

“Present Reality and the Return of Christ”

9/3/17

- Announce: Bridge Groups sign ups underway.
 - www.tbcvenice.com
 - Slide on the home screen that when you click it, it will take you to a listing of all of our groups that you can see on a map or scroll down and you can see on a list.
 - Color coordinated to tell you what day of the week these groups fall on.
 - You can click that group and when you do you will receive a confirmation email.
 - Groups start the week of September 10.
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-Today's message is a little different as we talk about **Present Reality and the Return of Christ**.

- I don't want anyone listening to the sound of my voice hear me say that I know when the return of Christ will happen.

- The Bible makes it supremely clear that no one knows the day, time or hour.

- The Bible tells us NOT to **PREDICT** the return of our Lord but to **PREPARE** for the return of our Matchless Savior.

-So that's what I want for us to do today and every day going forward, **PREPARE**.

-I want to answer 3 questions that have been pressing in on me for a while.

- Hopefully as we answer these questions today they will help you answer some questions in your mind as well.

-3 Questions:

- How are we to interpret?

- What are we to think about?

- What are we to be doing?

I. **How Are We To Interpret What's Going On Around Us?**

-If you have spent any time paying attention to our culture, our world, or the heavens above, you know that strange things are happening.

(1) **Societal Unrest**: **Racial Tension** that is bubbling in our country and our media is stirring the pot.

- Any movement needs to be condemned that puts another person down because of the color of their skin.

- If we knew what Jesus looked like when He grew up in the Middle East...

- No, we stand by the children's song:

- RED and YELLOW,**

- BLACK and WHITE,**

- They are precious in His sight.*

-Jesus loves the little children of the world.

-But we do see societal unrest in our culture right now.

(2) **Political Unrest**: Declaring political affiliation in our culture right now is like declaring war. There is hatred associated with either side.

(3) **Global Unrest**: Do you know how close we are inching toward nuclear war?

-North Korea, unstable, firing missiles over Japan.

-Russia mobilizing troops into that corner of the world.

-South Korea and the US conducting test bombing raids on the Korean Peninsula in a preemptive measure

-China growing very weary of N. Korea and the US.

-And so you see this pot being stirred and no one knows what the future will hold.

(4) **Population Unrest**: The number of Muslims seeking refuge from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other Middle Eastern nations because of escalating conflict in those areas more than quadrupled between 2013 and 2015.

-In 2014 alone, an estimated 1.3 million Muslims migrated into Europe.

-That is a Biblical proportion of movement involving peoples on this earth

(5) **Heavenly Unrest**: Let's think about what's happened in the heavens.

-4 **blood moons** appearing on Jewish festival days

-**Total eclipse** which was called "America's Eclipse" which was view by everyone living in the US.

-By the way, do you know when the next total eclipse is scheduled to traverse the US? In **7 years**.

-Flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey that no one predicted. (Cat 1 to Cat 4 overnight).

-News outlets are using these terms

-**"Thousand Year Flood"**

-**"Biblical"**

-**"Apocalyptic"**

-Societal unrest, Political unrest, Global unrest, Population unrest, Heavenly unrest.

II. **What Are We To Think About These Things?**

-3 responses:

(1) **Coincidence**: *"There's nothing going on. The world has always been an unstable place. Life will just continue as is."*

-But, coincidence is never a Biblical response.

(2) **Ignore/Unaware**: *"I'm so busy that I don't have time to even know what's going on."*

-So instead of waiting and watching, you are preoccupied with other things.

-Being ignorant or unaware is never a Biblical option.

(3) **Discerning**: I talk with other pastors on a regular basis. We are all feeling the same unrest.

-“Pastor Matt, what are we to be discerning?”

-2 Questions:

(1) **Is what’s happening in our world a sign of judgment from God?**

-Reminds me of the story found in Daniel 5 as King Belshazzar was partying, God’s judgment came against him and his kingdom.

-Why is judgement given?

-Judgement is given so that repentance can take place.

*Does the world need to repent?

-The Church and society as a whole needs to repent.

(2) **Are these events signaling the return of Christ?**

-Well, what did Jesus say?

-**Matthew 24:6-8** (NLT) And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately.
⁷ Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world.

⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

-**Joel 2:31** (NIV) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

-Do I know when Jesus is coming back? NO

-Do I know that He is coming back? YES.

-Listen, we are one day closer to the return of Christ than we have ever been.

-All these things happening around us should always alert us to the promised return and the definite return of our Lord and Savior.

-Let me share with you my end time understanding through the lens of the 7 Feasts of Israel.

-In Leviticus 23, the Lord gives to Moses 7 festivals that they were commanded to celebrate.

