

He Who is to Come | He's Coming Soon

12.21.25

Acts 1:1-11

Sunday AM

**Every Christmas** – whether we know it or not – we stand at a holy intersection where we celebrate the truth that the *infinite became infant* and that God became flesh for the purpose of seeking to save the lost thru the cross. But that's not where the story ends, Christmas also reminds us that one day in the future, He who came once – has promised He's coming again.

Christmas wasn't solely a birth announcement but also a PROMISE – for as the cradle points to the cross – and the cross points to an empty tomb; the empty tomb points to a throne and to the sky as the God who came special delivery some 2,000 yrs ago in humility is coming again to rule/reign just as He promised to be our conquering King and Savior Lord.

Nowhere is this promise more powerfully stated than in the angelic message to the disciples in **Act 1:1- 11**.

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions thru the H.S. to the apostles He had chosen. After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while He was eating w/ them, He gave them this command, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized w/ water, but soon, you will be baptized w/ the H.S." Then they gathered around Him and asked, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It's not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the H.S. comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly (2) men dressed in white stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:1-11*

In this angelic encounter, we learn that the Jesus who came in the Advent, arose at Easter, and ascended at Pentecost – will one day in the future return – visibly, personally, and gloriously – but this time not to die for sin but to put an end to sin and to create a new heaven/earth. But that until that day arrives, we're to live w/ hope and on mission in the **in-b/w**.

The **in-b/w** is that space/place where we used to be – but not yet where we're going... not living on pause – by actively living while waiting w/ great expectation.

This is exactly where the disciples and early church found themselves. Jesus had come, had died and risen from the dead – and now in Acts 1 – He's ascending back to His throne w/ a new heavenly mission.

**And now** – the (11) and a few of their friends, are literally doing what some of us do spiritually – they're just standing there – frozen. Wide-eyed – staring at the heavens uncertain of what is supposed to happen next.

**The scene makes me think of the quote** – *I ain't what I want to be; I ain't what I ought to be; but thank God, I ain't what I used to be.*

There not the same, but now they're a bit uncertain of what to do next b/c in just the previous 8 weeks their lives had been turned upside-down/inside-out by the triumphal entry, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, the cross, the resurrection, and now the ascension – and their Savior was no longer w/ them leaving only a promise of this thing called the H.S.

We too may've have been standing their gazing at the heaven – confused and dumbfounded by these series of events – ***talk about having spiritual whiplash!***

**When Suddenly** – an angel interrupted their staring contest to offer them a promise – *Men of Galilee...why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.*

**And this is our anchor of hope today** – that the same Jesus who ascended will one day soon return.

**Today**, in the spirit of His 1<sup>st</sup> coming, I want to speak w/ you about the One who still is to come – and what we need to do until that moment arrives.

I **TRUST** the Father's Timing v. 7

The disciples asked a question still getting asked today (asked this week) – when is Jesus going to return.

Before we delve into this question, I want to explain a little eschatology to explain the difference b/w the rapture of the church and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

Since the day of Pentecost, when the H.S. descended and the church began, we've been in what is called the church age. As we learned in Romans, the church and Israel share many items, but they're not the same. And while their promise run concurrently, there are some differences. FE – the ***rapture*** is a prophetic event for the church and not for Israel. Whereas, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is a prophetic event for Israel to fulfill God's covenant w/ them to make an end to sin, defeat evil, and establish His final kingdom

*The rapture is the belief that prior to the millennial kingdom, Jesus will gather and transform His followers from the church age in the clouds and spare them from experiencing God's wrath on sin.*

**NOW** – the views of the rapture are extensive. We have ***pre-trib.***, ***mid-trib.***, ***post-trib.***, ***pre-wrath trib.***, and my favorite – ***pan-trib.*** – that is, the rapture will occur either prior to the tribulation, ½ way into the trib, ¾ of the way into the trib, at the end of the trib – or... it's all going to pan out in the end – just be ready. We find hints of the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and in 1 Corinthians 15.

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven w/ a shout, w/ the voice of an archangel, and w/ the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then, we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together w/ them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

The key things to note is that when Jesus returns in the rapture, He doesn't come down – we go up – and are transformed as the mortal puts on immortality.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, which the angel is referring to here in Acts 1 – Jesus comes down right where He left from.

