

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

When the Lord Returns

By Joe R. Price

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16).

The apostle affirmed the events of Jesus’s return with clarity and authority. Paul systematically explained what would happen on that great day.

Jesus’s return will be personal (*“the Lord Himself will descend”*). No representative will stand in His place.

The return of the Lord will be visible. Just as He ascended, so shall He *“descend from heaven”* (Acts 1:9-11). The rapture theory of an invisible presence of Jesus and the unseen catching away of saints is a false doctrine.

With a shout, He will command the dead to rise (John 5:28-29). The archangel will lead Christ’s angelic attendants in this moment of transcendent power and victory over the grave (2 Thess. 1:7).

The trumpet of God will sound, signaling liberty from death and the gathering of God’s people (1 Cor. 15:52; cf. Lev. 25:9-10; Num. 10:3). With this signal, dead Christians will rise first (before the living Christians are changed, 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:52).

Paul’s message informs and comforts Christians about fellow Christians who die before Christ returns (1 Thess. 4:13-15). Indeed, every person will be resurrected from the dead when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:21-22). But this passage comforts Christians about departed saints, assuring us that death will not deter our hope of eternal glory. Every Christian will share in the Lord’s glory on that great day (Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:10).

Christians do not sorrow without hope when death comes because we anticipate a great day of glory and eternal reward (2 Tim. 4:8). ■

Before We Criticize...

By Heath Rogers

There are times when mistakes are made, and things need to be pointed out. And, unfortunately, we all know that offering criticism can sometimes make a bad situation even worse. Serious thought needs to go into what we will say. Maybe it would help if we would ask the following questions before offering criticism:

Why am I doing this?

Do I really want to help this person, or am I just doing this to make myself feel better? Am I trying to improve the situation, or do I just want to say, “I told you so!”? What is my motive? *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”* (Phil. 2:3-4). Regardless of what the world believes, we don’t have the right to let off some steam at the expense of another. Criticism that

is only going to make us feel better needs to be kept to ourselves.

Do I have a right to criticize?

Was I available when this person could have used some help before? Can I sympathize with what they are going through? Can I offer some positive suggestions to go along with the criticism? Some people like to just sit on the sidelines and criticize the labors of others. Such people really have no right to criticize.

Have I examined myself?

It is not right for me to give criticism that I am not willing to take. Jesus says that I must make sure that the log is out of my eye first, then I can offer to help my brother get the speck out of his eye (Matt. 7:3-5). Criticism is respected when it comes from a respectable person, but no one appreciates a hypocrite.

What will I say, and how will I say it?

This is very important. I must choose my words very carefully. They have the power to build up or to destroy (Prov. 12:18; 16:24). As Paul said, *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt...”* (Col. 4:6). What we say, and the way we say it, will make all the difference in the world.

Will it glorify God?

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Whose glory am I seeking? Am I saying something to help the cause of Christ or just to be heard? If it is just to be seen and heard by men, then truly I have my reward (Matt. 6:1-6). ■



Is It Narrow Minded?

By Jere Frost

I don't know about you, but I get a little weary of hearing the word “narrow” used as a slur against preachers who adhere to the Bible in their preaching. Sure, they are “narrow,” but so are factory workers, surgeons, druggists, and teachers.

The factory worker is so “narrow” that he uses micrometers and measures to the thousandth of an inch the bores and pistons of engines, electronic components and balancing wheels in timepieces.

The surgeon is so “narrow” that he insists on ultra-technical laboratory analysis and meticulously sterilized instruments of special design. Why is he so “picky narrow” that he makes his assistants wear cloths over their faces?

The druggist is so “narrow” that he just has to have a prescription before he will let you have certain drugs. He says he has to be “narrow” because government regulations are narrow, and even thinks it is for your good!

As you think about it, it's a blessing that somebody is “narrow-minded.” And however much we need to be narrow about vital material matters, we must be infinitely more careful and exact about spiritual laws. God will not be mocked! ■

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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