

Christ's Second Coming

Daniel Bailey

In Acts 1:10-11, we find the eleven apostles (Judas having hanged himself) standing aghast, gazing into the heavens after their precious Teacher who just ascended and was received by a cloud out of their sight. The Scriptures state that two men in white apparel then stood by them and said:

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

The Scriptures are absolutely clear about the certainty of Christ's return. Acts 1:11 teaches that Christ will appear again in person, coming in the clouds in the same way that He ascended into the heavens. These words are echoed in Revelation 1:7, when the apostle John states, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him” – a bold declaration with no hint of doubt or apprehension. Again, the apostle Paul in Titus 2:13 states that part of the motivation for a Christian's denial of ungodliness in order to live in sober righteousness during this temporary life is that children of God look forward to the “glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” This blessed hope abides in the infallible assurance God gives in His word that Jesus Christ will come again. Even the memorial feast that the church observes on the first day of every week is observed, in part, to proclaim the Lord's death *until He comes* (I Cor 11:26). The second coming is certain – a fact that all Christian's must understand and be ready to demonstrate from the Scriptures.

But why is Jesus coming again? Having previously suffered the trials and tempt-

ations of this life, even after being tortured and crucified on the cross, why would Jesus come even as close to the earth as the sky in the clouds? The Bible answers these questions, declaring both the things Christ will do, as well as some things He will *not* do upon His return.

In Hebrews 9:26-28, the inspired writer teaches that Jesus is *not* coming to once again offer Himself as a sacrifice. When He died on the cross nearly 2,000 years ago He did so once and for all. At His second appearance, Jesus Christ will come as a righteous Judge instead of as the sacrificial Lamb of God (cf. II Cor 5:10). Secondly, when Christ comes again, He will *not* give the wicked a second chance to acquire salvation. This fact is apparent in many passages, including the story of the rich man and Lazarus taught by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31. There are two eternal paths that one's soul can take after death, either eternal torment or eternal paradise: and the choice is made in this life, here and now, by our individual decisions, behaviors, and obedience (or lack thereof) to the words of Christ (cf. John 12:48; II Thes 1:7ff). Furthermore, Christ will *not* come to establish His kingdom. In fact, as Paul teaches in II Corinthians 15:24, Christ will *deliver* the kingdom to God the Father immediately after His second coming, the kingdom having already been established and thriving as the church since that first Pentecost after Christ's ascension (cf. Acts 2:22-36,47; Col 1:2,13-18; Rev 1:9; etc.).

However, the Bible assures that Jesus Christ *will* come again to raise the dead. In John 5:28f, Jesus teaches that all who are in the grave will come forth at the sound of His voice, “those who have done good, to the

resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of death.” The dead who were faithful to God and Christ during life will rise first, followed by the faithful Christians presently alive who will join them with Jesus in the air (I Thes 4:16ff). Secondly, as is implied in the previously cited verses in John 5, Jesus Christ *will* come again to judge the world. Note that the Day of Judgment will be a day of sentencing, not a day of trial and debate. The wicked, whose names are not written in the Book of Life, will be cast into the lake of fire after Satan and his angels (Rev 20:14f). And Jesus *will* come again in the clouds to destroy the earth and the wicked works that are in it, with fervent heat melting the very elements, to bring to nothing the dominion and sway of the devil (II Pet 3:9-13; cf. I John 5:19).

Be Watchful, Be Ready

What lessons and implications should Christians learn from the spiritual truths discussed above? A closer examination of three particular scriptures pertaining to Christ’s second coming reveals that the certainty of this great event should fill the child of God with comfort and hope, renew each Christian’s motivation to teach the gospel to all that will listen, and remind each Christian to be ever watchful and ever ready for the Lord’s return.

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18, the apostle Paul speaks plainly about the resurrection at Christ’s second coming, apparently because some Christians in the church at Thessalonica doubted or questioned gospel teaching concerning the temporary nature of physical death. Thus Paul reassures these Christians that all the dead will in fact be raised, and furthermore the dead in Christ will be gathered to the Savior in the clouds to be with Him forever. He concludes in

verse 18 by saying, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Children of God know and are assured by faith (Rom 10:17) that physical death is not to be feared, but is only a temporary separation from the beloved family of Christ. This spiritual knowledge should be a constant source of comfort and hope. As noted by the Hebrews author (Heb 2:14-15), all mankind lived in fear of death, in a perpetual state of uncertainty as to whether or not a resurrection is even possible, before God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. But Jesus Christ, in His victory over death by the power of God, not only destroyed the devil and his power over death, but also provided definite proof that the child of God has no reason to fear the sting of death. Therefore the child of God that does not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, lives not in fear of death but in hope of glorious immortality – a blessed hope that exists only because of Christ’s victory in resurrection and His promise to return and likewise raise all mankind at the last day.

Furthermore, in II Corinthians 5:10, the holy apostle teaches that all persons of all time “will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” In this passage and others like it, Christians are warned that all mankind will not only be raised but will face our Christ in eternal judgment. For the faithful Christian, this will be a day of incomprehensible reward, but for the unfaithful and unbelieving, a day of unspeakable terror, the beginning of eternal punishment by fire. In light of these facts, Paul makes this conclusion in II Corinthians 5:11: “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” The certainty of Christ’s second coming and the events that will unfold immediately thereafter should strengthen every Christian’s resolve to teach

and warn all people about the salvation that exists in Jesus Christ and the terrible consequences of disobedience. Citizens of God's kingdom should share the compassion for the lost that Jesus felt during His ministry on earth (e.g. Matt 9:36), and that the apostles also felt, as clearly evidenced by passages like II Corinthians 5:11 and Colossians 1:28-29.

Lastly, upon stating that the earth and all the evil works in it will be melted with fervent heat by the awesome power of the Almighty God, Peter concludes with this rhetorical question:

“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of person ought you to be in holy conduct and

godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” (II Peter 3:11-12)

The answer is obvious: **Christ's return is certain, and no one knows when that day will come, therefore Christians are forewarned to be ready and to be watchful.** Dear friend, strive to be certain that He will find you in faithful conduct, fervently busy in the work of God! Just as Paul declares in II Corinthians 5:9, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.”