

THE SECOND COMING

- A. Introduction: Welcome everyone! We're livestreaming from our home again tonight since we are still under stay-at-home orders because of the corona virus pandemic. We're using these talks to address what is happening and why. Our purpose is to quell people's fears as we strengthen our trust in Almighty God.
1. This is our fifth week and we've already covered a lot of ground. Let's set the stage for tonight's discussion by briefly reviewing the high points addressed thus far.
 - a. The return of Jesus Christ to this world is near. When Jesus was here two thousand years ago He told His followers that His second coming will be preceded by certain signs which He compared to birth pangs (Matt 24:4-8). Among those signs are famines, earthquakes, and pestilence (or plague—epidemic disease causing a high rate of mortality).
 1. This pandemic is a birth pang. Like a labor pain, it will come to an end and we will make it through. However as with labor pains, there will be other more intense pains. Therefore it is important that we learn how to deal with birth pains and the related effects of the birth pains.
 2. Jesus gave us these instructions: When you see these things begin to happen, be elated in joyous expectation because the plan of redemption is about to be completed. Luke 21:28
 - b. Jesus is coming back to complete the plan of redemption. Almighty God conceived a plan in eternity past to have a family with whom He can live forever in loving relationship.
 1. God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ. He made the earth to be a home for His family. However, both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; etc.
 2. Neither humanity nor this world is as God intended. Humans are disqualified for sonship because of our sin, and the family home is infused with a curse of corruption and death.
 - A. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay for sin by dying in our place on the Cross. In doing so He opened the way for sinners to be transformed into God's sons and daughters through faith in Him.
 - B. Jesus will come again to cleanse the earth of all corruption and death and restore it to a fit forever home for the family in what the Bible calls the new earth. The new earth is this planet renewed and restored. Isa 65:17
 - c. Jesus said that the years leading up to His return will be marked by increasingly difficult times on the earth. We've already given some reasons why and we have more to say, probably next week. For now, note these points.
 1. The Bible has much to say about world conditions at Jesus' return. It describes a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion being in place. It will be controlled by a Satan inspired and empowered man who, among other things, will try to oppose the Lord's return.
 2. As the world moves increasingly toward globalization and away from the God of the Bible, conditions are setting up that will produce much catastrophe and suffering. Accurate knowledge from God's Word will help us deal with the rough days ahead.
 2. Jesus' soon return should be a source of hope and joy for us that helps us deal with and rise above these increasingly challenging times. However, because of misinformation and lack of information, many Christians aren't that excited about Jesus' return. Some are even afraid. That should not be.
 - a. So, tonight, I want to briefly address some of the misunderstandings that rob Christians of the hope and joy that comes from living with the awareness that Jesus is coming soon.
 - b. The second coming is actually a very large topic (more than we can address tonight). There are a number of events connected to the Lord's return that take place over a period of time and before culminating in the new earth.
 1. Christians have a tendency to focus on individual events—the identity of the Antichrist, the

meaning of 666, when will the Ezekiel 38 war take place—and miss the big picture. We end up confusing ourselves, and what ought to be a source of hope and joy—the fact that Jesus is coming soon—ends up scaring us.

A. Christians worry about if they're going in the rapture and argue over when it will take place (pre, mid, or post-trib). Should we stockpile food? How can we survive in a cashless society without taking the mark of the beast? But we don't find any of those worries in the New Testament.

B. In fact, one of the best known statements about not worrying in the New Testament is found immediately following this statement: Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything (Phil 4:4-5, NLT).

2. Many spend way more time trying to match current events with Bible verses instead of simply reading the Bible itself. They waste a lot of time and undermine the credibility of prophecy.
 - A. I sat in a meeting on Dec 31, 1979 and heard a prophecy teacher declare that the ten nation confederation predicted in the Book of Revelation was here because the next day (Jan 1, 1980) Greece would become the tenth member of the European Common Market. Needless to say, that wasn't correct. The Common Market no longer exists.
 - B. There are many prophecies about Jesus' first coming in the Old Testament. However, it was not clear what many of them meant until they were fulfilled. It's the same with the twice as many prophecies concerning His second coming.
- c. We would be a lot better off if we focused on what is clearly stated in the Bible. For the rest of tonight's talk we're going to consider how the first generation of Christians viewed the return of Jesus and what that information did for them.

