

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S RETURN



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Our spiritual preparation for the return of the Lord Jesus is vital, and it should command our personal attention everyday. The only true preparation is when we are truly forgiven of sins; our heart is controlled by the Holy Spirit; and we can honestly say that we are growing spiritually each day with each circumstance met scripturally. God is more interested in seeing that than anything else.

It is not our religious appearance; the statements of faith we make, nor anything we do outwardly that matters, but the development of our inward Christian character to the image of Christ—that is of major importance in the sight of God. Every thing; every person, and every situation we meet, is used by God to prepare us for the return of His Son.

The temptations that arise in our spiritual life; our body; with finances; at work; in our home; situations with friends, neighbors, and everyone else, are for one purpose—to develop and perfect our faith in God. Romans 8:28-29 "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."

That is the most important thing with God; and that is what should command our attention so that we will be ready when Christ returns—it is our necessary preparation for eternal life. This is especially important because of our tendency to be occupied with "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" Luke 8:14. Knowing that Je-

sus could return at any moment, we can see the ridiculousness of setting our heart on, or becoming too involved with, things of this world.

Christ could return at any time, so we must be alert spiritually, because we can easily be distracted. Luke 21:34-36 "*Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting [carousing; self-indulgence], 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 [horrors] that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*"

God's program is that His Son will return in visible form, when no one, who is not aware spiritually, is expecting it to happen. Jesus Acts 1:9-11 "*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.'" That is why Jesus said Matthew 24:44 "*You also must be ready; for it is at a time when you do not expect Him that the Son of Man will come.*"

Wickedness will increase as His return comes ever closer. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 "*In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous [love money], boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection [unloving], trucebreakers [unforgiving], false accusers [slanderous], incontinent [without self-control], fierce [brutal; profane], despisers of those that are good;*

"Traitors, heady [headstrong], highminded [conceited; self-important], lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof [live in defiance of its power]: from such turn away." Matthew 24:12-13 "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

The Jewish Age ended with the Jews crucifying the Son of God; and the Gentile Age will end with the Gentiles rejecting the true Christ of God, and accepting the antichrist of the devil. From the time King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem 588 B.C., until Jesus returns, is considered the *times of the Gentiles*. The Gentiles are in charge, and the Jews are in subjection. If Israel had not been idolatrous, they would always have been the chief nation. Before the Millennial Kingdom, however, the Jews are going to repent, and again become the chief nation on earth. The apostle said that Israel is the true olive tree, and Gentiles are just wild branches grafted in Romans 11:17-24.

Because of their wickedness, God deals with the Gentiles in a drastic way. The Tribulation brings a time of trouble on earth that is worse than anything before—Daniel 12:1 "*such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book*" Matthew 24:21.

Before the supernatural judgments begin, Jesus returns in the clouds with those who passed away in Him, and He translates every living person who is in the will of God—from mortal to immortal; like Elijah and Enoch. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 "*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.*" This could happen when we are not thinking of it, so we must always be prepared.

Israel's prayer of repentance brings Jesus back for the second time. *Isaiah 64:1-2* "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—As fire burns brushwood, As fire causes water to boil—To make Your name known to Your adversaries, That the nations may tremble at Your presence!"

Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel. The temple worship and sacrifices are reinstated only as a remembrance of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross as the Lamb of God, and that the Jews were the people who demanded His crucifixion—it keeps them humble.

Jesus said that true believers would be very few in the closing days. *Matthew 24:37-39* "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."

As His return approaches, there will be less living by faith in God and more living for self by the world. *2 Timothy 4:3-4* "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." Jesus asked if there would be any faith on earth—after telling about the persistent widow's answer to prayer from an unjust judge *Luke 18:6-8*.

As we increase in our faith and trust on God, we will see how little faith is left in denominational churches today. They have moved away from the true Gospel of Christ—which is to actively trust God in faith for every aspect of life.

It means being delivered, healed, avenged, and supplied by the divine power of God alone.

The average church member does not trust God for anything, and they think that anyone who does is fanatical. A sure indication of God's Truth, is that Satan does not agree with it. *Malachi 3:18* "You will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." The Holy Spirit will give us spiritual wisdom so that we can discern between those to trust God in faith for things in this life, and those who do not.

End Times signs are company takeovers and huge corporations. Money will be accumulated to make many multi-millionaires. *James 5:1-5* "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

"Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter." They have more money than they could ever need or spend—Satan is in back of it all. They are just preparing themselves for the day of wrath; even though *2 Peter 3:9* God does not want "anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

We are not to act one way at home and another way in church. We must be willing to change attitudes that *need* changing in order to be ready when Christ returns. All malice, meanness, spite, jealousy, hard feelings, and resentment toward each other, must be removed—such things should not exist in the true Christian life.

When the love of God is in our heart, we will pray for, not criticize, others.

We should overlook the faults and shortcomings of others. The true Christian attitude is *Matthew 7:12* "Do for others what you would like them to do for you. This is a summary of all that is taught in the law and the prophets." We should treat people in a way that we want them to treat us.

To be ready when Jesus returns, all resentment must be removed from our heart; we must be at peace with God and everyone else—loving our enemies and doing good for those who hate us. We must *Ephesians 4:32* "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

All wrongs and injustices are to be met in a scriptural way, because if we are not found in that condition when Jesus returns—which can happen in a moment—we will have to endure the horrible Tribulation troubles, and we could finally land in the Lake of Fire forever. Satan wants to defile our conscience and tag some unscriptural thing on us.

If we are holding the least grudge against anyone, it is high time to break off with Satan and all of his attitudes forever. If repentance is needed about anything, we cannot delay in doing so, and forsaking those attitudes which could take us to Hell forever.

Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." *John 13:34* "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."



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