and live a pure life and win souls so you will not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

And, sinner, are you ready for Jesus to come? If not, only one thing will make you ready, and that is for you to trust Him today to forgive you, surrender your whole heart to Him, claim Him as your Saviour! Do it today! Make sure of it while you can, and then you, too, can join in the happy watching for the coming of the Saviour.

One night at the close of a service I went down a darkened aisle to prepare for a baptizing while the people waited. A woman seized my sleeve and stopped me. With quivering lips and broken voice she said, "Brother Rice, do you believe Jesus is coming soon?"

I answered back, "Yes, I believe that Jesus is coming soon: I ought to believe it much more than I do. There are many people who think so. Certainly the Bible teaches He may come at any moment."

"Oh! I am afraid He is! I am afraid He is!" she said. I was startled and asked her the reason why she, a Christian, should talk this way. I said, "Don't you know you are saved? Haven't you trusted Jesus for forgiveness?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "but my husband is not saved. I am afraid that Jesus will come and leave him behind. What will I do if Jesus comes and my husband isn't saved and I have to go away and leave him?" I earnestly urged her to put the salvation of her husband's soul before everything else.

Do you believe that Jesus is coming? Then the way to prove it is to win souls, separate yourself from the wickedness of this world and let your light shine while you can.

When I used to play college football, the referee would call to the captains of the opposing teams,

"Are you ready, Decatur?" "Are you ready, Denton?"

And then the whistle would blow. So with an earnest heart I call today to every reader,

"Are you ready, Christian?" "Are you ready, sinner?"

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-r-rice/jesus-may-come-today/>

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