

The time of the Lord's return (Quality: Average)

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[0 : 00] As the Lord may help me, I will speak from the Gospel according to Mark, the 13th chapter, reading the 33rd verse.

Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.

The Gospel according to Mark, the 13th chapter, the 33rd verse. Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.

That is, the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come in power and great glory according to his word. These words occur in the record we have in the Gospel by Mark of the Lord's discourse to the disciples towards the end of his earthly ministry.

It was in fact one of the last discourses that he gave and upon the last thing. And this discourse is recorded in Matthew and Luke and Mark at considerable length, from which we can gather that the Lord considered this matter to be of such great importance to his church that he would have it recorded at great length in these three Gospels.

[1 : 48] And in very much the same way. For in two verses before the text, you will find the text of last Lord's day.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. If we remember that I spoke upon that text in a somewhat general way.

Although the Lord intended those words especially to apply to his second appearing. The matter then must be a very solemn weight and important.

For apart from the Sermon on the Mount, I think this is the longest discourse we have recorded for us of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Towards the end of his ministry, he puts increasing emphasis upon this truth, that while he was about to leave this world and return to heaven, he would come again in due time in power and great glory.

[3 : 04] Now I'm going to ask the question. Seeing that this teaching of Jesus Christ has such prominence in the Gospels and is of such a solemn and vital nature, how is it that it is so little regarded?

How little consideration, when you come to think of it, is given to this so important part of the teaching of Jesus Christ concerning his second coming to this world.

It is very largely neglected. And that's a great shame that it should be so. And I think, perhaps denominationally, we lie under a serious charge about this Master because, as I say, it has very little prominence amongst us, very little prominence in the ministry, very little prominence in the concern, the prayerful concern of our hearts, and our prayers very little envisage it in our supplication.

There is, I don't think you can say I'm wrong in this, there is a general disregard amongst us of this solemn part of the Lord's teaching.

For, as I said, if you consider, say, the ministry, now, very seldom is this solemn matter brought before the people concerning the Lord's appearing again in this world in power and great glory.

[5 : 06] I'm afraid it might be said with only too much truth that our ministry might be heard from January to December.

And it might be said we have not so much as heard anything about the Lord Jesus Christ coming again to this world. And you can read through volumes of sermons, good, truthful, experimental sermons, and find hardly a reference to it.

And if we would search our own hearts and minds with little closeness, we might ask ourselves, how little does this solemn truth affect us?

Oh no, why should this be? How comes it about that the truth that is so prominent in the teaching of Jesus Christ and so prominent in the scriptures, there are between two and three hundred references in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus Christ coming again?

How has it come about that this is almost lost sight of? It generally regards it as a truth that he will come again, that's where it ends. Well, I think there are reasons for it.

[6 : 35] And it may not be amiss if I mention them as briefly as I can. Now, I think one reason is that there are so many prophecies attaching, I mean, as regards the details of them, so many prophecies attaching to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ that are very difficult to understand.

And those who do concern themselves with this branch of divine truth too often exercise their minds in endeavouring to explain the difficult prophecies that attend the one central prophecy of the Lord's return.

It isn't for lack of commentators or interpreters that the subject is difficult, but it is to a great extent a lack of agreement between them.

Almost every part of the prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, I mean, the details of it, what they call the secret rapture and the millennium and all that kind of consideration.

Expositors disagree so much about it all that it seems as though the whole subject lacks profit to the mind. And some interpretations lack soberness.

[8 : 06] And so, that is one cause I feel why the subject itself is greatly neglected. The diverse interpretations of prophecy have made many feel the whole subject is unpropheetic.

Another reason I feel why this subject does not more exercise the hearts and minds of believers is because they do not envisage it arise.

They do not regard it as it is set before us in the scripture as a blessed hope. Something to look forward to believingly and anticipate prayerfully.

It is too much regarded in the light of a judgment which it is to the ungodly and not sufficiently in the light of a wonderful blessing to the church of God.

The apostle writing to Titus says, the grace of God which bringeth salvation has appeared unto all men teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ.

[9 : 36] Now if we could scripturally and spiritually and believingly envisage the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of what it will be to his church and people then I think we should feel our hearts to echo that word with which the whole Bible closes.

Jesus said, behold I come quickly and the church answers Amen even so come Lord Jesus. We tend to look rather upon the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ because of the glory nature of it as something to dread rather than something to long for.

I feel that this subject is not rightly envisaged. And then there is another reason and the Lord anticipates it in his discourse to the disciples at that time and that is a long time that has elapsed since the Lord Jesus Christ uttered these prophecies concerning his second coming.

It is very evident that in the New Testament days the churches of God were very much alive to this truth.

They looked forward to it they prayed for it they much desired to be prepared for it but they passed away and the Lord never returned and generation after generation has passed away and the Lord has not returned and so it has come about that certainly the worldly mind if it pays any regard to this at all well things go on just as the same as they were from the beginning.

