

## Be Prepared: Hasten His Return

*II Peter 3:8-13—But let not this one thing be hidden from you, beloved, that one day with [the] Lord [is] as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [The] Lord does not delay his promise, as some account of delay, but is longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of [the] Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and [the] elements, burning with heat, shall be dissolved, and [the] earth and the works in it shall be burnt up.*

*All these things then being to be dissolved, what ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, by reason of which [the] heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and [the] elements, burning with heat, shall melt? But, according to his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.*

Shall we have a word of prayer:

*Dear heavenly Father, we thank Thee for being so merciful to us in allowing us to meet together this morning. Lord, we know Thou art present here with us. We do look to Thee to speak to each and every one of us. Prepare us for Thy imminent return. Lord, if Thou should come now, it would only be by Thy mercy and grace that we would all be raptured and be with Thee. There is nothing better than that. But oh Lord, if some of us should be left behind, how tragic it will be! So dear Lord, we do pray that Thou wilt speak to each one of us in such a way that when Thou shall return, none will be left behind, but by the mercy of God we will all be raptured and be with Thee in Thy glorious kingdom. We commit this time into Your hand and trust the Holy Spirit to do the work. In Thy great name. Amen.*

Before the Lord returned to heaven He said to His disciples: "I am going to prepare a place for you, and then I will return and receive you to Myself." This is what the Lord told His disciples before His return to heaven. Two thousand years have passed and the Lord seems to be delayed. So the question is very urgent. We know that His heart must be very anxious to return to receive His own to Himself, but why has it been so long and the Lord still seems to be delayed? And I believe we must be wondering why it is so. The only answer is because His own people are not ready. It cannot be that our Lord does not want to return; His people have delayed Him.

After two thousand years, as we read the Scriptures, we believe that we are living at the end of this age on the verge of His return. So it is a very important question for all of us to consider: Are we ready for His return?

### **As in the Days of Noah**

The Bible tells us that at the time of Noah the Lord revealed to him that the end was coming, and He asked him to prepare an ark. Noah spent 120 years in preparing the ark which was an unusual thing because the earth had never had any rain or disaster of that kind, so people must have come and inquired as to what he was doing. Thank God, Noah used this opportunity to preach the gospel to the people telling them that disaster was coming and to be prepared. "Receive the Lord Jesus, and enter into the ark when it is ready." But people just laughed at him and said, "There is no such thing." But as we all know from reading the Scriptures, after the ark was ready God told Noah and his family of eight to enter into the ark, and the Lord closed the door.

When this happened, suddenly rain began to form. How people must have flocked to the door and said, "Noah, open the door for us!" But Noah said, "I cannot do it because it was God who closed the door." The flood came upon the earth, and we know what happened.

In Matthew 24 the Lord tells us that as in the days of Noah, so shall be His coming. Two people are grinding at the mill, and we know that it is morning. Two people are working in the field, and that tells us that it is in the daytime. Two people are sleeping so it must be night. This does not mean there are six people, only two. But it shows us that the earth is round. In some places it is early morning when the women will be grinding at the mill. In other places, at the same time, it must be daytime when people will be working in the field. At the same time, in other places, it must be night because people are sleeping. Now we know that there are not six people, only two. These two people represent the Christians who will be living at the time just before the coming of the Lord, and we believe that we are living at such a time.

### **The Ten Virgins**

We all know that the number of the church is twelve, and here we find the two and the ten are found in Matthew 25. The ten virgins represent all the Christians

throughout the ages who are waiting for the Lord's return. All of them are holding a torch ready to go out to meet the Lord. However, because the Lord seems to be delayed, they all fall asleep. In other words, they die. So we have the two and the ten, which is the perfect number twelve.

Now that shows us where we are at this very juncture. Many Christians have already died in the Lord, but there are those who are still living. The day is coming when the Lord shall return, and those who are following Him will be taken and later on those who died in Christ will all be raised. The Bible says that we shall all meet Him in the air and that will be the period of judgment.

### **On the Verge of the Lord's Coming**

As some people have told us, one day the Christians who are still living, as they are driving suddenly they disappear. Imagine what chaos there will be on this earth! Those who will be taken by the Lord are the people who are waiting for the Lord. Outwardly there seems to be no difference. Those who are working in the morning are both working. Those who are working in the field are both laboring. Those who are sleeping are both sleeping. I often tell people not to be afraid to go to sleep at night. Rest and sleep because even if you are sleeping when the Lord comes, you will be taken if you have been made ready. Can you imagine people who are sleeping that suddenly disappear? Why? The Lord has come!

