

“WHY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST MUST COME AGAIN”

Part 2

Dr. John S. Waldrup

Two thousand years ago lived a man who was executed illegally and without cause at the instigation of Jewish leaders by their Roman occupiers. This was done by brutally flogging Him, and nailing Him to a cross, the common form of Roman execution for criminals; but three days later He rose from the dead. After His resurrection, more than 500 credible witnesses saw Him alive, some of whom talked with Him, some of whom ate with Him, and some of whom actually touched Him.

Forty days later, after speaking to His disciples on a mountain, He suddenly ascended into the clouds. As those disciples were watching Him literally and physically ascend from the earth, two angels appeared and said,

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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.”¹

The angels’ prediction that the Lord Jesus Christ would return was certainly not a new promise, since the Lord Himself had said on many different occasions that He would return. As a Christian, I and others like me believe the prediction of His Second Coming will be fulfilled, and we are waiting for Him to return, even though we don’t know precisely when that will take place.

Some people think we who believe the Bible are very foolish to be looking for the Second Coming of Christ, but that is certainly to be expected. The Apostle Peter predicted that in the end times, the doomed and the damned would increase in their mocking and ridicule in response to the promise of Christ’s return.²

In Luke 12.41-48, we find a parable in which the Lord spoke to this issue of scoffing at the promise of His Second Coming. Turn there and read it with me:

- ⁴¹ Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?
- ⁴² And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season?
- ⁴³ Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
- ⁴⁴ Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.
- ⁴⁵ But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;
- ⁴⁶ The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.
- ⁴⁷ And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

¹ Acts 1.11

² 2 Peter 3.3-4

- 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Notice the circumstances set forth in the parable, in verses 41-42:

- 41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?
42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season?

We are told of a landlord and his steward. The steward didn't own anything but was responsible to carefully manage the affairs of the household.

The commendation is recorded in verses 43-44:

- 43 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.
- a. The verbal picture is of a landlord who went away and put one of his servants in charge of his property. When the landlord returned, if the servant was found faithfully doing what was required of him, he was promised a great reward. This parable promises that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back to reward those who have served Him faithfully.
 - b. In Second Timothy 4.8 the Apostle Paul wrote,
“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

In other words, the Apostle Paul and those who live as if the Lord Jesus Christ is coming at any moment are promised a crown of righteousness.

There is, however, a contrast that is shown in the parable, back in Luke 12.45:

“But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken.”

Our Lord Jesus warned that there would be some who, when the Lord of the house goes away, would be unfaithful to the obligation and trust committed to them. They are the ones who don't live with any consideration of His return, but instead scoff and say, “Oh, my lord delays his coming ... maybe he'll never come.”

Unfaithful, they neglect the responsibilities of faithful stewardship and begin to misuse their privileges. They push around their fellow servants according to their own whims, indulge themselves in the food and drink of their master, and even get drunk, wastefully taking that which is not theirs to take and failing to supply others as they should.

Of course, this brings condemnation, verses 46-48 of the parable:

- 46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.
47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.
48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Christ is obviously the landlord in His parable, and He said He is going to come back and judge those to whom the stewardship had been committed, mankind. Notice not only the suddenness of His return, but also the fact that when He returns, He will evaluate His servants based on what has been done in His absence.

Also, notice that His judgment will be in proportion to how much the servant knows. The Lord Jesus Christ is saying here that there are degrees of judgment. The individual who understands the Lord's will and does not obey it gets a more severe judgment. Therefore, if you scoff at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and think it's pie-in-the-sky nonsense to believe in the physical, literal return of Christ to this earth, let me just say that from this moment on, you have been warned. You have heard the truth, and you now know what the Lord has promised to do, so it is up to you whether or not you will obey.

How can we be sure the Lord Jesus Christ will really return? What is the evidence? How do we know this isn't just nonsense? What causes us to be sure of a literal, physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Our conviction about Christ's return is based upon two things:

First, OUR CONVICTION ABOUT CHRIST'S RETURN IS BASED UPON GOD'S PERSONALITY

By personality, I refer to God's character of fidelity to the truth, to Him keeping His Word and adhering to His promises and assurances. We reflect upon each of the three Divine Persons of the Godhead:

First, there is the promise of the Father. Throughout the Old Testament, God continually promised a Deliverer, a Redeemer, a Messiah, a Savior, and a King who would deliver men, forgive their sins, bring justice out of injustice, make right out of wrong, and reverse the curse of the Fall. God repeatedly made this promise. In fact, I previously pointed out that there are at least 333 prophecies in the Old Testament telling about this coming Deliverer. This Deliverer is Jesus Christ. But the first time He came, He only fulfilled 109 of these prophecies. This means 224 prophecies have never been fulfilled. If they have yet to be fulfilled, He must return; otherwise, God's Word is unfulfilled, making Him a liar. So, the promise of the Father demands that Jesus Christ return.