B. Acts 1:9-11—Jesus' first message to His followers immediately after He returned to Heaven was: I'll be back. Obviously, Jesus knew that He would not return during the lifetime of anyone who heard that message on that day two thousand years ago. Why then did He give them that message?

1. Jesus gave it to them because there's something beneficial about living with the awareness that He is coming back—and the Lord desired that every generation from that time until He comes have that hope.
 - a. It's not escapism. Living with the awareness that Jesus is coming back helps you recognize that a plan is unfolding and that there is more to life than just this life. You're part of something bigger than yourself. You have a hope and a destiny that will outlast this very temporary and difficult life.
 - b. Twentieth century western Christianity has put too much emphasis on making this life the highlight of our existence. Due to lack of knowledge of what lies ahead after this life, combined with a disproportionate emphasis on this life, many sincere Christians don't want to leave this life behind.
 - c. When you read the New Testament this is the perspective you get: We're only passing through this world as it is (I Pet 1:17). Store up treasure in Heaven (Matt 6:20). The hardships of this life don't begin to compare with what is ahead for those who know the Lord (Rom 8:18).
 1. I Cor 15:19—Paul wrote: If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of men. Why? Because everybody dies, and whatever you gain in this life, you leave behind.
 2. II Cor 4:17-18—Paul was able to call his many difficulties momentary and light because he knew that what is ahead is far better and what matters most is staying faithful to the Lord.
 - d. When Jesus' first apostles went out to proclaim His resurrection from the dead, they explained that His death on the Cross made it possible for men and women to become sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. And, they also told everyone: He's coming back.
 1. When we examine all the statements made in the letters that Jesus' first apostles wrote to that first generation of Christians (the epistles), there's nothing about: Be afraid of what's ahead or get all you can out of this life because you only go around once.

2. What you see over and over in the New Testament are people who were looking forward to, anticipating the Lord's return. I Thess 1:9-10; Titus 2:11-13
2. Before we continue, I need to make some clarifying statements about the Lord's return. There are actually two stages to the second coming of Jesus separated by seven years.
 - a. When we read verses about the second coming, they seem to contradict each other. Some talk about Jesus return as a terrifying event while others talk about eagerly anticipating it. These verses don't contradict. Some deal with stage one and some with stage two. Matt 24:30; John 14:1-3; II Thess 1:7-9; I Thess 4:13-18; Jude 14-15; Rev 1:7; Rev 19:11-16
 - b. In stage one Jesus won't come to all the way to earth, He will come in the clouds and only His followers will see Him. He will take all who believe on Him off the earth and back to Heaven.
 - c. Once all believers are removed from earth, a seven year long period most commonly known as the tribulation will begin. It will be a time of great suffering. (We'll say more about this next week.)
 1. A world leader known as the Antichrist will come to power as the head of the worldwide government, economy, and religion. He will be Satan's counterfeit (in place of) Jesus.
 2. Through this ruler Satan will draw the world to himself. During these years his wickedness and the wickedness in human hearts will be demonstrated as never before.
 - d. At the end of this period, Jesus will come from Heaven with His saints in stage two of His coming. This time, the whole world will see the Lord and He will put an end to Antichrist and his forces. Then, the process of renewing and restoring the earth will begin. (lots of topics for another time)
3. A full discussion of everything that the Bible says about the second coming would take many weeks. Here's the point for our present discussion. None of this information scared the first Christians.
 - a. They understood that this world is not as it is supposed to be, not as God created it to be—filled with sin, pain, suffering, and death. They knew that the Lord will ultimately remedy this condition—and that's a good thing.
 1. They also knew that this present age (when things aren't the way God intended it to be) will end with the removal of all that is not of God—and that's a good thing. Matt 13:40-43
 2. But, they also knew that because they were blood bought, redeemed sons and daughters of God (thanks to Jesus' death and resurrection), they would participate in the finished product—this world restored to what God always intended. And they knew that God would preserve them until then, no matter what came their way. Joel 2:28-32
 - b. Because of the time in which we were born (a time when technology has reached unbelievable heights) it's easy to think that we can fix all the things that are wrong in this world.
 1. But there's no natural cure for what ails humanity and the earth because the root problem is spiritual—sin and all the resulting consequences.
 2. It will take the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to make things right. And He is soon going to do just that. We simply have to make it through the birth pangs—and we will by His grace.
4. Let me give you one example of how accurate knowledge of what's ahead is a source of comfort and hope in the midst of life's present challenges.
 - a. In AD 51-52 the apostle Paul went to the city of Thessalonica located in what is now northern Greece and proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ and His resurrection to the people. Many responded and a group of believers was established.
 1. He was in the city for about three weeks when severe persecution broke out and he was forced to leave. Shortly thereafter Paul sent his co-worker Timothy to check on the new converts. Timothy returned with a good report and Paul wrote an epistle to encourage them.
 2. We find out from the epistle that even though Paul was only in the city briefly he taught the people that Jesus is coming back. In his letter Paul actually gave them further instructions about the Lord's return and further clarified some points he had already made.

3. Evidently some of the new believers had died since Paul left the city and there were questions about the fate of those who had died. Would they miss the Lord's coming?
 - b. In I Thess 4:13-18 Paul explained to them that when the Lord returns their friends and loved ones will be with Jesus, and they will be reunited with their dead bodies raised from the grave. Then, all believers who are alive when this happens will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air.
 1. The phrase "caught up" (v17) is a Greek word (*harpazo*). It means to snatch or catch away. It has the idea of force suddenly exercised. When the Greek New Testament was translated into Latin this word was translated as *raptus*. We get the word rapture from this Latin word.
 2. Notice these points: We have hope in the face of sorrow due to the death of someone we love. They have not ceased to exist and we are only temporarily separated from them. And, their bodies will be raised from the grave and those who have died will get them back.
 - c. The Lord Jesus personally taught Paul the message that he preached (Gal 1:11-12), revealing to him a number of mysteries. One of those mysteries is that there is coming a generation of believers who will not see physical death. I Cor 15:51-53
 1. In connection with the resurrection of the dead Paul taught that when Jesus comes in the clouds, a trumpet will sound and two things will happen—the (bodies of the) dead will be raised and (the bodies of) all believers (dead and alive) will be changed.
 2. All of our bodies will be changed from corruptible and mortal (subject to corruption and death doomed) to incorruptible and immortal (beyond the touch of sickness, aging, and death).
 3. In Phil 3:20-21 Paul connected the transformation of our bodies with the coming of Jesus, revealing that when He comes again He will make our bodies like His own resurrected body.
 - d. I Thess 4:18—Paul concluded his remarks to the Thessalonians by telling them to comfort each other with this information. The Greek word means to aid, help, comfort, encourage.
 1. This information was meant to encourage believers, not lead to a frenzied discussion over when the rapture is and who's going.
 2. Those ideas would not have entered the mind of anyone who read Paul's word.
- C. Conclusion: Just as there was a generation that saw the first coming of Jesus and experienced things unique to them, so there will be a generation that sees the second coming of Jesus and experiences things unlike any other generation.
1. We've said this before, but it bears repeating. We need to feed our faith and not our fears. Heed Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians. Encourage yourself and others with the truth. Our future is bright because Jesus is coming back to complete the plan of redemption.
 - a. Instead of focusing on how crazy the world is, take time to think about the things we're discussing. None of this is bigger than God. None of it is taking Him by surprise. He will complete His plan.
 - b. If you are a committed Christian and the end times teachings that you've received scares you, then you didn't get good teaching. The fact that Jesus is coming should fill you with hope and joy.
 2. Circumstances will grow increasingly challenging on this earth. God will get us through, but to have peace of mind, to be excited and full of hope, you're going to have to know how to look past what you see—to the fact that a good plan with a good end is unfolding.
 3. Jesus is coming soon!! Amen!!!