

## Episode 10

### Living In Light Of The Last Days: Lessons To Be Learned (Part 2)

In our last episode we emphasized that the Bible has the answers to the two basic questions that people ask about the Christian faith, “Is it true, and can it work for me?”

We recalled in episodes 2-8 in “Today in Bible Prophecy” that we have provided overwhelming evidence for the Scriptures being the Word of God. We documented prophecies fulfilled in the past, as well as those being fulfilled in the present. Add to this, we will again emphasize that the God of the Bible has Himself claimed that only He can do this.

We then started listing a number of lessons that we should all learn to live a successful Christian life in the light of these last days. All of these lessons are from our book *God Wants Us To Know the Future: An Introduction To Bible Prophecy*.

We listed four.

- Lesson 1: We can understand the times in which we are living.
- Lesson 2: We should be thankful and humbled by the privilege of living in these times
- Lesson 3: We should interpret the prophetic passages at face value
- Lesson 4: We should not go beyond that which is written.

This brings us to lesson five....

#### **Lesson 5: We Should Be Teachable About Prophetic Issues**

As we wait for the coming of the Lord, and we study the Scriptures about the events surrounding His return, all of us need to be teachable.

In fact, Paul wrote about the qualifications of those in leadership in the church. They must be... “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2).

My good friend and world class Greek scholar, David Black, emphasizes that the word translated here “able to teach” can also mean “teachable.”

This applies to every believer in Jesus Christ. None of us “have arrived.” In other words, each of us should be teachable with respect to that which the Lord has revealed concerning the things to come.

May the Lord help each and every one of us learn the lesson to be teachable when it comes to understanding the truths of the biblical predictions of the “last days,” as well as how we should live in light of these truths.

## **Lesson 6: We Are To Be Watchful And Ready For His coming**

Once we begin to understand the times in which we are living, we are to be watchful for the things that are to come. Being watchful means to be ready—to be alert. Jesus said:

Therefore stay alert because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have been alert and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him (Matthew 24:42-44 NET).

This is another lesson that needs to be emphasized, especially in our day and age. We are to pay attention to the signs that we see with respect to the coming of the Lord.

Again, no believer should be ignorant about these things.

## **Lesson 7: We Are To Wait Patiently For His Coming**

This logically brings us to our next point. While we are to be watchful, and always alert, we are also to be patient.

Undoubtedly, this is particularly problematic in light of the conditions of the world in which we live. James wrote about the need for such patience in light of the present circumstances:

Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near (James 5:7-8 NLT).

We should indeed "take courage."

In fact, when we look at the events around us, we sometimes feel like the martyrs that cry out in the Book of Revelation:

They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?" (Revelation 6:10 NLT).

How long indeed!

The lesson to learn is to be patient. God's program is right on schedule.

## **Lesson 8: We Should Resist Doubting and Disillusionment As We Wait For His Return**

One particular lesson that we must learn is not to doubt that the Lord is truly returning. Jesus warned about this problem:

But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk (Luke 12:45 NIV).

Unhappily, too many people in our day have been caught up in doubt and disillusionment about the return of the Lord.

However, we must recognize that this is not something new. Indeed, Peter wrote about the doubters and scoffers in his day:

Dear friends, this is already the second letter I have written you, in which I am trying to stir up your pure mind by way of reminder: I want you to recall both the predictions foretold by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. Above all, understand this: In the last days blatant scoffers will come, being propelled by their own evil urges and saying, "Where is his promised return? For ever since our ancestors died, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:1-4 NET).

The scoffers ridiculed believers in the first century for trusting in the promises given in the Word of God about the return of the Lord.

This is all the truer today. Especially when so-called "Bible experts" make predictions about the precise time of the coming of the Lord; and, of course, their predictions turn out to be untrue.

Since the predictions of these date-setters always turn out to be wrong, this causes some people to make a tragic mistake—they reject all biblical prophecy.

Unhappily, some people have gone so far as to list an exact date when Christ will return. They claim to have calculated the precise moment that He will come back to the earth. These claims have led many people astray, as well as disillusioned others.

And, of course, the scoffers are there to continually remind us of these mistaken predictions by "Bible experts."

The lesson to be learned is that we should not allow false claims by certain "biblical authorities" to cause us to be disillusioned about the return of the Lord. Neither should we be bothered by the continual reminders from scoffers that the Lord has not yet returned as He promised some two thousand years ago.

Indeed, the Lord is coming back to our world, and He is returning on His schedule. May this particular lesson sink deep into our hearts!

### **Lesson 9: We Are To Encourage One Another As The Time Draws Near**

Believers should be encouraging one another as the time of the Lord's coming approaches. In fact, the Bible commands us to do just that:

And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works, not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10:24-25 NET).