Mentioned thru-out the O.T. and in Matthew 24, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is part of God's plan for His covenant promised to Israel to restore the Temple and make an end to sin as prophesied in the book of Daniel.

And it all starts w/ the signing of a 7-yr covenant b/w the anti-Christ and Israel. (Read Daniel 9:24-27)

*(70) sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place. "Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be (7) 'sevens,' and (62) 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt w/ streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the (62) 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to*

*death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant w/ many for (1) 'seven.' In the middle of the '(7)' he'll put an end to sacrifice and offering – and at the temple, he'll set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that's decreed is poured out on him.*

**To Daniel**, God promised the Israelites that He would fulfill His covenant in (3) parts. Understanding that a week equals 7 yrs – this is a 490 yr prophecy. **Part 1** – God would take 49 yrs to rebuild/reestablish the Temple – and He did thru Ezra/Nehemiah who were allow to return to rebuild. **Part 2** – 434 yrs after that, around the time Jesus would start His earthly ministry, God would send the anointed Messiah but He'd be cut off – and we know that Jesus was rejected. This leaves **Part 3** – 1 week (or 7 yr period) that most theologians agree is the 7 yr Tribulation we see in the book of Revelation.

**All that to say** – while the rapture and 2<sup>nd</sup> coming are inseparably linked, one is a prophecy for the church, the other is a prophecy for the Israelites.

But for the Jesus-follower, as we witness the amazing timing of God, our focus shouldn't be set on crunching dates and trying to figure when He's going to return, but to live for Him on mission until He returns.

**WTM** – Jesus point is two-fold. (1) God owns the calendar; we own our obedience. (2) We're to stop trying to predict the date, and start stewarding today.

## II **EMBRACE** Your Great Commission v. 8

In v. 8, Jesus offered a second G.C. statement inclusive of some pretty important details. He said – (1) when the H.S. arrives and empowers you; (2) you're to become a witness to the life, love, and truth of Jesus; and (3) you're to share it w/ everyone your life intersects w/ where we live, work, play, and travel.

**IOW** – we're not to sit by idly to watch paint dry – we're to get our lives in gear for God w/ the specific aim to be a witness of His transforming power by widening of our spiritual circle starting where we are.

**The mission** – *go make disciples*. Not church-goers or moralist – but abandoned, reproducing apprentices. That is, to desire to be w/ Jesus, to become like Jesus, so they can do as Jesus did.

## III **LOOK** Ahead w/ Active Hope v. 11

*Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.*

The angel's point was simple – don't just stand there staring in awe – get to work. Start serving. Keep your eyes on His promise and your hand on the plow. Be watchful; but prioritize being worshipful and working.

As Jesus ascended, we're told that He will one day return right where He departed – *in the same way*.

Let me share a fun fact – When Jesus ascended, He was standing on the Mt. of Olives across the Kidron Valley opposite of the Eastern Gate – and He said that He was going to return just as He left. Ezekiel 43-44 tell us that when the Messiah returns, He will pass thru the Eastern Gate to reclaim His rule.

*Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, b/c the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore, it shall be shut. Ezekiel 44:1-2*

**NOW** – look at this picture of the current Eastern Gate – notice that it's blocked in (or shut).

**Here's where it gets fun** – in AD 1517, sultan Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire, conquered Jerusalem. Some 30 yrs later, around AD 1541, after learning about this Jewish prophecy, he had such fear for it coming true he ordered the gate to be bricked in to prevent the Messiah from ever gaining entrance back into Jerusalem thru the Eastern Gate.

Now listen to Zechariah 14:3-4 – *Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. In that day, His feet will stand on the Mt. of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east – and the Mt. of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move to the north and half of it to the south.*

In 1964, Israeli geologist were doing work on the Mt. of Olives preparing to build a hotel but were shut down when they learned there's a fault line starting on the Mt. of Olive that moves from east to west across the Kidron Valley right thru the area of the Eastern Gate – meaning... when Jesus returns, not only will the heavens open up, but the earth will open up – opening the Eastern Gate – so all of Suleiman's strategy will fail as the Messiah will enter the Temple to reign!

**All this to say** – Christmas isn't only a *manger* story—it's an “*He's coming back*” story. At Bethlehem, while the angels announced *good news of great joy*. At the Mt. of Olives, they announced the *promised return* of the Christ – the One who is still to come.