

Have You Grown Weary?

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Have you grown weary? Are you tired? Has this physical life completely worn you down? Do you look forward with excitement and anticipation to the return of Jesus Christ, or does it rarely occupy your mind? Are you remaining vigilant? Do you set aside time to truly study and reflect on God's word? Have you taken the time lately, to just meditate on the incredible world that Christ will establish upon His return? Are you proving all things? Do you take the proper amount of time to commune with God through prayer? Have you neglected these things, or possibly even given them up altogether? Are you paying attention to events going on around the world, or have you become so completely caught up in your daily routine that major events just pass you by. Are you dozing, or is it possible that you are even asleep?

These are hard questions...but they are questions that we must ask if we want to be honest with ourselves and if we truly seek to find God's will in our lives and make it into His kingdom. It is not easy to look into the spiritual mirror and peer long and hard at what we find staring back at us. Yet...look we must and not only look, but examine thoroughly and critically what we find and determine what changes are necessary to keep us on course to enter God's kingdom. Make no mistake; those who are just idling along and nodding off, or sleeping **will not** inherit the reward that God has set aside for those that love Him and the appearing of His Son.

God's Feast of Tabernacles pictures a time of unprecedented joy and happiness, unlike anything that has ever been seen, or experienced before on this world. But, scripture also plainly shows that there are many who will have to suffer and endure severe hardship, because they were not awake, not prepared and had grown weary of waiting for Christ to return. Yes, some of them will eventually make it into God's kingdom, but they will pay a terrible price. It **will not** be a pleasant experience to live through.

Scripture makes it very plain, that at the time just before Jesus Christ is to return to this earth, the dominate characteristics present in God's people are a lack of alertness and urgency, a lack of watchfulness and preparation, an attitude of being lukewarm, or half-hearted towards God's way of life and frankly, people who are literally fast asleep spiritually. There is much more to our spiritual walk, than keeping all of the physical requirements of God's law.

There is a very deep spiritual connection that must exist if we are to remain close and engaged with God and His Son. We can be going along on our

own, thinking that everything is fine and still be in a deep sleep...it is just like sleepwalking! As we compare the events happening in this country and those elsewhere around the world along with all of the signs that Christ gave us to watch for, we can clearly see that we are in that time of the end of this age. So again I ask the question, have you grown weary?

In the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ gives an answer to a question posed to Him by His disciples; that discourse has come to be known as the Olivet Prophecy. The disciples wanted to know when the end was coming and what they should be looking for.

Matthew 24:4-14

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Notice that all of these things are just the beginning; these and other events will be happening on a continual basis and will continue to build in frequency and intensity. There are other events as well, that are not listed here, that we have seen occurring in the past few years and intensifying in frequency. Devastating natural disasters and strange and unusual weather patterns have become more prominent in all areas of the world. There have also been many significant events and unusual signs in the heavens, which is another sign, or indicator of where we are in this present age. Continuing on with verse 9:

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

You will find more and more as you read through the gospels; that the majority of what Christ was saying in that time, was meant for our benefit now at the end of this age! His words give us clear direction and instruction as to where we are heading and what we should and must be doing in our lives to prepare for His coming.

I overheard a conversation once between a man and a pastor. The pastor was asked "How much longer are we going to have to wait? When is Christ going to return? I'm tired." At the time, I thought this man was speaking from a purely physical standpoint, but now I believe that his words had a much deeper spiritual meaning, whether he realized it, or not.

I came to the realization that what he had said was true; he had grown tired physically, but more importantly, he had also grown weary spiritually. The real deep spiritual meaning and understanding of God's law was not present. A deep personal and meaningful relationship with God and Christ was absent. He is not alone; there are many others besides him who have also grown weary. It is not always so obvious when someone has grown tired and given up. We can easily become spiritually lethargic without even realizing it and that is the real danger!

Matthew 26:36

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

This is precisely what we are supposed to be doing now, at this very time, we are to be watching, staying alert, and being vigilant. We are supposed to be watching and waiting **along** with Jesus Christ. He does not know the exact day and hour of his return and neither do we.

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Notice what happens next:

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? (Could you not even remain awake and alert for such a short period of time? Christ was disappointed that they had fallen asleep so quickly and he left them with a warning.) 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We need to listen and heed that warning! It is very subtle what happens in people's lives. People don't intend to fall asleep, they don't mean to become lethargic, but it is the weaknesses that come from living in these fleshly, mortal

bodies that cause them trouble and that applies to all of us. We all suffer the weaknesses that are inherent in our mortal, human bodies. Continuing in verse 42:

42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." 43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

Why were their eyes heavy? They were tired, they were weary of waiting, they failed to realize the seriousness of the situation, they had good intentions, but the flesh was weak! Continuing in verse 44:

44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

It is easy to see the parallel between that event and where we are right now in God's plan. We are waiting for Christ's return and the establishment of his millennial reign, which will usher in a time of peace, prosperity and harmony that has never been seen before on this earth! It is important to notice that it was three times that Christ found them sleeping. Three is an important number in God's word. It denotes finality and it was after the third time Christ found them sleeping that He was betrayed. Their opportunity to remain awake, alert, waiting and watching with Him was over, they had missed out. At that point and time they no longer had access to Christ physically, He was taken from them. There will come a time in the future when access to Christ spiritually will be cut off and all of those who have grown weary of waiting, whose eyes have become heavy to the point of falling fast asleep, will find that the door has been closed to them.

