

If the Lord Returned Today

The Bible teaches not only that the Lord will return, but provides information about how that will happen, "...*the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Jesus Himself said, "*But of that day and hour no one knows*" (Matthew 24:36). So, when Jesus returns, it will be sudden and unexpected. This truth should cause us to pause and consider, what if the Lord returned today?

If the Lord came back today, every earthly pursuit would instantly lose its value. Our money, careers, possessions, and even our plans for tomorrow would all fade away.

If the Lord returned today, would He find us faithfully serving Him with gladness? Would He find us distracted by the cares of this life, unprepared to meet Him? What would matter most is whether we are found in Christ. Paul urged the Corinthians to "*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The return of Jesus will be either a day of great joy or a day of great sorrow. For the faithful, it will be the moment of eternal reward, the fulfillment of every promise. For the unprepared, it will be too late to change.

There is no better time than now to obey God, to live faithfully, and to prepare for the day that will surely come. Peter reminds us that "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9). His delay is giving us time to turn to Him, but the delay will not last forever. One day, the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, and we will all stand before the Lord in judgment. At the end of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Jesus said, "*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*" (Matthew 25:13) We should live in constant readiness, watching and waiting for His coming.

Fanny Crosby wrote a song that was published in 1876 titled "Will Jesus Find Us Watching?" The chorus of the song asks the following questions:

*"O can we say we are ready, brother?
Ready for the soul's bright home?
Say, will He find you and me still watching,
Waiting, waiting when the Lord shall come?"*

If the Lord returned today, would you be ready to meet Him?

- by Josh McCord

God's Plan

In the first century, God's plan for saving the lost and caring for the saved was made known through the apostles and put into practice by the disciples. God's plan was simplicity itself. And its success was the marvel of all the world. The gospel was sent to the lost. The poor and needy were cared for. And the church was edified.

How was the gospel sent to the lost? By congregations (1 Thess. 1:2-8) and individual Christians (Gal. 6:6) supporting evangelists to carry the gospel message all over the world, and by every faithful Christian "who (would) teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

How were the poor and needy cared for? By each congregation caring for its own needy (Ac 4:34-35, 1 Tim 5:16) and receiving help from other congregations when needed (Rom. 15:25-26), and by each individual Christian "doing good unto all men" as there was opportunity (Gal 6:10).

How was the church edified? By the elders of each congregation "feeding the flock of God which is among them" (1 Pet. 5:2), and by Christians "exhorting one another" and "provoking one another unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:24-25).

This plan is tried and proven. It worked in the first century, and it will work in the twentieth century. We do not need a new plan. We do not need an improved plan. But we do need renewed zeal for executing God's plan.

- by Bill Walton

When Is A 'Miracle' Really A Miracle?

A fund raising letter from a local hospital said: "Miracles at this place are part of everyday life. Miracles that come from technology. And miracles that come from human caring. I've seen them happen." This is an excellent example of the inaccurate use of the word "miracle" in modern usage.

What this man is describing IS a wonderful thing. It's great to see a sick person recover. It is thrilling to view the fruits of recent technological advances in medical care. We are seeing things that folks only a few years ago never imagined. Open-heart procedures, organ transplants, laser surgery and a host of other new medical methodologies have been perfected in rapid succession. It is truly amazing - but, it is NOT a miracle! And, today we understand more than ever before about the "psychology" that is associated with physical illness. And this is surely helpful in bringing about cures but, it is NOT a miracle!

You see, by definition - and in accordance with accurate Biblical usage - a miracle is "an effect in the physical world which surpasses all known human or natural power ... supernatural." So, when a doctor uses a sophisticated new medical device to affect the cure of a seriously ill patient, there is no miracle involved. While the technology may be new and very advanced, it is still a procedure that is known and understood by men. It is an action that is in accord with natural law. It is not supernatural. It is NOT a miracle.

Miracles are things like: walking on water, turning water into wine, raising a man who had been dead for four days; etc. These things defy a natural explanation. They are truly supernatural. The Bible records many instances of true miracles - but it also tells us that no such miracles are taking place in the world today (1 Cor. 13:8-13). No, there are no miracles at that hospital - or any place else. Think!

- by Greg Gwin