

# **The Second Coming**

**by**

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## **The Second Coming**

### **1 – He is Coming Again**

When I was a youngster my dad would often come downstairs after shaving and he'd be singing "O what a beautiful morning" or "Early one morning, just as the sun was rising, I heard a maiden singing in the valley below – O never leave me, O don't deceive me." I didn't know the word 'deceive' and was told it meant 'to mislead, to cheat or to delude.'

When Jesus spoke about His second coming, He would say, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming 'I am the Christ' and will deceive many" (Mathew 24 verses 4 and 5). He warned, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognise them" (Mathew 7 verses 15 and 16).

A preacher called William Miller found an audience of thousands for his prediction that Jesus would return on 22nd October 1844. When it didn't happen, that day became known as The Great Disappointment. Jim Jones with the Peoples' Temple in Guyana in 1978 and David Koresh at Waco, Texas in 1993 led their followers to their death by deceiving them. Obviously, the author of the book "88 reasons why the Lord will return in 1988" was equally deceived. The Bible teaches that Jesus will return to planet earth one day – but no-one knows the date. Someone has said, "Date setters are up-setters."

You may ask "Who says, 'Jesus is coming again'?" The Lord Jesus Christ does, for a start. In chapter 14 of John's gospel Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (verses 2 and 3).

At the time of his Ascension from the Mount of Olives, we hear angelic testimony regarding Christ's return. The angels said to the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1 verse 11).

In Hebrews chapter 9 verses 27 and 28 we read, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him." There are some lovely words in Titus chapter 2 verses 11 to 13 where Paul writes, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." It's clear where our focus should be – not looking for signs, but looking for Him.

Non-Christians are very accustomed to thinking about the end of the world, but they don't anticipate that God will have anything to do with it. They think in terms of a nuclear holocaust, global warming or pollution. However, according to the Bible, the climax of the ages will be the return of Jesus Christ to planet earth.

Teaching on the second coming seems like a wave of the sea. It gains prominence and rises, and then seems to fall away and people say "I can't remember when I last heard a message on the Return of Christ."

However, the doctrine of the Second Advent is mentioned over 300 times in the New Testament alone. Not one New Testament writer fails to speak of the Lord's coming again. The early church held strongly to the doctrine of Christ's return. In fact, the watchword of the early believers was "Maranatha" – Come, O Lord – Come, Lord Jesus.

The church taught the bodily, visible return of Jesus as King. Whenever we take communion we are mindful of both the first and second comings of Christ. "Do this in remembrance of me" in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 24 is followed by "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (verse 26).

Just as Micah (Micah 5 verse 2) prophetically pinpointed the very village where Jesus would be born – Bethlehem – so the prophet Zechariah has pinpointed the very area to which the risen, ascended and glorified Christ will return, "On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14 verse 4). That prophecy was given over 2,500 years ago. It hasn't happened yet, but it will because the scripture cannot be broken. Are you looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ? Are you ready to meet Him?

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### **2 – Sign of the Times**

Biblical prophecy is not Old Moore's Almanac. More than a quarter of the Bible is prophecy and 80% has already been fulfilled with 100% accuracy. The prophecies and warnings about the end of the age and Christ's return have this purpose – to prepare us, not to scare us.

It is clear from scripture that at the end of the age righteousness and wickedness will mature simultaneously. The light will become brighter and the darkness will grow darker. As Derek Prince wrote, "Lawlessness will be the hallmark of the last phase of world history." The best is yet to be, but the worst is still to come.

There's an old chorus that says "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. Earth's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ." Do you not long for the day when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together?" Do you cry to God for the fulfilment of Habakkuk's vision that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea? O for the day when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and the bats, when the demonic principality that energises all false religion falls, like Dagon, shattered before the Lord God Almighty!

Why is Jesus coming again? Because He is the Truth and He will keep His word. He will fulfil His manifesto commitments and ensure that the meek inherit the earth. He's coming for His Bride. He's coming for the national salvation of Israel, His ancient people. He's coming for the overthrow of the Antichrist and of Satan himself. He's coming to judge and to establish His millennial kingdom on the earth. Then prayer will be answered. God's kingdom will come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In Matthew chapter 24, as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately. They wanted to know what would be the sign of His coming back and of the end of the age. After warning about not being deceived, He says "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth-pains" (verses 6 to 8). One might argue these things have always been occurring. But are they not growing in intensity and frequency? Since the end of World War 2 there have been over 250 different wars and though there were 640 earthquakes in the 18th century and 2,119 in the 19th century, in the 20th century there have been more earthquakes than in the last 5,000 years. The whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of child-birth right up to the present time.