[11 : 32] There is no indication that this will ever come to pass and so it is dismissed from the mind. and that spirit tends to affect even the godly.

They look upon the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as something so distant when it may be very near. What a solemn word the Lord Jesus had about that with regard to those who profess to serve him.

He said they will say my Lord delay it is coming there is no need to be concerned about that. So what? They give themselves up to self-satisfaction and self-interest and the life until the Lord comes upon them suddenly.

It may well have been of course that the early churches were mistaken in this particular that the Lord was about to return but if they had sufficiently considered the teaching of Jesus Christ on this matter they would not have so misunderstood the point.

The Lord plainly implied that it would be a long lapse of time before his ascension into heaven and his returning again to this world.

[12 : 58] And with regards to some scriptures that speak as though his coming was imminent after his ascension into heaven the Apostle Peter deals with that very clearly.

He said now you mustn't reckon this is in substance what he meant you mustn't reckon time according to your reckoning of time when it concerns God's purposes.

For with the Lord he said there's no difference really between one day and a thousand years. With the Lord a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is one day.

By the way I think it's stretching that far too much to imply that's kind of a key there to interpret the mysterious numbers of Daniel's prophecies and the like.

The theory that a day in prophecy means so long a time I think is very misleading. The point is very plain.

[14 : 05] Peter meant a thousand years is a long time according to our reckoning. Two thousand years is a long time according to our reckoning. And that time will soon have passed since the Lord ascended into heaven.

But as the Lord in the fulfilling of his purposes that's no more than two days. See? That's no more than two days. So according to our reckoning the time is long.

According to the Lord's reckoning not at all. It is short. But I think in my considering of the master and how it has come about that we are not more concerned with what is of such a weighty concern to us in the church of God is because it is not felt that the truth and teachings with regard to the Lord's coming again to this world is a doctrine that has much profit spiritually in our own experience.

It is the truth that we have no experience of and cannot have any experience of until it comes to power. And yet in another way rightly viewed there is a certain experience attached to the prophecy of the Lord's return.

I may have pointed this out to you before. You will pardon me if it's a repetition of thought. But there are three main and essential truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 58] And they are these. There is first the truth concerning his sin atoning death. He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Now that's one deep, solemn and blessed truth. The next is this, that he is exalted in heaven at the Father's right hand and crowned with honor and glory.

and that he sustains in that exalted state a prevailing intercession for his people on earth.

And the third, equally important point of truth is that he will come again the second time without sin unto salvation.

The apostles in the epistle to the Hebrews put those two together. But now once in the end of the world, that is in the end of the Jewish dispensation, all that it involves, sacrifices and the like, now once in the end of that world, the term world in the scripture, sometimes means a dispensation salvation, or an age, or a period.

[17 : 28] But now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

salvation. Now here are the three main truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they are equally the objective of a living faith and hope in the heart, where there is that faith and hope.

They are equally solemn, certain, and blessed objectives of faith. And if our faith does not embrace these truths, well, there will be a corresponding lack in our spiritual life and our spiritual experience.

Because each of these truths have a vital part in the experience of the people of God, and in this way. Take the first point I've mentioned, the death of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

[18 : 49] What then, my faith looks back to see the burdens that he bore, when hanging on the accursed tree, and hoped her guilt was there.

Now, from believing in Jesus Christ's suffering, and dying for sin, and sinners at Calvary, comes pardon and peace into the soul.

If I should be speaking to anyone this morning, and I hope perhaps I may be on this particular point, that is longing, desiring, praying to feel the blessing of forgiveness, and of the peace of God that always comes with forgiveness into the heart, that is really desiring to be at peace with God, and truly reconciled to him, their curse of sin gone, and pardon and love revealed in their heart.

I must say, well, now you must look back to Calvary for that. You must look back to Calvary for that. It's to no point to look forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ for peace with God.

That can only come through Calvary's precious blood. And, if it's given to you with your heart to look back, to see believingly that he did die, the just for the unjust, the sinner's substitute, then your sin will assuredly be forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ.

[20 : 38] And, as it may please the Lord by his blessed spirit to favour you, you will feel that forgiveness and that peace and that love of Jesus in your soul.

But it must come from Calvary. Now, the consideration by faith of Jesus Christ in his heavenly and exalted state has another effect on our heart spiritually when it's made effectual by the Holy Spirit.

And that is to animate our hearts with a feeling that Jesus Christ is alive, that he is in heaven, that he is our forerunner. For there is a path that is before us, and we know this, that it can only have one ultimate end, we must come to that dark river of which there is no bridge.

We must pass through that veil that hides an invisible world from our sight. We must experience what it is for heart and flesh to fail and mortal life to see.

But now to a child of God, what lies beyond that veil, the other side of that river, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, and his glory, and the heaven where he is.

