

HOPE FOR EVERY GENERATION

- A. Introduction: We have begun to talk about the second coming Jesus Christ. Jesus' first message to His followers once He returned to Heaven after His crucifixion and resurrection was, "I'll be back". Acts 1:9-11
1. Clearly Jesus knew that He would not return within the lifetime of anyone who heard His message that day. Why did He give them that message? Jesus did not want that generation (or any other generation) to miss out on the hope that comes from knowing He will return to complete what He began at the Cross.
 - a. To appreciate this hope, we must see the big picture—why God created humanity and the earth. God created human being to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him, and He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; etc.
 - b. However, this world is not as God created or intended it to be because of sin (going back to Adam). Both humanity and the planet are infused with a curse of corruption and death. Because of sin, human beings are disqualified for God's family, and the earth is no longer a fitting home for God and His family. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; etc.
 1. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin and open the way for people to be restored to their created purpose as sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. John 1:12-13
 2. Jesus will come again to cleanse this earth of all corruption and death and restore it to a fit forever home for Himself and His family. Then, all who throughout human history have put faith in the revelation of Jesus given to their generation will return to this earth (once it is renewed and restored) to live with the Lord forever. Rev 21-22
 - c. Heb 9:26—Paul the apostle wrote that Jesus came at the end of this age to abolish sin by the sacrifice of Himself. We currently live in the age when things are not as God created or intends them to be.
 1. Then Paul wrote: And now to those who eagerly await him, he will appear a second time; not to deal with sin but to bring us the fullness of salvation (Heb 9:28, TPT).
 2. Jesus didn't die just to save the immaterial part of man from sin (our spirit and soul). He died to save every part of our being (including our body and the family home) from the effects of sin, corruption, and death. Jesus is coming back to bring full salvation to this world. Full salvation includes resurrection of the dead and restoration and renewing of the earth.
 - A. Resurrection of the dead is the reuniting of the physical body and the inward (immaterial) part of man that separate at death so we can live on earth again—this time forever.
 - B. In connection with Jesus' return, Our bodies will be glorified or made incorruptible and immortal. And, the earth will be restored to pre-sin conditions, in what the Bible calls the new heavens and new earth. I Cor 15:50-54; Rev 21-22
 2. Jesus wants every generation to live with the awareness that a plan is unfolding that is bigger than this life and will outlast this life. He wants all of us to live with the awareness that the best is ahead (after this life) for all who put faith in Him.
 - a. This is particularly important because of the times we're living in. Jesus' return is approaching and the Bible is clear that perilous times will precede His return. In order for us to have hope and peace of mind in the midst of increasingly difficult times, we must understand what is happening and why.
 - b. Luke 21:28—Jesus told His followers that when these perilous times begin to occur, we can be elated in joyous expectation because the plan of redemption is about to be completed. Redemption is His plan to fully deliver His creation from bondage to sin, corruption, and death.
 - c. We can't be excited and elated in expectation if we don't know the plan. So, in this series, we're taking some time to talk about what will happen in connection with Jesus' return and why.
 1. For many people talk of the second coming of Jesus is a science fiction topic that brings up images of a coming zombie apocalypse and the end of the world. For others it's an opportunity to discuss their favorite theory on the identity of the Antichrist or the meaning of the mark of the

beast. Still others don't want Jesus to come back yet because there are too many things they want to accomplish before the world ends, and if they don't get it done now, it won't happen.

2. Each of these responses indicates a lack of understanding what Jesus' coming will mean for humanity. When He returns, life on this planet will be restored to all that it was meant to be before it was damaged by sin. Death, sorrow, crying, pain, and loss will be forever banished.