We want to know when Christ's return will happen. Jesus says that it is classified information known only to the Father. However He does, in broad brush strokes, tell us that the climate will be as it was in Noah's day and Lot's day. Noah's day (Genesis 6) was marked by wickedness, evil, violence and corruption. Lot's day (Genesis 18) was a time of grievous sin and sexual perversions. Jesus declares in Luke 17: "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark" (verses 26 to 27). In other

words, daily life went on as normal. “Then the flood came and destroyed them all” (verse 27). The event was sudden.

“It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building” (verse 28). Life as we know it. “”But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed” (verses 29 to 30).

Perhaps you’re thinking, “Where is the promise of His coming?” The Bible warns that ‘in the last days scoffers will come’ (2 Peter 3 verse 3). Mockers will taunt believers. The first Christians were eagerly expectant and yet were disappointed. It didn’t happen in their lifetime. An old retired clergymen once asked, “How can you be watching and expecting for a thousand years?” But doesn’t the Word say “With Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day”? Three times in the Bible’s last chapter, the risen, ascended, glorified Christ declares, “Behold, I am coming soon!”

One thing is certain. Christ’s return is nearer now than at any other time in history. Tomorrow we shall be one day nearer the Lord’s return!

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### **3 – Hastening His Coming**

Some have suggested it was Christ's purpose to return quickly. If He had had His way without hindrance, would He have already returned? The sober truth is we, His followers, were tasked to "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16 verse 15). Have we achieved this? Jesus specified in Matthew 24:14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

There is a way to hasten His coming. Live only for Christ. Peter wrote, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Peter 3 verses 11 and 12). Twenty centuries have rolled by – O the marvellous, inconceivable patience of God the Father. Patience is love at its best. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation for more and more in this day of grace (2 Peter 3 verse 9).

The failure to trust and obey is always costly, but God is always a Redeemer and it is not His will that any should perish.

A Jewish teacher I used to work with once asked me, "Is there not a more unambiguous sign, a more convincing sign about Jesus return that hasn't been going on like wars and earthquakes for hundreds and hundreds of years?"

Yes there is. It's the nation of Israel, the key to prophecy. In Jeremiah chapter 24 the Jews are likened to figs in the vision of two baskets of figs. Israel is the fig tree nation. Do you remember the enacted parable where Jesus cursed the fig tree and it withered? It was the day after Palm Sunday and Jesus was making a statement about Judaism. "He found nothing but leaves" (Mark 11 verses 12 to 14). Judaism is the root but Christianity is the fruit.

Jesus told the disciples enquiring about signs of the end of the age an important parable in Luke 21 verses 29 to 33 "Look at the fig tree" (remember, the fig tree nation is Israel) "and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. I tell you the truth, this generation (or race) will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

There are bible scholars who interpret this passage as follows. Israel is the fig tree nation. When it begins to blossom – and all the nations bud and sprout – we're nearing the time of the manifest kingdom.

Hadn't the Sovereign Lord promised His ancient people, "I will bring you back to the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37 verse 12)? The race that sees the fig tree nation emerging – and all the new nations – will not pass away until all these things have happened.

Here's the wonder. Fact is stranger than fiction. It's unthinkable that Israel, God's chosen people, should be placed on the back burners like the cursed fig-tree of Mark chapter 11, dried up from the roots through unbelief and sin – but it happened.

After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD under Titus's invading army, the spot light of God was turned from the Jews onto the Gentiles. The Jews were scattered among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other.

We read of the rise and fall of nations, but here's the end time prophetic sign – the rise and fall and rise again of Israel. Having been buried in the nations of the world, what Ezekiel prophesied has happened, "I will take you out of the nations, I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land (Ezekiel 36 verse 24).

In the parable of the ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25 it says "The bridegroom was a long time in coming and they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (verse 5). The church needs to be aroused regularly to be sober and vigilant. After mentioning "the fig-tree and all the trees", Jesus instructs His disciples, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth (Luke 21 verses 34 and 35). Francis Frangipane writes, "In the days ahead many will be stirred by proclamations, both true and false, of ominous events set for fulfilment on specific dates. However we are not being prepared for a 'date' but for a marriage. It is the depth of our day by day relationship with Christ that defines walking with God at the end of the age."

