



**“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” (I Thessalonians 4:16).**

### **The Second Coming of Christ**

**Truth:** Jesus is coming to earth again.

*Cobb’s “Confession of Faith”:* Articles XVII, XVIII

Text: I Thessalonians 4:15-18; 5:1-9

“We believe that there will be a resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, with one thousand years intervening between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. The dead in Christ shall rise first; at the expiration of the one thousand years the wicked will then be raised and judged.

“We believe that at the end of the gospel age Christ will appear. The sleeping saints will be resurrected and the living saints will be instantaneously changed, together to be caught up to the Lord. That, we believe, will occur at the beginning of Daniel's ‘Seventieth Week.’ During the first three and one-half years the beast will deceive the Jews, and for a while the world's government will be organized under the domination of the Beast. The Beast will, at the beginning of that ‘week,’ or seven-year period, make a covenant with the elect (the Jews) to rebuild their temple and to restore their ancient worship. In the middle of that week he will break his covenant and the Great Tribulation will then begin and continue for three and one-half years. During that period, the saints who shall then be with Christ shall receive their rewards, and the Lamb and the bride (the church) shall be married. The Great Tribulation will climax with the Battle of Armageddon. At that time Christ will destroy those armies, the judgment of the nations will occur, the living wicked will be destroyed, and the millennial reign of Christ and His saints over the earth will begin” (Cobb's

Baptist Church Manual, pages 84, 85).

Jesus is coming. Christians anticipate with joy *“that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13). Do not be distracted by difference of opinion on details of the event. The important thing is not the “how” but the “who” of His return.

## **I. HE COMES**

Jesus himself promised His second coming, saying, *“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 14:3). He warned, *“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). He gave the promise to His disciples and the warning to His enemies. Jesus said it and it is certain.

Angels foretold His return, saying, *“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 1:11). God's angels would not deceive us. He will return.

Prophets predicted His return. Enoch, who lived in the seventh generation of human history, said, *“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints”* (Jude 14). Daniel foresaw the God of heaven set up a kingdom which would fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:34, 35, 44). *“One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. . . . And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom . . . which shall not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:13, 14). Yes, Jesus is returning to reign.

Apostles of Jesus said He would return. Paul concludes one epistle with the affirmation *“Maran-atha,”* meaning “our Lord comes” (I Corinthians 16:22). *“Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”* (Hebrews 9:28). God's Word is true. The message is certain. Our Lord Jesus comes.

## **II. WHEN HE COMES**

**A. Jesus comes for His saints.** First Thessalonians 4:14-17 describes the return of the Lord. It talks about the saints of God when Jesus returns. No mention is made of unbelievers. The return of Jesus has to do with the saints, is centered in them, and will be of special significance to them. *“He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matthew 24:31).

**B. Jesus comes personally.** *“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven”* (verse 16). It is *“this same Jesus”* who went into heaven who will return (Acts 1:11). He testifies, *“Surely I come quickly”* (Revelation 22:20). He loves us too much to leave our gathering together to another. He comes to receive us to himself.

**C. Jesus comes in power.** The *“shout”* with which He descends is a military command. It is an order which effects the resurrection of the dead. Jesus pictured it somewhat when He stood before a tomb and called, *“Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth”* (John 11:43, 44). That is no surprise since He said, *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”* (Matthew 28:18). *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming . . . when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. . . . All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth”* (John 5:25, 28, 29). What a power is this that can raise the dead!

**D. Jesus comes with His attendants.** *“The voice of the archangel”* will be heard when He returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16). *“The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels”* (Matthew 16:27). *“The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him”* (Matthew 25:31). That will be a glorious and innumerable company.

**E. Jesus comes to gather the saints to himself** (verses 16, 17). The trumpet which will sound will be like the trumpet which called Moses up the mountain to meet God and caused the people in the camp of Israel to tremble (Exodus 19:13, 16). It is the assembly signal for the people of God (Numbers 10:2). Those who assemble will be *“caught up”* together to meet the Lord in the air. That term *“caught up”* means to seize and carry off by force, to claim eagerly for oneself (as a child would grab a favorite toy), to rescue from danger, to transfer from one place to another. Jesus comes to take us up *“to meet the Lord in the air”* (verse 17).

**F. Jesus comes to be with us.** Think about that! He is to be with us and we with Him. *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4). The best part of the promise is *“so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (verse 17). What a privilege to be *“before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he . . . shall dwell among them”* (Revelation 7:15). Glory!

**G. Jesus comes to change us.** *“Our conversation (citizenship) 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”* (Philippians 3:20, 21). *“This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (I Corinthians

15:53). *"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him"* (I John 3:2). *"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"* (I Corinthians 15:49). *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matthew 13:43). Glory!

**H. Jesus comes to judge the world.** He will *"judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom"* (II Timothy 4:1). *"Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God"* (I Corinthians 4:5). That will be a solemn day for those who are not prepared. *"Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming"* (I John 2:28). Does the prospect of the return of our Lord fill you with delight or with dread? It should be the bright prospect of the future for us all. Jesus really is coming!

### III. UNTIL HE COMES

**A. Some will doubt and deny until the Lord has come.** His coming will be so unexpected that it will be like a thief coming in the night. No preparation will be made for His coming. Sudden surprise and consternation will seize upon their hearts. Only those living in sin will scoff at the teaching of His return. Their doubts or denials do not change the purpose of God. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise. . . . But the day of the Lord will come"* (II Peter 3:9, 10).

**B. Many will believe and expect the Lord to return.** They will not be so foolish as to set dates for His coming. Jesus said, *"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:36, 44).

Though we do not know the date, we are sure the time of his coming is near. We believe, *"The Lord is at hand"* (Philippians 4:5). *"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry"* (Hebrews 10:37). *"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"* (James 5:8). In our hearts we pray, *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20).

**C. Many will watch and be sober, as He commanded in I Thessalonians 5:6.** They will watch their conduct lest they be soiled in the present evil world (Revelation 16:15). They will be busy in faithful Christian service, serving one another in the name of the Lord, until He comes

(Matthew 24:45). They will be prepared for His appearing at any time (Luke 12:35, 36). They are faithful and wise servants of the Lord Jesus.

**D. Many will continue to fight the good fight of faith, “*putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*”** (I Thessalonians 5:8). Wearing the Christian armor and being strengthened by God's might, they will be faithful soldiers (Ephesians 6:10-18). Those are the kind of people to whom the Lord will say, “Well done.”

**E. Many will anticipate with joy their ultimate salvation in Christ.** “*God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Thessalonians 5:9). “*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). “*So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 1:11).

He comes! There can be no reasonable doubt about it. We do not know all the details concerning it, but we know the fact of it. Let us be busy in His service, serving people in His name. And let us live each day with the heart-deep petition, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20).

1. Why is the return of Christ such an important doctrine?
2. What are some of His promises to return?
3. What have prophets said of His return?
4. Who will be caught up to meet Him when Jesus returns?
5. How will God's power be manifest at His return?
6. What change will take place in us when He returns?
7. Why do some deny that He will return?
8. Why is it foolish to set a date for His return?
9. How should we live until He returns?
10. How can you prepare for His return?