B. No matter what generation we've been born into, living with the awareness that Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan of redemption helps us keep this life in perspective and gives encouragement and hope in the midst of life's hardships. John 16:33

1. Peter the apostle (an eyewitness who heard Jesus' first message after He returned to Heaven) wrote an epistle to Christians scattered throughout northern Asia (modern day Turkey) in AD 63-64.
 - a. These people were facing persecution in the form of slander and social pressures from the local populations. And, imperial persecution under the Roman Emperor Nero was about to begin. (Both Peter and Paul will die in those persecutions.)
 - b. Peter wrote to encourage these Christians to stay faithful to Jesus. He reminded them of what is in store for us when full salvation comes (when the plan of redemption is completed).
 - c. He reminded them of the hope they have because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Through faith in Jesus they've been born again and restored to their created purpose as sons and daughters of God.
 1. I Pet 1:3-4—By his boundless mercy...God has given us the privilege of being born again. Now we live with a wonderful expectation because Jesus rose from the dead. For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay (NLT).
 2. I Pet 1:5-6—Through our faith, the mighty power of God constantly guards us until our full salvation is ready to be revealed in the last time. May the thought of this cause you to jump for joy, even though lately you've had to put up with the grief of many trials (TPT).
2. Peter wrote a second letter about a year later. By then the Roman government had begun persecution of Christians. Peter was facing execution for his faith. Before he died, he wrote to remind his readers of the certainty of what they had believed. II Pet 1:13-21
 - a. In his letter, Peter gave a description of the process that will transform and restore the earth to a fit forever home for God's family when Jesus returns (II Pet 3:10-12, upcoming lessons).
 1. Note Peter's attitude as he faced certain death: But as we wait (for earth's transformation) we trust in God's (Word) to be fulfilled. There are coming heavens new in quality, and an earth new in quality, where righteousness will be fully at home (II Pet 3:13, TPT).
 2. Peter knew that this life is not the highlight of our existence. In his first letter he had reminded his readers that we are only passing through this world in its present condition (I Pet 1:17; 2:11). Peter died looking past this life to life after the plan of redemption has been completed.
 - b. Peter got this hope from the Old Testament prophets and from Jesus during His earth ministry. Not long before Jesus was crucified, Peter asked Jesus what he and the other apostles will receive for having left everything to follow Him. Matt 19:27-29
 1. Jesus told Peter that they will receive positions of authority (lessons for another night) and they will get back over and above what they lost or gave up to follow Him—with everlasting life. (In other words, this time they won't lose it.)
 2. Note, Jesus said this will happen in the regeneration. The Greek word translated regeneration (*palingenesis*) literally means new birth. The word is used twice in the New Testament.
 - A. In Titus 3:5 the word describes what happens to a man or woman when they believe on Jesus—they receive the life and Spirit of God in their innermost being and are born of Him. In Matt 19:28 it refers to the transformation of the world when the Lord restores the earth.

B. Matt 19:28—In the new age—the Messianic rebirth of the world (Amp); in the age of the restoration of all things (TPT).

3. Jesus didn't have to explain to Peter what He meant by regeneration. Peter already know from the prophets. Peter is the one who proclaimed in one of his first sermons after Jesus returned to Heaven that the Lord “will remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through His prophets” (Acts 3:21, NLT).
3. We've referred to the Epistle to the Hebrews a number of times in recent lessons. Paul wrote this letter to encourage people who were experiencing increasing pressure and persecution for their faith in Christ.
 - a. One of Paul's tactics was to remind them of some of their ancestors who through faith (or trust) in God endured hardships and stayed faithful to the Lord. They knew that this life is not all there is.
 1. Heb 11:13—All these faithful ones died without receiving what God had promised them, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth (NLT).
 - A. Paul reminded them of those who did great exploits for God through faith, listing famous men who overthrew kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions, and escaped death. Heb 11:32-35
 - B. But Paul also reminded his readers that “others trusted God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life...Some died by stoning, and some were sawed in half; others were killed with the sword” (Heb 11:36, NLT).
 2. Jewish tradition and some early church fathers say that Isaiah the prophet was sawn in half by the wicked king Manasseh. Isaiah prophesied in Israel during a time when national destruction was coming to the nation for their persistent idol worship.
 - A. Isaiah's message was not received and he was eventually executed. But he knew that there's more to life than just this life. He wrote about resurrection of the dead. Isa 26:19
 - B. Isaiah was also shown the distant future for God's people and wrote: Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth—so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation (Isa 65:17-18, NLT).
 - b. Peter and Paul (both eyewitnesses of Jesus) got their world view from the Old Testament prophets and from information Jesus gave them when He was here two thousand years ago.
 1. They knew that this life is temporary, and even if you achieve the best this world offers (and few people do so), old age and death take it away. They understood the importance of living this present life with the awareness that there is something better and imperishable ahead.
 - A. Peter wrote: For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because they life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God (I Pet 1:23, NLT).
 - B. Paul wrote: Our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather we look forward to what we have not yet seen. The troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever (II Cor 4:17-18, NLT).
 2. The first Christians lived in anticipation and awareness of the return of Jesus. Statements like the following are scattered throughout the New Testament epistles (letters).
 - A. I Cor 1:7-8—Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong right up to the end, and he will keep you free from all blame on the great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns (NLT).
 - B. Phil 1:6—And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again (NLT).