I close with these questions, "Are you ready for Christ's return?" "Are you watching and waiting for this blessed hope?"

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### 4 – Perilous Times

In 2 Timothy chapter 3 Paul describes the godlessness of the last days. “But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days” (verse 1). The King James Bible says “perilous times”, Moffatt says, “harsh times”, the margin says “times of stress.” It’s the same Greek word translated ‘violent’ in Matthew 8 verse 28 to describe the two mad men at Gadara. Paul continues, “People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them” (verses 2 to 5).

There are nineteen different phrases used in these verses to describe what it will be like in ‘the last days.’ There will be blatant selfishness, materialism and hedonism. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, not lovers of the good. They will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. When men no longer fear God, they will no longer regard man. Religion will be phoney. “Having a form of godliness, but denying its power” (verse 5). Religious rituals will lack the life and reality of a living faith.

Has not the formula “Worship God, love people, use things” become scrambled in our day? The modern mantra seems to be “Worship ourselves, love things and use people.” This life style results in frustration, but we can’t see it, having been deceived.

In the last days God makes a distinction between His people and those who are not His people, just as when He was about to bring the Israelites out of Goshen in Egypt, He made a distinction. As Warren Wiersbe has written, “The whole point of preaching about the return of Jesus Christ is not calculation (when will it happen?) but consecration.” Be ready when the Bridegroom comes.

In Isaiah chapter 21 someone calls “‘Watchman, what is left of the night?’ The watchman replies, ‘Morning is coming, but also the night. If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again’” (verses 11 and 12). Down through the centuries Jesus still says, “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the seas. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21 verses 25 to 28).

At the incarnation Jesus slipped into this world, incognito, in the fullness of time by the back door. At the rapture the saints, the caught away ones, will rise up to meet Him in the air. And at His second coming, there will be no ambiguity. At the end of the tribulation, the time of Jacob’s trouble and Daniel’s seventieth week, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to planet earth by the front door. What Enoch prophesied will happen. “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone” (Jude verse 14). What John prophesied on Patmos will happen. “Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every

eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him” (Revelation 1 verse 7). What the prophet, Zechariah prophesied so clearly in chapter 14 will surely happen. It will occur when all the nations are gathered against Jerusalem to battle. “The Lord will go out and fight against those nations as He fights in the day of battle” (verse 3). “On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem ... Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him” (verses 4 and 5).

The best description of the second coming is in Revelation 19 verses 11 to 16 where we read, “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

Christian - Stay faithful until He comes!

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### **5 – The King is Coming**

A churchgoer asked, “Why study Bible prophecy?” Here are three quick reasons. One, because it provides answers found nowhere else. Two, it is as a lamp shining in a dark place for it’s the revelation and communication of the mind of God. And three, it will come to pass because “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10 verse 35).

A major sign that Jesus is coming again is the miracle of the Jews. It took biological miracles in the barren wombs of Sarah, Rebekkah and Rachel to bring the nation to the birth. The Jews were divinely chosen to be God’s demonstration people who would later astonish the world. They were meant to be a shop window showcasing what it is to live under the blessing of God. Sadly, they missed out through disobedience and, as prophesied in Deuteronomy chapter 28, they have been scattered in exile across the world. The Jews have been dragged away as slaves, grossly humiliated and persecuted throughout their history.

Who would have given you anything for the Jewish nation after World War II? Surely Israel was destroyed, wiped out, finished. She would never rise again! But Jeremiah 16 verse 14 and 15 is being fulfilled in our day. “Therefore behold, the days are coming”, says the Lord, “That it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ “but, ‘the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.”

The signs of the times tell us that the return of Jesus the Messiah is surely at hand!

Rejoice, Christian! The King is coming – unexpectedly, personally, suddenly, visibly, audibly and spectacularly.

There’s coming a day when the people of God on this polluted planet are going to be snatched away ‘to meet the Lord in the air.’ Christians call this the rapture from the Latin word, RAPTO, which means ‘to seize, to carry off.’ The Greek word is HARPAZO ‘to snatch away.’ It’s the same word Luke used in Acts 8:39 when ‘the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again.’

