

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 8

2018

Watch and Be Ready

For many years, the subject referring to the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has been one of absorbing interest. For instance, many have often wondered and asked questions such as, “Will Christ return again? How will He return? When will He return?” However, the good news is, we can find the answers to these questions in the all-inspired word of God.

You see, God’s word reveals to us that Christ will return again. Now, although many have been and are spectacle about the return of Jesus Christ, we can find assurance in God’s word of the fact that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will someday return again. For instance, in 2 Peter 3, we learn that there were some in the first century who were skeptical concerning the return of Christ. However, notice what Peter told them, he said, “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

Folks, the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. Therefore, Jesus Christ will someday come again, just as He told His apostles that He would (John 14:3). We also learn from the Scriptures that while the apostles watched Christ ascend into heaven, they were told by two men in white apparel, “*This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11). Also, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 9:28, “*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.” So, you see, the Bible clearly tells us that Jesus Christ will come again. “*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord*” (James 5:7).

Not only does the Bible inform us of the fact that Jesus Christ will someday return, but we also learn from the Bible how He will return. Beginning with, we are told that Christ will return without warning (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), His return will be visible (Revelation 1:7), His return will be audible (1 Thessalonians 4:17), He will return on the clouds of heaven (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7), and we are informed that in His return, He will be accompanied by His angels (Mark 8:38; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). My friends, these are just a few examples from God’s word, which assure us that the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will not go unnoticed.

Now, we know that Christ will someday return, and that His return will not go unnoticed, but what we do not know is when He will return. You see, although some try to predict the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, there is no one who knows the day of His return, but only our Father in heaven (Mark 13:32-33). Therefore, we must all watch and be ready for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:42-44). For, as the Bible tells us, Christ is coming (Matthew 25:13), He will someday return to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1), and we will all be judged according to our deeds (Romans 2:5-10, 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). So, in conclusion I ask, are you ready for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

✍ Brad Phillips



SOUND SPEECH or SOUND SILENCE?

The book of Titus is a treatise on the subject of "sound doctrine." Sound doctrine is to be employed in exhorting and convincing gainsayers (Titus 1:9). The word "sound" means "in good health" or wholesome." In reference to teaching it means free from any admixture of error. The design of sound doctrine is that the taught may be "sound in faith" (Titus 1:13 & 2:1,2). The fruit of sound doctrine is living "soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). The vocabulary of sound

doctrine is "sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:8). To employ "sound speech" is to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

But I wish to point out that the word of God requires sound speech, not silence. Whatever is included in "sound doctrine" is to be spoken, not silently held within. In the struggle over the nature, work and organization of the church, which resulted in a terrible division among the Lord's people, there were certain men who, in private conversation professed the truth, but they would not speak up or speak out. Brethren of that inclination thought their soundness could be measured by their silence. These days there are many subjects troubling the people of God. Once again, we have some who are soundly silent. The "whole counsel of God" must be spoken "in season and out of season." To refuse to speak up and take a stand when the kingdom is on fire is not soundness at all. It is cowardice pure and simple. The advocates of unsound doctrine are not silent. The only antidote is the pure word of God. We must speak the truth in love. But, it is not love for God, for man or for the truth to refuse to speak.

Doctrine which is sound can be expressed in language which is scripturally correct. It is when people have doctrines to uphold which are not Biblical that they must resort to unsound terminology to describe what they mean. Every religious movement has been characterized by its own peculiar vocabulary. A return to the faith and practice of the early church was, and is, impossible without a return to the language of the Scriptures in discussing religious topics.

✍️ *Connie Adams*



DO I HAVE TO?

Children, it seems, are natural negotiators. They want all the cards on the table and all alternatives clearly outlined before they commit themselves. Whether it involves a trip to the mall as a reward for cleaning the house or a listing of snack choices if they eat their vegetables at dinner, children are shrewd and manipulative with anyone who will let them be.

How many times have you heard a child ask, "Do I have to?" And what this question implies is that he doesn't want to, but if he has no choice, he will (as if he has the option). What an exasperation!

We play the same game with God. People want to be "religious," they want to go to Heaven. As they study and discover what the Bible reveals about salvation and man's part in it, many are wont to ask, "But do I have to?"

Peter once asked Jesus how often he should forgive a brother who has wronged him (Matthew 18:21,22). He surmised that seven times was sufficient. What he implied was the question: "Do I have to forgive him the eighth time?" Jesus responded that one should forgive as often as forgiveness is needed.

Do I have to attend Wednesday Bible classes? Do I have to be baptized? Do I have to give up my worldly lifestyle? Do I have to forego marriage because I foolishly married and divorced when I was young? Do I have to read my Bible every day? Do I have to...? And so on.

The answer to all these questions is NO. God does not ask us to obey Him because we have to. Our possession of free will is evidence of this fact. We are asked to obey out of love (John 14:15, 23).

Imagine Israel responding to Joshua's exhortation, "...choose you this day whom you will serve..." (Joshua 24:15), with "Do we have to?" Perhaps they should have asked. If they had, they might have better understood Joshua's address, which is really an answer to the question. The Israelites' history following the life of Joshua is a vivid account of the reality that one does not have to obey God. But in this people's history we see the severe consequences of disobedience.

He doesn't seek those who would be indentured servants--working hard to repay a debt. He seeks those who would give themselves in service to others because they know they can never repay the debt that is owed on their account (Luke 17:10).

We need to stop asking, "Do I have to?" and start asking, "What more can I do?"

✍️ *Mike Thomley*

Belleville church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 745-1507