

The Return

The world has a long history of possibilities for happiness or strife for all sorts of reasons. Into the turmoil, one day, Christ will return. It has been continually expected since the early Church as calamities, wars, pestilences and famines in our world are a regular occurrence. An imminent return has been proclaimed often and thus far in vain. Apostle Paul seemed to have expected it during his lifetime and from then on the expectations progressed. Many have tried to read the signs of the times, for Jesus suggested his return will occur in days of tribulation (Matthew 24:29-31). Every age has its tribulations and destructive possibilities, which in our days are magnified by an advanced technology that makes blowing up the whole globe no longer a dream of fancy. We live in a tinderbox world in which anything might happen. All that can be said though with certainty about the return of Christ is that it is closer now than 2000 years ago. About when it will happen, the Lord himself has confessed that he doesn't know either, only the Father knows (Matthew 24:36).

There will always be prophetic utterances about an imminent return. It seems to be human nature to attempt this foreseeing. Foretelling periods of strife can be helpful, but only if it aims at convincing believers that their focus on Christ better be sharpened into a deeper relationship so that storms ahead become more spiritually manageable. Beyond that, whatever comes our way, will come our way. Jesus advises to take one day at a time for that has enough hassle in it. Don't be anxious for the Lord knows your troubles and is a helper (Matthew 6:31-34).

Jesus had some incredible things to tell, not least the story of people being taken up into the heavens while going about their business as usual – some will be thus taken and others won't (Matthew 24:36-44). Apostle Paul wrote about the Parousia in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and mentioned the mystery of being changed in a twinkling of an eye in his first letter to the Corinthians (15:52). To be honest, it's all too wonderful to me and I am fine with that. I have long learned to enjoy mysteries and leave them just for what they are: mysteries. Do I believe the words of Jesus and Paul to be true? – yes, I do. Will it occupy much of my thinking and emotions? – no, for those remain towards the Lord and my immediate concerns, rather than potential events I have no control over.

For me, the most important story regarding Jesus' coming is the one he told about the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The idea of a virgin represents purity and refers to those who have been born of that pure spirit deriving from the Holy Spirit, in other words, the Christian. All that is required of me, whatever my circumstances and the happenings in the world, is to have oil in my lamp and keep it burning. My relationship with Jesus must remain sincere and intimate. The foolish virgins neglected it and asked for oil from the wise ones, who refused, not out of spite but

simply they were not able to share it. The quality of a relationship with Christ is personal and cannot be transmitted to another person. The lukewarm virgins belatedly discovered that building a meaningful relationship takes time and they had run out of it.

The wise virgins went to meet the bridegroom for a banquet, a wonderful party. I have no idea what that entails apart from it being a special relationship with the Lord. Will those at the banquet be the only people in heaven? Surely not, for Jesus saved all of creation otherwise Satan would have won. Might I find a seat at the banquet table? Perhaps, it is not for me to decide. Whatever the case, my response to this mystery must never be one of over-confidence, but one of deep humility.

And thus my heart dwells in peace. Will the world be in trouble? It always has been and I hope for the best. Will the Lord return? Yes, one day, but why should I give it overly much attention as nobody will know when. Will I be ready to face the Lord in a manner worthy of his majesty? Surely, I will try, and keep the fire within burning.

If you have found this interesting please consider my books in which much more is explained about God and the reality of an authentic Christian perspective on life – the benefits that offers.

Thank you,

Michael