

Wipe Away All Tears from Their Eyes

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How often do you think about the second coming of the Son of God? When you do, does it make you nervous or does it fill your heart with excited anticipation? His coming is frequently on my mind. And I must admit the thought holds mixed emotions for me. Some days I'm so bone-tired and weary that I'd gladly welcome His arrival at that instant. Other times, I want Him to postpone His coming just a little longer . . . so I have time to do just a little bit more.

Mostly, I feel like I'm running out of time to do what I've been sent here to do. Am I making a difference? Am I helping people develop a deep personal relationship with their Savior before what Joel refers to as "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:11,31)? Frankly sometimes I get distracted. Other times, I feel such an urgency I worry that I'm not doing all I could be doing. Perhaps you know these feelings.

I suppose this is one reason Joel calls that day both "great" and "terrible?" John the Revelator gave a detailed explanation of the dual nature of that day:

"And I saw a new heaven and new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be my son.

"But the fearful, and unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and

all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelations 21:1-8).

Whether Christ's coming is a great day or a terrible day for you depends upon the state of your heart. It's great for the righteous and it's terrible for the wicked.

I'm not much of a "fire and brimstone" kind of teacher. I don't like to focus on the punishments when there are so many rewards to be had for the righteous. Even if you have taken your eyes off the Good Shepherd and gone wandering, the way back is clear. Forever and always, the Good Shepherd's arms are outstretched. His voice beckons each of us to follow Him, to repent and quench our thirst at the well of living waters. He promises "the pure in heart" that they shall "see God" and the peacemakers that they shall "inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:8-9).

According to John the Revelator, these are the same blessings bestowed upon those who "overcome the world." No more tears. No more death. No more sorrow. No more pain. A boundless inheritance in the presence of God awaits those who "overcome."

What does it take to overcome? It takes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It requires repentance (or turning from our old ways and striving to follow His teachings). It requires commitment! Remember "He makes all things new" and that includes you and me! As we strive for this purity of heart Jesus spoke of, as we reach toward His reaching, His enabling grace activates on our behalf. Through His blood we are sanctified and through the Spirit we are justified (or pronounced "not guilty"). This sanctifying, justifying process transforms our hearts and fills us with His love. A peacemaker spirit only comes from the Prince of Peace.

A broken heart and a contrite spirit is the beginning. Isaiah said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." (Isaiah 1:18-19).

Many people have trouble understanding Isaiah, but I've grown to love his words -- especially after receiving a little tutoring in Hebrew poetry and symbolism. Verse 18 is a wonderful example of Isaiah's poetic and prophetic abilities.

Though your sins be as scarlet
 They shall be as snow.
Though they be red like crimson
 They shall be as wool.

If you or I were to represent sin with a color, we'd most likely choose black. But Isaiah chose scarlet and crimson which is the color of blood. Innocence he represented with the whiteness of snow and wool. Why wool? Where does wool come from? Lambs. And who does the Lamb represent? The Lamb of God - the Savior of the world who shed His blood that we might be cleansed. And what is the blessing for being willing and obedient and allowing ourselves to be cleansed (or purified) in this fashion? We shall eat the good of the land.

I would submit to you that along with "eating the good of the land" there are other glorious blessings that come to the pure in heart. One of the greatest of which is that we will be able to stand blameless at that last day, having our garments cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. There, at that magnificent day, He will wipe all tears from our eyes, heal every hurt, mend every heartbreak, vanquish every pain, and fill us with indescribable joy. We quite literally will inherit the earth and see the face of God!

This is my desire for each and every one of us. This is the "big vision" I work toward. I hope and pray that I may one day meet you at the pleasing bar of God and rejoice with you as we both hear the words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Matthew 25:23).

May the Good Shepherd watch over you, protect you and seal you His, is my prayer.