

7.18.21 ~ 1Peter 4:7-11, Serving Christ in the Last Days: Part One

Many of us grew up in the 1950's and 1960s; during which a godless cultural climate began to rise. From a society where heterosexual romantic relationships and monogamous marriages were the norm, we experienced a society that openly proclaimed and practiced sexual liberation and freedom, known as "free love."

What were some of the consequences of throwing off Biblical principles and practices? In the 1960's and 1970's, divorce rates began to rise, as did the promotion and practice of sexual immorality, fornication, and adultery. What a surprise, right? But interestingly enough, in the late 1960's through the 1970's, there was growth in the evangelical church in America through what was called the Jesus movement; bringing with it, a renewed effort in evangelism and discipleship, along with renewed interest in groups studying the Bible, especially on college and university campuses where organizations like InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, The Navigators, and Campus Crusade for Christ began to flourish.

This also brought to fruition new translations and paraphrases of the Bible, e.g., The Good News Bible, The Living Bible, The New International Version.

Many new independent non-denominational churches were established during this time, bringing numerical growth in church attendance across America.

But, that was then, and here we are in 2021 when church attendance is diminishing, the number of those who have no religious affiliation and say they do not believe in God is increasing, along with a growing number of those who are very confused about gender, sexuality, and marriage; which should be so simple (**Genesis 1:27**), "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them," (**Genesis 2:24**), "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

We are indeed living in trying times, we are getting closer to the return of Christ, the Rapture of the Church, as we studied last Wednesday night together.

We live at a time when secular religion demands a message that is more accepting of the social, cultural, and sexual climate in which we find ourselves; a message that seeks to condone and promote a more sensory, emotional and psychological response to the issues of law, sin, judgement, salvation, and eternity.

Read **1Peter 4:7-11**... Today we are only going to get through **verse 7**, but next week we'll work through the rest of this passage.

When Peter says (**1Peter 4:7a**), "The end of all things is near," he is speaking about eschatology: the theology of what the Bible teaches about the eternity of humankind and all of creation, i.e., death, judgment, salvation, condemnation, exultation, eternity, i.e., the fulfillment or consummation of all things future for all of creation: beginning with the Rapture of the Church, the Rise of the Anti-christ, the Tribulation Period, the Return of Christ to the Earth, the Millennial Kingdom, the Great White Throne Judgment, the New Heavens and New Earth.

If you are interested in learning more about these end-time events, please join us in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday nights, at 6:30PM.

In **Matthew 24:3**, the followers of Christ asked Him what it will be like before His return, and He said to them (**Matthew 24:5-10**) "many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, *those things* must take place. For nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, ...there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs."

After Jesus ascended back into heaven, ten days later (at Pentecost) the church was birthed (around 32 AD); it began to grow and spread from Jerusalem throughout Judea, up through Samaria, and to the outer parts of the earth.

Near the end of the 1st century, Christians had an expectation that they were living in the last days and Christ could return at any time. The truth is, the "last days" began when Christ came the first time, and they will end when He returns.

James 5:7-8, "be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The coming of the Lord is near."

Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son."

1John 2:18, "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour."

Along with wars, famines, earthquakes, and chaos, Paul tells us what people will be like during the time before the Lord's return (**2Timothy 3:1-4**), "in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Peter concurs with Paul about the lifestyles and attitudes of those who reject God's Son (**2Peter 3:3-7**), "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

Matthew 24:37-39, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be."

In **1Peter 4:7a**, we read, "The end of all things is near," Peter then exhorts his readers (**1Peter 4:7b**), "therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer."

In **Matthew 24:42-44**, Jesus told His disciples, concerning the time of His return, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be

sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will.*"

Christ's return should not surprise you like a thief breaking into your home. Think about that! If you are awakened at night to the sound of what you think is a thief breaking into your home, it might cause you to become fearful; however, if you are awakened at night to the sound of what you think is a loved one returning home from a long trip, you will most likely become joyful.

As we await the time when we will be raptured to meet Christ in the air -- we should be living for Christ, sharing the good news of salvation with all who will listen.

The writer of Hebrews declares God's fulfillment through Christ in these last days (**Hebrews 9:26-28**), "but now once at the consummation of the ages [at the completion, the fulfillment of all things God] He [Christ] has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him."

Once we are taken to heaven, it will be too late for us to witness to those who are left behind. So, while we still have the opportunity, we must spread the truth of the Gospel of Christ, through the testimony of our words and our life, to every one who will listen.

True believers and followers of Christ have been forgiven all their sins, granted eternal life, and are waiting expectantly for the time of the return of the Lord to take us to be in heaven with Him. Peter says (**1Peter 4:7b**) we are to be of "sound judgment," the Greek word here [*sōphroneō*] literally means, "be in right mind," "be of sound mind," i.e., to be under control, thinking clearly, everything being in subjection to the Word of God and Christ.

Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

Ephesians 4:17-18, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles [unbelievers] also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart."

Ephesians 5:6, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

Living during the trying times of these last days (**1Peter 4:7b**), we are to have a "sober spirit," the Greek word used here is closely related to the word translated "sound judgment," but here with the emphasis being on spiritual discernment, alertness, being watchful. Jesus expressed this to His disciples in **Matthew 24:22**, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

Using the Word of God as our authority in all things, while being spiritually alert and aware of what is going on, we can pray in a manner that reflects the mind of Christ, and an understanding of the deep truths of God.

1Corinthians 2:9-16, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Romans 8:26-27, “We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God.*”

Ephesians 6:18, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

We are closer to the Lord’s Return, than we have ever been. We must not let our guard down (**1Corinthians 15:58**), “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord,” (**Galatians 6:9-10**), “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith,” (**Colossians 3:17**), “Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

The closer we get to the return of Christ, the more important it is for all of God’s people (**1Thessalonians 5:16-18**), to “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Pastor Mike
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