



How Much Would You Give Away If You Knew Jesus Was Coming Back This Time Next Year?

I don't have any insider information here, but for the sake of discussion what if we could somehow know that Jesus was indeed, coming back this time next year. It is certainly a question that should cause all of us to pause and reflect. If your answer to this question is different than how much you are currently planning to give this coming year, it might be good to ask yourself why? Why would the amount I give this year be different if Jesus was coming back in one year instead of twenty years or one hundred years from now? There may be a number of reasons for why our giving would be higher and I think it might be good to contemplate some of those reasons.

Reason #1: Could it be that with only one year left we would be willing to make much greater personal, material sacrifices since it would only be for one short year before we eternally relocate? In the grander scheme of eternity, twelve months is pretty insignificant.

I know when I exercise I am able to endure much greater physical "torture" because I know that my workout is only going to last for 45 minutes and then I can go back to being fat and lazy again! We are usually far more willing to give something up for Lent than we are to give it up for life. Would this be true of our current giving practices?

Reason #2: Might our giving amount be different because with only one year left, as the old hymn says, "the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace"? As the new heaven and the new earth get closer, this old one doesn't seem quite so attractive.

If you think about the value of a confederate dollar in 1861 (when the Civil War began) compared to the value of that dollar in March of 1865 (a month before the war and the Confederacy came to an end), we would all agree that a confederate dollar after April of 1865 would be worthless to whoever held it. So, giving Confederate dollars away just before the end of the war was really not much of a gift. Likewise, as the return of Christ moves closer, the "things of earth" grow more and more worthless to us because it will not be a measure of anything of value in the next life.

That is what makes the picture of the streets in heaven being paved with gold so humorous. We take gold which is universally valued here on earth and in heaven God uses it for street pavement. What the world values here is worthless there. Conversely, what the world considers worthless

here is priceless there. Would this be true of our current giving practices?

Reason #3: Would our giving increase because sending our financial resources on ahead would be much more appealing since we would be getting a much larger reward (Matthew 6:20, 19:21) in a very short time when we get to heaven next year?

It is still obvious to all of us, “You can’t take it with you.” But you can send it on ahead. If we knew that “ahead” would be only one year away and not decades or centuries away, we might view the temporal “loss” of our immediate enjoyment of and security in these things compared to the eternal gain to be a quite compelling trade off. Would this be true of our current giving practices?

Something very interesting seems to happen to our viewpoint when we dramatically shorten the timeline. The world and our place in it seem to be viewed from a totally new perspective while the real priorities of life seem to literally explode within our consciousness. We find every area of our life is quickly reshuffled creating an entirely new order of priorities. And all too often these new life priorities

seldom include what currently consumes much of our daily routine. In life, the *tyranny of the urgent* is constantly seeking to override the *priority of the important*. We always seem to take time for the trivial and the unimportant, often because we mistakenly believe that there will always be time for getting to the “big stuff” later. Well, what if there was no “later”? What if there was no “next year”?

If we only had one more year to impact the Kingdom with what God has entrusted to us, would we be living and giving differently than we are planning to do this year? If so, it might be a good spiritual and mental exercise to take some time to recalibrate our priorities to reflect an eternal mission instead of a temporal one, adopting a shorter timeline rather than a longer one.

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