

THE APPEARING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

1John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

When God appeared to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they sinned, his appearance was a source of terror to them – they hid themselves. “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10). The Lord Jesus Christ is going to appear soon; do you hear his voice? I hear the voice of Jesus everywhere these days – in the wars and rumors of wars (Matt 24:6); in the pestilences (Matt 24:7 e.g. Covid-19); in the buying and selling (Luke 17:28); in knowledge being increased (Dan 12:4); in the selfishness of people (2Tim 3:2); in the ungodliness and lack of fear of God (2Tim 3:4,5) and in the world’s prejudice against the nation of Israel (Zech 12:3), to name a few. I trust all of you here today love the Lord and have determined to prepare yourselves for his coming. Jesus’ return will not be a source of terror for us, but the fulfilment of a lifetime of loving him and preparing for this very event. Hallelujah!

In the Bible, God always appeared first to his own people, who loved and served him, before he appeared to the world. In the days of Abraham, God first paid a visit to Abraham and his family, after that Lot, and then the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, in that order. When we put God first, he will put us first!

Genesis 18:1 And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day.

Abraham “sat in the tent door in the heat of the day”. This is a metaphor for preparation and watchfulness. The door is where we receive guests and visitors. Abraham appeared to spend his time at or near the door – he was expecting someone, and this someone was his God; he did not lie in his sofa or couch (doubt that he had one) most of the day. “Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them” (Luke 12:37). Sometimes we need to emulate father Abraham and go to the door of our house and look out for Jesus – glory to his name! Abraham did not get tired of looking out the door periodically; he decided to *sit at the door*. Now and then, we read about fanatical customers or moviegoers who wait for several days in a long queue outside the venue or shop waiting for

the opening day/hour for a new Star Wars film or latest iPhone. Abraham was fanatical about the appearing of God – let us do the same!

Isaiah 25:9 *And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

What is the purpose of this life and how can one spend it most meaningfully? The answer is to wait upon the Lord and prepare for his appearing. It means a life that is inspired and directed by the appearing of Jesus. It means whatever a person does, the appearing of Jesus is part of this activity. How can one believe that a life span as short as ours is an end in itself? In a restaurant, in Italy in particular, one knows that the tiny little first serving is just the appetizer; the best part is still to come! In the same way, this life is just an “appetizer” preparing and promising the best part is yet to come. “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Notice that Isaiah stated, “for him that waiteth for him” – teach us to wait, Lord! Consider the lives of Ana and Simeon. They decided to live the rest of their years in the Temple serving God. This pleased God so much that he gave them a promise – they would not die before they saw God manifested in the flesh”.

Luke 2:25 *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.*

Luke 2:26 *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

Luke 2:36 *And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;*

Luke 2:37 *And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

As was previously mentioned, God always rewards those who love his appearance and wait on him first. Their eyes were blessed to see the salvation and redemption of God – for the flesh and blood of Jesus is God’s own redemption. Simeon said, “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30) and of Ana Luke writes, “And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). Permit me to speak candidly motivated by the love of Christ to you today! Brother, Sister, what have you invested your life in? Where does most of your time, energy and money go? What will your own life testify against you on the Day of Judgment? I am

afraid that our contemporary giants of the techno companies will struggle to respond when heaven asks them – what have you done for the glory of Jesus with all your wealth and privilege? They will be unable to answer because nothing in their multibillion-dollar companies loved and prepared for the appearance of Jesus. Their companies became their “gods” and these “gods” will testify against them.

1Cor 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1Cor 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

1Cor 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Consider the apostles of the Lord! The fishermen may have labored much with their fishing business, but make no mistake; they thought constantly about the appearing of the promised Messiah! “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:40, 41). We often assume that the Lord randomly selected these men forgetting that the Lord always first appears to those who love him and expect his appearing. Unlike many in our modern world, these men did not exist for their jobs and material things alone. On the contrary, their jobs could not stop them from loving the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray nothing and no one can stop you and me from loving and expecting the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Clearly, the apostles were looking for something and someone more than fish – the appearing of the Messiah was more important than the appearance of fish breaking the surface of the waters! May we be looking for more than salaries and recognition in this world! May we be obsessed with the hope of the appearing and return of our Lord Jesus Christ! We should have no greater expectation in this world than the return of Jesus. We hear much about climate warming, pollution and the destruction of the rainforests, for example. The air, the sea and nature are damaged because humans are damaged. Basically, the condition of nature depends on the condition of humans. The apostle Paul tells us that they are groaning and mourning for the appearance of their creator, Jesus Christ!

Rom 8:22 *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

Rom 8:23 *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

In other words, this world cannot hope to be repaired or rehabilitated without the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ! Just the sight of Jesus returning in the clouds will lead to a series of worldwide amazing miracles. Satan will be bound, nature will be healed (Ezekiel's river), Israel will repent, and dangerous animals will be tame as lambs, to name a few. Who would not want the Lord Jesus Christ to return! No wonder the apostle Paul writes that those who *love* the appearance of the Lord will receive a crown.

2Timothy 4:8 *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

In other words, we are not supposed to look for the appearance of the Lord through fear – but love the appearance of the Lord Jesus. To wait for the return of Jesus is an act of the greatest love in the eyes of the Lord. See how richly the Lord rewarded Abraham for waiting at the door, Ana and Simeon for waiting in the Temple for his appearance and the apostles who lived each day loving and expecting the appearance of the Messiah! What about you and me today, Brothers and Sisters! Are we still waiting at the door of our homes, like father Abraham? Are we still waiting in the church, the Temple of God, like Ana and Simeon? Are we going about our daily jobs expecting the return of Jesus, like the apostles? If you are, blessed are you! There is a crown just for those who love the Lord's appearance. If you have neglected the appearance of the Lord, perhaps you have retired to your couch permanently, so to speak; perhaps you are in the Temple but not looking for the return of the Lord or perhaps you live for the fish alone (i.e. your daily bread). Then come, let us repent, let us ask him for forgiveness and renewal of our first love! He is coming soon! When Jesus returns, he will first return for his church alone, those who love him – may we be part of this first appearance!

1Thess 4:16 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

1Thess 4:17 *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

1Thess 4:18 *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*