

# A Future Journey with Christ

## An Introduction to the End Times

### I Thessalonians. 5:1-11

#### INTRODUCTION:

Two weeks ago we **completed** a series that I entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. In that series we looked at Jesus both past and present declaring that He was the prophesied Messiah. This morning I would like to start a sequel to the last series. This series will be ***A Journey with Christ Through the Future***.

Just as the prophecies in the Old Testament, concerning the Messiah that was to come, were hard to understand by the people in Jesus' time, it is **also** hard for us to understand the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ and the events surrounding that event.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (NASB)

5 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;** <sup>5</sup> **for you are all sons of light and sons of day.** We are not of night nor of darkness; <sup>6</sup> so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

#### Prayer

The Jewish people expected that the Messiah would end the exile of the Jews and the oppression of the Roman rule over Israel and the Jewish nation. When Jesus came as a baby born in obscurity in Bethlehem He did not meet the expectations of most. His life of teaching, healing, and ministry did not fit the image of an earthly kingdom that they expected. He showed no concern to start a political movement against the Romans. This caused many to doubt.

Most notably among his doubters was his cousin John the Baptist who sent this question to Jesus from Herod's prison:

### Matthew 11:2-3 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”

John was facing the end of his life and he wanted to know if his hopes in Jesus were well placed since He was not fulfilling the expectations for the Messiah. Jesus responded with words of assurance to John and reminded John that there is more to the Messianic hope than just the conquering of Israel’s enemies:

### Matthew 11:4-6 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> *the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* <sup>6</sup> And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

Jesus' response to John refers to prophecies in the book of Isaiah of six signs which the Messiah will give when he comes:

1. He will make the blind to see (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5),
2. He will make the lame walk (Isaiah 35:6, 61:1),
3. He will make the deaf hear (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5),
4. He will cleanse lepers (Isaiah 61:1),
5. He will evangelize the poor (Isaiah 61:1–2).
6. He will raise the dead (implied in Isaiah 11:1–2 but not made specific),

Despite the fact that He was a different than the Messiah that was expected and hoped for at the time, Jesus affirmed to John that He was the Messiah that He claimed to be.

Just as the Jews in Jesus' day who did not interpret the prophecies concerning the Messiah, our interpretation of the prophecies concerning the second coming will no doubt be fuzzy at best when compared to the actual events themselves.

I fully trust that God has provided the information we need to prepare us for the impending return of Christ. The prophecies provide enough information that we can be warned of the events that are coming, to recognize them when they happen and know that it is of God, and know the necessity of being prepared for that time.

Even though we have great detail of some events, other events are very cloudy, and it is very hard to place them in chronological order.

**We will not be able to agree completely on our interpretations of the end times scripture and that is OK!** We are all here to learn together. If you have scriptures that indicate a different interpretation than I present, feel welcome to share them with me. I am sure that my opinions and yours will change somewhat as we study the scriptures more closely. It is important to realize that **what WE** believe concerning the end times will not alter God's plans. Regardless of what we believe, God is going to send Christ back to this earth and He will only allow the events to happen exactly as He wills. And I will assure you, the events will perfectly fulfill the end times prophecies.

The important lesson to grasp is that if we are saved through Christ, we have assurance that Christ is going to win the war against Satan and in the end **we will be in His**

**presence** under a New Heavens, on a New Earth, and in the New Jerusalem that He is preparing for us.

As the song goes...

**(SING)** Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and His grace;  
In the mansions bright and blessed He'll prepare for us a place.

And then the chorus goes like this...**(SAY with EXPRESSION)**

When we all get to Heaven, what a day of **rejoicing** that will be!  
When we **all see Jesus**, we'll **sing and SHOUT the victory!**

And then another verse goes like this...**(SAY with EXPRESSION)**

Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving every day;  
Just **ONE GLIMPSE of Him in glory** Will the toils of life repay.

**(SING)** When we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!  
When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!

The prophecies concerning the second coming are found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In this series, we will attempt to tie them all together and present a picture of what the end times will be like. Jesus elaborated on many of them while He was on earth as did the writers of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude). The book most dedicated to the events marking the return of Christ is found in the book of Revelation written by John.

