



“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh,” Matthew 25:13.

Christ's Second Coming

Lesson Aim: The study of Article 22. 22. The personal, bodily and imminent return of Christ to earth.

L336. Date: December 1964. **Text:** Acts 1:10-11; Luke 17:22-29.

Topic: Christ: Return of.

INTRODUCTION—**Jesus is coming!** This message should be sounded out to all people. His coming is the “blessed hope” for the saints of God and is the goal toward which all human history is moving. It is the climactic event in the consummation of this present age. That will be a glorious day indeed when **“the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,”** Jude 14.

The New Testament Greek uses two words to refer to the coming of Jesus. The first is **parousia**. While it is sometimes translated “coming” it more exactly means “presence.” It refers to His coming as a manifestation of His presence in the world. The second word is **epiphaneia**. It is properly translated “manifestation” and refers to the Lord's coming as an unveiling, revealing, or open display of Himself in glory and honor.

Christendom is divided concerning details relating to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Some hold Jesus comes to initiate one thousand years of peace and righteousness on earth (premillennial position). Others hold He comes to conclude the reign of peace (postmillennial position). Others hold there will be no thousand-year reign of peace (amillennial position). The official position of the Baptist Missionary Association of America is in agreement with the premillennial position and that is the interpretation followed in this lesson.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is as certain as the fact that He has already come as a Babe in Bethlehem. The Christian is not waiting for death,

but for the Lord Jesus! This blessed fact of His soon appearing is the bright star of hope for God's people today.

EXPOSITION

I. JESUS IS COMING, Acts 1:10-11.

Jesus left the earth with a promise to return. On the day of His ascension back to heaven, He took the disciples out to the Mount of Olives. As He blessed them there, He was taken upward from them. Their astonished gaze followed Him until a cloud received Him out of their sight. Suddenly by their side stood two “men in white apparel” (angels?) with a promise that Jesus would return to earth!

1. Jesus is coming again personally. The angelic messengers announced to the disciples, **“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,”** verse 11. Careful observation of this promise will show it to mean that Jesus Himself will return to earth. No other shall come in His place. Having come to dishonor and death in the First Coming, He will surely come with glory and honor in the Second Coming. The important events which occur at His coming will not be left in the hands of men nor angels, but the Lord will be personally present to direct them. Paul promises, “The Lord himself will descend from heaven . . .” I Thessalonians 4:16. Yes, the Christians are looking for Jesus to appear!

2. Jesus is coming again in a visible manifestation. If Jesus comes “in like manner as ye have seen Him go,” His coming will be visible. On the Mount of Olives the disciples watched Jesus ascend upward until He went beyond a cloud. Now, reverse this scene and see what “in like manner” means in regard to His return: disciples looking upward will see the clouds part and Jesus will be descending in His Second Coming! Revelation 1:7 records, **“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him . . .”** Today's lesson text suggests the same truth; **“For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day,”** verse 24. Therefore, the idea that the death of a Christian is Jesus' “second coming” for him is incorrect. When Jesus comes again, He will be seen by the multitudes of men.

3. Jesus is coming again in his bodily form. The return of Jesus is not a spiritual manifestation, as the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. His return will be “in like manner” as His ascension—in a bodily, visible form. His body in the Second Coming will probably be the “glorious

body” which He now has in heaven, Philippians 3:21. This will be apart of the “great glory” which accompanies His return.

What a wonderful day it will be when the glorified Jesus appears in His own distinct individuality, personally, bodily, with angels and great glory of the Father. No wonder the Christian looks, not for death, but for the Lord Jesus!

II. JESUS COMES UNEXPECTEDLY, Luke 17:22-29.

Jesus told the disciples that some time would pass before His return to earth. During the time between His ascension and return, days would come when they would “desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man.” During this interim, false Christs would arise and cause great excitement. However at a time when people were eating and drinking, marrying, buying, selling, and otherwise pursuing their normal manner of life, Jesus would appear! That day will be both longed-for and unexpected.

1. His coming will be unexpected because its time is unknown. When the disciples questioned Him on this point, Jesus replied, **“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,”** Acts 1:7. Again, Jesus says, **“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only,”** Matthew 24:36. How absurd, then, are all efforts of men to set the date of His return. One religious sect convened in Waco, Texas, in the Spring of 1959 because they had found the day of his return! Some of them had sold valuable property at “give-away” prices. Others bought expensive automobiles and stayed at luxurious hotels because they thought they would never have to pay the bills! When Jesus did not return at the time, they said a mistake of one year had been made. Time has proven their error.

The indefinite, imminent nature of the Lord's return calls to watchfulness. Jesus said, **“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch,”** Mark 13:35-37.

2. His coming will follow a period of religious apostasy, verse 23. **“That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first . . .”** II Thessalonians 2:3. The condition of men in the time of religious apostasy is described by Paul in II Timothy 3:1-4. Selfishness, unholy passions, rebellion against rightful authority, pleasure loving, religious heresy, and general ungodliness will be the order of the day. In the midst of such distressing circumstances Jesus will appear! No wonder His coming is called

“the blessed hope” of the saints.