Just the thought of that should be sufficient to keep everyone awake and on edge...watching, waiting and on alert always.

Mark 13:22-23

22 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

How do people become deceived? When they are not staying close to God, when they are not paying attention, when they are sleeping and ignoring the warning signs all around them, when they are not discerning God's Spirit and

listening to Christ's voice. This depicts a time of trying and testing on the very elect, but Christ is warning us ahead of time.

There are some very serious consequences, if we allow ourselves to get lax, become distracted and go to sleep while waiting for Christ to return.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly (or completely and thoroughly) that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness (we have been given understanding and knowledge and we have also been warned), so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

Over and over again, Christ warns us not to become complacent, let down our guard and become inactive and lethargic. We are to be growing, overcoming and preparing for his return. He has left us tasks that we are to be working on and working towards in his absence. We have to show ourselves worthy of what we have been freely given.

Mark 13:32-37

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch . 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch !"

This applies to everyone and notice that Christ is speaking to us individually here, He does not say lest coming he find **them** sleeping. He specifically says lest he find **you** sleeping. It is personal!

People do not just fall asleep all at once; most people are very zealous at first. It happens over a period of time; other things begin slowly, subtly, creeping

into our lives, displacing God, and then slowly we begin to lose the excitement and zeal that we once felt towards God's word and His way that leads to eternal life. Christ cautions us not to allow this to happen:

Luke 21:34-36

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare (or trap) on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always (continually and without ceasing) that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Watch and pray always, that is what Christ says we must do, remaining alert, being vigilant, so that we may be counted worthy. There are many things that can come before us and God if we are not careful. Personal ambition, educational pursuits, our jobs, recreational activities, the way we entertain ourselves and none of these things are wrong in and of themselves. It is the level of importance, that we as individuals place on these things, that can make them a problem. I do speak from experience, this has happened to me. There was a time in my life when between working, going to school and taking care of my family responsibilities, I am ashamed to say that I was shoving God farther and farther out of my life. I was letting self ambition and goals that I had set for myself rule in my life. Now again, there is nothing wrong with having ambition and having goals, it is the way we prioritize those things and anything else that requires our time and efforts in our lives and of course our ambitions and goals should be Godly ones.

We always seem to forget that God knows us, intimately...He knows our needs, our wants, our fears, our aspirations, our positions in life, but He also has a plan for each of us and He always knows what is in our best interests. God does not just haphazardly give His Holy Spirit and the understanding that comes with it out to everyone. He specially selects those whom He has called at this time. God selects, God handpicks and God specially chooses each and every person whom he gives an opportunity to be a firstfruit.

Ephesians 1:7-12

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He

might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Who are those who first trusted in Christ? The firstfruits; those to be born first into God's Kingdom. He wants each of us to be in His kingdom, He wants to give us everlasting, eternal life! Think carefully about the opportunity that God is giving you here! Think about what Christ went through to make this possible for each and every one of us!

We will be changed in an instant, taking on perfect, glorified spiritual bodies, first to assist Christ during the millennium and then finally to dwell in the beautiful New Jerusalem that will descend from the heavens onto a rebuilt and cleansed earth. Do you ever think about that? Can you picture yourself rising up into the air to meet Christ at his return? What will that sensation be like? Can you imagine looking down on the armies of the world gathered there together for one final battle? How will it feel to have your body transformed in a millisecond into a perfect, spiritual body that will last forever? What about all of the knowledge and the complete and total understanding that will also occur at that time? How about even beyond the millennium to God's Holy City where He will dwell and we will dwell there with Him and Christ!

Revelation 21:1

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

That is a description of a Father who deeply loves and cares for each of His children. How long has it been since you have read about God's Holy City, meditated on it, pictured it in your mind, dreamed of being there? We have got to make these things real to ourselves; to clearly see them in our minds, to believe on them and trust in them, we have to keep in mind the goal that we are working towards.

Proverbs 29:18

Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

The Hebrew word that is translated as vision here is **chazown (khaw-zone')**; from OT:2372; a sight (mentally), i.e. a dream, revelation, or oracle: and it literally means a mental picture.

Let's turn over and read about God's Holy City.

