

STUDY TWO – WAITING WITH THE RIGHT MOTIVATION!

INTRODUCTION

If our goal is truly to understand biblical prophecy, then our first step will be preparation of our hearts. We must have the right attitude as we face the future. In this study, I will provide an objective biblical basis for developing an attitude that honors Jesus and prepares us for His return.

Anticipating His Coming

The first point is basic: As Christians we are waiting for Jesus Christ; conversely, we are not waiting for the Antichrist.

The Bible teaches that there have been many antichrists, and as we draw near to the close of this age, there are going to be more antichrists. The Bible speaks of one character in human history who will be the Antichrist. It is possible that his shadow has already fallen across the stage of human history, and that his appearing is very near at hand. But we are not waiting for him.

I have met fellow believers who are so busy with theories about the Antichrist—his number, his name, the countries he will rule, the methods he will use, how he will put his stamp on people's foreheads and hands—that they are almost advertising agents for him. Our business as Christians is not to be witnesses to the Antichrist but to the Christ. Jesus said, "You shall be witnesses to Me" (Acts 1:8).

Let me provide some Scriptures that make this clear. In 1 Thessalonians Paul congratulates his converts and disciples in Thessalonica, reporting that the people around them are impressed by their way of living:

"For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

As Christians we are waiting for the Son of God—Jesus—to return from heaven. Those who are waiting for Him have the guarantee that He delivers us from the coming wrath on the earth—that is, from the Tribulation. How He is going to rescue us is another matter, but I believe that guarantee is given only to those who are clearly waiting for Jesus.

Another Scripture says the same thing:

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Hebrews 9:27-28)

When Jesus comes back, He is going to come with salvation only for those who are waiting for Him.

Holy Living

Another important practical result in our lives of the attitude of waiting for Christ is motivation to holy living. This truth is stated many times in the New Testament, for example in the first epistle of John:

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:2-3)

UNDERSTANDING END TIMES

When we have that continual expectancy, the joyful hope that we are going to see the Lord and be transformed to be like Him, the natural, logical application in our lives is that we purify ourselves and make ourselves ready. That standard of purity is a high standard: We purify ourselves just as He, Jesus, is pure.

This kind of waiting motivates both those who minister the Gospel and those being ministered to. Paul declares this in his ministry to the Christians in Thessalonica: *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”* (1 **Thessalonians 2:19-20**)

Paul seems always to be thinking about the day when he will stand before Jesus and answer for his life and ministry. He explains, “The thing that will make me most proud and joyful is the people I have helped to find their way to Jesus. They are going to be my crown, my glory and my joy.” That is true motivation!

Later in the same epistle, as Paul speaks to those to whom he has ministered, he offers one of the most beautiful prayers found anywhere in the Bible: *“So that He may strengthen and confirm and establish your hearts faultlessly pure and unblameable in holiness in the sight of our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) with all His saints (the holy and glorified people of God)! Amen, (so be it)!”* (1 **Thessalonians 3:13 AMPC**)

That is anticipation! Not only does Paul anticipate the coming of the Lord for himself, hoping to offer the Lord a tribute from his life’s work, but he also wants those who have come to the Lord through his ministry to have the same attitude of expectancy. Paul knows that attitude will motivate them to become blameless and holy. Believe me, friend, there is nothing that purifies our lives more effectively than the hope of seeing Jesus. If we really live in that hope, it will have a radical, permanent effect on the way we live.

Christ Reigns Now and Forever

The next main factor in waiting with the right motivation is centered in the realization that Christ already reigns as King of the universe. Furthermore, He will continue to reign forever. From now until eternity there will never be a time when Christ is not on the throne of the universe.

The same power that raised the dead body of Jesus from the tomb and exalted Him to the highest place in heaven is available to us as believers. Paul goes on to depict the level of authority to which God has raised Jesus: *“[God] seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come”* (Ephesians 1:20–21, NIV).

Christ is far above all other forms of rule or authority or power in the whole universe. He is not merely above them—He is far above them. One of His titles is Lord of lords and King of kings. I interpret that this way: He is the Ruler of all rulers and the Governor over all governors.

He is also above all spiritual rulers and authorities in the unseen realm. In many places the New Testament speaks of “principalities and powers” or “rulers and authorities” with reference to the kind of power and authority Satan would seek to exercise against God’s people and God’s purposes. Though these are real and we must reckon with them, we must continually bear in mind that the power and authority bestowed by God upon Jesus is on a far higher level. He is above all.