The rapture will be the greatest wake-up call this world has ever known, and there are more details of it in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 than anywhere else in scripture.

How does Paul know all this? He says it’s ‘according to the Lord’s own word’ (verse 15). God told him “The Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (verses 16 and 17).

No wonder Paul urges his readers to “encourage each other with these words” (verse 18).

Remember why Paul wrote first Thessalonians. It was not to present some specific doomsday scenario, but to enlighten uninformed and worried believers who had lost dear ones. "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (4 verse 16). Death is the great separator.

Just as everyone who lives, one day dies; so everyone who dies, one day will be raised from the dead. Only the timescale is different.

The car bumper sticker said, "Don't take life too seriously. You won't get out of it alive." That's not true. We will all live forever somewhere, so the big question is not, "Will I live forever?" but "Where will I live forever?"

The Bible is quite clear about this. Ultimately all will be raised from the dead – believer or non-believer. Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life said, "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live ... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5 verses 25 to 29). Daniel had long ago prophesied "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Chapter 12 verse 2).

The second coming of Christ will usher in judgements on the wicked and rewards for the righteous. The Old Testament and the New Testament both speak of two resurrections. The resurrection of the righteous is the first resurrection (Revelation 20 verse 5). This is what Hebrews 11:35 speaks of as 'a better resurrection.' Then there is the second resurrection (Revelation 20). These resurrections are one thousand years apart. The first is at the start of the millennium – the thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The second is at the end of the millennium just before the Great White Throne judgement (Revelation 20 verses 11 and 12). That's when the books are opened. Is your name in the Lamb's book of life, listener? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour or will you face Him as your Judge on that final day?

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### 6 – End Time Events

End time events can be very confusing. Let's try and put some in order. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 we read about the first resurrection which occurs at the time of the rapture. Then comes the seven years of Tribulation followed by the visible return of Christ the King and His millennial reign on earth. At the end of this all non-believers are resurrected to face the great white throne judgement and then the second death. The second death has no power over believers.

We always want to know when this will happen. The scriptures call us to spiritual watchfulness and a godly lifestyle so that as 'sons of the light and sons of the day' (1 Thessalonians 5 verse 5) we are not taken by surprise. Second coming teaching encourages us to live clean and holy lives. This is spelt out clearly in John's first letter. "And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming" (chapter 2 verse 28). "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as He is pure" (chapter 3 verses 2 and 3).

One day, in the fullness of time, at the rapture the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the midst as the church of the first born is air lifted to glory and to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The residence of the Holy Spirit on earth will be withdrawn. The day of the Lord, frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, especially in the prophet Joel, will come upon the earth – 'the day of Jacob's trouble', the painful culmination of Daniel's seventieth week.

Do you realise, believer, that the very presence of the church, Christ's body, on earth is delaying the coming judgement? It's 'as in the days of Lot' (Genesis 19). Lot was not a dedicated man, but his very presence in Sodom held back the wrath of God until he was snatched away.

Some may recall the old hymn which said:-

"He is not a disappointment! He is coming by and by,  
In my heart I have the witness that His coming draweth nigh.  
All the scoffers may despise me and no change around may see,  
But He tells me He is coming, and that's quite enough for me!"

In Romans chapter 8 we're told there's a lot of groaning going on in this fallen world. To groan is to be burdened, to utter a deep moaning sound as in pain or grief. Paul writes "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of child birth right up to the present time" (verse 22). The whole universe craves release from the curse placed on it in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3 verse 17). How creation longs to be liberated from its bondage to decay. Christians are also groaning. "We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (verse 23). Don't you ever long for that day when you'll have a new body, a resurrection body? No need for any more hearing aids, false teeth, walking sticks, Zimmer

frames, stair lifts, wheel chairs. How we resent old age and yearn for the redemption of our bodies, delivered forever from decay and corruption. The Holy Spirit also groans as He helps us in our weakness. Paul writes, "We do not know what we ought to pray for but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (verse 26). This intercession by the Spirit for the saints is 'in accordance with God's will' (verse 27). What we're seeing are the death throes of one civilisation and the birth pangs of another.

