

What If Jesus Were Coming Back Next Week?

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When asking the question, "What if Jesus were coming back next week?," let it first be clearly understood that there is absolutely no way to know when Jesus will return. Jesus said we cannot know when He will return, and even Jesus Himself did not know when He would return! *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"* (Mark 13:32). Paul wrote that there is no need to waste time speculating about "times" and "seasons" regarding Christ's return: *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2; cf. Matthew 24:43-44; 2 Peter 3:10). Although we cannot know when Jesus will return, Jesus said we must always be ready. The purpose of the posed question is to help us get ready for that day. For the sake of provoking thoughts on this subject, the writer asks, "What if Jesus were coming back next week?"

Would alien sinners decide to seek and obey the Truth? According to statistics, about 153,000 people die every day. Every day thousands of people who believe they are near death begin to seek God. As they begin to see death as a reality and feel the dread of stepping off into eternity, they finally begin trying to "get their priorities straight." Sadly, many have waited too long, and they do not have enough time to find the Truth and obey it. How important it is to seek God in our youth! *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"* (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Our first priority in life should be to seek out Christ's kingdom! (Matthew 6:33). Those who tarry in this most important of all obligations are not wise (Acts 22:16; 24:25). There is a sense of urgency when one believes he is about to die, but that sense of urgency should be ever present because the Lord could come back at any time, taking vengeance on them who have not obeyed Him: *"...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). If the world knew that Jesus were coming back next week, and if they knew the punishment which awaits, would they be more motivated to find the Truth and readily obey it?

Would erring children of God decide to repent and be faithful? If there is anyone on earth who should be motivated to repent and be faithful, it should be erring children of God. These people found the Truth and obeyed it, yet they have turned their

backs on God!

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Regarding those “sanctified” ones who became Christians, but now “willfully” live in sin, the writer of Hebrews wrote that “the Lord shall judge his people,” and “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:23-31). “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord,” erring children of God should fear the return of Christ more than anyone else! (2 Corinthians 5:11a; cf. v. 10). If you are an erring child of God, and if you knew Jesus were returning next week, what changes would you make? Would you begin faithfully attending worship services? (Hebrews 10:25). Would you let go of sin in your life and start living for God? (Acts 17:30-31).

Would Christians spend more time in prayer? I can imagine brethren dropping to their knees more often and remaining there for longer periods of time if they knew the Lord were returning soon. May we have that prayerful mindset now! “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Would Christians spend more time studying God’s Word? Perhaps if we knew the Lord were coming back next week, we would be turning off our televisions and opening up our Bibles! Can you not imagine families making important changes such as these if they knew the Lord’s return was imminent? Let us have that studious attitude now, so that we will be approved by our Judge when He does return! “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). After all, the Bible is that Word by which we will be judged when He returns: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Would Christians be more evangelistic? What if we knew that in one week Christ would return and bring condemnation to those outside of His church? (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:36-41, 47). What if we knew that many of our family members,

friends, and neighbors would be on their way to Hell in one week's time because they have not done the will of the Father? (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 4:17). Would we love them enough to try to save them? Would we love them enough to bring the Truth to their attention, even though they may get angry or upset with us? Do we realize that He who is returning is the one who commanded us to take the Gospel to the lost? (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:47). Will we be able to face Him if we have not obeyed His commands to evangelize?

Would preachers be more specific in their sermons? If a preacher only had one Sunday left in this world to preach, what would he deliver to his audience? If he knew there were people present who were lost, would he simply tell jokes and cute little stories to try to keep them entertained, or would he boldly preach the Word of God in its power and purity? Would he warn these people of the dangers of sin, false teachers, and false religions, or would he allow them to linger in their false sense of spiritual security? (Ezekiel 3:18-19; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; Rev. 2:15, 20). Would he preach the Gospel of Christ and tell those people how to obey the Gospel through water baptism? (Acts 2:36-41; Mark 16:15-16; Romans 6:3-5). It is sickening to think of all those today who are lost because they only hear watered down sermons every week that have no saving power in them at all! If a man who calls himself a preacher is not preaching water baptism for salvation, then he is not preaching Christ, and he is not preaching the Gospel! (Acts 8:5, 12, 35-39; Mark 16:15-16; Galatians 1:6-9). Preaching the good news of the Gospel necessarily includes preaching how we can be saved by obeying the Gospel! (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 4:17; Romans 6:3-5, 17). Knowing that every Sunday could be our last, preachers today should *"preach the Word," "speaking the truth in love,"* using *"great plainness of speech"* like Jesus, Paul, and other Gospel preachers of Bible times did (2 Timothy 4:2; Ephesians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 3:12). That is the only kind of preaching and teaching that will truly prepare people for Christ's second coming.

It is true that the Lord's return may not be next week. It could happen 3,000 years from now, or it could happen today! What changes do you need to make? *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:44).

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