

Awaiting the hour

Decades ago, when I was a much younger man, I wrote a song with this very title. In fact in the 70s I wrote many songs on the Second Coming. As I was learning more and more about theology, the Second Coming was of great interest; not as a debating question to strive for in arguments, but reflecting an earnest hope and great excitement at the fulfilment of my pilgrimage and the joy of meeting my Lord face to face as salvation was consummated in glory. It thrilled me.

I once read of an old church pastor who, on waking up every morning, looked out of his window at the clouds to see if Jesus was about to appear. He was awaiting the hour. The plea of the saints at the end of Scripture is, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' (Rev 22:20).

The Second Coming is a huge subject in the NT which crops up repeatedly. If I remember correctly, one in every 28 verses regards the end. This is only natural since the return of the Lord is the fulfilment of all our hope and the end of our suffering and struggle. Indeed, it is the climax of human history; the consummation of the Decree of God. At this point all things are centred in Christ and in harmony with God's will. Even nature is released from bondage into glory. Then, God's word is fully vindicated and the testimony of the saints throughout history is authenticated. The destructive arguments of men seeking to attack God are all reduced to ashes in the fire of God's judgment.

So why, in the light of all this, are modern saints not very interested in the Second Coming? I do not condone those few who focus on eschatology and ignore every other doctrine because that is a fad that interests them. But the end must have its proper place in doctrinal teaching. Not only that, we are instructed to wait for the Lord and to be prepared for his coming, not being found wanting (Matt 24:42; Mk 13:33; 1 Thess 5:4-6). Many texts show us that we will suffer significant loss if the Lord comes and we are not ready. The virgins must have their lamps fully prepared and full of oil (Matt 25:1-13).

Yet modern Christians appear to be fascinated by a multitude of questionable doctrines, aberrant practices, mysticism and self-esteem and any fad that raises its ugly head rather than watch and pray for the return of the Lord. Perhaps it is the deleterious effects of 100 years of Dispensational eschatology that has left people unenthusiastic about the end. Perhaps the multiple failures of false prophets, cultic millennialists, arrogant preachers and money-grabbing charlatans have also left people lacking in anticipation of the consummation.

Christians are not at home here. We crave the return of our Lord so that we can be taken to our real home. The expectation of the end and the fulfilment of salvation in Christ is the anchor that gives us hope. This anchor stretches from heaven behind the veil to our soul on Earth, bringing the assurance of God (Heb 6:19-20). The certain return of the Lord is a source of great assurance to us in our struggles while on this foreign pilgrimage in this life. It is something to be celebrated, excited about and longed for.

Like that old pastor, I frequently look at the clouds and meditate on the sure fact that Jesus is returning in similar clouds, with great glory and heavenly power to wind up the natural order and prepare the judgment and to bring me release from suffering and provide the resurrection of my body. What glory we will share. What rejoicing. What peace.