

## Be Prepared

We know that before the Lord returns to set up His kingdom, there will be major judgments brought upon this sinful world and its inhabitants. Most of us, in observing world events in the last few years, have surmised that we are getting closer and closer to the last days. Of course, even the apostle John, in his first epistle, told us “it is the last hour,” and it has been so for the last 2000 years. We don’t know when the Lord will come, and we want to be ready when He does. In the next set of messages, I want us to take a look at the idea of readiness, of being prepared for what is coming. What are we supposed to be ready for? How are we to get ready? What does the Bible have to say about this?

Staying in 1 John, we read in 2:28, “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.” John was writing to believers, and the very suggestion that we might be ashamed at the Lord’s return should get our attention. This verse tells us that the Lord’s coming is the key event to prepare for, and the way to avoid that shame is to abide in him – to be secure in our relationship with the Lord. Of course, the first step would be to ensure that we are in that relationship in the first place.

Let’s do a quick review of why that is so important. Romans 1:18 says “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...” The fact is that our sin is an offense to God, and He will judge us for it. The punishment for sin is death, as Romans 5:12 says “so death spread to all men because all sinned.” That is our predicament – we have sinned against a holy God, and therefore we face the death penalty. Thankfully, God had a plan for how we could be saved from that penalty, and that’s why Jesus Christ came to this earth. Romans 5:18-19 tell us “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

Before we get too far, let’s make sure we’re clear on what this was saying. Who are these men the verses refer to? The first man, Adam, as the representative of the human race, sinned by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that sin brought death into the world, and passed the sin nature to all of Adam’s offspring. The second man mentioned, Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh, was also the representative of the human race, and lived a perfect life of obedience and faith. Even though He was perfect and holy, thus not deserving of death, He willingly took the death penalty as our substitute, as a sacrifice on our behalf. That act of righteousness leads to justification (judicial decree of acquittal) for all men.

We see from this that from God’s perspective, there are really only two classes of people: unrighteous and righteous. We are all born into the unrighteous category and no amount of good works on our part can change that. When Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to visit Jesus in John 3, he was told (v. 3), “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus was a religious man. He believed in God. He tried to keep the Law of God. Jesus told him that wasn’t good enough to see the kingdom of God. He needed a new birth – a spiritual birth. In vs. 6-8, Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

This is the first step in being prepared in this life, ensuring that we have received the new birth. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, the next part of his instruction focused on how that was to happen. He spoke of His own death for us, as we already pointed out in Romans, and of our need to believe in, or trust in Him for salvation. John 3:14-17, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

This belief isn't simply an acknowledgment of a fact – it means an active trust or reliance on His death. What's involved in that? Romans 10:9-10 say “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” Jesus is Lord – that means we believe He is God in the flesh, and that because of His sinlessness, death had no power over Him, so He was raised in victory, showing that He is God, the Lord of life. We confess that He died in our place, for our sins, and that we trust His sacrifice to obtain forgiveness.

Once we receive His life and forgiveness, we have a new hope to be able to face the trials of life. Romans 8:31-35 sum up how this prepares us for what is to come: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” The answer is given in vs. 37-39: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

That is the best preparation and guarantee in the whole world! The security of our souls, no matter what comes. If you have not received God's gift of salvation, you are invited to come and trust Him today.