In Daniel chapter 7 human history is portrayed as four savage beasts. This reveals the world's true character. That's what is hiding behind the statue's refined and sophisticated façade in Daniel chapter 2. World empires, at heart, are unregenerate. Gentile powers and their rule which look so impressive in men's eyes, when impacted ultimately by God's kingdom, will be, like the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, smashed to pieces (Daniel 2 verses 31 and 35). The rock 'cut out, but not by human hands, that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth' is Messiah and His kingdom rule. It's as if Gentile history is presented as a dream, just an image, and then you wake up in the morning to the reality of God's kingdom ruling over all. O Lord, lighten our darkness, for in Your light we shall see light!

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### **7 - The Judge is at the Door**

One of the frequently asked questions regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is “Will the church go through the Great Tribulation?” This is not the same as asking ‘Will the church see no suffering?’ Jesus, the master of understatement, promised, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16 verse 33). Today in many parts of our world the church is suffering acutely. But will the church in the last days go through the Great Tribulation? I don’t believe she will, because the rapture – the snatching up of the caught away ones – precedes the Great Tribulation. Jesus ‘rescues us from the coming wrath’ (1 Thessalonians 1 verse 10). Churches are mentioned in Revelation chapters 1 to 3 and the refrain is “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (chapter 2 verse 7). Then the church disappears and is mentioned no more. In Revelation chapter 4 heaven is empty, but in chapter 5 heaven is full.

Another frequently asked question is “Will people be saved during the Great Tribulation?” Certainly! The rapture of the church will trigger off a wave of mass evangelism for people will say, “This is that which our Christian friends who’ve disappeared kept telling us about.” Suddenly the church moves out, when the trumpet is blown, and the born again are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then the clock starts ticking for Daniel’s seventieth week, the seven years of Jacob’s trouble. Israel becomes God’s witness again. The Holy Spirit will be present in the world as in Old Testament times when He clothed and empowered certain people. 144,000 Messianic Jews are sealed as His witnesses (see Revelation chapters 7 and 14). Still the gospel net will be flung out far and wide to catch men, but then it will be a race against time. The countdown is on and only seven years remain until the bodily return of Christ Jesus to planet earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

God is righteous and His judgements are righteous. At the second coming He comes to punish wickedness. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 tells us what will happen when ‘the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed’ (verses 7 to 10).

Some people say, “I don’t like messages on judgement, sin and hell.” We’re not meant to like them, but to take heed of them and run to Jesus who alone can save us from the wrath to come. As Warren Wiersbe wrote, “Just as a physician cannot love health without hating disease and dealing with it, so God cannot love righteousness without hating sin and judging it.”

As James, the Lord’s half-brother, writes, “Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming ... stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near ... The Judge is standing at the door!” (chapter 5 verses 7 to 9).

A holy God cannot leave sin unjudged. When God says, regarding His wrath, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Romans 12 verse 19) He isn’t pretending. We read in Isaiah’s last chapter, “See, the Lord is coming with fire, and His chariots are like a whirlwind; He will

bring down His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with His sword the Lord will execute judgement upon all men, and many will be those slain by the Lord" (chapter 66 verses 15 and 16). However much we may wish these verses were not in the Bible, they remain in God's word.

The world is coming to an end, but that end is personal rather than impersonal. In fact the end is a person. Jesus is the end. As David Pawson has written, "Christians are really the only ones who are longing for 'the end' to come, every generation hoping that this will happen during their lifetime." They are eagerly awaiting Him, the King in His beauty.

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### **8 – The Man of Sin**

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians around 51 AD there was a fair amount of confusion regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ. In fact a fake letter, a forgery, was in circulation purporting to be from Paul the apostle claiming the second coming had already taken place.

Paul wrote “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way” (2 Thessalonians 2 verses 1 to 3).

Although the rapture – the secret snatching away of believers from the earth – could happen any time soon, the public return of Jesus Christ to this earth will not happen ‘until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction’ (2 Thessalonians 2 verse 3).

Who is this ‘man of sin’ who ‘will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God’ (verse 4)? This is the Antichrist. Only John uses the word Antichrist in his writings. For instance, in 1 John 2 verse 18 we read, “Dear Children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.” In 1 John 4 verse 3 he writes, “Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.” The spirit of antichrist wants to oppose Christ and replace Christ.

John writes in 2 John verse 7, “Many deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” Back in history, people wondered whether any tyrant who was the embodiment of evil – could be the promised Antichrist.

All these leaders might be considered forerunners of that ultimate masterpiece of Satan, the Antichrist. He will manifest after the rapture and will cause the world to worship the devil. Will he emerge as a peaceful, political ruler who unites ten nations of Europe into a strong power block? Will he temporarily solve the Middle East crisis? We do not know.