3. His coming in glory will be in contrast to His former coming in humiliation, verse 25. Paul describes the incarnation of Jesus as His “making himself of no reputation” (literally, “he emptied himself”) in laying aside the perfect glory of the Father to become man, Philippians 2:5-8. His second coming will be with the glory of the Father with His angels, Matthew 16:27. His sign will appear in heaven and then He will come “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” Matthew 24:30. At first He came as the Sacrifice for sin. He will come as the Judge and Victor over sin. He came first in the likeness of man, He will come in the likeness of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” Revelation 22:20.

4. His coming will interrupt the regular pursuits of men, verses 26-29. The uncertain date of the Lord’s return, plus the unbelief of many that He will never come again, is evident in the activities of people when he does come. They will be eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, and building. If His return was expected, they would not be going normally about their pursuits. People, generally, will not be ready when He comes.

Christians must keep their life centered in heaven, not on earth. The Lord may return soon. We must be ready all the time. His coming will catch many unawares, but the Christian must always be ready to welcome Him.

5. His coming is imminent. One man was heard to say, “There is so much prophecy to be fulfilled before Jesus returns that His coming will not be for another hundred years.” His opinion must be classed with all other efforts to set dates for this important event. Jesus says that He may come at any hour and calls His people to alert watchfulness right now and all the time, Matthew 24:42. Each day, with each hour of the day, must be lived as if Jesus might return now. How wonderful it would be if that blessed event would occur today: It could. Indeed, it may! Jesus said to expect it at anytime. **“Even so, come, Lord Jesus,”** Revelation 22:20. How our hearts yearn for His blessed appearing!

III. JESUS COMES TO REDEEM, I Thessalonians 4:13-17.

1. Jesus comes to redeem the bodies of the deceased saints from the grave, verses 14-16. The Bible suggests there are three phases to full salvation. (1) The soul is saved eternally when one trusts Jesus as his Savior. (2) The life is saved in day-by-day consecration to the will of God. (3) The physical body is saved when Jesus returns. It is the third phase of salvation which is here considered.

Paul says Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet-sound of God. Those saints which have died will return with Him. Their bodies will be raised from the graves wherever they have returned to dust, the spirits will reinhabit the bodies, and they shall live eternally with the Lord. This is exactly what God promised to do for Israel many centuries ago: **“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes,”** Hosea 13:14. Someday the graves will give up their treasures for Jesus will return to resurrect the departed saints.

2. Jesus comes to redeem living saints from a sin-cursed environment, verse 17. The resurrected saints will have no advantage over the living saints when Jesus comes. Neither will the living saints have any advantage. Just as the bodies of deceased saints will be resurrected in a glorified form, so the bodies of the living saints will be changed into glorified forms. All this will happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,” I Corinthians 15:52.

The glorified bodies of the saints are described in I Corinthians 15:42-53. They will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, and shall bear the image of the Lord Jesus! Even so, **“... it doth not yet appear what we shall be (like): but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,”** I John 3:2. Paul adds his testimony to this glorious fact when he writes, **“(Jesus) shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself,”** Philippians 3:21. These physical bodies have been fitted for existence in this present world system. The Lord will change them to be fitted for an existence in glory where God is revealed. Since heaven will have no pain, death; nor sickness the resurrected bodies will no longer be subject to the infirmities of earth. All deformities, diseases, and decay will be left behind, unknown in that glorified state.

However, the redemption of the saved will also be the condemnation of the unsaved. Only the saints will be resurrected and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The unsaved dead are left in the graves at this time (Revelation 20:5) to await the “second resurrection” and eternal judgment. If you have a dear one who is not safe in the fold, hasten to win him today. Eternity will be too late.

CONCLUSION—Jesus is coming again. He will return in the same manner in which He ascended into Heaven—personally, bodily, visibly. No man knows when He will come. His coming may be near—very near. Until

He comes, we must live worthy of the vocation into which we have been called. (1) We must be constantly watchful and ready for Him. (2) We must be busy winning others to Him. (3) We must be standing faithfully by the Word of God as the days of apostasy draw near. (4) We must share the hope of His return with those who do not have the consolation it brings. (5) We must keep our hearts tender and our hopes bright until He appears. Until that hour may the Lord keep you. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Titus 2:13. Next Sunday's lesson will pursue in further detail some of the events related to the Lord's return.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the doctrine of the Second Coming so important?
2. What is meant by, "Jesus is coming personally"?
3. What is meant by, "Jesus is coming bodily"?
4. Why will Jesus' coming be unexpected?
5. Do you believe Jesus could come today? Give reasons for your answer.
6. What are the three phases of salvation?
7. How is the second coming of Jesus an act of redemption?
8. What will the resurrection body be like?
9. What happens to the saints after the resurrection?
10. What are you doing personally in preparation for His coming?