



WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN

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Good morning and welcome to Let the Bible Speak. History declares that Christ came to this earth two-thousand years ago. Prophecy declares that He will come again. Why is He coming? Can we know when He is coming again? And are you prepared and watching for His coming? These are all important questions for the Lord is going to return and that will be an incredible day. It will be a day of deliverance for many and damnation for many others and what we do regarding Jesus, Himself, will make the difference. So, we do well to keep the promised coming of the Lord at the top of our minds and spend our lives making preparations.

In Acts chapter 1, Luke describes the amazing scene the disciples witnessed outside Jerusalem two millennia ago as Jesus returned to His home in glory. Beginning in verse 9, he writes: ***“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.”***

The angels declared some important facts concerning the future coming of Christ. Their words certainly ignited a longing in the hearts of the disciples who saw Him go away. Their anticipation was shared by the others who became believers in the days to come. We want to talk about the return of Christ today and I hope you’ll ask yourself: “am I ready?”. ‘WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN’, after a song.

The return of Christ was a pressing theme in the lives of the first Christians. The early church possessed a spirit of hope and excitement for the coming of the Lord that we have largely lost. When they thought of the Christ returning, their hearts beat with anticipation, not dread, and certainly not doubt. The final words of the book of Revelation and of scripture altogether, consist of an earnest prayer for Christ to come quickly. The Thessalonians were so excited about the coming of the Lord, they at one point became confused and thought they had missed it, which led Paul to write a letter to them and assure them that His coming and the accompanying resurrection were still to come. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

When Paul wrote to Titus, he said the grace of God teaches us to be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,” (Titus 2:13) The word ‘looking’ does not merely mean to point one’s eyes at something, but to eagerly expect it; to anticipate it. He says the coming of the Lord, to the Christian, is a ‘blessed hope’ and will be a glorious sight. It won’t be that way for everyone on earth. The bible makes that clear in other passages, but for the saints of God, it means the fulfillment of all their hopes and aspirations.

How much thought do you give to the second coming of Christ? I don’t just mean when you hear a sermon about it, but I mean in your day-to-day life. Do you ever wake up and think, this could be the day Christ comes again? Do you ever imagine what His coming will be like and ask, would I meet Him with confidence if He were to come right now or would I meet Him with shame and dread? 1 John 2:28 says, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” He is coming again, and we will either be watching and waiting for it or we will be caught unaware and unprepared.

I first want to emphasize the **CERTAINTY OF HIS RETURN**. New Testament scripture almost takes for granted that first century believers understood the Lord would come again one day, and as I say, they thought it could be soon and welcomed the thought of it. Christ had not left the earth after His incarnation before He was promising the disciples that one day He would come again. Before He went to the cross and told them once His work here was through that He must leave them behind on earth to carry on in the kingdom, He comforted their anxious hearts by saying in John 14:1-4, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

Not only did He, Himself, promise to personally return, the angels who attended His ascension, re-iterated this hope to the awestruck and even bewildered apostles, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11)

Notice, that not only did the two angels tell them that He WOULD come again but that it would be a PERSONAL coming. In other words, as they watched the glorified body of Jesus ascend into the heavens to be received up into the 'third heaven', that they would see HIM return in the same manner. In other words, it would not be an invisible and secret return, nor would it merely be some type of invisible 'spiritual' coming but that they would see HIM return from the skies where they had watched Him leave. Some suggest that the coming of the Lord simply refers to Him coming in the form of the confirmation of the New Covenant or that it refers to His coming in power through the agency of the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70. He did indeed come in power, in a sense, in the destruction of Jerusalem. But that's not what the angels said the apostles would see. They said they would see HIM coming in the same way they saw Him go.

Second, **His return will also be SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED.** Peter said, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night..." In other words, it will occur at a time unknown to man. While we can know with certainty that He will come again, and though we are to be watching and anticipating His return, we cannot mark it on a calendar or somehow divine the timing of it, for Jesus Himself made it plain that no man knows the day or the hour. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." (Matthew 24:36) Now, it is alleged that Jesus gave signs of His second coming in the first half of that chapter, but a close examination of the language Jesus used through much of the chapter will show that He was referring to the promised destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. They could see signs that would signal the approach and invasion of Titus and his Roman armies so that they might flee to the mountains and escape the bloodbath. Why would Christians flee to the mountains for Christ's second coming? They won't. The disciples were associating the destruction of the temple with the end of the earth and Jesus is showing them that would not be the case. While there would be signs of the impending invasion of the Jerusalem, there would no such signs of His personal coming and they were to simply be ready, as Christians of any age should be.

Various religious leaders have foolishly tried to predict the time of Christ's coming at different points in history and every one of them was embarrassingly proven wrong. Even today, every time there is a conflict in the Middle East or some epic natural disaster, or they see the world as especially unsettled, they declare that the second coming is right around the corner. We don't know that. That doesn't mean Christ isn't coming and that we shouldn't regard it urgently, but the church at any and all times should be expecting Christ to return and be prepared to meet Him. It's on God's calendar, for sure, but you and I are not made privy to that, as Jesus said. So, we watch, and we wait and we are foolish if we fall asleep and fail to do so. The people of this world will certainly be taken by surprise. Those who ignore Christ's warnings of coming judgment and the gospel's urgent appeal to obediently bow to the Christ and to be saved from the wrath to come, will be shocked when He actually appears.

Peter said that "in the last days" (and that phrase simply means all throughout the Christian dispensation – Acts 2:17) there would be those who would scoff and mock and say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were

from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2Peter 3:3-10)

What will His coming mean? What will it mean to the church and what will it mean to those outside of the Lord's church?