This is another timely truth. Discouragement can easily set in as we look at the world around us and the spiritual battles that we are facing.

In fact, as we get closer to the time the Lord will return, the battle will be more difficult than ever.

Consequently, each one of us should learn the lesson to be an encourager to one another.

### **Lesson 10: We Are Not To Be Conformed To This World System In These Last Days**

If we are to stand out as a witness to this world, especially in these difficult times, then we should not be conformed to this ungodly world system in which we live. Paul wrote:

Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service. Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God - what is good and well-pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:1-2 NET).

Indeed, in our present environment, the temptation to compromise and to be conformed to this evil world system, is like never before. We must resist this temptation. We have been made for a purpose: to glorify the Lord in all that we do. The Lord has said:

For I will honor those who honor me (1 Samuel 2:30 NET).

### **We Have Nowhere Else To Go**

In fact, the answer of Simon Peter to the question of Jesus is appropriate here. We are told that many people walked away from Jesus when He taught some difficult things. The Lord then asked His disciples if they were going to leave also. Peter gave this answer:

Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God (John 6:68,69 NLT).

Where indeed? This evil world system has nothing for those who believe in Jesus Christ ... lest we forget.

### **Lesson 11: We Are To Work For The Lord As We Wait For His Coming**

The time of waiting is a time of working. In other words, we should not sit idly by as the time of the Lord approaches. Jesus made this clear:

We must perform the deeds of the one who sent me as long as it is daytime. Night is coming when no one can work (John 9:4 NET).

We must work before the night comes. Paul wrote about this to the Thessalonians:

So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation. For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are alert or asleep we will come to life together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you are in fact doing (1 Thessalonians 5:6-11 NET).

Every believer needs to be busy in the work of the Lord.

### **We Are To Be Faithful To Our Calling**

Consequently, as we are living in the light of the coming of the Lord, each of us has a calling, a responsibility, that we are to live up to. Paul wrote:

Now what is sought in stewards is that one be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2 NET).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2 NLT).

No matter the circumstances, we are to “stay the course.” We are not to forget the calling that we each have. In other words, as we look for His coming, we are to fulfill the calling that the Lord has given to us.

The lesson is clear: the time of waiting is a time of working!

### **Lesson 12: We Are To Live With Eternal Values In View**

Since we are living in the light of eternity, we must live with eternal values in view. Paul wrote about this to the Philippians:

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us (Philippians 3:12-14 NET).

Like a runner with their eyes upon the finish line, we are to be constantly moving toward that goal as we press on toward eternity. Each day that we live is one day closer to His Coming.

We all need to live in the light of eternity with the values of eternity constantly on our mind. This is another important lesson to learn.

### **Lesson 13: We Are To Be Constantly Looking For His Appearing!**

Interestingly, in the last section of the last letter that the Apostle Paul wrote before his impending death, he emphasized to Timothy about the necessity for believers to be looking for the return of the Lord:

For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for me to depart is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day—and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8 NET).

When someone writes a letter, knowing that they are soon to die, it would be fair to call it a “dying declaration.”

Hence, they will obviously emphasize the things they believe are the most important since this is the last thing that they will ever write.

Therefore, it is telling that Paul wrote this at the end of his last letter.

His point: the coming of the Lord should be something that is constantly on our mind. In fact, Paul says that we are to “love” His appearing—to “set our affection” on His coming back to the earth.

Therefore, each of us needs to ask ourselves these questions: Have I set my affection on the coming of Christ? Is this something that is forefront in my mind?

According to Scripture, it should be.

#### **Lesson 14: We Are To Remember That Our Message To The World Is The First Coming Of Christ**

Finally, and most important of all, the message that Christians are to take to the world is *not* the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth but rather His First Coming to our world.

We cannot emphasize this enough!

While we are living at the time of the end, and we see the signs that are pointing to the coming of the Lord, we should always remember that our message is the same one which Jesus told us to bring to a lost world. Paul wrote about this:

The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent.” So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world’s brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it’s all nonsense (1 Corinthians 1:18-23 NLT).

The gospel of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His offer of forgiveness of sins, remains our message to this lost and dying world. We should never stray from proclaiming these truths first and foremost.

Therefore, when we talk about the subject of Bible prophecy it should always be centered around the Person of Jesus Christ and what He has already accomplished for us. As John wrote in the Book of Revelation:

The testimony about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10 NET)

In conclusion, these are some of the lessons that we should learn as we study the subject of Bible prophecy; and, in particular, the things concerning the last days.

May we always keep them in the forefront of our minds as we seek to serve and follow Him in this very exciting time in which we are living.