

The Blessed Hope

The first coming of Jesus was the great hope of the Jewish nation. But they knew not the time of their visitation. Dear friend, Jesus is coming again! This is the consummation of the Christian's hope. The apostle Paul justly labels this glorious event as "that blessed hope." All the prophecies are vibrant with this wonderful event. Will this generation be like the Jews who did not recognize the time of fulfillment of all their hopes?

The Lord Himself, in His parting message to His disciples, so feelingly spoken just before He was separated from them by His ascension to heaven, said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

The Blessed Hope Proclaimed in All Ages

Long before Christ was born as a baby in Bethlehem, His second coming was foretold. Before the flood, Enoch who was the seventh descendant from Adam, prophesied: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all . . ." Jude 14, 15.

Abraham, who lived ten generations after Noah also testified of the coming of Christ in glory: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." John 8:56.

The patriarch Job adds his testimony with these words of faith and hope: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job 19:25, 26. And David, king of Israel, prophesied: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people." Psalm 50:3, 4.

This same message has been sounded throughout all ages and is repeated many times through the Bible. The last words of Jesus given to John the Revelator are especially addressed to our generation as we see the signs of His coming fulfilling round about us: "Surely I come quickly." Revelation 22:20.

A Literal Coming

In what manner does Jesus return? Will we recognize the event? Counterfeits and speculations will prevail. Despite human theories we need not be deceived. We can be prepared to meet Him. We need to believe only what God says, and make our preparation according to His word: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Matthew 24:4, 5.

The crowning deception of Satan will be a counterfeit of Christ's return.

". . . for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14.

It is most essential therefore, that we know how Christ will return! In exactly the same way as the disciples saw their beloved Master ascent, He will return: "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same

Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:10, 11.

Heavenly angels left a perfect record of a sure fact—Jesus will return in like manner. Let no man deceive you otherwise.

John declared that the event will be visible and real: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” Revelation 1:7.

Jesus Himself likens this momentous event to the flashing of lightning which is obvious to all: “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matthew 24:27, 30.

Not as a baby will He come the second time, but as a mighty King and conqueror. In His train will follow all the heavenly host: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19:11-16.

Who Will See Him?

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” Revelation 1:7.

Everyone living upon the earth will see Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, even those “which pierced Him,” even though they died centuries ago. When Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin at His trial, He said to His accusers: “I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 26:64.

In the last lesson we learned that at Jesus’ coming there will be a general resurrection, of all saints. Jesus Himself calls them from their graves. These will not witness the actual event of His coming as they are resurrected when he arrives, but those raised at the special resurrection together with the living inhabitants of the earth will see the Lord coming in all His glory.

Why Is Jesus Coming Again?

When Christ came the first time, He came to pay the price for our redemption, so that all who believe in Him and obey Him may receive eternal life.

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Hebrews 9:28.

Christ’s return will be the gathering time when the saints of God from all ages will be gathered for the heavenly kingdom.

“He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” Psalm 50:4, 5.

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

From the previous quotation we can see that the feet of Jesus will not actually touch the earth at His second advent. He will remain in the open heavens, in full view of all upon the earth. The angels will gather the waiting saints to meet Him in the air. In the process the saved are glorified and made immortal.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Philippians 3:20, 21.

Then Jesus returns to heaven with the redeemed, His ransomed people.

Who Will Be Ready?

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall he gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” Matthew 25:31, 32.

There will be only two classes upon the earth when Jesus returns. One class is represented as sheep and the other as goats. The sheep are the righteous who by acts of love to their fellow men have proved themselves to be the children of God. The goats are the wicked who irrespective of their religious profession have only lived for the gratification of their own selfish interests.

What will be the effect of Christ’s coming on these two classes? For the righteous the coming of the Lord will be an event of indescribable joy, a moment to which they have looked forward with eager anticipation throughout their Christian experience: “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9.

Not many will be ready for the Lord’s return. Only a few choose to walk the strait and narrow way that leads to life. Of others it is said, “and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn” Matthew 24:30. The rich men will cast their gold and silver to the moles and bats (Isaiah 2:20), and will plead for annihilation in preference to standing before the gaze of His searching eye.

During the mighty earthquake which will immediately precede His appearing, the mountains will be leveled; the islands of the sea will disappear, the cities of the earth will

be reduced to ruins, and the heavens will open as when a scroll is rolled together, revealing the King of kings seated upon a great white throne, attended by all the angels of heaven.

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:15-17.

All the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. Not a person will be left alive on the earth after Jesus takes the saints to heaven. (Refer to Lesson Numbers Twelve and Twenty-Seven).

When Will Jesus Come Again?

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Matthew 24:36.

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:42, 44.

Although we do not know the exact time of His return, we do know by the signs of the times that “it is near, even at the doors” (Matthew 24:33).

How Can I Be Ready?

“Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Hebrews 9:28.

To be ready we must first look to Him and prepare to meet Him so that He will not come as a surprise to us and find us unprepared.

“. . . But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2, 3.

Secondly, we must put sin completely out of our lives by repentance, confession, and resisting temptation in the power of Christ. In this way we will know Christ as a friend from personal, daily experience.

“. . . What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” 2 Peter 3:11-14.

Only by fully consecrating our lives to Him can we be ready to meet Him in the kingdom of heaven.

Dear friend: Jesus is coming again! It is the Christian’s blessed hope. Is it yours?