- C. Conclusion: Jesus wanted and wants every generation to live with the awareness that He is coming back to complete the plan of redemption. That being said, just as there was a generation that saw the first coming of Jesus, there will be a generation that sees the second coming of Jesus.
1. There is good reason to believe that many of us are part of that group. The Bible makes a number of specific statements about world conditions when Jesus returns (lessons for another day). Consider two which have only recently come to be—the existence of Israel as a nation and worldwide technology.
 - a. Many passages about the second coming refer to Israel as a nation. However, just forty years after Jesus returned to Heaven, Israel was destroyed by the Roman government and the population scattered throughout the empire (AD 70). Israel ceased to exist as a nation until 1948.
 - b. The Bible describes a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion that will be in place when Jesus returns (Rev 13). The technology for such a setup has only existed for a few decades.
 2. In the last lesson we said that in addition to a curse of corruption and death in the earth, there's a counterfeit kingdom in this world in active opposition to God, presided over by Satan. There is a cosmic battle raging (lessons for another day). I John 5:19; Eph 2:1-3; Eph 6:11-12; etc.
 - a. Just as the devil attempted to thwart the first coming of Jesus (he inspired King Herod to kill Hebrew babies around the birthplace of Jesus, tempted Christ, and inspired the crucifixion) he will attempt to stop the Lord's return so that he can hold on to his kingdom.
 - b. Prior to Jesus' return Satan will offer the world a false Messiah, an anti Christ who will preside over the worldwide system. This man's activities and the responses of the world to him will produce the chaos and tribulation of the final years leading up to Jesus' return (lessons for another day).
 1. The point for our present discussion is this: The circumstances that will produce the chaos of the final years of this age won't come out of a vacuum. They are setting up now. Times will grow increasingly difficult in this world. II Tim 3:1-5
 2. We need the perspective that comes from seeing the big picture and the end result of Christ's return so that we have hope in the midst of increasingly dark times.
 - A. As we said earlier, when the second coming of Jesus is mentioned people have a tendency to focus on individual events such as the rapture, the tribulation, and the Antichrist and miss the overall purpose of the second coming.
 - B. Because they don't consider the individual events and topics in terms of the big picture, or God's plan for humanity, they draw wrong conclusions that produce fear instead of hope.

Those individual topics only matter in connection with how they fit into the big picture.
 - c. The focus in the New Testament is not on the Antichrist's identity or who will start the Ezekiel 38 war or when the tribulation will begin. It's on the fact that Jesus is returning to take back what is His as the rightful King and complete the plan of redemption.
 3. This world is going to get a lot darker in the months and years ahead (lessons for another night). It will seem as though the powers of darkness have won. That's why we must remember the end result. We must be persuaded that no matter how dark things get there's a good end ahead, and keep our focus there.
 - a. When Jesus was arrested and turned over to be crucified, He made this statement to the men who arrested Him and the power at work behind them: "This is your moment, the time when the power of darkness reigns" (Luke 22:53, NLT). It looked as though Satan had won.
 - b. But God beat the devil at his own game. Jesus willingly went to the Cross as a sin sacrifice and turned this great evil into mankind's greatest blessing—salvation for all who put faith in Jesus.
 - c. Paul later wrote: But the rulers of this world have not understood (the wisdom of God); if they had, they would never have crucified our glorious Lord (I Cor 2:7-8, NLT).
 4. This is the end result of the chaos coming on this world: Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: The whole world has now become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he will reign forever and ever (Rev 11:15, NLT). More next week!