

Intro: Jesus’ return is certain and imminent...and this changes everything!!

1. If Jesus’ Return is Certain and Imminent, How Shall We Live?

a. Dressed for *Action*

- i. What we expect of Christ’s return, both in certainty and in immediacy actually alters how we act today
 1. Courageous in the day of trouble, because tomorrow we stand before Christ
 - a. The throne could appear at any moment and this war will be over
 - b. Thus, I fight on, even in the midst of a loss, because I know My Redeemer lives and is riding on to rescue – the War will be won
 - c. If you’re on the front lines, bleeding and wounded, exhausted from battle, losing hope and just want to lay down and die – and then you hear the music, the triumph song, the victory march, you will be invigorated to rise and set your feet again
 2. Humble in the face of persecution, because tomorrow they will stand before Christ
 - a. The throne could appear at any moment, so I don’t need to retaliate or even defend myself
- ii. If I told you that there was a million dollars to be given to all who heartily greet a specific person in the 5th Street market in the next two weeks, but I you don’t know who they are or when they’ll be there, exactly how much time will you spend at 5th Street in the next 14 days?
 1. Who we are today and how we live today is shaped by what believe our future to be:
 - a. Two women, same job, same hours, same tasks
 - b. One promised \$15,000 for her work and the other promised \$15,000,000
 - c. Who will work with greater joy and expectation?
 2. And we are not merely receiving some benefit that would purchase other benefits, but we are receiving the greatest joy for which the human heart was created, Jesus Christ Himself!
 - a. “As Christians, we should not be existists, looking for our going, but adventists, looking for his coming.” - William Freel
 3. We are shaped by a glorious future that may begin at any moment – see the future grace today and dress accordingly
- iii. How would live today if you knew that Jesus was returning tomorrow?
 1. Would you be anxious in today’s troubles?
 - a. In a minute or two we stand before the Gracious King!
 2. Would you be hypocritical and self-consumed?
 - a. In a minute or two we stand before the Revealing King!
 3. Would you be greedy and treasuring the things of this world?
 - a. In a minute or two we stand before the Almighty King!
- iv. It is not possible to be expecting your Master’s return and to remain anxious, when we believe what the return of the Master means for us!
 1. Sorrow may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning
 2. The battle may be lost today, but the song of triumph is on the wind and the War will be won
 3. You may have to punt this series, but the game doesn’t hinge on this set of downs.
- v. It is also not possible to be expecting your Master’s return and to remain lazy, for the joy of His arrival agitates our souls to movement, to action, to service.
 1. This is not necessarily out of fear, as if Santa will find out that you’ve been bad if he springs in on you
 2. Rather, it is the joyful expectation of one’s Beloved returning from a journey that moves us to action
 - a. It’s the frenetic preparation of a child making and holding a sign at gate 24B because her daddy’s coming home today.

- b. It's the love that moves a husband to deep clean the house because his wife is returning from a long trip tonight.
 - 3. When the servants love the Master, they want to please and honor Him and thus in their joy they are dressed and ready for service
 - a. When the servants don't love the Master, they drink his wine and abuse his workers, and are found in a drunken stupor and thrown outside.
- vi. What are these clothes in which we are to be found?
 - 1. The righteousness of Christ alone!
 - 2. Our clothes of service are not our own good deeds or some "level" of obedience or even faith
 - 3. The only clothes which are suited for the glories of that Day are those given to us by Christ, imputed to us by faith (we don't wear our faith, but rather we wear Christ's achievements)
 - a. It's like wearing the wedding band and seal of the only one suited to the throne
 - b. When you're married to the King, it doesn't matter where you've come from, or even how noble you are now, but only that He is your husband and you His Beloved
 - c. When He returns, He comes for His Bride, His seal is His Spirit and His dowry is His own blood

b. In the Light

- i. You stay in the Light in order to see in the darkness
 - 1. We live in a constant pull toward sleepiness, the blindness to what is eternal and Real in view of the temporal and insignificant
 - 2. Dream vs. Reality
 - a. We live as in a dream, which we believe to be real, but isn't
 - i. We believe the fleshly things are the most real, and the eternal things are the most unreal
 - b. When you sleep and dream, you often respond as if what you are dreaming is real
 - i. I jump in my sleep, even though I'm laying down in bed
 - ii. Because I am responding to what is unreal, what is fantasy, and it is affecting my actions even though it's not true
 - iii. One could be dreaming of a beautiful sunset, full of happiness, but in reality driving their car off the road
 - 3. STAY AWAKE!! SEE REALITY!!
 - a. This is what it means to keep your lamps lit, SEE REALITY
- ii. Staying in the Light is having the Word of God illuminate, or reveal, the Reality of the eternal things, the things of God
 - 1. It means that the promise of God's provision and faithfulness is more important than that raise at work
 - a. If you are angry and bitter towards your boss, then you are living in a dream world
 - b. Feeling sad is not the problem (Jesus was sad), but bitterness is a sign that your reality is based upon the fantasy that your treasure or your honor in this world will bring you real joy
 - 2. If you are devastated and depressed about some gossip that is going around about you, you're living in a dream world
 - a. Who cares what the peasants think, when the King calls you precious and beloved?!
 - 3. If you are more excited about the playoffs than about worship together, you may have fallen asleep!
- iii. Keep Your Lamps Lit
 - 1. Stay in the Word of God that it might illuminate Reality for you, exposing the fantasy that our hearts cling to and operate from with the eternity and glory of the knowledge of Christ
 - 2. Spend time in prayer that you might know the Master who is returning
 - a. So that your heart is spurred to service by the greatness of His person and the excellency of His love and holiness

3. Gather together with believers to discuss the things of the Lord
 - a. Sometimes when you are sleepy, you need friends to keep you awake
 - b. We need to be reminded, often I think, that the Master is coming soon so that we think thoughts of eternity more than dreams of fantasy

2. For Whom Shall He Return?

- a. "Is this for us or for everyone?"
 - i. This is an important question today, too
 - ii. Is Jesus returning for us or for everyone?
 1. He returns for everyone, but not for the same purpose!
- b. Principle: To whom much is given, much is expected
 - i. The "Faithful Steward" is the one who is watchful and prepared
 - ii. Interestingly, it is the watchfulness and readiness in preparation that leads to right service, not visa versa.
- c. Unfaithful Servants: If you're not ready, I will appear and cut you to pieces
 - i. If a servant takes the gifts that his master gave to him, left him in charge of, and then the servant uses it for himself, it shows that he doesn't really love the master at all, but abuses him
 - ii. Christ Jesus is the Master of ALL, though not the Savior of all.
 1. Every human on earth has received some gifts from the master, has been charged with stewarding his creation, his people, his goods
 2. Every human on earth is ruled by Him – and if they are thoughtless, careless, and don't desire nor expect His return and thus abuse His goodness, He will judge such faithless ones with fearful ferocity
 3. Jesus' words here are strongly warning that it is not a mere loss of blessing that one will receive for being a selfish, faithless, self-serving person within the context of the Body of Christ, but that faithless folly is evidence of faithlessness
 - a. Thus, the outcome is not merely a loss of blessing, a basement room in house, but rather that a selfish, self-serving "servant", when discovered upon the Master's return, will be cut up and thrown out with those of like kind
 - b. Faith in Christ loves and cherishes Christ
 - iii. This idea of reckoning, of judgment, of punishment is highly unpalatable today, but we must recognize the severity of Christ's words
 1. He is returning, not as the first advent for salvation, but at the return as the Judge, the Winnower, the Divider
 2. You're either a faithful and wise steward who loves his master, or you're an unfaithful and selfish steward who despises his master and you're looking a dreadful result
 - a. He will not assign a believer a place with unbelievers!
 - b. He will, instead, assign an unbeliever who cherished the idea of belief and inclusion and manufactured a profession of faith that was, at its root and by its self-serving actions, self-interested and self-exalting, a place where unbelievers go in perfect fairness
 - i. The man simply disguised the reality which will be revealed when the Master pulls the curtain back.
 - ii. This man was in the wrong place and the Master will return him to his rightful place, outside the gate with goats.
 - iii. "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed" (12:2)
 3. Jesus is speaking these words to those who were following to listen to him, giving them a choice, because He was headed to lose in this world
 - a. It is a warning to count the cost, to question your allegiance: Is it to Him pre-eminently, or to yourself substantially?
 - b. This is still a question of hypocrisy and allegiance, related to the previous passages: Do you serve God or Money? Are you hiding your heart for the purpose of gain, either in honor or reputation?