1 - IT WILL BE A DAY OF EXCLAMATION.

The Lord will suddenly appear with great announcement and the world will come to an instant halt. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God..." His coming will not be secret or unannounced. Some suggest that people will simply disappear, and people will wonder where they went. The bible doesn't teach that. He will return with a 'shout' or a call to His accompanying angels to go about their work in bringing the end of the world and men to judgment. He will come with the sound of a trumpet. Trumpets were used throughout ancient times to herald great events. With this, Jesus, Himself will appear in the clouds. He who came to this earth the first time as a lowly lamb will return in splendor, majesty, and great glory. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 that he will return with 'flaming fire' meaning He will return in such glory that the skies will be ablaze with His brightness and power. Exactly one chapter later, 2 Thessalonians 2:8 says he will destroy the lawless one with "the brightness of His coming." There is nothing secret or unawares about the appearance of Jesus Christ the second time. There will be no lowly family huddled in a little dwelling but the universe, as it were, will shout His sudden arrival. Correspondingly,

2. IT WILL BE A DAY OF ILLUMINATION.

Those who doubted the existence or the credibility of Jesus will no longer be skeptical when He appears. Those who mocked Him and those who ignored Him and those who denied Him will have their sarcastic and arrogant façade stripped away and will be forced to admit that Jesus was the Christ. Romans 14:10-11 says "...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD."" What a shocking day that is going to be for those who spent their lives in denial of the truth of Christ and what a dreadful day for those forced to confess Him as opposed to them who gladly did so in this life.

3. IT WILL BE A DAY OF VINDICATION.

Paul told the Thessalonians, "when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." (2

Thessalonians 1:10) This was the intent of the prayerful cry of John who was banished to the isle of Patmos while he wrote to persecuted churches who wondered if their cause would survive. While their blood was being shed by the wicked opponents of Christianity, the martyrs cried out to God for relief and for vindication. They longed for their royal Captain, Christ Jesus, to reveal Himself and deliver them and John tells them through the fantastic symbols and word pictures of the Book of Revelation that the forces of King Jesus will prevail and that despite the battles they seem to be losing, they would emerge in victory and Christ's enemies put to shame. That's what will occur in the day of Christ's coming. The victory He secured at Calvary and when He came forth from the tomb, will be fully manifest and displayed when He has the last word and Satan, and his hordes of accomplices will be cast into the bottomless pit forever. The shout that will occur on that last day will be a signal of victory for good and righteousness. "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.", said Paul in 1Co 15:24-26

4. IT WILL BE A DAY OF RESURRECTION.

Paul said death will be the last enemy destroyed? What did he mean? He spends the majority of the 58 verses of that chapter explaining the bodily resurrection that will occur on that day. Yes, the dead will rise again with new and glorified bodies like what Jesus had when He came forth from the grave and ascended to heaven. We will experience the same process and ascend bodily to the new heavens and earth, God's beautiful abode that Christ is preparing for us to live in forever. Graves will burst asunder, glorified bodies will come forth in unmarred and perennial perfection in the likeness of Jesus to serve God around His throne for eternity. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says that when Christ comes, "...the dead in Christ will rise first..." and those who are still alive will be caught up to meet them in the air and ever be with the Lord. But that resurrection applies to the wicked as well, according to John 5:28-29 and Acts 17:31. They will come forth from their graves to meet the Lord as well. But that will be a far different kind of meeting. Because that will also be:

5. A DAY OF ADJUDICATION.

The court of heaven will be called to order, the righteous Judge, Jesus Christ, will be seated upon His great white throne the judgment of all who lived will take place. John described that scene in Revelation 20:11-15 and Paul said in Romans 14:10 and verse 12 that "we shall ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ...So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." We will answer for the way we lived our lives. We will answer for even the idle words we spoke (Matthew 12:36). Things kept under the cover of darkness instead of being brought under the blood of Christ will be exposed. (1 Corinthians 4:5) Even the thoughts and motives of our heart will be laid bare in judgment. There will be no evading the righteous examination and reckoning of that day.

6. A DAY OF RECTIFICATION.

Not only will sin be exposed but injustices will be made right, victims made whole, and truth and right will be upheld. Has someone wronged you and it seems there is no justice? There will

be according to Paul in Romans 12:19. No wrong will get by in Christ's court. It will be a day of ADJUDICATION.

7. A DAY OF RECOGNITION.

Just as no unforgiven, unrighteous deed will go unpunished, no faithful deed in the name of Christ will be FORGOTTEN. Crowns and rewards will be given to the faithful and what a beautiful picture is painted in Revelation 4:10 that in heaven, the righteous will cast those crowns at the feet of the Lamb who gave us our victories.

8. A DAY OF SEPERATION.

At that great judgment, those not written in the Lamb's book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. Those who refused to surrender to Christ Jesus and place their obedient faith in Him will have to stand on their own merits and the only thing the sinner has merited from God is His wrath. But the righteous, by His grace and mercy, and the atoning work of God's Son will be given an everlasting entrance into God's heavenly kingdom to shine as the brightness of the stars forever. Jesus Himself described that great day of judgment in Matthew 25:46, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Loved ones will be parted. Some husbands and wives will go in opposite directions forever. Some will never see children or parents again. Because that will be day of separation. Jesus is coming. Which side will you be on in that great multitude? Will you greet the Lord's appearing with jubilation or indignation? Will you love His appearing or dread it? Will you see His smiling face or will you meet His wrath. What you do with the opportunity today to obey the gospel and begin living for Him may very well answer the question.

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