-In that, God calls these His “appointed festivals” or “appointed times”

-They do not belong to Israel, they belong to the Lord.

-They are God’s calendar as to how He is working in the world.

-**Passover**—Exodus, God passed over those who had the blood of the Lamb over their door.

-Jesus died on Passover

- **Unleavened Bread**—the sinless Son of God (without leaven) was placed in the ground on this day, not to rot but to be quickly resurrected.

- **First Fruits**—the day of harvest as those appearing before the Lord would bring a first fruit offering from their field.

- Jesus resurrected on First Fruits.

- **1 Corinthians 15:20-23** (NLT) But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man.

²² Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

²³ But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

- **Pentecost**: The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost to dwell forever in the hearts of men, both Jews and Gentiles alike.

- He establishes His Word in our hearts and He assembles us together in local churches.

- **Trumpets**: First day of the new moon.

- Pentecost occurred in the Spring. Trumpets occurs in the Fall.

- It involved a time of waiting.

- It also involved a time of watching (new moon)

- **2 Thessalonians 4:13-18** (NLT) And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves.

¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.

¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

- **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** (NLT) But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!

⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.

-**Day Of Atonement**: It was a day of fasting for the people of Israel as they appeared before the Lord to be judged.

-Would God banish them because of their sins or would he make ATONEMENT for them? (Bulls blood on the altar and the significance of the ScapeGoat)

-I believe this will be the time when all the world will stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment.

-Believers at their judgment and Non-believers at their judgment.

-**Shelters**: Israel was commanded to celebrate their rescue from Egypt and God “tabernacling” or “sheltering” with them.

-In the same way, we will forever “tabernacle” with the Lord in His presence, in Heaven, forever and ever.

-**Revelation 21:1-4** (NLT) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.

² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

-The first 4 Spring feasts have been fulfilled by Jesus. (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost)

-The last 3 Fall Feasts are waiting to be fulfilled by Jesus.

-So, on God’s timeline, we are living in between the **day of Pentecost** (present day where the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer and the Church gathers and carries out the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ) and the **day of Trumpets** when Jesus will come back.

-And everyday we are moving closer and closer to the trumpet call of God signaling the return of Christ.

III. **What Are We To Be Doing While We Are Waiting For The Return Of Christ?**

(1) **Aware**:

-Not unaware, but aware.

-**Matthew 24:37-39** (NLT) “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day.

³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat.

³⁹ People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

-**Mark 13:32-33** (NLT) “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

³³ And since you don’t know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!

-Do you know that the return of Christ should be on the forefront of everyone’s mind every time we gather together as a church?

-**Hebrews 10:25** (NLT) And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

-Encourage each other with the return of Christ in mind.

(2) **Expectant:**

-**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** (NLT) Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, we don’t really need to write you.

² For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

³ When people are saying, “Everything is peaceful and secure,” then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman’s labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

⁴ But you aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

⁵ For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night.

⁶ So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded.

⁷ Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk.

⁸ But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.

¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

-You aren’t in the dark about these things.

-We are children of the day and children of the light.

-Not surprised but clear headed.

(3) **Joyful:**

-knowing that we are the Lord’s redeemed.

-**1 Corinthians 1:4-9** (NLT) I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus.

⁵ Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge.

⁶ This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true.

⁷ Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

⁹ God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

-Philippians 3:20-21 (NLT) But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

-We are to be joyful and eager as we anticipate the return of Jesus.

(4) Working: Accomplishing the work that Jesus has left for us to do.

-We are not to be cashing in our accounts, cutting ourselves off from society, sitting on our roofs, waiting for the return of Jesus.

-And what are we to be doing?

-Telling others about the Hope found only in Christ.

-Living righteous lives before them knowing that there is a day of accountability coming.

-2 Corinthians 5:10-11 (NLT) For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

¹¹ Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too.

-We are to be serving and ministering in the name of Jesus so that they see Him in us so that more and more people can give more and more thanks and worship to Jesus.

-Closing:

(Que Music)

-AWARE, EXPECTANT, JOYFUL, WORKING.

-May Jesus find us like this no matter when He returns.

-Q: If Jesus came back tomorrow, would you live any differently?

-Don't live as children of the darkness, live as children of the day.

-Don't live as unaware, live expectantly in light of His

coming.

-May we be found faithful when He comes again.

-Bridge Group Questions:

(1) What stood out to you most about this week's message?

(2) Are you aware of what's presently happening in our world right now? What are your thoughts about these things?

(3) How often do you think about the return of Christ? Is it something you are keenly aware of?

(4) What 4 things are we to be doing as we wait for the Lord's return? How are you doing in these areas?

(5) If you knew that Jesus was coming back tomorrow, would you live any differently?