[22 : 11] And remember this, that he is our forerunner, right through to heaven. To think of Jesus in heaven is beautiful.

It is strengthening to our hope. It is uplifting to our affection. When the apostle Paul would exhort believers to set their affections on things above and not on things on the earth, he doesn't direct their minds back to Calvary, but up to glory.

It is this where Christ sitting. That's it. Where Christ sitting, at the right hand of the throne of God. Now, were that blessed true that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God, to begin with, we shouldn't fear to die at all, and we should feel even before then an attraction that drew our desires and our affections up from this sordid world.

and all its sorrows and cares to that blessed state where Jesus is. Christ on the cross means peace and pardon.

Christ in glory means hope and heavenly affection in our spirit. Well then, what of Christ coming again in his power and glory?

[23 : 43] what effect has that? Well, this and the very needful one to stimulate watchfulness and soberness and prayerful expectation in our minds.

is the one effectual remedy against loathfulness and unconcern and lethargy.

And you may be sure of this, that where there's a neglect of that truth, there will tend to creep a lethargy over the spirit, a carelessness and indifference.

Now, don't you feel my brethren, all of you who are spiritually minded, that what you need is something to stimulate spiritual exercise and watchfulness and prayerfulness in your spirit.

Well now, this is exactly what this truth does. It stimulates concern. It makes us look to see whether there's oil in their vessels before the bridegroom comes, because it will be too late to get anywhere he does.

[24 : 59] It causes us to examine our health, whether we are children of the light and walking in the light, or whether that day will overtake us as a thief in the night.

It causes us to examine our spiritual state, whether we are in such case as to be glad at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Take a word like this of the apostle John. He said, and now little children, abide in him. That is, abide in him, in faith, believing, in love, loving, in obedience, walking in him, abiding in him, in a sense of spiritual union with him, and abiding in that.

Now saith John, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, when he shall appear, ye may be accepted of him, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

My brethren, this is a very certain thing for me to have to say, and it searches my own heart and my own mind, and the consideration is this, is my spiritual state something I should be ashamed of when the Lord shall appear, but I haven't been advising in him more, pleading to him, and rendering and loving obedience to his gracious word.

[26 : 52] The teaching of Jesus Christ with God to his second coming didn't end with these discourses in the gospel. You get it again in the book of the Revelation, and this is his word, Behold, I come as a thief in the night, blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garment, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

What are the garments? Garments are the spiritual conditions of our soul. If we're walking in humility, we're clothed with humility.

Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his spirit clothed with humility. Love is a precious garment, very blessed is he that watches and keepeth his love, seeking to keep his spirit clothed with love.

Consistency of life is a garment. There's such a thing as adorning the gospel of Jesus Christ with a life and conduct consistent with the spirit and principles of it.

And blessed is he that keepeth that garment that when he cometh they see his shame is not clothed with garments of humility and love and consistency and tenderness.

[28 : 40] Brethren, I believe in my own heart there is such a thing even with the people of God that some of them will be ashamed before him that is coming.

And there is such a state and condition of heart and mind and life that they will not be ashamed before him that is coming. Now, I think the time is nearly gone.

You will see what I'm trying to impress upon your minds this morning. That the truth of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ has a healthy effect on the spirit and mind of a child of God.

And it is very clear that it is so because of the very words of our text. After the Lord had given, I must say, some mysterious intimations of the natural phenomena that will attend his appearing, he said, take ye watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.

Now, if this subject causes us to take heed, to watch and to pray, no one will say this is an unprofitable subject, will they?

[30 : 10] Well, now the time is practically gone this morning. I think I can only just intimate very briefly the way my mind has been led in meditation upon this subject.

First, then, we have very unmistakably an intimation of the Lord's return. Then, secondly, we have the exhortation with regard to that solemn time and that solemn event.

That is, to take heed, to watch and to pray. And this is where I feel so many go wrong with regard to the prophetic scriptures.

They take heed indeed, but it is not such a taking heed as causes heart-searching, watchfulness in their spirit, and prayerfulness in their heart.

It's more interested taking heed than a gracious exercised concern. brethren, the Lord will come.

[31 : 20] The Lord will come. There's no question about it. If we're alive and remain under the coming of the Lord, we shall see this come to pass.

If we are not, we shall be raised again from the dead to see it come to pass. But see it come to pass, we shall. There's no mistaking that.

And if it is given to us to take heed to these things, to watch and to pray, well then this will be our case in that solemn day, and you shall lift up your heads with joy, for your redemption draweth nigh.

now I think I've said enough of this morning. The Lord helps us to take heed, to watch, to pray while there's time to do it.

Whether we're young, whether we're old, makes no difference. Take heed to the word of Jesus Christ. Let it enter into your heart.

[32 : 32] Don't disregard it. and then watch, and then pray. Amen.