Another vital point to realize is that God gave the prophecies in the Old Testament to establish His trustworthiness. When He says something will happen and it does, it builds our confidence to trust and believe Him. But if God provided 224 prophecies regarding the Messiah that did *not* come to pass when He came to the earth, then God's Word is suspect. He is undermining exactly what He is trying to accomplish ... unless, of course, Jesus Christ comes back a second time. Therefore, the promise of the Father demands that His Son return to Earth.

Secondly, we see that the Son's statements demand the Second Coming. Jesus Christ said He would return. He not only said it in direct statements.³ But also in parables.⁴ And after He had already returned to heaven, the book of Revelation records six times when He said, "I come quickly."⁵ This is the same Lord Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" in John 14.6.

So, if He is the truth, He cannot lie, and He, therefore, must return. He actually went further than just saying He was coming back; He gave an actual demonstration of the Second Coming. We find it in Luke 9.28-36. I wish we had the time to read it. About eight days after our Lord had told His disciples that He would be slain (Luke 9.22), that He would rise on the third day (again Luke 9.22), and that He would come again in glory

³Matthew 24.27, 30-31; 25.31; John 14.1-3

⁴Luke 19.11-27

⁵Revelation 2.5, 16; 3.11; 22.7, 12, 20

(Luke 9.26), He took Peter, James, and John up into a mountain to pray. Verses 29-36 record the shining forth of His glory, His conversation with Moses and Elijah, and their discussion of His death in Jerusalem.

The full impact of the lesson was lost on the three apostles, who slept through most of it. It was only later, after the Savior's ascension to glory and the Day of Pentecost, that the astonishing prequel to the Savior's resurrection and Second Coming they had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration would be understood. It was certainly remembered by the two who, among the three, survived the longest.⁶

Thirdly, we see that the guarantee of the Holy Spirit demands the Second Coming. The Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, continually states, "Jesus is coming," through all the New Testament writers. When they wrote, the Spirit's mind guided their pens. Therefore, the New Testament is the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the person of Christ and His Second Coming. In Second Peter 1.19-21, Peter emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit's testimony through Scripture for the return of Christ. He had just finished indicating, in verses 16-18, "Do you know how I know Jesus Christ is coming? I personally saw His Second Coming glory."

You say, "Well, that's great, Peter, but that's just your experience." Anticipating just such an objection, he wrote, in verses 19-21:

- ¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:
- ²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.
- ²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

Peter was as much as telling his readers, "I not only know Jesus Christ is coming because I experienced His glory, but I know He's coming because the Holy Spirit gives testimony to it on the pages of Scripture." So, the Lord Jesus Christ **must** return to earth because of the promise of the Father, the statements of the Son, and the guarantee of the Holy Spirit demand it. These Three make up the Godhead. Therefore, Jesus Christ must return because the character of God's personality demands it.

As Well, OUR CONVICTION ABOUT CHRIST'S RETURN IS BASED UPON GOD'S PLAN

We, first, consider the program of God for believers of the Church Age, this era. Understand that I am broadly dispensational and that nothing I presented last week in the first part of this message, and nothing I am saying today in the second part of this message, is in any way original with me. It is a view of God's dealings with mankind that was held by such as the late George Peters, J. Frank Norris, Peter and Kenneth Connolly, Lewis Sperry Chafer, W. Graham Scroggie, Arthur W. Pink, John MacArthur, and many, many others.⁷ Also to be noted is the historical evidence from the first three centuries of the Christian era that Christ's return must precede the establishing of His kingdom on earth.⁸ Allow me to elaborate by way of two notions:

First, there is the sequential plan revealed by James in Acts 15.13b-17:

- ¹³ And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

⁶ John 1.14; 2 Peter 1.17

⁷ This message is heavily dependent upon material found in *The Second Coming Of The Lord Jesus Christ: Study Notes Selected Scripture*, edited by David Sper, (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1981), pages 13-22

⁸ George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom, Vol I*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1972), pages 449-466.

