

Living In Expectation The Acts 1 Church Part 8

Two weeks ago we talked about the Acts 1 church living in expectation of the Lord's return. As the disciples watched Jesus ascend into the heavens two angels told them, **“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 1:11** The Acts 1 church, the New Testament church believed Jesus would return and they lived in expectation that he would return in their lifetime. They lived in anticipation of the imminent return of the Lord and as we shared in our last message, that expectation impacted everything they did for the Lord. It makes a difference when the church lives and ministers in expectation of the Lord's soon return.

I mentioned two weeks ago the Assemblies of God make a distinction between the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ. The rapture is the catching away of the church, the bride of Christ. At the rapture Jesus comes FOR the church, at the second coming he comes WITH the church.

Another way to think of this is to refer to the second coming of Christ as a two part event. In the book *Bible Doctrines* by P.C. Nelson, which is basically an overview of our doctrinal statements, what we call the 16 fundamental truths of the Assemblies of God, Nelson writes, **“The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on earth for one thousand years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace.” ...P.C. Nelson** Two parts of the second coming of Christ: 1st, the sudden rapture of the church and 2nd, seven years later, his visible return to earth with the church.

Let me give you a brief A/G endtime overview. The bible predicts things on earth will grow continually worse. Sin, rebellion and wickedness become more widespread. Finally, at a time set by the Father himself, Jesus will return to rapture or catch away his church, i.e. all those who have placed their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, both living and dead. Paul states, **“The Lord himself will come down from heaven...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**

Jesus said the church was salt and light in this world. Salt both seasons and slows decay. Light illuminates. With the church gone, the world will fall into greater decay and darkness, culminating in a time of judgment on earth called the Great Tribulation. During that time, the

saints of God are with the Lord while a man of lawlessness deceives and then rules the nations of the earth. At the end of this seven year period of tribulation things come to a head and Jesus returns, this time with his saints, to establish a new millennial kingdom. Satan is bound and cannot tempt or destroy for a thousand years, Jesus then rules and reigns the nations and we are with him. There will be no sin, no violence, no rebellion, no fear as we are with the Lord.

There is much more to be told but at the end of that Millennial reign, Satan is loosed for a brief time and will try to once again deceive people and then the final end comes. At that time all of the dead are raised. Remember the righteous dead have already been raised at the rapture. Now the rest of the dead are raised and will be judged. If their name is not written in the Lamb's book of life, Revelation says they will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death. Satan and hell itself will be cast into that lake of fire. Then comes a new heaven and a new earth, a new Jerusalem, the holy city, what we call heaven. Paul describes this as being beyond anything we could imagine. **“Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what the Lord has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9**

Trust me when I tell you, you don't want to miss this! You don't want to be cast from his presence into hell but more importantly, you don't want to miss the glory of His presence forever! It is eternal life. I don't just mean living forever, not dying, but real, true, beyond imagination, life! Life as God intended. Life in his presence.

People spend time and energy trying to determine when the Lord is coming. More important than when he's coming is why he's coming. While the bible doesn't tell us when, it does give indications as to why. (We are focusing primarily not on the rapture, but on his coming WITH the church.) What is the purpose of his coming? Perhaps first and foremost: **Jesus will be glorified and acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords by all!**

We know who he is, that he died for our sins, rose again, ascended to the right hand of God and is seated in power and glory, but much of the world either does not know or refuses to recognize him as Savior and King and Lord. When he comes to rapture the church, although the world will know something has happened, they won't necessarily see him in the clouds, but when he returns with the church the bible says **“...every eye will see him...and the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.” Revelation 1:7** Jesus will establish his rule and reign here in that new Millennial kingdom. The prophet Isaiah spoke of that Messianic kingdom when

he declared, **“The glory of the Lord will be revealed and all people will see it together.”**

Isaiah 40:5 The second coming of Christ is a revelation of Jesus!

We live in a day when people doubt Jesus’ resurrection and laugh at the thought of him being God’s son or Savior of the world, but let me tell you, at his coming all doubt will be removed! Walter Kunneth wrote, **“For it is only when the hidden Lord becomes manifest King in his glory that all resistance to his claim to rule collapses, that indeed every possibility of rebellion has the ground removed from under it.”** ... **Walter Kunneth** The day is coming when the veil is lifted, the curtain will be pulled back, his glory and Lordship will be revealed to all. Nothing subtle about that moment! On that day, Paul tells us, God has ordained that **“...every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** **Philippians 2:10-11** The day is coming when every last enemy of Jesus, every enemy of life including death itself will be under his feet and Jesus will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Another purpose in his 2nd coming: **At His coming the church of Jesus Christ will be glorified and transformed.** Not only will Christ be glorified when he returns but we will share in his glory. Paul writes, **“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”** **Colossians 3:4** Part of his glory is exhibited and revealed in the very fact that he redeemed a bunch of sinners like us! We are trophies of his redeeming grace. The people of this world can marvel at Jesus because no one else could save a wretch like us!

