



“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: To study Article 22 of our Doctrinal Statement.

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Topic: Christ: Return of; Doctrine: Studies In.

INTRODUCTION—The Christian is not waiting for death, but for the Lord Jesus! The surest event yet to transpire in human history is the second coming of Christ. His first coming is a matter of recorded history. His second coming is a matter of recorded prophecy. But one is no more sure than the other. Jesus is coming again!

There are two blessed aspects involved in His personal return to earth. One is suggested in a word the writers of the New Testament uses spelled “parousia.” It is often translated “coming” but literally means “presence.” It suggests that when Jesus comes again He will be personally present with His people.

The other word used in the New Testament is spelled “epiphaneia.” It means “manifestation.” This suggests His appearing will be an unveiling, revealing, and open display of Himself in glory and honor. The first time He came it was in humility and poverty. The next time He comes it will be in power and great glory. Remember this lesson on the second coming of Jesus when, in about two weeks, you study the Christmas lesson concerning His first coming.

All Bible believing Christians hold that Jesus will come again. There is wide disagreement, however, on the details of events surrounding His coming. Premillennialists believe the world will grow worse and worse until He returns to establish a kingdom of righteousness upon the earth which will last for 1000 years. Postmillennialists believe that the world will grow better and better through preaching the gospel and at the end of 1000 years of

peace the Lord Jesus will come. Amillennialists hold that the world will grow worse and worse until Jesus comes and brings it to an end without 1000 years of reign either before or after His coming.

The doctrinal statement of the Baptist Missionary Association of America declares agreement with the premillennial view. The following comments will follow that line of interpretation.

EXPOSITION

I. THE FACT OF HIS COMING

Jesus is coming again! Any honest student of the Scriptures will bear witness that this is the unanimous testimony of Holy Writ. His second coming was prophesied, promised, predicted, and expected by all true believers. Jesus is coming again.

Jesus himself promised that as surely as He went away in the ascension, He would return for the saints. **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself. . .”** John 14:3.

Angelic messengers promised it, **“... 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 1:1. The apostles believed these messengers and so do Christians today.

The Apostle Paul promised, **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven. . .”** I Thessalonians 4:16. And he bases the Christian hope of resurrection upon the fact that Jesus is coming again. If there is no second coming there is no promise of the resurrection, I Corinthians 15:22-23. The Apostle John wrote what he saw in a heavenly vision and it included promises of the return of the Lord Jesus. The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is introduced with the promise, **“Behold, he cometh with clouds. . .”** (1:7). It continues giving in detail the events which will surround His coming. Then it concludes on the same theme in which it began. Revelation 22:7, 12, 20 state and repeat, **“Behold, I come . . . behold, I come . . . Surely I come.”**

The only people who deny the reality of the second coming of Jesus Christ are those who have rejected the Bible as their guide of faith. Though they may differ on details, all Bible-believing people agree that Jesus is coming again: The fact of His coming is firmly declared and established.

II. THE TIME OF HIS COMING

1. The time of His coming is unknown. Occasionally someone will show his ignorance of the Scriptures by trying to set a date when Jesus will come. Matthew 25:13 says we do not know the day. Matthew 24:42, 44 says we do not know the hour.

Jesus told us who knows when the second coming will be, Mark 13:32. The angels do not know. Not even the Son of God knows. The Father only knows the time.

There are some signs which identify in general terms the condition of the world when He returns. But there is neither sign, nor information, nor revelation which sets the hour or the day. The time of His coming is unknown.

2. The time of His coming is imminent. That is, it is pending and liable to happen without delay. Jesus may come today!

His coming may be “at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning,” Mark 13:36. Jesus warned, “Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” So we should be ready every hour, “for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh,” Matthew 24:42-44. He could come this very hour.

Jesus stands before the door as if ready to enter this instant, James 5:9. “The time is at hand” for it to occur, Revelation 22:10. All calls to watchfulness and industry in the Scriptures are based upon the fact of His imminent return.

3. The time of His coming is unexpected. This is illustrated in several cases in the New Testament.

People did not expect the flood to come at the time it did during Noah's generation. They were eating and drinking, becoming engaged and getting married “until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all,” Luke 17:27. The flood's coming was unexpected as Jesus' coming will be unexpected.

The same was true in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. “. . . **they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all,**” Luke 17:28-29.

Jesus said, “**Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed,**” Luke 17:30. Farmers will be cultivating their crops expecting a future harvest. A businessman will invest his capital expecting a future profit. A young man will ask his sweetheart to marry him expecting a future home. And the very day it is happening, the Lord Jesus will return to the amazement of them all. No wonder Jesus warned, “**Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is,**” Mark 13:33.

4. The time of His coming challenges us to be prepared. It is the believer's part to wait with anticipation the Lord's return from heaven, I Thessalonians 1:9-10; I Corinthians 1:7. While he waits, he must be alert and watchful, Mark 13:34-37. **“And now 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.

III. THE MANNER OF HIS COMING

1. He comes personally. At this point the Bible is quite emphatic. The angels announced upon His ascension, **“... 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. The Apostle Paul adds, **“... the Lord himself shall descend from heaven. . .”** I Thessalonians 4:16. It is Himself who will come. None other will come in His place or as His representative. A matter so important as returning to receive His own in the resurrected bodies will be attended by the Lord Himself.

2. He comes visibly. For Jesus to come “in like manner as ye have seen Him go” would necessitate his visible return. From the Mount of Olives the disciples watched as the laws of gravity were reversed for Jesus and He was taken up from them into heaven. They looked upward until He was high enough that a crowd received Him from their sight. Now, reverse the scene and behold the “in-like-manner” return of the Lord: Disciples look upward, the cloud parts, and there is Jesus descending.

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. . .” Revelation 1:7. The lightning flashes in the east and is seen unto the west. So the coming of the Lord Jesus will be visible, Luke 17:24.

3. He comes bodily. His return is not merely a spiritual manifestation, such as the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. If He comes “in like manner” then He will come in a body. Indeed, He will come in the same body He took to heaven—the one which was crucified. **“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced,”** so the prophet declared of Jesus, Zechariah 12:10. **“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends,”** Zechariah 13:6. Yes, the body of His humiliation, now glorified, will be the body in which He returns.

4. He comes in glory. Having laid aside His perfect glory when born of Mary, Christ Jesus took it up again when He ascended back to heaven. His second coming will be “in the glory of his 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. The resurrection will come at that time. Bodies of believers will be made glorious “like unto his glorious body,” Philippians 3:21. What a day of glory that will be!

IV. THE PHASES OF HIS COMING

The Bible teaches there will be two phases to the second coming of Jesus. In the first phase He will appear in the air. This is called the “rapture,” for saints will be caught away to meet Him there. In the second phase he will come to earth. This is called the “revelation” for then He will reign in righteousness over creation.

1. The rapture. — The Lord Jesus will come for the saints. **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,”** I Thessalonians 4:16. Three sounds will mark His coming: the victor's shout, the voice of the archangel, and the sound of the trumpet of God. “And the shout will be so loud and the voice will be so clear and the trump will be so distinct that every child of God will hear and go up to meet him.”—Herschel Ford.

With such audible demonstrations the Lord Jesus will come. For Paul clearly says, **“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven. . .”** His first coming is a certain event in history. His second coming is a certain event in prophecy. And each is as certain as the other!

The first event when Jesus appears in the air is the resurrection of the dead believers. I Thessalonians 4:16 reads, **“. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”** Some of the Thessalonian Christians were concerned lest their loved ones who had died would miss the second coming of Jesus. Paul said to them, “Not so. The dead in Christ will be the very first ones to respond to His appearing. Before any living saint is translated the dead will be resurrected. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished.”

The second event when Jesus appears in the air is that translation of the living believers. **“Then (that is, after the dead saints are raised) we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. . .”** I Thessalonians 4:17. This is what Paul referred to when he wrote, **“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep (die) but we shall all be changed,”** I Corinthians 15:51. The living will have no advantage over the dead or the dead over the living. Jesus will call to Himself all believers, living or dead.

What is the “change” that is mentioned in I Corinthians 15:51? It is the change of our-fitted-for-earth bodies into fitted-for-heaven bodies.

Corruption changes to incorruption; dishonor changes to glory; weakness changes to power; natural body changes to spiritual body, I Corinthians 15:12-44. **“And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,”** I Corinthians 15:49.

Now all this may sound very complicated and tedious to some reader. But not so. The resurrection of the dead, the change of the living, and the rapture unto Jesus all happens in an instant: “. . . In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” I Corinthians 15:52. We would say “in a split second” it will all occur. Such is the power of God.

The resurrected and glorified believers will remain in the air with the Lord for a short while. (Some say seven years and some three and one-half years.) During this time they will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards for deeds done in the flesh, II Corinthians 5: 9-10. This judgment is described further in I Corinthians 3:10-15. Works will be passed through the fire of testing. Unworthy works will be burned up. Worthy works will abide and one shall be rewarded according to the works which remain.

It appears also that during this time in the air the marriage supper of the Lamb will be observed, Revelation 19:7-10. There is very little information given on this subject in the Bible. But it must be a wonderful occasion since Jesus will be there with all the saints of all ages.

At the time these events are transpiring in heaven, the earth will experience a time of turmoil such as it has never known before. This period is known as The Great Tribulation. As it applies to the Jewish people it is called “the time of Jacob's trouble.” The world will then know what it is like to have no influence of Christian faith acting as a preservative of society. The result will be chaos.

2. The Revelation. — The Lord Jesus will come with the saints. At the end of the seven years the Lord Jesus will return to earth with His saints. Enemies of righteousness will try to oppose Him. But they will be destroyed with a great overthrow by the power of His word, Revelation 19:11-16. The devil will be bound and cast into a bottomless pit. With his power cancelled for a time and with the Lord Himself on earth with His glorified saints, there will follow a reign of absolute peace and righteousness which will endure for one thousand years, Revelation 20:1-6.

At the end of the millennium of peace and righteousness, there will be a brief revival of evil. Satan will be loosed for a little season, deceive the nations of the earth, and lead one last insurrection against God's sovereign rule. He will be overthrown and his power forever cancelled, Revelation 20:7-9. The devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be

tormented day and night forever and ever, Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41.

Then the unsaved dead will be resurrected and the unsaved living will stand with them before God at the Great White Throne Judgment, Revelation 20:7-15. Because their names are not written in the Book of Life (meaning, they are not saved) they will be cast into the lake of fire also.

Thus time shall come to a close. Righteousness shall have triumphed. The end of things as we have known them will come. The heavens and earth shall be dissolved in a most spectacular manner: “. . . **the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,**” II Peter 3:10.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . .” Revelation 21:1. And so shall come the end of the age. The new heaven will be like a tabernacle of worship (Revelation 21:1-8), a city of security (Revelation 21:9-27), and a garden of delight (Revelation 22:1-5). What a joy to be there with God our Father, Jesus our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier! I'll be there. Will you?

CONCLUSION—Jesus is coming again. Jesus is coming soon. Jesus may come today. I'm ready. My heart is anxious. **“Even so, come, Lord Jesus,”** Revelation 22:20.

But wait! I'm being selfish. The best possible thing for me would be for Jesus to come again. But what about my unsaved relatives and friends? What about the folk who were presented with the gospel last Sunday but have not trusted Jesus? What about the hundreds of thousands of people who have never heard the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? If the Lord wills, let His coming await our having another opportunity to press upon the hearts of men the importance of preparing to meet God.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the first coming of Jesus?
2. What is the second coming of Jesus?
3. Why do we expect Him to come again?
4. When will He come?
5. What is the manner of His coming?
6. What is the “rapture”?
7. What is the “revelation”?
8. What events transpire in the air when He comes?

9. What change awaits the earth in the end?
10. What can you do to prepare for His coming?