What we do know is that the signing of the covenant with Israel signals the start of Daniel’s seventieth week – that seven year period known as the Day of the Lord. But after 3½ years this ‘superman’ reveals his true colours. It’s that Judas moment when the clever cover-up is blown wide open. The supposed peace maker turns out to be the peace breaker. He takes over the temple in Jerusalem and this sham protector of the Jews turns out to be violently anti-Semitic, their persecutor. Antichrist will be energised by Satan. As the prophet Daniel foretold, he will set up ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ (Daniel 9 verse 27 and 11 verse 31). It will be a time of unhindered lawlessness. The Holy Spirit is holding him back at the moment but he shall be ‘revealed at the proper time’ (2 Thessalonians 2 verse 6).

At the moment civilisation still has a veneer of decency through law enforcement, education, science and reason. But it's constantly being broken down. The Holy Spirit, the restrainer, is holding back the floodtide of iniquity as long as the church is here. Never underestimate the presence of the church in this world. It is light in the darkness. There is a 'secret power of lawlessness already at work' (verse 7) – what the Authorised Version of the Bible calls 'the mystery of iniquity'.

The Bible declares that "the coming of the lawless one (i.e. Antichrist) will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2 verses 9 and 10).

In the final analysis Jesus will bring an end to Satan's operations by the outshining of His presence. "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4 verse 1). "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendour of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2 verse 8). Ultimately there will be a demonstration of power to win the battle of the ages – not a debate by theologians. It will be works not words. The God, who answers by fire, let Him be God.

In view of all this, have you placed your faith in Christ who gave his life to save you from your sins and from the wrath to come? Are you eagerly awaiting the appearance of the Saviour to take away his people?

## The Second Coming

### 9 - The Day of the Lord

There's so much I don't understand. I believe certain passages of scripture are sealed up until the time of the end. They'll make sense only when divine wisdom is given. Then they'll spring to life. We read in Daniel chapter 12, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end" (verse 9). Some riddles of prophecy have not yet been unlocked. Religious guesswork is no use.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways God's ways. His thoughts and His ways are far higher than ours. We would have sent Paul to the Jews because of his brilliant Jewish background. We would have sent Peter to the Gentiles because this fisherman had the common touch. The Lord didn't want His disciples to fit in. He wanted them to stick out!

If we believe we are part of the church in the end time, what kind of people ought we to be? Peter clearly answers, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Peter 3 verses 11 and 12). He urges us to "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him" (verse 14). Christians have always gone through trials and tribulations since this is part of dedicated Christian living, but we will not go through the Great Tribulation that is appointed for the godless world.

During the night before the cross, Jesus was on trial in front of the whole Sanhedrin. The High Priest, Caiaphas, asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ?" Jesus replied, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14 verses 61 and 62). Centuries later, Charles Wesley penned these words:

"Lo! He comes with clouds descending  
Once for favoured sinners slain:  
Thousand thousand saints attending  
Swell the triumph of His train!  
Hallelujah! Jesus comes, and comes to reign."

The drama of the ages reaches a mighty climax at the Battle of Armageddon. Darkness falls. Time is running out. The day of grace is nearly over. That great day of God Almighty has come which Old Testament prophets foretold 2,500 years ago.

Isaiah had declared, "See, the day of the Lord is coming ... the stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light" (Isaiah 13 verses 9 and 10). There's coming a final day when the wrath and fierce anger of the Lord of hosts will be cut loose. I wouldn't want to be unsaved on that day.

Similarly the prophet Joel had foreseen that dread and awful day. "The Day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand – a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come" (Joel 2 verses 1 and 2). Joel goes on, "Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no

longer shine ... The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?" (verses 10 and 11).

We gain the same vision in Amos (chapter 8 verse 9), "In that day", declares the Sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight," There's coming a day when total darkness will engulf this earth immediately prior to the Second Advent. When Jesus was crucified at Calvary, "there was darkness over the whole land" for three hours, but a dark day is coming, a darkness which can be felt, a thick darkness where no one can see anyone else and the words of the prophet Joel (chapter 3 verse 14 and 15) will be fulfilled: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine." Time is running out. People will be running scared and calling 'to the mountains and the rocks.' "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6 verses 16 and 17).