We’ve already pointed out that at the rapture of the church, the dead in Christ will rise and then we are caught up to be with him. We are given brand new, glorified bodies like his. Paul says we are buried in corruption but we are raised incorruptible! John writes, **“When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”** **1 John 3:2** Jesus is coming so we can share in his glory and be like him! John Stott wrote, **“We will be radically and permanently changed, being transformed into his likeness. And in our transformation his glory will be seen in us, for we will glow forever with the glory of Christ, as indeed he glowed with the glory of the Father.”** ...**John Stott**

Do you see it? At his coming, it all comes together. Jesus is glorified, acknowledged and honored by all as King and Lord, and because he has redeemed us and made us his own, heirs and joint heirs with Christ, by his grace, his mercy, we will be made fully alive like him, in him. Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is a human being fully alive.” In Christ we will be made fully

alive and He will be glorified through the saints of God that he has redeemed for himself! Part of the purpose in His second coming: His church is going to be glorified and transformed, forever to be like him!

We find another answer to the purpose of his 2nd coming in the Apostle's Creed. **Christ will come to judge the living and the dead.** While God the Father is often thought of as the judge of the whole world, Scripture indicates Jesus has been given that role and authority. Jesus himself stated, **"The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son...and He has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man."** John 5:22, 27. When Peter preached the gospel at the house of the Roman Centurion Cornelius, he told them **"[Jesus] is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead."** Acts 10:42 Paul, preaching on Mars Hill in Athens, spoke of Jesus when he told the people that **"[God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."** Acts 17:31

Jesus is coming to judge the living and the dead. Paul says **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."** 2 Corinthians 5:10. Judgment is coming. We think of the judge coming to hand out punishment for our misdeeds. But think of this: we repented of our sin and trusted in Jesus, and Jesus has already taken the punishment for our sin. Our sins have been judged and the judgment carried out, the penalty paid in full. That's why you need to repent and make Jesus your Savior and Lord. But consider this when you think of Jesus coming to judge. Karl Barth, an eminent theologian of the last century wrote, "In the Biblical world of thought, the judge is not primarily the one who rewards some and punishes the others; he is the man who creates order and restores what has been destroyed." This is why often in the Psalms the righteous are crying out for the Lord to judge. They want him to come and make things right. Jesus coming as judge isn't bad news for the redeemed. It's cause for celebration. The Psalmist declared, **"He will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad...Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth."** Psalm 96:10-13

Jesus the righteous judge is coming. N.T.Wright says in light of that, **"In a world of systematic injustice, bullying violence, arrogance and oppression, the thought that there might come a day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and the poor and weak are**

given their due is the best news there can be.”...N.T.Wright Jesus is coming to judge the living and the dead. He will judge the wicked because he is good and just but likewise he will comfort the afflicted and oppressed. We can rejoice in hope for our good and righteous judge is coming!

A final purpose for Jesus’ 2nd coming: **Jesus will come to make all things new.** New heavens and a new earth. Paul says in Romans that creation itself is groaning for redemption, longing to be liberated from its’ bondage to decay. This world, the cosmos is going to be new, a new order of things. Paul says we too are groaning and eagerly awaiting the completion of our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. We are going to have new bodies. Paul writes, **“Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.” 1 Corinthians 15:49.** We will have a new body like Jesus’ body, a body that will never die or grow sick or old or feeble or forgetful. A new body, in a new world where He will dwell with us forever. John says **“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’” Revelation 21:4-5**

Everything will be new and by his grace, we will be a part of all God has prepared and all he has planned. John said the voice from the throne said, **“He who overcomes will inherit all this; and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Revelation 21:7** Are you overcoming? Are you living in expectation of his coming? Are you ready?

This same Jesus will come again and if you know him, that is really good news! The last words of the book, **“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.” Revelation 22:20-21** We need his grace to overcome, to live ready, to stay ready, to be ready. Part one, the rapture, may be today. “People get ready...”