Paul gives us this good news: *“And He [God] put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”* (Ephesians 1:22-23). Those last three words are tremendously important: for the church. Jesus is seated in heaven on our account—to

UNDERSTANDING END TIMES

represent us, to watch over us, to ensure that God's purposes and promises for us are worked out unfaithfully. No human or satanic opposition or hindrance can ever frustrate the promises and the purposes of God on our behalf. Jesus is the head over everything for His Church. How important it is to realize that! The Church is the primary object of His care and concern. All His power and all His authority are exercised on our behalf.

Some people who are preoccupied with the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation believe there will be a gap somewhere in the future in human history when Jesus will no longer be reigning. That is not true. He is reigning now, and He will continue to reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. No matter what happens on earth, Jesus is never going to abdicate that throne to which the Father has raised Him.

Continuous Victory Is Ours

Let's take these truths one important step further. Christ exercises His authority through His believing people and makes continuous victory possible for us. We see this in the first two verses of Psalm 110, quoted in the New Testament more often than any other passage from the Old Testament. Jesus Himself quoted these verses. The psalmist says:

"The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!" (Psalms 110:1-2)

From the lips of Jesus Himself, we know the application of the first verse. The LORD is God the Father. My Lord, that is, David's Lord, is the Messiah. So, God the Father said to Jesus Christ the Messiah after His death and resurrection, *"Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."* We have seen that this has already been fulfilled. Jesus is already at God's right hand. He is waiting for God to put all His enemies finally under His feet, but He is already ruling.

It is important that we see two truths here about this rulership: Christ is ruling, but there are enemies on every hand. Some people have the impression Christ will be ruling only when there are no more enemies, but that is not true. This is the critical period in God's dealings with the human race—when Christ is already ruling but the enemies are not fully subdued. We have to balance the two facts. Of course there are many enemies. They are active, vocal, and vicious. But Christ is ruling in the midst of His enemies, exercising His authority through us, His people, as we learn how to use the authority that is in His name.

Furthermore, Christ sends us out as His representatives to exercise His authority on His behalf. This is the final commission of Jesus to His disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel:

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." (Matthew 28:18-20)

What is the connection between the authority and the going? The authority has been given to Jesus, but it is our responsibility to exercise that authority.

We accomplish this, in His name, by going and doing what He has commissioned us to go and do. As we obey His commission, He says, "I'm with you always, right to the end of the present age. If you have any hindrances or obstacles, remember, just appeal to Me. I'm on the throne. I'm there for your benefit, and I'll see to it that you can do what I have commissioned you to do."

That is the picture: Christ is on the throne. He is ruling, but He is exercising the authority that is in His name through His people as we obey Him. That will continue right to the end of the present age.

UNDERSTANDING END TIMES

The Triumphal Procession

Let's look at this truth of Christ's victory manifested through us from another angle. About the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul says: *"Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"* (**Colossians 2:15, NIV**).

When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, He triumphed over all satanic opposition—all satanic authorities and powers that resist the purposes of God and God's people. He led them behind His chariot in public display and the whole, unseen universe applauded His victory.

But it does not end there. In 2 Corinthians Paul goes on to say: *"Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him"* (2 Corinthians 2:14, NIV). Not only is Jesus moving in triumphal procession, but He has called us up to ride in the chariot with Him! We share not only His victory but His triumph, the celebration of His victory. We are identified with Him. We are not there on the sidewalk applauding. We are certainly not among the captives that are being led behind Him in chains. We are riding in the place of honor with the Victor.

As we share His triumph, something beautiful and wonderful happens: God, through us, spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. There is a kind of fragrance that comes out of our victorious living, and it permeates the atmosphere where we live. Even people who do not understand the Gospel or do not appreciate theology are aware of our victorious living.

Notice two final points about this victory: One, God always leads us in triumph; and, two, through us He spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. When we put together those two words, always and everywhere, we realize that in every time and in every place total victory is possible for us as the people of God. This happens if, by faith, we learn how to share Jesus' victory and His public triumph. Is that not glorious?

As a brief recap, here are three basic principles for a right attitude toward the future:

We are waiting for Christ, not for the Antichrist. Christ already reigns and will continue to reign.

Christ exercises His authority through us always and everywhere.

When we grasp those facts, we are going to face the future with strong confidence because our hearts are ready.