With the final seconds ticking away before His glorious appearing, the ancient promise still stands, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2 verse 32).

But then, when everyone who is going to be saved has been saved, a light begins to appear in the Eastern sky. "See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you" (Isaiah 60 verse 2). The King is coming, Christ the King with ten thousands of His saints and He'll come as the Light of the World to dispel the darkness for ever. Even so come, Lord Jesus!

## **The Second Coming**

### **10 – The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords**

Returning from my twin sister's funeral in North Wales by car at night, suddenly there was a flash that lit up the road. I'd ignored the speed restrictions on the empty road and had been caught on the speed camera. It was sudden, noticeable and irreversible.

Jesus, speaking of His return in Luke chapter 17 says, "For the Son of Man in His day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other" (verse 24).

When I lived by the Caribbean Sea, aged 21, many evenings there would be an electric storm on the horizon by the Southern Cross. The Bible says one day the light will get brighter in intensity as He who is the Daystar from on high, the Light of the Word, returns to His earth in great glory. "He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1 verse 7).

Isaiah saw Him coming from the East over the mountains of Edom. He prophesied six hundred years before Christ's first coming these remarkable words regarding His second coming.

"Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendour, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? 'It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.' Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? 'I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground'" (Chapter 63 verses 1 to 6).

At the end of the age we know the lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed. Then the Lord Jesus will be manifested from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. "The Lord Jesus will overthrow the Antichrist with the breath of His mouth and destroy him by the splendour of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2 verse 8). When the King in glory comes, with all His saints, this world is going to be bathed in tremendous light. The light will be so intense – God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Jesus is God, the light of the world, and He'll return with the children of light. On that day we shall be revealed. We'll be exposed to the universe. Our lives which are hidden with Christ in God won't be hidden any longer. The level of holiness we've achieved will be apparent to all, when we appear in glory with Him.

I'm mindful of Thomas Binney's famous hymn:

"Eternal Light! Eternal Light!  
How pure the soul must be,  
When, placed within Thy searching sight,  
It shrinks not, but, with calm delight,  
Can live, and look on Thee!"

When the Second Advent, long predicted, takes place, it will be very public and in dazzling light shattering the darkness. Sudden, noticeable and irreversible.

John the Revelator saw how it would be, when exiled on Patmos Island. He wrote (Revelation 19 verse 11 to 16) "I saw heaven standing open and before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron sceptre.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

It will be as Zechariah foretold over 2,500 years ago. When the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with Him "It will be a unique day, without daytime or night time – a day known to the Lord. When evening comes there will be light" (Zechariah 14 verse 7). The very source of light, Jesus Christ, will be back on earth in human form.

"Who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears?" asked Malachi (chapter 3 verse 2). A day is coming when the glory of His power will be displayed and He will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. Don't you long for that day when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea? (Habakkuk 2 verse 14).

## **The Second Coming**

### **11 – Triumphant Saviour**

Let's take a quick overview of Revelation chapters 6 to 19. The Apostle John talks about war, famine, one quarter of the world being killed, one third of the earth and the sea destroyed, fresh water being polluted, the release of hell's demons to overrun the earth and untold horrors. Such is the Great Tribulation. It marks Satan's final attempt to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. He knows his time is short.

On that day 'the Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God' (Isaiah 52 verse 10). In the same place where Jesus was rejected and vilified, He will be worshipped and adored. This same Jesus, who was set at naught, scorned and despised, will finally be esteemed and owned, welcomed and received in the same place, namely on the earth, where He was spat upon and humiliated. The scripture says, "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (Zechariah 14 verse 4).

On that day 'the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' (Isaiah 2 verse 3). In the very place where Jesus has been systematically denied and forgotten, blasphemed and opposed – here on this earth – He shall reign, without a rival, supreme over all. Where He was hated, He shall be vindicated. Where He was ignored, He shall be adored. He will return from an open heaven in majesty, riding forth victoriously to reign. "The government shall be upon His shoulders and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish this". (Isaiah 9 verses 6 and 7)

Are you eager for His return? What kind of bride, as her wedding day approaches, would be careless about her looks, her dress, and her attitude of heart towards her bridegroom? Would she be complacent and unprepared? Revelation 19 verse 7 says, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready." One purpose of Second Coming preaching is not calculation (when will He return?) but consecration. As the old chorus said "I'm getting ready in the latter rain, ready for Jesus – He's coming back again. I have my wedding garment, praise His name! I am getting ready in the latter rain."

