

## Living In Expectation The Acts 1 Church Part 7

We are continuing our Living in Expectation series, drawing lessons from the Acts 1 Church. Two weeks ago we focused on the coming of the Lord. Acts 1 tells us Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples, teaching and giving instruction, telling them to stay in Jerusalem until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and then **“...He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? 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 1:9-11

The Acts 1 church was living in expectation that the Lord would return. We too are to be living in that same expectation and that has major implications for every follower of Jesus!

We mentioned last week the Assemblies of God teaches the rapture of the church, a sudden catching away of believers. Paul writes, **“The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** After the rapture we are with the Lord, celebrating the marriage supper of the Lamb. There is a time of tribulation here on earth and then Jesus will return with the saints of God in what we refer to as the second coming of Christ. (The rapture is for the saints, the second coming of Christ is with the saints.) He will then establish his kingdom here on earth. We acknowledged that while we hold to this doctrine, there are others who just as sincerely believe the bible indicates only that Jesus will return at the end of time, at the second coming to establish his kingdom. What all Christians can agree on is that Jesus is coming! We believe, as did the writers of the New Testament, that Jesus’ return is imminent, i.e. he could come at any moment and we are living in expectation of his return.

George Eldon Ladd, a renowned theologian of the last century said that **Jesus’ own teaching about the end times “... is never interested in the future for its own sake, but speaks of the future because of its impact on the present.” ...George Eldon Ladd** The same could be said of the teaching of the apostles. Jesus is coming and in light of that, how should we

live today? World events point as signs of the Lord's return. Anticipating and expecting the imminent return of the Lord should affect how we live today. How does it impact us?

**Living in expectation of his imminent return motivates us to holy living.** While the bible speaks of the church as the body of Christ, it also speaks of the church as the bride of Christ. The Apostle Paul admonishes husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. He says Christ gave himself for the church to cleanse her, **"...and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."**

**Ephesians 5:27.** The image is of us, the church, as a bride presented to her husband, Jesus, on the wedding day, without sin, without stain or blemish, holy, pure, blameless, dressed in white. If that is what we are supposed to be, are we living like that, as a pure and spotless bride?

Jesus the groom isn't coming for a bride that's been unfaithful, partying and running around, sleeping around. He is coming for a bride that has been faithful to him, a bride looking for him. The bride on her wedding day doesn't want to be surprised by the groom: unprepared, hair and makeup not done, dressed in a t-shirt and sweat pants, fingers stained by the Cheetos she's been eating by the handful. We are to be clean, pure, prepared, holy, living a life that is pleasing to Jesus, our heavenly bridegroom. His soon return should motivate us to be prepared, rejecting sin, refusing compromise in our life. John writes, **"...we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."** **1 John 3:2-3** We are destined, through God's grace and forgiveness, to be with Jesus and when he appears we are to be like Jesus and that hope, that anticipation motivates us to start now, living like him, making sure our motives and actions, our speech and our conversations, our attitudes and character are like him. We are to keep ourselves from the wickedness and impurity of this world and its' influence. Paul writes to Titus, **"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ..."** **Titus 2:11-13**

Jesus is coming and we need to live like it might be today! The New Testament continually connects the Lord's coming to our present lives. The Lord is coming, love one another. The Lord is coming, be sober, diligent, patient, sincere. The Lord is coming, be obedient, be godly, be vigilant, be watchful, be faithful, be ready. The Lord is coming, learn to

say no to sin, to compromise, to the enticement of the world. The Lord is coming, so the writer of Hebrews says, “consider how to spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” The Lord is coming so don’t stop meeting together, but encourage one another and even more so because you see the day is approaching. The list can go on and on. The Lord is coming and it could be today. Live like it!

**Living in expectation of his imminent return motivates us to faithfulness.** In Matthew 24-25, what is often called the Olivet Discourse, Jesus responds to the questions of his disciples about what will be the sign of his coming and the signs of the end of the age. After giving them a number of signs, he then tells three parables: the parable of the householder and the faithful and unfaithful servants, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and the parable of the talents. All three parables have a similar plot and make a similar point. Someone of significance and power has gone away but has promised to return, but no one knows exactly when. Each parable speaks of the wise who are prepared for his return even though they don’t know when it will be. In spite of the extended absence, they remain prepared and keep serving faithfully. Whether he comes today or not, the wise remained faithful, they lived expecting his return and when the master or the groom finally came, they were rewarded and blessed for their faithfulness. The foolish and unfaithful were unprepared for the return, they lived and behaved with no regard to his instructions, disregarded the likelihood of his coming and ultimately they suffered severe consequences.

