

How Will Jesus Christ Return? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction

- A. This series of messages is named **Final Things**. We have studied what the Bible says about those things that happen at the end our lives.
 - 1. We die (the only exception is the return of Christ), we face judgment, and we will spend eternity in one of two places - heaven or hell.
 - 2. The last final thing we are considering is the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- B. To this point we have noted two things.
 - 1. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 says this doctrine should foundationally affect the way we live our lives. We should not find ourselves unaffected by the second coming.
 - 2. Last week Mark Prater served us well by showing that the signs in Matt 24 are not the thing of most importance. Loving Jesus Christ and others is.
- C. Here is where we're headed.
 - 1. The title of this message is **How Will Jesus Christ Return?**
 - 2. Next week I'm in Souderton, John will fill in for me, the following week we'll look at **When Jesus Christ Will Return**.
 - 3. Finally, what about the Jews and Israel? Where do they fit in? How should we relate to them as a people and as a nation? Then, can it be, 2004!
- I. Some pastoral thoughts and advice on the doctrine of the second coming.
 - A. First, sincere Christians differ on this doctrine. There are 3 or 4 interpretations given regarding what the Bible teaches.
 - 1. I'll try to give a condensed version of each in a couple of weeks. Our position is amillennial, but this is a secondary doctrine (avoid quarrels and speculation).

Ex: A TV preacher last week saying we are the terminal generation.
 - 2. We will always accent the gospel, especially the cross. That is central.

The preoccupation of "Left Behind" with final judgment and the future fulfillment of prophecy ultimately distracts from Jesus' central message of comfort: the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Brent McGuire on issuesetc.org

Ex: Let's deal with our fear of man. How many have a Left Behind book? Have read one? Read all 11? Left Behind Prophecy Club?

Ex: Not bashing, I haven't read them. 50 million copies sold, 20 million bucks, good for Jenkins and LaHaye (generous guys). Great literature should be read.

3. We will avoid being dogmatic, exclusive or fearful. We will not run to prophecy conference after prophecy conference. We will keep our balance.
4. Above all, we will live daily for God's glory by desiring to be with Christ and we hope He finds faith in us when He returns.

B. Our statement of faith is intentionally non-specific (He is coming, be ready):

The Consummation - The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with him forever. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.

II. The Scriptures speak often about the second coming of Christ.

- A. Jesus taught about it in Matt 24 & 25, as in Mark 13 and Luke 21.
- B. In Acts 1 (the ascension), the disciples are curious about when the kingdom will be restored to Israel.
 1. Jesus says, It is not for you to know times and seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. Wait for power, be my witnesses.
 2. Peter preaches the doctrine in Acts 3, Paul preaches this doctrine in Acts 17.
 3. All over the epistles (Paul, Peter, John, James). They all reference this precious doctrine.
- C. Therefore, we cannot be indifferent. We cannot avoid the doctrine because better minds can't figure it out.

I think we have to agree that this doctrine, this truth, is somewhat overlooked and is certainly not emphasized as it should be, and it behooves us to consider the reasons for this neglect. There is no doubt that one reason is the tendency in all of us to spiritual lethargy. We tend to become victims of life and circumstances. That is why these Scriptures are always exhorting us to remind ourselves of these things, to stir ourselves up, that we may contemplate them. We are confronted by an enemy who is always trying to depress us and to keep our lives so full of other things that we forget this blessed hope. That is why this doctrine tends to stand out prominently in days of persecution and trial. So often, it is only when we see the vanity of this world that we look to the glorious future that is awaiting us. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *The Church and the Last Things* p 85-86

1. Now, some folks believe it has all happened already. Jerusalem AD 70, and so now the doctrine is simply confined to the Jewish nation.
2. Others hear sensational teaching and don't wish to be identified with it so the doctrine goes on the shelf. It is neglected.

III. The text describes the coming of the Lord.

A. I want to call your attention to verse 16.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

B. This tells us 5 things about how Jesus Christ will return.

1. One, a personal appearing. The Lord himself!
 - Not a spirit, not an influence.
2. Two, a physical appearing.
 - No doubt the Lord came in judgment in AD 70 spiritually. No doubt the Lord comes spiritually in revival. This will be seen by all.
3. Three, a visible appearing.

Matthew 26:64b ESV But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

- The Bible nowhere teaches a silent, secret, quiet rapture. The idea of cars and trains and planes suddenly being deserted isn't in the text.
- Or any other text for that matter.
- Began as a prophetic word given by Margaret MacDonald in Glasgow, Scotland in 1830, and later taught by Darby, Irving and Scofield.
- Where else does the idea come from? Two texts, Larry Norman and Hal "Late Great Planet Earth" Lindsey have all played a role.

Matthew 24:40 ESV Then two men will be in the field, one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.

Luke 17:34-35 ESV I tell you, in that night there will be two in bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.

Life was filled with guns and war, and everyone got trampled on the floor, I wish we'd all been ready. Children die, the days grew cold, a piece of bread could buy a bag of gold, I wish we'd all been ready. There's no time to change your mind, the Son has come and you've been left behind.

A man and wife asleep in bed, she hears a noise and turns her head he's gone, I wish we'd all been ready, two men walking up a hill, one disappears and one's left standing still, I wish we'd all been ready, there's no time to change your mind, the Son has come and you've been left behind.

How could you have been so blind? The Father spoke, the demons dined, the Son has come, and you've been left behind, you've been left behind, you've been left behind.

- I Wish We'd All Been Ready by Larry Norman (1969)

In 1970 Hal Lindsey wrote Late Great Planet Earth and my last report is 15 million copies have been sold. Huge impact (cold war, nuclear winter, middle east, etc) on the church.

- The book and the song describe those two texts. If one is taken, and one is left, add 1 Thess 4, doesn't the good guy get taken? Perhaps.
- Another option exists. Look at Matt 24. In the verses preceding (38-39) the ones removed are destroyed in the flood. The ones who are left is Noah and family. In the verses following (40-41) is about a thief breaking and entering a house. The illustration depends on the idea that having your things taken is bad, it is good if they remain.

The word for "taken" in the Greek of Matt 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-35 can also be used to mean seized or taken prisoner. For instance, Jesus is "taken" by the soldiers prior to his crucifixion (Matt 27:27). Moreover, the word for "left" is often used in the Bible to mean "to pardon" or "to forgive." The same verb is used in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us (Matt 6:12, Luke 11:4). Given the immediate context and the different meanings possible for the words "taken" and "left", a strong case could be made that when Jesus refers to the "one taken" he speaks of those who will be judged at the second coming. Those who are "left", then, are those who are forgiven and who receive eternal life. Brent McGuire in issuesetc.org

- Which is it? Better to be taken or left behind? I don't know, the main point is be ready for His return. Friend, are you ready now?
- 4. Four, a sudden appearing. The Scriptures compare His coming to lightning or a thief in the night.
- 5. Five, it will be a glorious appearing.
 - His first appearance was in humility as a babe in a manger.
 - His second appearance will be as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Every knee will bow and worship this King.

Close

A. How will Jesus return? Five ways:

1. Personally, physically, visibly, suddenly, gloriously.
 2. Everyone will know because the Lord will descend with a cry of command, the voice of an archangel, and the sound of the trumpet of God.
- B. For everyone here today I want to ask two questions.
1. Do you love Jesus Christ? To love Him is to desire to see Him appear so that we are with Him forever. How do I grow love? Sin - cross - salvation.
 2. Are you ready for His return? Is there anything undone?

Pray

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