

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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Watch And Be Sober

Dear Friend,

Since I was a child, I have been hearing preachers preaching about how we are in the last of the last days. Obviously, today we are closer to the end than when I was a child. So, how close are we to the end? Here's what Jesus had to say. (Mark 13:32)

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

The truth of the matter is, no one knows the exact moment in which Jesus is returning to earth to receive His bride; the church. So, if someone tries to tell you; “on such and such a day Jesus is coming back”, you can rest assured that person is wrong.

I can remember as a child hearing about how Jesus would return as a “thief in the night” and lying in bed wondering if this was the night He would return and take me to heaven. Did the fear of possibly missing His return keep me from straying away from Jesus as a teenager? No. It isn't the “fear” of God that leads a person to repentance. It's the goodness of God that leads to repentance. (Romans 2:4)

“Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”

Scaring people into serving the Lord is not the answer. Speaking from my own personal experience, the fear of missing the return of Jesus was overshadowed by my desire to live like all my friends. I even rationalized my decision by thinking to myself; “If I miss the rapture, I can still make it by dying a martyr's death.” Isn't that sad, to be so self-centered that I was willing to run the risk of missing eternity with Jesus all for the sake of enjoying sin for a season.

That may very well be the reason why I rarely discuss the end time. I don't want anyone to be scared into serving Jesus. Isn't talking about the goodness of Jesus and His goodness drawing someone to want to serve Him much better than scaring someone into submission? Chances are, if faced with a similar temptation as I was, they too may choose to gratify the flesh and fall away from serving the Lord.

Having said all of that, I do think it is prudent, as devoted followers of Jesus, to look at a few verses that I believe will encourage us as the time of Jesus' return approaches. Instead of causing us to live in fear, I believe that the scriptures will encourage our hearts. You can't think that Jesus wants us to fear the future. Think of the multitude of times Jesus said, "Don't be afraid." If Jesus didn't want the disciples to be afraid, I'm sure He doesn't want us to be afraid today.

So, let's take another look at those verses in Thessalonians that talk about the day of the Lord coming as a "thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5:2) Let's begin with verse one of that chapter.

"But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you."

For some reason, that sounds much more reassuring than how I remember it being presented as a child. It sounds to me like what Paul is saying here is that his audience wasn't ignorant of the times and seasons that would surround the return of Jesus. So, if believers aren't supposed to be ignorant of the times and seasons of Jesus' return; who are the ones that are going to be shocked at His return?

Apparently, the shock of His return is going to fall upon those who are not lit with the light of life. Look at what Paul says next.
(1 Thessalonians 5:2-5)

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. (vs.3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (vs. 4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief. (vs.5) You are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

I don't know about you, but what Paul is saying here encourages my heart. Why? Because I know that I am a child of light not a child of darkness that "day"

is not going to “overtake me as a thief”. Funny, I don’t recall hearing that verse quoted in conjunction with Jesus returning as a “thief in the night.”

We are of the light and consequently we have no reason to fear, whether you believe Jesus is returning pre tribulation, mid tribulation, or post tribulation. The truth is, it really doesn’t matter when He returns if your eyes are set upon Jesus. For those who are not born again and are not lit with the light of life, the return of Jesus paints an entirely different picture.

I remember as a child thinking, “If I miss the rapture, I can still make it”. Here’s what I failed to take into account, the deception that would overtake the hearts and minds of the people once the light was removed from the earth. Even as the day of the Lord approaches the deception is going to increase and people, even some believers are going to be deceived into accepting a lie.

“How do you know this Mark?” Simple, look at the next two verses and see Paul’s warning to believers. (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8)

“Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (vs.7) For they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. (vs. 8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

What it sounds to me like Paul is saying here is for believers to be vigilant. Why do we need to be vigilant? I believe the reason Paul is encouraging us to be vigilant is because the closer we get to the day of the Lord the more deception there is going to be in the earth, even in the church.

What exactly does a breastplate protect? It protects our heart. And, what does a helmet protect? A helmet protects our head, the place we normally recognize to be the origin of our thought life. In the days approaching the return of the Lord believers must be sober and guard against deception, represented by the helmet protecting our thoughts, as well as, the enemy’s efforts, particularly through divisions in the body of Christ, to destroy our hearts.

Think about how fractured the body of Christ has become because of divisions resulting from arguments over doctrine. As the return of Jesus approaches rest assured the divisions over doctrine are going to increase, especially surrounding issues of false doctrine.

It is so easy to get caught up in a dispute over doctrine and before you know it there is a division and hearts are broken. Brothers who would have never had a cross word before are now at odds with one another. Notice that the breastplate

here is identified as “faith and love”. I don’t believe faith and love are ever to be separated. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians he said that faith works by love. (Galatians 5:6)

In conclusion, we are to watch and be sober as the day of the Lord approaches, realizing that deception is going to continue to increase. (2 Timothy 3:13)

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

But, living in fear of being deceived is not the answer. I believe it’s when we live in fear of deception that we open ourselves to the enemy, ultimately resulting in division in the body. If we stay in faith and love our hearts are protected. Peter wrote about the power of love to cover a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

“And above all things have fervent charity (love in action) among yourselves: for charity (love in action) shall cover the multitude of sins.”

Peter goes on in the next chapter of the same letter to admonish the reader to be sober. (1 Peter 5:8)

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

What will help us as we endeavor to “Watch and be Sober” is to be clothed with humility, because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5).

No believer wants to be deceived by the enemy. But, in our effort to maintain the purity of sound doctrine, we can’t walk outside of love towards our fellow believers. In so doing, we have walked right into the enemy’s trap and sown division in the brethren. The key then is to never veer away from love, no matter what.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins