

After the long night... It's Time for the Sonrise!

Chuck Smith:

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, ...not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof (Romans 13:11-14).

Jesus Christ never intended for His people to be taken by surprise at His coming. He intends for you to be totally aware of the time of His return, so that you would be watching, waiting, and ready when He comes again. Scriptures that refer to His coming again as "a thief in the night" do not refer to the way the Church will experience His return, but to the way the world will see it. The coming of Christ will take the world totally by surprise - but not the Christian. Paul said, "You are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief. You are the children of the light" (I Thessalonians 5:4,5).

"Knowing the time." The children of the light know that the coming of the Lord is very near. We know we live near the end, because God has placed so much evidence and proof in the world events around us - signs that are intended to alert us to the hour and the day in which we are living.

If the Jews of Jesus' day had only known the time of His coming, they would never have rejected Him. They would have received Him.

Actually, the Jews should have been looking for their Messiah to come the very year Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem. If they had been reading their Scriptures and had been properly taught the Word, they would have known exactly when the Messiah was due to appear.

Daniel had revealed that it would be 483 years from the time the commandment went forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah the Prince. Since the commandment went forth in 445 B.C., the Jews should have been looking for their Messiah precisely when He arrived 483 years later. Daniel received this prophecy when he had been studying the Word of God. He knew that a dramatic year was arriving. Daniel knew through studying the Scriptures that the 70 years of the Jews' captivity in Babylon were about over, according to the prophecies of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 25:11 said, "They shall serve the king of Babylon for 70 years." After some basic mathematics, Daniel knew the time of Israel's repatriation had come. He started praying and seeking the Lord concerning any special part He had for Daniel in the return of the people to the land.

Because Daniel was familiar with the Scriptures, he was aware of the world events around him. If you're in the Scriptures and studying the Word of God, then you should also be aware of the events that are happening in the world around you. You'll be privileged to know what they really mean!

The problem with the Jews in Christ's day was their lack of knowledge of the Scriptures. When Christ came they weren't expecting Him. They were expecting their King to come with regalia on a white charger or in a great chariot. But the Scriptures had said, "Behold, your King comes to you. But He's lowly, He's riding upon a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9) So, when Christ came riding on a donkey, they turned up their noses .

Today, we see people who are versed in so many areas of understanding, but they're totally oblivious to the fact that we're coming to the end of the line!

There is no reason why any believer should be taken by surprise when Jesus returns. Even as the Word of God gave so many signs and indications concerning His first coming, it also gives us many signs and indications of events that will be a forewarning of His second coming.

When I looked at the paper the other day, six of the seven articles on the front page were of prophetic significance! They were prophesied in the Scriptures as events at the time of the return of Jesus Christ. All around us are signs and indications that the coming of the Lord is at the door.

It's amazing to me that so many Christians are planning their lives as if they'll be here for at least another 20 years. Do I believe the Lord will return within 20 years? You bet your life I do! I don't want to be around 20 years from now, anyway. If what the ecologists say is true, it's going to be a very unpleasant world 20 years from now!

Alerted

A young girl came up to me the other day and showed me her arm. There was a rash all over it. She said, "This is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy! I went to my doctor, and he said that this rash is a result of ultraviolet radiation. He said there are many cases of skin irritation due to ultraviolet radiation, because of the depletion of the ozone in the atmosphere."

If those who have been warning us about the dangers of aerosol propellants are correct and we continue to deplete the ozone blanket, 20 years from now you won't dare walk outside in the sun. If you decide to go to the store, you'll have to travel in a little mobile cubicle with protective shields. (See Revelation 16:8-9)

But you're going to have a hard time propelling that little vehicle because, according to estimates, we'll be out of fossil fuels by then. And the experts haven't developed anything else which is even close to replacing fossil fuels as our major energy source.

According to an interesting book about these crises, scientists fed various factors and data regarding the world, its population, the food supply, the ability to grow food, etc. into a computer. Each time this information was fed into the computer to find out what the world would be like 20 years from now, the computer said, "The world can't last that long... there's not enough fuel to take you there... the ozone will be depleted to the point where life will be totally endangered... the population will be so large that you'll be unable to feed it."

Actually, 15 million people are dying of starvation this year. Two out of three people being born will suffer permanent brain damage from lack of protein in their diets during the developmental years.

There are the exotic super-weapons that are being developed. How much longer can we go until one of these is released by accident or on purpose? The terrorists in Europe are now talking about stealing a nuclear device and using it as their next threat of blackmail.

There are devices that might even be worse than the nuclear weapons. Our forces in Europe have been trained concerning a new nerve gas that has been developed by Russia. We have already received a kit with an anti-toxin for this gas. It contains a spring loaded needle. Hit yourself in any part of your body and the needle will go right through your boots or your clothing and inject this serum into your body. You have fifteen seconds from the time of exposure to the gas to inject the anti-toxin, or you'll be too late. You have ten seconds to analyze and determine whether or not you've been exposed to the gas. If you use the anti-toxin when you haven't actually been exposed to the gas, the anti-toxin will kill you.

What kind of a world are we living in when we have only ten seconds to judge, and if we make a mistake we lose our life? What kind of world will it be 20 years from now? And who wants to try to exist in that kind of world!

When you talk about the coming of the Lord, the world says, "You're a prophet of doom!" If you ask me, a gloomy message is what the ecologists are saying about our future. As I look around the world, I take great comfort in knowing that it won't be long until the Lord comes!

I look around and see the turmoil. I see, as the Scripture says, "the distress of nations with perplexity." The word "perplexity" translated from the Greek actually means "no way out." We don't know what to do! The economic experts are as confused as the public. They don't want to admit it, because they're afraid we'll panic.

The Bible says that the night is far spent and the day is at hand. The night of evil, the night of misery, the night of darkness of man's history is about over!

When I woke up just before dawn this morning, I looked outside. I could see vague outlines. I could make out the nearby trees. It was getting a little light in the eastern sky, just enough to see my way around. I knew that it wouldn't be very long before the sky would be getting brighter and brighter. And then the day would dawn. Now there was a sign and evidence. The faint light in the eastern sky told me that the day was at hand.

When my wife and I were awaiting our first child, we came to the day the doctor said would be the probable date of birth. But our child wasn't born. We waited another day. Still, she wasn't born. We waited a third day, and she wasn't born. I didn't throw down my hat and yell at my wife, "You deceived me! I don't think you're going to have a baby!" No. I still believed that our baby was coming. There were positive signs and evidences. I couldn't tell you the day or the hour. I didn't become an unbeliever just because it didn't happen the day we thought it

was going to happen. In fact, with every day that went by we knew that the baby's arrival was more and more imminent.

The Lord must be coming any time now. We know that we're getting closer with each passing day. That's what Paul meant when he said, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).

Prepared

Realizing that the Lord's coming is due at any moment, how should we live in these final days of grace? First of all, Paul says that we should cast off the works of darkness. These works are described as rioting, drunkenness, chambering (sexual immorality) and wantonness (sexual immorality with no shame), strife and envying.

Christians living in this polluted world are under tremendous pressure. My mother used to say, "Son, any dead fish can float downstream with the current. It takes a live fish to swim upstream against the current." She said, "You'll be faced with a tide of evil, and the easy thing is to flow with it. But that only proves that you're spiritually dead." She said, "Be alive unto God. Be alive unto Jesus Christ. Dare to go against the tide!" Thank God for mothers who give that kind of advice to their sons.

Every once in a while, I hear my wife quietly sobbing. I go into the room to see what's wrong, and her hands will be over her face. She's a very beautiful and sensitive person. The newspaper will be in front of her. She's so sensitive to people and to suffering that, when she reads some of the things that are happening today, it just tears her up inside. My wife has too much empathy for the tragic victims of this crazy world in which we live. She cries for that little child who's been beaten or cruelly tortured and who doesn't even know why. Sometimes, I have to get up and turn off the television because her reaction is just too great. The stuff that people are doing is just so shocking that a sensitive person is completely torn up by it. It's sad to me that our children, being exposed to it for so long, have somehow built up an immunity to the violence of these days.

In light of these things, how should a Christian then live? "Let us put on the armor of light." The literal phrase in the Greek is "weapons of light."

Did you know that there are weapons of light? Truth is a powerful weapon of light. What a power the man has who uses the weapon of light in a dark and evil world, the man who will not bow his knee to Molech, the god of the flesh, but who stands strong in the face of the corrupt society around him.

Another powerful weapon of light is love. We're to put on love and let God's love fill our hearts and our lives.

What is destroying our whole system? Greed. We want someone else to make the sacrifices. Let someone else quit their driving. I'm not willing to sacrifice. Look at the whole economic upward spiral. Why? Because the laborers are demanding higher wages in order to buy the higher priced goods. The manufacturers are saying, "We've got to put higher prices on the merchandise so we can pay the higher wages." Greed drives inflation even higher.

Where's it going to end? It's almost over! The night is far spent. The glorious day of the Lord is at hand!

Paul next exhorts, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the Light. Oh, that we will walk in His strength, His ability, and His power! It's only through Him that we have any chance at all in this world in which we're living. If you don't appropriate the power and strength of Jesus Christ, you're a goner!

If you believe you're only a product of accidental circumstances, a series of evolutionary changes, then life for you is meaningless. But life is real. Life is earnest. The grave is not the Christian's goal. Dust thou art, to dust returneth was not spoken of your soul!

God has a plan and a purpose for you. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and discover the glorious life that God has for you. Life with meaning, a life of beauty, a life of joy, a life of love, as we walk in the Spirit, and as we, through Him, become a light in this black, darkened world.

Make no provision to fulfill your flesh's desires. Don't give it an opportunity. If you do, it can take over and bring you under its power and control. Knowing the time, it's high time that we wake up. It's almost over. The cry goes forth. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Jesus said, "Be ready!" - for they that were ready went in to the marriage supper! (Matthew 25:6).