- 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.
- 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,
- 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:
- 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

This passage is one of the most critical prophetic passages in the Bible. It is a brief summary of the purposes of God given to the Jerusalem Council. Commenting on Peter's report that Gentiles were being brought to Christ, Acts 15.6-12, and quoting Amos 9.11-12, Pastor James declared the order of events in God's plan of redemption. This order is as follows: According to Acts 15.14, there is the gathering of Church Age Gentile Christians:

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

Israel rejected their Messiah, so God turned to the Gentiles to "take out" a people. The Greek word for church (which is comprised of Christians) is ἐκκλησία and is derived from ἐκ, which means "out," and καλέω, which means "to call." In other words, church members are comprised of those who are "called" or "taken out," Christians. This gathering over the centuries will be followed by the return of Christ to the Earth, verses 15-16a:

- 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,
- 16 After this I will return

This will occur in two parts. After all the Christians of this Church Age are completely gathered, the *invisible* Rapture for us, us meeting Christ in the air, occurs and the believers of our era are removed.⁹ Seven years later, Christ *visibly* returns to earth with us.¹⁰ Then, the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ will be established, Acts 15.16b:

"... and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

When we are told that Jesus Christ comes back and rebuilds the house of David, it means just that. The returning Savior will set up the Kingdom and reign on King David's throne. Then comes the subjection of the nations to Christ, verse 17:

"That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

God cannot finish His plan with Israel until He finishes His plan with the Church Age believers. Jesus Christ *must* return, because the Church Age cannot end if He does not end it. And if the Church Age doesn't end then the "after this" of verse 16 doesn't take place. And if there is no "after this," there's no Kingdom, either. So, we find that the sequential plan of God found here in Acts 15 is that Christ first gathers His children saved during this Church Age. When He's done with that, He comes back seven years later and works with Israel. Then, He sets up His Kingdom, and the Gentile nations come to His throne in subjection to His rule. At present, God is

⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4.17

¹⁰ Acts 1.9-11; Revelation 19.11-16

gathering Church Age believers through the Gospel, but until He's finished with that, nothing else in the plan can occur.

We next consider the symbolic picture of a wedding, Second Corinthians 11.2:

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*”

Christ's Second Coming is likened in some ways to a wedding, and in Second Corinthians 11.2 the Church in Corinth was likened by Paul to a virgin waiting for her husband. Marriages in the Oriental world had three facets, with each facet parallel to God's program for Church Age believers.

First, there is the legal contract. This is very much like a prenuptial agreement, which I advise as a matter of course whenever someone with assets marries, in part to prevent some crazy relative from suing a surviving spouse in the event of a tragic death of one of the newlyweds. The custom at the time of Christ was for the two fathers agreeing on their children's marriage to write a contract, to exchange money in the form of a dowry from her father, and also money from his father. Once the payment was made, the marriage was considered legal even though no honeymoon or consummation had yet taken place. The comparison? When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, He made legal payment for our 'marriage' to Him. And even though the 'marriage' has not yet been consummated, it is binding because He paid the dowry with His precious blood. In our desperate poverty, we pay nothing. Isn't grace wonderful?

Next, there is the betrothal. The custom was for a brief ceremony in which the bride and bridegroom would meet in the presence of witnesses and receive many gifts, like a bridal shower. History tells us that all kinds of gifts were given. Still, the marriage was not yet consummated. The comparison is that the betrothal is a beautiful parallel to God giving us the gifts of the Spirit, in addition to the gift of the Holy Spirit, when we come to Jesus Christ. The consummation has still not yet happened, but we have all the gifts.

Finally, the marriage feast. The third phase of the wedding occurred when the bridegroom and his friends went to the bride's house. There, they had the actual ceremony followed by a marriage feast. The comparison? We who are Christians have already had the legal contract affirmed and the betrothal. We are now waiting for the marriage feast. But unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes back for us, there will be no feast. He *must* come back to claim His bride, the believers in Christ of this Church Age, to consummate the marriage.

This is a symbolic picture of God's plan for Church Age believers in Jesus Christ. God would *never* use the beautiful metaphor of marriage and then leave us hanging forever, with no consummation. Those of us who have put our trust in Christ are legally married to Him. The seal of the Holy Spirit secures us. Christ paid the dowry when He died on the cross, so, legally, we are joined to Him. We have been betrothed to Him in that the Spirit given to us has additionally given us gifts. All we are waiting for now is the final moment when we enter His presence and the marriage feast begins. So, God's purpose for believers ***demands*** the return of Jesus Christ; otherwise, the marriage is not consummated.