Do not imagine that this day is still far from us. If you still have that kind of thought, I am afraid when this happens you will be left behind. So may I warn you brothers and sisters, according to the Scriptures, we are living on the verge of the return of the Lord. The Lord may return at any moment, and it is my wishful thinking that as we are meeting here this morning and the Lord returns, suddenly the whole place will be empty. Thank God for that! Now do not think it cannot happen at this moment. I truly believe that this can happen now because we are on the verge of the coming of the Lord. If you believe this can happen at any moment, can you just sit here as if nothing will happen?

We are living on the verge of the coming of the Lord, and it is a thrilling and glorious time for those who have been waiting for the Lord. But for those who have wasted their lives here on earth after they have believed in the Lord Jesus, there will be a great regret because the Bible tells us they will be in outer darkness with gnashing of teeth. We know the unsaved will be left behind, but those who are saved and know what will happen if they waste their time on earthly pursuits, there

will be a great regret in their lives. The gnashing of teeth means greatly regretting what they have done. So if we do not want to regret, we had better be prepared.

### **Repent Now or Later**

What happened to the bad servant? He thought the Lord would not return so soon, and he began to eat and drink and enjoy his life. He even beat his fellow servants; but suddenly the Lord returns. What happened to that bad servant? The Bible tells us he will be cut into two and cast into outer darkness. He will be left out of the kingdom age, the glorious kingdom, the thousand years ruling with Christ Jesus. This is what the Scriptures have told us will happen to the bad servant.

On the one hand, we thank God that we are living at this time. But on the other hand, we do sense the seriousness of our time. Are you being made ready if the Lord should return at this moment?

Imagine one day all over this world some who are driving on the road suddenly disappear. What a chaotic situation will happen at that moment! However, the Bible tells us that this is exactly what will happen. Those who are ready for Him will be taken, but those who are left behind, as the Bible says, will be cast in outer darkness with gnashing of teeth in great repentance.

You can choose whether you want to repent now or later during the thousand years in darkness. You are blessed if you repent now. If you at this moment give yourselves to the Lord and say, "Lord, search my heart and see if there is any evil within me. Cleanse me with the precious blood that I may be ready for You at any moment." If you do this, you will be the blessed one.

But what if you are careless? You may enjoy yourself today. And you may comfort yourself by saying that by the grace of God I am saved. Therefore, if I am saved I am forever saved, so let me eat, drink and enjoy my life today. You may think you are wise, but you will find how foolish you have been. We are living at this moment of time, right on the verge of His coming, so you cannot afford to be careless. Be prepared; the Lord may come at any moment. He has waited long enough. I always feel, I always hope that He will come back in my time.

### **Margaret Barber**

I remember one day brother Nee was telling us about Miss Barber. You may know that Miss Barber was someone who really loved the Lord, and she went to China to preach the gospel. A number of young people were really helped by her

among whom was Watchman Nee. One day she and Watchman Nee were walking together, and as they turned the corner she told him, "When we turn the corner, suppose we meet the Lord?" She was a person who had been waiting for the Lord all her life. She came to China as a missionary when she was young. She taught in a girls' school, and because of her love for the Lord, the students would come to her which caused jealousy in her fellow teachers. So they accused her of a crime that she never did. But she did not want to defend herself, and she was sent back to England under disgrace.

She remained silent before the Lord, and He vindicated her. After she was vindicated, she was in London at the time meeting with D. M. Panton. D. M. Panton was one who loved the Lord and was greatly used by the Lord especially in prophecy. He felt the Lord wanted her to return to China, so by faith she went back even though she was not sent by any missionary group. Her fellow missionaries in China did not receive her, so she went to live in a small town and just gave herself to prayer. It was her prayers that attracted a number of college students, and brother Nee was one of them. These college students were greatly helped by her, and brother Nee used to tell us how much he was helped by her. She served the Lord throughout her life.

