

Hastening Toward the Goal

In the previous chapter, we saw the importance of developing godly character as we prepare for the appearing of the Kingdom of God. But few people consider the possibility of hastening the Kingdom's appearing. Yet there is a passage that suggests that holy conduct and godliness (godly character) may hasten the coming of that day.

2 Peter 3:11-12 (NASB)

11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,
12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

We read in Revelation 22:17 that the Bride and the Spirit say "Come." Three verses down, in Revelation 22:20, we read Jesus' words: "Yes, I am coming quickly." From this we can hear a sense of urgency that should stir us to press on the accelerator as we prepare the way of the Lord and hasten the coming of that day.

Three Accelerators to Hasten the Coming of the Day of God

There are at least three accelerators that serve to move our vehicle (the Church) toward the finish line (the appearing of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom). [1] In some ways, the church is like a timepiece we can watch which gives some indication of our progress toward our goal of the Kingdom of God appearing on earth. [2]

Unity and Maturity

The scripture refers to ministry gifts in the Church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Verse 11 tells us what these ministry gifts are and verse 12 tells us what their purpose is: the equipping of God's people for the work of ministry; for building up the Church. But in verse 13 we learn how long they will be needed: until we all come into unity and maturity. [3] The implication here is that these ministry gifts will not be needed (at least not in the same way) after

Jesus returns and all Christians will have put on immortality.

How can such unity and maturity come to pass with all the different views and disagreements? Well, it won't happen simply by learning doctrine, comparing study notes, and knowing what others are saying. There are far too many voices! The answer is contained in the statement, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." It is through knowledge of the Son, not as in knowing about Him, but in knowing Him that we will find unity and maturity. When we all are listening to one voice, the voice of the Son, unity will be automatic.

All legitimate ministries point people to Jesus and help them to know Him better. True unity can only happen as we deepen our relationship with Jesus, become like Him, and rally under His cause. That cause is the appearing of His Kingdom. Therefore, as we truly seek to know Jesus and His cause, unity and Christlike stature will develop in the church, and as a result, we are hastening toward the goal.^[4]

Purity and Holiness

The Church that is ready to meet Jesus will be a holy church (see Eph 5:27). ^[5] There are several references to this, but first notice that the connection between holiness and the coming of the Lord is also seen in the passage already cited (see verse 11), where Peter said we should look for and hasten unto the coming of the day of the Lord.

2 Peter 3:11-12 (KJV)

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

In his letter to Titus, Paul implied that there was a connection between holy living and the return of Christ when he said,

Titus 2:12-13 (KJV)

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

In his first epistle and also in Revelation, John wrote about the hope of seeing Jesus (a reference to Christ's return) in connection with purity:

1 John 3:2-3 (KJV)

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Revelation 19:6-8 (KJV)

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as

the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

In the passage above, we see the wife of the Lamb has made herself ready, which is another way of saying she has finished her preparation. [6] Clean and white garments obviously represent purity or holiness. Therefore, as we pursue holiness and walk in purity, we are hastening toward the goal.[7]

The Kingdom Message

Shortly after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). At first glance it appears that Jesus ignored the question concerning when He would return to set up His Kingdom; and simply pointed the disciples in a soul-winning direction. But that is not the case. Jesus answered their question, not in terms of clocks and calendars, but in terms of a job being completed. This answer put the ball in their court and gave them a keen sense of purpose and responsibility for preparing the way. The context of the question provides insight.

Acts 1:6-8 (KJV)

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?
7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Jesus was shifting them from a time-oriented mindset to a task-oriented mindset. [8] He wanted the appearing of the Kingdom of God, and their passion for it, to motivate them toward working, not waiting. The only waiting He told them to do was to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. After that, it was time to take the gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth. This is confirmed by what Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 24.

Matthew 24:14 (KJV)

24 And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Once again, we see that the appearing of the Kingdom of God is not based on a calendar date (though God in his wisdom certainly knows that date), but on a job completed. As we preach the gospel of the Kingdom (not only the gospel of salvation) we are hastening toward the day of God. In other words, there must be a kingdom paradigm in place before the kingdom can appear. [9]

When will the Kingdom appear? When our job as witnesses is complete. Though it may be difficult to know when that job is complete, it is not difficult to know what the job is.

Therefore, as we preach the good news of the coming kingdom, we hasten toward the goal.[10]

He is Waiting Until

Scripture says that Jesus “...sat down at the right hand of God; ... expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (see Heb 10:12-13). Some interpret this to mean that we must subdue the earth prior to Christ’s return. But as we have seen, the enemies of Christ will not be totally subdued before His return, but immediately after (see Rev 19). Young’s Literal Translation brings clarity, saying it this way: “...expecting till He may place his enemies as his footstool” (See Heb 10:12-13 YLT), which implies that Jesus is waiting for something (completed preparation) before He returns to put his enemies under His feet.

The return of Jesus and the subsequent subjugation of His enemies as His footstool is actually the culmination of the three accelerators mentioned above,[11] which are essentially the mark of God and His character as discussed in the previous chapter, *Resisting Satan’s Mark*. Jesus is willing and able to subdue His enemies, but is waiting at the right hand of God until a unified pure expression of His church has spread the kingdom message around the earth. He is assembling His holy army whose feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; an army of godly character, preparing to rule the earth with Him at His return.

Paradigm Builder

Jesus is waiting till there is a unified holy expression of His church with a Kingdom paradigm before He returns.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree