



Behold, He is Coming! (Part 1)
Revelation 1:7-8
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In 1917, a book was published, and widely accepted by the Christian community, suggested the generation living through World War I would undoubtedly be the generation that would be caught up in the Rapture.

Twenty-five years later, several authors observed the rise of Adolph Hitler and suggested he perfectly fit the description of the Antichrist. Many of these books predicted the Rapture would take place shortly, after which, Hitler would assume world domination and the Tribulation would begin. Others claimed Mussolini or Stalin was the Antichrist.

After World War II many books were published claiming that the founding of modern-day Israel triggered the countdown to Armageddon. The claim was based on **Matthew 24:32-34** where Jesus references a fig tree and proclaims, **"This generation will not pass away until all these things take place."** The consensus opinion was the fig tree represented Israel; a generation in Scripture was about 40 years, so Israel becoming a nation in 1948 meant the Rapture would take place before 1988.

In 1970, author Hal Lindsey made a killing with his best-selling book, "The Late Great Planet Earth" based upon this premise. As the forty-year target grew closer, Mr. Lindsey followed up this book with another in 1980 called, "Countdown to Armageddon." Lindsey wrote, *"I am convinced that we are now in the unique time so clearly and precisely forecast by the Hebrew prophets."* Lindsey further stated that the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation would take place in the 80's.

Many other authors seized the opportunity to cash in on the doomsday predictions made by Lindsey and flooded the Christian book industry with similar fanatical tales. One author, Edgar Whisenant, had a runaway best-seller called "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988." Whisenant boldly claimed he had unlocked the mystery of the prophetic timetable, and the Rapture would occur during September 11-13, 1988. Undaunted when that date came and went, he published a new book predicting 1989 as the year of the Rapture.

Harold Camping, a well respected ministry leader, published a book called "1994" in which he predicted the Lord's return on September 7, 1994. Camping based his prediction primarily on numerology. He repeatedly broadcast on his radio program that he was 99% certain his prediction was accurate.

Numerous others have joined the futility of date-setting through the years. A popular movie that was released not too many months ago, called "2012" has many believing the end of the world will come then. And it seemingly never ends.

Many so-called "prophecy experts" post on their blogs and websites, current newspaper headlines and how they fit into Scripture. I'm no expert, but I do not see how current events could possibly be a valid way to interpret Scripture. Those who adjust their understanding of Scripture to accommodate the latest headlines are abusing and misusing Scripture at the very least, and could be purposely twisting God's Word for their own personal benefit.

World events should not affect our preparedness for Christ's return. Throughout the Bible, Jesus teaches us to be ready for His return at any moment, but to also be prepared to endure and stay faithful if He takes longer than we expect.

On the other side of the spectrum we have the naysayers, the agnostics, and the atheists who mock Christ's return. "Where is He? He hasn't come yet so I guess He's never coming." That's like saying, "I've never died before, so I guess I'll never die."

I will admit to you that we do not have every detail in Scripture surrounding the return of Jesus Christ; there is indeed a lot of mystery. Jesus Himself said, "**But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come**" (**Mark 13:32-33**).

So if Jesus Himself did not know while He was still on this earth, isn't it a bit ridiculous for any of us to speculate and try to set a date?

But even though the date and time are wrapped in mystery, one thing is not; and that is the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again. I believe that as strongly as I believe He came the first time. I believe that as strongly as I believe He died on the cross for my sins. I believe that as strongly as I believe He rose from the dead three days later. I believe Jesus Christ is coming again as strongly as I believe every other word in this Bible.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of the **Revelation**.

Revelation 1:7-8

Let's pray.

Revelation 1:7a

"**Behold, He is coming...**" Beloved, there are more than 500 verses in the Bible that specifically refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; which amounts to approximately one out of every twenty-five verses. It is one of the primary themes of God's Word; and there is absolutely nothing in God's Word that is false.

And let me make sure you are in line with that last statement; because if you do not believe certain things that are written in your Bible, why should you believe anything? If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is coming back between now and someday in the future, why do you believe He came the first time? Why do you believe He died for your sins? Why do you believe in heaven? Why do you believe you are saved? Why do you believe in the power of prayer? Why do you believe God even exists, and why are you here this morning?

Behold, He is coming!

How should we respond to such a truth?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Romans**.

Romans 13:11-14

Paul gives us a very practical response to the imminent return of our Lord, and he does so with great urgency.

Romans 13:11-12a

Paul is obviously stating that time is short and opportunity is brief. The time to listen and obey is now; apathy, complacency and indifference must be suppressed and done away with in your life. Take action immediately; be about the business of “**redeeming the time**” as Paul says in another call to action given to the Ephesian church (**Ephesians 5:16** – KJV).

If the call to action was urgent during Paul’s time, how much more urgent is it in our time? No one knows the day or the hour when Jesus will return but I can confidently tell you it is immensely closer this morning than it was when Paul wrote the Book of **Romans**. Our opportunity to be obedient to God’s Word and our opportunity to be His witnesses slips away with every tick of the clock.

