

How Important Is The Second Coming Of Jesus Christ?

After the First World War there was within the evangelical Christian Church an intense interest in the prophecy that pointed towards the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The excited interpreters were one after another proved wrong in their expected dates of Jesus Christ's return.

As a result of these failures the hope of Jesus Christ's coming is today all but dead among these evangelists.

The belief in the eventual return of Jesus Christ is still there as an accepted doctrine of the Christian Bible, but presented for the most part either academically or politically.

The joyful personal element is altogether missing.

Mere acquaintance with correct doctrine is a poor substitute for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

New Testament eschatology will never take the place of a love-inflamed desire to meet Jesus Christ in the clouds on His Return. [1 Thessalonians 4:16-18]

If this yearning is gone there must be reasons for it.

1) The utility of the cross has been emphasised rather than the beauty of the One on the cross.

The saved person's relationship to Jesus Christ has been made contractual instead of personal.

The "work" of Jesus Christ has been stressed until it has eclipsed the Person of Jesus Christ.

Substitution of sin has been allowed to supersede the identification with Jesus Christ.

What Jesus Christ did for me seems to be more important than what He is to me as a faithful Friend.

John 15:13-17 [NIV] *"Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other."*

We all need to meditate on these verses, we obey Jesus Christ because He is a Friend whom we love for who He is.

2) Redemption is seen as an across-time counter transaction which we are to "accept".

The whole thing seems to lack emotional context.

Perhaps we should look on Jesus Christ as an older brother who gave up His life to save us from death.

Such an experience on the physical level would make our older brother our hero and one we will constantly be telling others about his personal sacrifice.

Ephesians 5:14-16 [NIV] *“for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”*

We must love someone very much to stay awake and long for His coming.

This lack of emotion may explain the absence of power in the advent hope even among those who still believe in it.

3) Living in a comfortable physical world.

This is another reason for the lack of real yearning for Christ’s return.

We all want to reserve the hope of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven as a kind of insurance against the day of our death. But as long as we are healthy and comfortable, why change a familiar good for something about which we know very little?

This is how the carnal mind works so subtly that we are scarcely aware of it.

Romans 6:1-4 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*

When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a substitute for our own deserved death we bury our old life and live a new life that will bring glory to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Luke 14:26-27, 33 [NIV] *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” ... “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

Our focus must be totally on our Saviour and Friend, Jesus Christ.

4) For some, religion has become jolly good fun or a social club to be enjoyed.

Christianity has become to some a higher form of personal entertainment.

Jesus Christ has done all the suffering for us, He has shed all the tears and carried all the crosses. We have but to enjoy the benefits of His heartbreak in the form of religious pleasures modelled after the world but carried out in the name of Jesus Christ.

So say some people who claim to believe in Christ’s second coming.

Church history reveals that it is in times of suffering for the Church, have also been times of looking upward for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Tribulation has always sobered God’s people and encouraged them to look for and yearn for the return of their Lord Jesus Christ.

Our present preoccupation as Christians with this world and its society may be a warning of bitter times ahead when God awakens the Church to fulfil its true purpose, to prepare a people for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as John the Baptist did for his First Coming.

God will wean the Church from the world’s society in some way, the easy way if possible, the hard way if necessary, the choice is ours to make right now.