Revelation 21:9

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. 12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. 14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

Twelve thousand furlongs is 1500 miles. To put that into perspective; it would be roughly from San Diego, California, north to the Canadian border and east to Shreveport, Louisiana, that is more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the size of the United States and the city is also 1500 miles high, what an impressive and majestic sight that will be! Continuing in verse 17:

17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits (that is approximately 216 feet), according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18 The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper (a type of crystalline quartz), the second sapphire (a precious stone of a sky-blue color), the third chalcedony (kal-se-"dO-

nE, an agate-like quartz of a bluish color), **the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx** (three layers of opaque spots or stripes on a transparent red base), **the sixth sardius** (a blood red gemstone) , **the seventh chrysolite** (a transparent to translucent olive green stone), **the eighth beryl** (a gold colored stone similar to topaz), **the ninth topaz** (a straw yellow, or wine colored stone), **the tenth chrysoprase** (an apple green stone similar to jade, one of the most prized varieties of quartz), **the eleventh jacinth** (a red transparent variety of zircon), **and the twelfth amethyst** (a violet, or purple colored stone). **21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**

Beautiful isn't it? Breathtaking, magnificent and perfect in every way, because God made it...do you want to live there...forever? I do.

All too often we forget that God is the one in control and that we are nothing in and of ourselves. We always think that we need to help Him in sorting out what our lives should be like.

Matthew 6:31-34

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

You see we have a hope, we have a purpose in life, we have God's promise. God absolutely will not and cannot go back on His word, what He has promised us He will give to us. But, it is not guaranteed, we also bear some responsibility too. Here is our first priority in life, seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness.

If we do that, God says He will take care of the rest! We are not even to worry about what tomorrow will bring. If we are seeking God's kingdom, we will not become weary, we will not become drowsy and we will not fall asleep. The word seek means the following:

2 a : to go in search of : look for **b** : to try to discover
4 : to try to acquire or gain : aim at
5 : to make an attempt

Seek is a word of action, to be seeking requires an active participation on behalf of the person who is seeking something. If we are not actively seeking out God, we can become weary and possibly even fall asleep. If we could only truly take this scripture to heart and put it into action, many of the problems we experience in our lives could be avoided.

Galatians 6:7

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption (or death, destruction), but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Wherever and whatever we are spending the majority of our time and efforts on, is also where our hearts lie. If we are spending our time on pursuits of this life, we will not inherit God's kingdom, but if we are seeking and pursuing spiritual understanding, if we are growing and nurturing the knowledge we have been given; we will receive a reward of immortal life and that is not all, there will be positions of honor and respect for those who overcome in God's kingdom. As we are told here, we are not to grow weary, we have to have courage, to be bold and confident and keep moving forward, always keeping our goal in sight. That is what is meant here by not losing heart. When the time is right, or in due season, if we do not give up hope, if we remain alert, awake and in watchful anticipation, we shall receive that reward of everlasting life that Christ will bring with Him when He returns. It is ours to claim! Let no one and nothing rob you of your crown!

We absolutely must stay on task. We have the most awesome and incredible future ahead of us! It is far beyond imagination and description. This world and everything in it is nothing, it's standards, it's riches, it's understanding, it's governments, it's pastimes, it's plans and everything that it stands for is all going to pass away, despite man's desperate efforts to hold on to it. God has called certain people out of this world and set them apart for a specific purpose and Jesus Christ is returning soon to make that a reality. There was great joy and celebrating among God's angels when we made the decision to go God's way. You can find that in Luke 15:10.

Revelation 3:19

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten (He is correcting us, pointing out our faults and weaknesses, He wants us to overcome). Therefore be zealous and repent.

Remember that feeling that you experienced when God first opened your mind to his truth and you began to see and understand things in God's word in a way that you had never seen before. It was just like a veil had been lifted from your eyes; it has been described as a "first love". It is a feeling of excitement, joy, anticipation and amazement as you find you are able to understand things of God that had remained a mystery for hundreds of years. It is an overwhelming and enveloping feeling of love, warmth and affection towards God and His son Jesus Christ. A feeling of gratitude, respect, awe and wonder at His power and majesty.

And it is also a feeling of unworthiness and almost disbelief that the Creator and sustainer of this world, the entire universe and the cosmos could be so involved and have such concern and care for just one individual out of millions, but it is true just the same. God knows each of us very well...personally. To be zealous means to eagerly and passionately pursue something. Does that define the way you feel about God, His son Jesus Christ and entering God's kingdom? If you are eagerly and passionately pursuing something, if you are zealous, you will forsake everything else in order to obtain your goal. That is what Christ says we must do. Continuing in verse 20:

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Christ is knocking at the door, will you get up and let him in? Or, is there something distracting you and taking up all of your time, so that you cannot hear, or so that you are unable to answer? Is there anything that is of more worth than to sit with Christ on his throne? This is picturing a very intimate setting here, one on one with Christ. He cares about each of us deeply and individually. He wants to come in to each one of us, but He will not force His way in. He is knocking, we must respond if we desire His presence in our lives.

There came a time when the apostle Paul knew that his own time was very short. In 2 Timothy he left us with some very encouraging words that we can all take comfort in:

2 Tim 4:6-8

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Now is not the time to be faint of heart, or to let down your guard...we are so close to the finish line! Let us each and every one be vigilant, watching, waiting, alert and ready so that each of us also, may eagerly and passionately look forward to and love His appearing.

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)

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