

Keeping Watch for Christ's Return

Seeing COVID-19 as a Wake Up Call

The COVID-19 pandemic is a world-altering event. Everyone is anticipating a “new normal”, a new kind of world. There’s much speculation about big changes to areas like: work-life, home-life, church-life, social-life; and massive adjustments in education, travel, commuting, security, finance, entertainment, retail, food services, health sciences, health care, elderly care, and so much more. As we think of all these changes to our world, perhaps it would be timely for us Christians to think how God might be at work in these present circumstances to fulfill his purposes for this planet and its people.

Jesus said there will be “signs” around the time of his imminent return. Though we don’t know precise dates, we are given clues as to the general season, and are exhorted to be looking at current events to better anticipate that time. There is much disagreement as to the nature and general timeframe of these signs, but there is no disagreement among Bible-believing Christians that Jesus is coming again—coming to judge, coming to reward, coming to “make all things new”.

In anticipation of this Day, Jesus and other New Testament writers have given dire warnings to both believers and non-believers to be prepared. To non-believers, the warnings are to turn to Jesus Christ as Saviour before it is too late. To believers, the warnings are to stay alert and steadfast in our faith. In our discussion today we will turn our attention to the promises of Christ’s return and the sober warnings for *everyone* to be watching and ready for That Day.

Thinking Soberly: There are numerous passages in the Bible that issue a stern call to be sober (alert, watchful, awake, ready) as we consider carefully how we should live in light of certain future realities revealed to us by God.

- **Read:** During the meeting (or prior to the meeting if you prefer), read through the one-page Scripture handout.
- **Discuss:** Summarize in 2-3 sentences the main message of all these passages (trying also to capture the tone.)

1. How do you think God might be purposing to use this global pandemic to get people’s attention—to fire a “shot over the bow” for the world *and* the Church? What do you think He would like to remind us of?
2. For people living in the 21st century, discuss how and why reading these warning passages might...
 - perplex some: “*Sheesh, what an unfair, unkind and vengeful God.*”
 - encourage some: “*Wow, what a just and promise-keeping God who vindicates his children!*”
 - awaken some: “*Whoa, what a soon-coming Judge of all humanity to whom I must give an account.*”

Thinking Prophetically: In our quickly changing world, it might do us well to consider how global events and changing times may be pointing us to the imminent return of Christ.

3. Do you think the current pandemic might be a sign (or at least a foreshadowing or reminder) of the approaching end times? If so, how? (*We are in the realm of conjecture here, not certainty. Remember to agree to disagree!*)

Do you find this line of thinking:

- premature?
- motivating?
- hopeful?
- other:

SUMMARY

1. Jesus is coming back to vindicate and reward his children for their faith, and to judge the world for its rejection.
2. Jesus warns his disciples to be alert and to live in such a way as to be prepared for his unannounced return.
3. Many things in the world (geopolitical, technological, moral) will increasingly come into alignment with Bible prophecies, setting the stage for Christ’s return. Those who are wise will consider the season and be ready.

APPLICATION

1. **PERSONAL:** Don’t slumber—stay awake and alert! Consider the times we live. Be ready to stand before your Creator and Saviour and give an account of how you lived your life. Live faithfully for God.
2. **GROUP:** Out of love for God and one another, recommit to holding one another accountable to live God-loving, Christ-abiding, Spirit-depending lives. Do this by faithfully encouraging, challenging and praying for one another.

When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.