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Briefing 94: Tuesday 14th December, 2021.

Dear friends,

On Sunday we thought together about the authority and power of Jesus to deliver on his Advent promises to return as King, to judge the living and the dead, to banish the devil and sin and evil for ever, and to bring in his perfect, renewed and eternal kingdom of peace, righteousness and joy. That is the great and glorious hope of the Christian. That is our destiny. Jesus' eternal kingdom is our final home.

That's not to say that there aren't many wonderful benefits of following Jesus now. There are! *'Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth'* would be two. Others would be a true and eternal purpose in life and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us to change us, equip us and *'fit us for Heaven'* as the Christmas Carol puts it. But these current blessings, wonderful though they are, are just a deposit, a taster if you will, of what is to come.

The joy we have in God now will be multiplied numerous times when we see him face to face. The peace with God we enjoy now will be incomparable to the peace we experience in eternity. The love of God we feel now will be but a rain drop compared to the ocean of love in which we will live when Jesus comes again.

But if you're honest, I suspect you don't spend much time thinking about it. Life is busy, there are practical jobs to be done, immediate concerns to be met, so thoughts of eternity will just have to take a back seat until we have more time! Yet if the hope of heaven is far from our minds, we soon find that our confidence in our eternal destiny fades too. As a result, we find ourselves living for today and tomorrow instead of for eternity; for this world and not the next; for ourselves and not for Jesus.

So let me encourage you at some point this week to grab a mug of tea and coffee and sit down and read slowly through Revelation chapters 21 and 22. As you read, look out for what is missing and for what is present in Jesus' eternal Kingdom. Meditate upon the true glory and majesty of the babe of Bethlehem that will one day be revealed. Grasp the power and authority of God over the future and imagine yourself there. With Jesus. With his people. Free from those sins that continue to bind you, and free from the aches, pains and frustrations that blight your life. Then see if you don't cry out as John did in Revelation 22:20. "Come, Lord Jesus!"

But rather than leaving those thoughts in that chair, take them with you into your daily life, at home, at work, at play. Let the eternal hope that is yours through God's saving grace inspire you to live differently because of it. To be bolder in your witness, more willing in your service, more generous with your time and possessions, more gracious with those who wound you, more patient in your affliction, more joyful in your suffering. Let the hope of the future impact on how you live now.

That isn't easy. I know that. I'm writing this as much for myself as for you because I know that I am so easily distracted from what really, truly and eternally matters. But if we are to live for Jesus in this world, I'm convinced that we need a greater sense of anticipation of the world to come, and to have a greater sense of joy in its coming. The suffering and persecuted churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation needed that. The weary, worldly, weighed down churches in England in 2021 need that too.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

Grace and peace,

Dave

IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!

Services over the Christmas period: Do come and join us!

St Mary's Graveley

Sunday 19th at 11:30am Christingle and Nativity Service
Christmas Day at 11:30am Christmas Family Celebration with Communion

St Nicholas Church Stevenage

Sunday 19th at 9:30am Morning worship: Service of the Word
Sunday 19th at 6:30pm Carols by Candlelight
Christmas Eve at 1, 3 + 5pm Christingle and Nativity Service
Christmas Eve at 11pm Midnight Service by candlelight with Communion
Christmas Day at 9:30am Christmas Family Celebration with Communion
Boxing Day at 10am Joint Benefice Service with Communion

COVID PROTOCOLS: A reminder. If you sit in a **masked** area of the church, please keep your face coverings on for **the whole service**. If you'd rather sing without a mask, please sit in the 'mask free' areas provided. Government advice is that we take a **lateral flow test** before meeting lots of people. We have lots of free kits in church. Why not take one and use it either on Saturday evening or first thing Sunday morning before you come?

Come + Pray!

PRAYER GATHERING: Wednesday 15th December 7:45pm in St Nicholas church.

We'll begin with sung worship, hear from God's word and spend time praying together for our remaining Christmas services, for the church around the world, our mission partners and for those in need. Come in person or ask for a Zoom link to join online.

Please note: This will be the last prayer gathering for 2021. We will start again in the New Year

Private Prayer in St Nicholas church THIS WEEK.

Tuesday 14th from 2pm-4pm, Wednesday 15th from 12noon-2pm, + Thursday 16th from 10am - 12noon

READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS: The readings for the next 3 weeks are as follows:

19th December: Matt 11:20-30 26th December: Matt 21:1-11 3rd January: Matt 21:12-17

MISSION PARTNER NEWS:

CHRISTMAS GIFTS: If you'd like to contribute to a Christmas gift for our mission partners at St Nicholas or St Mary's, please place your gift in an envelope marked MISSION PARTNERS in the offering at either church (or use the tap and donate machine in St Nicholas, selecting that option). You can also place a donation in the bowl by the kitchen at St Nicholas.

RACHAEL AND BERNIE MULUUTA: Send them a Christmas message by using the form here: [Christmas cards | Crosslinks](#)

ST NICHOLAS FINANCIAL UPDATE LETTERS AND FORMS: If you haven't done so already, please prayerfully consider reviewing your giving. Hard copies of the letters sent out with the previous newsletter are at the back of St Nicholas Church. A similar update for St Mary's will come out in the New Year.