The Bible also tells us what happens next after the King's return. We read in Revelation 20 verses 1 to 3, "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, which is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time." In just seven verses the millennium (the thousand year reign of Christ) is mentioned no fewer than six times. There can be no ideal world while Satan is on the loose, so he is bound in the Abyss or bottomless pit. Satan's imprisonment and total absence from the earth changes the conditions from darkness to light. It's as if King Jesus ties up 'the strong man', then He can rob his house. The prince of this world is driven out by the Spirit of God.

O the joy when the once crucified Man of Sorrows, now living in the power of an endless life, hears the loving cry of His devoted subjects "We will have this Man to reign over us." What celebration when God's direct rule is established in the millennium. Scorpions will lose their sting. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11 verse 9). Jerusalem will be the Kingdom centre; life span will increase again, back to Methuselah.

Here's the plain truth. If you're born twice, you die once. If you're born once, you die twice. Let me explain. If you're born twice (your natural birth when you entered the world and your spiritual birth when Jesus came into your heart and you were born again) you will die once, when this life ends. But if you're born once, and have never been born again, you will die twice. First when this life ends and then again at what the Bible calls 'the second death.'

Let me ask you directly. Do you belong to Jesus? Is He your Lord and Master? Give Him all the keys to every room in your heart today.

## **The Second Coming**

### **12 – Your Kingdom Come**

What happens at the end of Christ's one thousand year reign on earth? The Bible gives us sparse, but intriguing details. Revelation chapter 20 says, "When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore" (verses 7 and 8). This is the last great rebellion against Omnipotence.

After being chained for a thousand years, Satan has learned nothing. When released from the Abyss, he continues where he'd left off. A teenager in an RE (religious education) class in Corozal, Belize in Central America once asked me, "Why doesn't God forgive the devil and save himself the trouble of judging us?" Answer: the devil is too proud to repent and the unrepentant cannot be forgiven.

At the end of the millennium, which has been heaven on earth, the Lord's Prayer "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11 verse 2) will have been answered. People born during that time, but not born again, are still ready to do Satan's bidding because they are unregenerate. The lies we have been told are exposed. Lies such as 'we are all essentially good. It's just our environment that is at fault' or 'If we could see God, we would all believe' or 'we've never had a good role model.' After one thousand years of paradise regained, time hasn't changed anyone. Even when the government is upon His shoulders, men still choose to rebel. The final testing of mankind under ideal conditions reveals an evil heart.

As David Pawson writes, "This interim between Jesus' return and the Day of Judgement is widely rejected in the church today, yet it was the accepted view of the early church." The ultimate battle – a thousand years after Armageddon (Revelation 16 verse 16) - is Gog and Magog. "They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city He loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20 verse 9 and 10).

In the Old Testament two men go straight to heaven without dying – Enoch and Elijah. In the New Testament two men go straight into the lake of fire without dying – the Antichrist or the Beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19 verse 20). These two men are taken alive – the world dictator and his minister of religious affairs. They are the first two people ever to be cast into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. There they suffer the vengeance of eternal fire which neither annihilates nor purifies but torments for ever and ever.

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence ... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened which is the book of life" (Revelation 20 verse 11 and 12). If your name is written in the book of life, it is well with your soul. If not you will be judged according to what you have done, as recorded in the books. The second death is

the lake of fire. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire and so was everyone whose name was not found written in the book of life (Revelation 20 verses 14 and 15).

Derek Prince suggests that “Death and Hades are persons. Death is the dark angel, the minister of Satan, who claims the departing spirit of every unsaved person when he dies. Hades conducts them to their prison in the lower world.”

Chapter 21 in Revelation is the theme of the famous song “The Holy City”:

“And once again the scene was changed  
New earth there seemed to be:  
I saw the holy city  
Beside the tideless sea:  
The light of God was on its streets  
The gates were opened wide;  
And all who would might enter there,  
And no one was denied.  
No need of moon or stars by night, or sun to shine by day:  
It was the New Jerusalem that would not pass away.”

At the end of Revelation God Himself changes His residence from heaven to earth. It's not so much that human beings have gone to heaven to be with the Lord for ever, but rather that He has come to earth to be with them for ever. Even so come, Lord Jesus.