Secondly, the return of Jesus Christ is demanded by God's program for the Gentile nations. God has always judged sin, both personal and national. This is seen in the Old Testament when God destroyed entire nations to judge their sin. You might think, “Do you believe that Christ is going to come in judgment?” Absolutely! God is a God of love, but He is also a God of righteousness driven by His own nature to punish sin. And how does this relate to the Lord Jesus Christ? The Bible shows that all judgment is given to the Son, John 5.22. So, if God is going to judge the nations, and Jesus Christ is the Judge, then it must be Him who returns to judge the nations. Allow me to relate to you some passages which tell of this coming judgment of the nations:

First, there is Joel 3.9-16a. Though we do not have the time to read the passage, note when you can open your Bible to read it, that the context of this prophecy is when God regathers Israel, verse 1. Verses 30-31 of Joel chapter 2 show that the specific time referred to is the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:29-30). What will hap-

pen? In brief, there is to be a gathering of all the nations for war at the time of the end. This is known as the Battle of Armageddon.

Next, there is Matthew 25.31-46. In Matthew 25, especially verses 31-46, our Lord Jesus verified the judgment addressed in the prophecy of Joel. It is also interesting to note that all these nations gather for war and converge on the Promised Land to attack the returning Lord Jesus Christ and to destroy Israel once and for all, only to find out that they have been brought for this final great battle to the tribunal, the judgment bar of God. The tables are suddenly turned on the nations, and they are the ones who end up being judged.

Then, Revelation 14.14-20. In Revelation 14, the Holy Spirit confirms this judgment of the ungodly. As a matter of fact, verses 16-20 reveal that Christ reaps, and the slaughter will be so great that the blood spilled from the great slaughter will be six feet deep for what turns out to be over 200 miles. God's program for the nations is that they be judged. Who is the judge? Jesus Christ is the Judge, John 5.22. If the nations are to be judged on the earth, and Jesus Christ is the Judge, then Jesus Christ must return to Earth to judge. Thus, the Second Coming is demanded not only by God's program for the Church Age believer, but also by God's program for the Gentile nations.

Thirdly, the return of Jesus Christ to Earth is demanded by God's program for the nation of Israel. In Romans 11.25-27, Paul writes,

- 25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
- 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
- 27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Has this happened yet? No, it has not! The phrase "the fullness of the Gentiles" refers to the Church Age. It began with Christ and ends at the Rapture. Once the bride of Christ is complete, the Rapture will occur, the blindness will be taken away from Israel, and "all Israel shall be saved." However, Israel cannot be saved until Christ first comes for His own. He *must* come. God's program for Israel demands it. We should ask if every Jewish person will be saved during or at the end of the Tribulation. It is often asked what Paul means in Romans 11.26, "... all Israel shall be saved." Did he mean that every single Jew alive in the world during the Tribulation is going to be saved? Not likely. Not every single one, if we understand Ezekiel 20.33-35, which reads,

- 33 As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you:
- 34 And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.
- 35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

God will gather Israel during the Tribulation for judgment. Verses 37-38 continue,

- 37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:
- 38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Therefore, while not every single Jew during the Tribulation will be saved, the nation of Israel will once and for all be freed from persecution. When it says, "so all Israel shall be saved," it suggests a deliverance in which all persecution ends. Thus, though as a nation they will be delivered, it also seems that there will be rebels who will be purged out for their continued unbelief.

So, you see, the Christian's conviction that the return of Jesus Christ is essential is, in every way, proper, as a consequence of God's personality and as a fulfillment of God's plan.

The climax and fulfillment of God's plan for Church Age believers —the bride of Christ, the so-called Rapture —depend on it. The climax and fulfillment of God's plan for the judgment of the Gentile nations depends on it. And the climax and fulfillment of God's plan for the deliverance of the people and nation of Israel depends on it.

Jesus Christ is coming again! Our convictions about Christ's Second Coming in power and in great glory are convictions arising from God's personality and are convictions arising from God's plan as they are both revealed in the infallible Word of God.

The only question that remains is whether you are ready for His coming? Have you trusted Him for the forgiveness of your sins? If you have not, you need to.