At that time brother Nee was in college; he was a young man who loved the Lord but was full of human zeal. He often quarreled with one of his fellow workers who was five years older because brother Nee always felt that he was right. So he went to Miss Barber to talk to her about the situation and tried to vindicate himself. But Miss Barber told him that because the brother was five years older he needed to obey the older man. Brother Nee used to tell us that he was so frustrated because he was five years younger and had to obey the one that was wrong because he was five years older. At that time he did not understand, but thank God, gradually he learned the lesson.

So I feel very deeply impressed that probably when we turn the corner we will see the Lord. This is the way we are to be living at this moment. So we thank God for giving us this opportunity that we may come together to prepare ourselves for the Lord.

### **God will Never Desert Us**

Are you ready? Do you still think there will be time to enjoy yourself because you are saved? But you do not know how much you will lose. You will lose the kingdom rule for a thousand years with the Lord. You will be in darkness, weeping

and regretting for what you have done. But thank God, He will never desert you. Even if you may have deserted Him, He will never desert you. But that does not mean you will not be punished; you will be. The Bible tells us very clearly that during the kingdom age of a thousand years the overcomers of the church will rule with Christ from heaven to earth. But those Christians who have lived their lives loosely while on earth will be in outer darkness, suffering, weeping, regretting.

Dear brothers and sisters, which will you choose? Will you choose to repent now and be ready for the Lord? Or will you choose to enjoy the remaining short period of your life here and lose the kingdom glory? I think you are wiser. So I urgently beg you to be ready for the Lord now. Do not think that His coming will be delayed. Most likely, by the grace of God we will see Him coming back during our lifetime, and this is the most blessed thing. This is what we are waiting for. But are you ready? Or are you still loving the world thinking that because you are saved you can now enjoy the world? But do you know how much you will suffer? We have before us a thousand years ruling with Christ in glory or a thousand years in outer darkness weeping and repenting. Which do you choose?

So with deepest hope I pray that our time here will not be wasted, and every one of us will be ready for the Lord. Now it is true that if you want to be ready for the Lord, you have to suffer to a certain degree because you have to deny yourself. You have to learn to follow the leading of the indwelt Holy Spirit. The Lord has given His Spirit to each one of us to dwell in our spirit, and He is very careful in leading us in the way of the Lord. That is why after you believe in the Lord Jesus, you will not be able to live as you lived before. The still small voice of the indwelling Holy Spirit will lead us. But do you obey? If we obey we will have to give up our soul-life, but it is worth it.

### **Delivered from Bondage**

I remember before I was saved I used to spend my Saturdays in theaters. Even though my father was a pastor, yet I was usually in the theater. After I was saved people told me that I should not go to the theater, and I used to quarrel with them and say, "I will choose what I look at. If it is a good movie, why can I not do it?" Even though I said it that way, I knew something must be wrong. So I tried to keep from going to the theater secretly lest I fall. Sure enough, the enemy knew if I were in that position I would be tempted by a Christian movie that came to Shanghai called Noah's Ark. And people sent tickets to my family. How I debated within myself! I

had not been to a theater for a few months, and I thought it was quite an accomplishment.

But the temptation was too great, and I succumbed to it. I went to that movie, and for two hours I sat in that theater looking at the film. It was the dirtiest movie I had ever seen. I debated in my heart, telling myself I had to get out, but I sat there. For two hours I suffered, but thank God, He delivered me from the theater. By the grace of God, I have not been to a theater since. Now I will not say that I have not been to a theater because when there was a gospel meeting in the theater, I did go. Nevertheless, I was delivered from the theatrical bondage. Am I glad about it? Thank God, I am glad about it; I was not under bondage anymore. I was freed by the grace of God.

So this time when we come together we are very serious. Don't ignore it as if there will still be opportunity to repent and return. This is the time. Repent, return; your soul may suffer, but your spirit will be saved. We have come here not just to enjoy ourselves; we have come here for eternal enjoyment. May the Lord show mercy to every one of us! Do not allow the pleasure of this life to make you miss the glorious kingdom of a thousand years. So may the Lord help us!

Shall we pray:

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee that again and again Thou does remind us of what Thou hast prepared for us. Thou wants us to really follow Thee with our whole heart and be willing to take up the cross, to deny self and to follow Thee. Lord, may this be the ambition of each and every one of us here. Lord, what if Thou should return now? Hopefully this auditorium will be emptied, and none will be left behind. That is the prayer that we ask of Thee. In Thy name. Amen.*