The ancient Greeks had a statue called Opportunity, sculpted by a man named Lysipus. The statue had winged feet, a great lock of hair coming from his forehead and was completely bald in the back of his head. The inscription at the base of the statue reads like this:

Who made thee? – Lysipus made me.

What is thy name? – My name is Opportunity.

Why dost thou have wings on thy feet? – Because I fly away swiftly.

Why hast thou a forelock? – So anyone can seize me when I come.

Why art thou bald in back? – When I am gone by, none can lay hold of me.

Each of us has immeasurable opportunities on a daily basis to be the man or woman God created us to be. Each of us also allows the vast majority of those opportunities to pass us by. We have managed to fill our hours and days with so many meaningless and frivolous activities that we rarely even recognize the opportunities as they come; our minds are so preoccupied with the cares of this world there is precious little room for the things of God.

Jesus says that in the last days, “**most people’s love will grow cold**” (**Matthew 24:12**). Paul says that in the last days, “**men will be lovers of self**” (**2 Timothy 3:2**). I have told you time and time again that the opposite of love is selfishness; and I submit to you that the primary reason we miss the opportunities God sets in front of us to be kingdom men and women is because of selfishness; because we love ourselves so much more than we love others.

Please do not get me wrong, I know many of you in this room this morning are busy with ministry (some of you are probably too busy with ministry) but being busy with ministry is not the issue. You can be busy with ministry and totally miss God. You can be busy with ministry and be completely outside of God’s will for your life. You can be busy with ministry and have a superficial and insufficient relationship with the Lord. And you can be busy with ministry and still be very selfish and have an unhealthy love for yourself.

That being said, you can also be busy with ministry and be right where God wants you to be; the point is to keep your relationship with God as your number one priority. And that means you must be reading and studying your Bible on a daily basis; you must have a healthy and active prayer life; you must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s activity in your life; and you must be open to setting your own wants and desires aside to take advantage of the opportunities the Lord presents to you, regardless of how many other tasks you think are more important.

The implication the Apostle Paul makes in this passage is that the vast majority of Christians are spiritually asleep. Sleep is defined as “*a state of inactivity with a loss of consciousness and a decrease in responsiveness to events taking place.*”

Most Christians are in *a state of inactivity* when it comes to the things of God; we are too busy entertaining ourselves to death or working ourselves to death or have an utter preoccupation with this world and the pace of life we allow to consume us.

Most Christians have *a loss of consciousness* when it comes to spiritual things. We may think we are living the spiritual life as we are commanded to do, but we instead are walking around in a state of unconsciousness; sleep-walking through this life and guided by rules and regulations and habits and traditions instead of being guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have become so self-righteous we judge everyone by our own standards and not by God’s standards. Many even reach the point of believing they don’t sin; they are spiritually unconscious to their own reality.

And most Christians have *a decrease in responsiveness to the events that are taking place* all around them. This is how we miss the opportunities to join God in His work. We are slow to respond to what God is doing. We overanalyze and over-plan and spend far too much time making a decision. We even piously spiritualize our inactivity by saying “I’m going to take some time to pray about this.” And while prayer is always a good idea, most people who say this do not pray about it or pray very little about it, they simply just didn’t want to be involved. Selfishness is again usually the culprit; the opportunity was not to their liking and they needed a way out. So they blame it on God in essence by feigning prayer on the issue and coming back with the tired old excuse of “I don’t feel led to do that.”

And God, through the Apostle Paul, is saying, “WAKE UP!”

Solomon says, “**Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids; deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter’s hand and like a bird from the hand of the fowler**” (**Proverbs 6:4-5**). Solomon is simply warning us to not allow our laziness and our selfishness to control our lives; don’t miss the opportunities to do good. Otherwise you will be no better off than the gazelle who has been trapped by the hunter or the bird that has been captured by the fowler.

Wake up is the plea; the time is here, the time is now, the night is almost gone, the day is near, behold He is coming! The opportunity on this earth to believe and to obey and to love one another is not here forever. We must cease and desist with the notion that we have plenty of time to get our act together. We must take advantage of today as if it were our last. We must take advantage of today as if our very life depended on it. We must take advantage of today as if the souls of men, women, and children were at stake. Wake up!

Romans 13:12b-13

Because He is coming, we must **lay aside**, we must forsake, renounce and repent of anything that holds us back, that keeps us from taking advantage of the opportunities, and that causes us to sleep and slumber when we should be sober and alert. Lay it aside, get rid of it, destroy it, and do everything you need to do to relinquish the hold it has on you.

The phrase “**Deeds of darkness**” is simply a general term for sin of any kind, because sin of any kind will hold you back. We will briefly take a look at some specific sins Paul had in mind when he wrote this in a moment, but any sin will steer you off course and throw you for a loop, spiritually speaking.

Once we have laid aside our sin, we must be quick to replace it with the deeds of righteousness or the **armor of light**, as Paul calls it here. I’ll speak to this also in a few moments, when we get to **verse 14**; for now I want to focus on this activity of laying aside your sin and putting on righteousness.

The imagery Paul uses is very important and very profound when we think it through. The difference between sin and righteousness in a believer’s life is really as simple as taking off a piece of clothing and putting on a different piece of clothing. God would not have had Paul use this illustration if it wasn’t that simple. We are the ones who tend to make it seem harder than it actually is.

But you say, “*Oh, it’s much harder than that; you can’t break a bad habit instantly.*” I understand that some of our bad habits and sins can have a physical component when you abuse nicotine, alcohol, or drugs of any kind, but God can deliver you from that just as easily as He can deliver you from any other sinful behavior. He simply says lay it aside and put on the armor of light. Don’t make more out of your sin than it is; according to God it really is just that simple.

Paul goes on to again, very simply say, “**Let us behave properly as in the day.**” The imagery used here is again very plain and easy to follow: Behave as if someone was watching everything you do and monitoring everything you say, because even if no other human being is, the Lord is.

Picture in your mind the possibility of your every action, every word, and every thought being recorded this week. Now picture the possibility of that recording being displayed up here for everyone to see next Sunday; any volunteers? This is what Paul is illustrating for us. He is simply telling us to behave as if everything we do is exposed for all to see.

Let’s get to the list of sins Paul specifies.

He starts with **carousing**. **Carousing** is associated with wild partying, orgies, and brawls. It means to avoid putting yourself in a position or situation that is prone to getting out of control.

It is pretty much a weekly occurrence to hear a news report of a celebrity, politician, or professional athlete who was arrested or accused of improper behavior at a bar or nightclub. It has been said that nothing good happens after midnight when it comes to being out on the town; and that is often the case with the aforementioned people. Almost invariably these issues of breaking the law or behaving improperly happen after midnight.

This is the general sense of **carousing**. It is putting yourself in a situation that could get out of control very easily based on the crowd you are with or around, based on the availability of alcohol and drugs, and based on the atmosphere. There are obviously numerous personal applications we can make that do not involve being at a bar or nightclub after midnight. Just

being at a party with a group of unbelievers could be considered carousing depending on the atmosphere and conditions.

Secondly, Paul mentions **drunkenness**. This one is obvious but the sense is intentionally and habitually drinking to excess. When you are drunk you are not in full control of the things you say or the things you do. In this state you are much more vulnerable to the whims and wishes of Satan; the desires of the flesh will rule and reign supreme over the desires of the Holy Spirit; and that is a direct violation of God's Word.

Thirdly and fourthly, two closely associated sins are mentioned: **sexual promiscuity** and **sensuality**. We again do not need much explanation to understand what Paul is warning us against. **Sexual promiscuity** simply means engaging in any sexual activity outside of that which has been ordained by God in the marriage bed. **Sensuality** refers to especially lewd and uninhibited sexual debauchery. I don't want to go any further than that so as to not lure our minds into places they should not go. The Bible is undeniably clear that sex is a beautiful thing but it is only such between husband and wife; anything else falls into the category of sexual sin covered by these two terms.

Fifthly, Paul mentions **strife**. **Strife** is persistent contention, bickering, and petty disagreement. It reflects a spirit of antagonism and competitiveness that constantly fights to have its own way, regardless of the cost to itself or harm to others. It is produced by a deep desire to prevail or be in control. It has no room for tolerance, much less humility and love. The sin of strife is basically any behavior that disrupts the peace of God in our lives due to a desire to be in control or get your own way.

Lastly, Paul mentions the sin of **jealousy**. **Jealousy** is related to strife and it can also be interpreted as envy or selfish ambition. You can be jealous or envious of just about anything. You can be jealous of someone because they have more money than you, or have a higher status in the community or company you work for, or you could be jealous of someone who is more popular than you. You can even be jealous of someone because they have a more thorough knowledge of the Bible than you do; the list is never ending. And the root cause of jealousy is a lack of contentment with where God has you at the present, which is in reality a lack of contentment with God Himself.

Romans 13:14

Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ is another way of saying grow up and grow strong in your spiritual life.

Colossians 2:6-7 says, "**As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.**"

As we grow in Christ, the old clothing of sinfulness will continually be discarded and be replaced by the new clothing of righteousness. As you **put on the Lord Jesus Christ** you will be growing in righteousness, holiness, truth and good deeds.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Philippians** as we close.

Philippians 3:13-14

Paul narrowed the Christian life down to **one thing**: pressing on toward the goal of being like Jesus Christ; and it should be no different for any of us. But beloved, you can't be like Christ if you don't spend any time reading your Bible. You can't be like Christ if you are not engaged in a healthy and consistent prayer life. You can't be like Christ if you are not filled with the Holy Spirit on a regular basis. And you can't be like Christ if you are not laying aside the deeds of darkness and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we do all of these things because of the opening phrase back in **Revelation 1:7** – **"Behold, He is coming!"**

Let's pray.