We find ourselves in the parables. Jesus has gone away but has promised to return. In the interim, he has given us responsibilities and commands. We are to tell others about Jesus, we are to live faithful and holy lives, live as children of the light, walking and living in obedience to Jesus and his word. He’s going to return and His expectation is that he will find us carrying out his commands, living as he told us to live, faithfully serving God and serving others. I don’t want him to come and find me like the unfaithful servant in the parable in Matthew 24 who decides the master probably won’t come anytime soon so he ignores the master’s instructions and starts mistreating others and partying and serving only himself. The master showed up and it did not end well for the servant in the parable. Lord help us remain faithful because we know you are coming! May he find us faithfully obeying him, serving the Lord, expecting his return.

Understand, the wise in the parables weren’t considered wise because they figured out when the master or the bridegroom was coming. They were considered wise because they

continued to do what they were instructed to do regardless of whether the master was there or not. David Pawson commented about the wise in the parables, **“They behaved the same way in the absence of the key figure as they would in his presence. Even a prolonged absence made no difference; they were fully prepared for that. They proved their trustworthiness.”** ...**David Pawson** Are you trustworthy? Can Jesus trust you to remain faithful?

Jesus is coming. Are you prepared, and by that, I mean are you living so that if he comes today, he will find you busy doing what he has called and instructed you to do? Don't you want him to find you faithful? Notice it's not just faithfulness in the big things. In the parable of the talents the master says, **“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!”** **Matthew 25:21** Regardless of how significant or insignificant your service may seem to be, God is looking for faithfulness in his people. Jesus is coming and we want to be found faithful when he returns. If he called you to be a teacher, be faithful, if you are called to work in a trade, be faithful, let your light shine as you repair that air conditioner. If you work in sales, let your light shine, be faithful, work with kindness, show mercy, be diligent. Whatever you do, may the Lord find us working faithfully and diligently, with integrity, when he returns.

**Living in expectation of his imminent return motivates us to engage in the mission of the church.** Jesus himself connected his return to the mission of the church in his Olivet Discourse. **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”** **Matthew 24:14** We don't know when he is coming but that isn't our responsibility. Our responsibility is to preach this gospel to the whole world, to all nations. Our responsibility is to receive the power of the Holy Spirit and be witnesses in our family, our community, our nation and to the ends of the earth. Go, send, give. Support missionaries with your giving and prayers, like our guests today, the Millers. Help them as they help churches. There are a million ways to connect with and engage with the mission of the church. Each generation realizes we are running out of time. The Lord is coming and now is our opportunity to be the church he has called us to be.

In addition, when the Lord returns at his second coming, eventually there will be a new heavens and a new earth. In that day there will no longer be sickness or death, no more injustice or crying or violence or pain and his glory and the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth. There are some who believe by our good efforts we can establish the kingdom of God on

earth. We can bring the kingdom down now. That isn't what the bible teaches. We can't bring the new out of the old. Jesus alone can make all things new. But the mission of the church can and should include praying for and working for justice where there is injustice. The church should be bringing hope to the hopeless, feeding the hungry, living as citizens of a heavenly kingdom. We see what will be and try to live as citizens of that kingdom now, treating others as Jesus would have us treat them. Jesus is coming and he's coming for people that are engaged in the mission of the church. Let's do all we can to reach this world with the good news of Jesus!

**Living in expectation of his imminent return motivates us to keep on going.** Life isn't easy. There are troubles that come with living in a fallen world and the bible predicts increased trouble and difficulty as we approach the coming of the Lord. Wickedness thrives, violence and evil increases and the Lord's people may bear the brunt of powers and policies that are against us. James speaks of being patient in the face of suffering and connects it to the Lord's return. **“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming...be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.” James 5:7-8** Be patient means to bear up under pressure. Stand firm. Don't quit, don't stop, don't give up, endure because you know Jesus is coming. Hold on a little longer because Jesus is coming. I know it seems like he keeps delaying or missing a good opportunity to come and get us out of here, but Peter reminds us the reason for the delay. God is patient because he doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9). He is giving others an opportunity to make things right and to call on him, but be assured, the Lord is coming. He promised!

Jesus is coming. Are you ready? Are you living a holy and godly life? Are you faithfully serving the Lord so when he returns he will find you living for him and doing what he called you to do? Are you engaged in the mission of the church, doing what you can to see that everyone hears the good news of Jesus? In the light of the Lord's return, Peter asks, **“What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” 2 Peter 3:11-12**

Living in expectation of his return, the Acts 1 church turned the world upside down. Everything they did, the way they lived, where they went, how they behaved was impacted by that expectation that Jesus was coming. What kind of people ought we to be in 2022? Jesus is coming. It could be today. Are you ready? Not just have you gotten sin out of your life, but are you doing what he has called you to do? Living in obedience? Jesus is coming. Get ready!