The Book of Revelation often has been regarded as a mysterious book. Many feel that it is beyond the comprehension of the average reader.

When we read Revelation we see..

- many references to angelic beings,
- elaborate descriptions of Christ as he appears in the heavenly courts,
- the use of mystic numbers such as three, seven, twelve, and their multiples,
- accounts of strange beasts, symbolic names, and definite time periods,
- and the use of elaborate symbolism.

The use of symbols has an important place in the scriptures, for there is no other way in which a person can talk or even think about that which is beyond the realm of human experience.

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 (NASB)

<sup>6</sup> Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; <sup>7</sup> but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; <sup>8</sup> *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; <sup>9</sup> but just as it is written,

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And *which* have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him."

<sup>10</sup> For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

These references all suggest some hidden and meaning that only an expert can decipher. For these reasons, many people, including pastors, have ignored the book, feeling that any attempt to understand it is futile and open to criticism.

June and I were in Silver Dollar City last week listening to the Southern Gospel Picnic. One of the groups we heard was named The McKameys. Peg was the wife and mom of the group. She shared a story that led into one of their songs entitled "He Fought the Battle, I Won". The story went like this...

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

One time, a preacher saw a young man reading the book of Revelation. The preacher stopped and asked the young man, "Are you reading Revelation?"

The young man answered, "Yeah!"

Then the preacher asked him, "Do you understand it?"

The young man answered again, "Yeah!"

Finally, the preacher asked, "What does it say?"

The young man replied, "**It says we win!**"

### **WE WIN!**

Just remember. Despite how confusing the end times may seem to you, trust Jesus when He says that those who are in Him WILL WIN in the end! Whether we clearly envision the end times or not the end result of seeing Jesus face to face in Heaven will be worth every ounce of effort that we put forth while living on this earth.

### **BODY:**

People today want to know what is in their future. So they ask themselves questions like...

What is the purpose of my life?

Is there life after death?

What happens after I die?

But they do not know how to find the answers.

Paul told the Thessalonians and us what he learned...that Christ did not want us to be ignorant of the future. There will be a lot of events in the end times, which will be dimly revealed to you, but the most important thing to know is that I am coming again and you must be prepared.

## **I. YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED.**

## **ILLUSTRATION:**

One of my memories from grade school was playing Hide & Seek at recess time. Regardless if I was the seeker or if I was one of those trying not to get caught, I always enjoyed the game.

The seeker would close his eyes and count to 100 so that all the others could run and hide somewhere. After he or she had reached 100, the seeker would shout out, "Ready or not here I come."

Three things were always certain:

1. He was coming to find you.
2. He was coming whether you were ready or not.
3. If you were not ready, then you would pay the consequences.

Hide and Seek reminds me of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Paul encouraged the church of Thessalonica and us today about the importance of being ready.

We can be certain that Jesus is coming back! The Second Coming of Jesus is one of the most repeated teachings in all of Scripture.

Paul was well aware of that.

He says Christians should be aware that Jesus was coming again. In fact, he says he shouldn't even have to tell them again. It should be obvious.

## **ILLUSTRATION:**

A man stopped at a gas station. He noticed a piece of rope dangling from a sign.

The sign was labeled "**Weather Forecaster**".

The man asked the station attendant, "How can you possibly tell the weather with a piece of rope?"

The attendant smiled and replied, "It is extremely accurate. When the rope swings back and forth, it's windy. When it is perfectly dry, it is a clear day. When it gets wet, it's raining. When it is flexible, it is a warm day. When it's frozen stiff, it's cold. When it turns white, it is snowing. And when it's gone... it's a tornado!"

There are some things that should be obvious without even asking. The imminent return of Jesus Christ is one of those things. Paul says Jesus will come "...as a thief in the night." Just as a thief plans his entry at an uncertain time when people least expect it, so will be the coming of the Son of God.

Unfortunately, many people will not be prepared. They will actually be deceived and actively deceiving others. The Antichrist who steps forward will begin to assume power all over the world. The chaotic conditions will cause people to look for a man to lead them. This Antichrist will claim that he can bring "Peace and safety". However, the Antichrist supported by Satan, will be no match for God's wrath.

Destruction will come immediately upon them.

We must live each day with the protection of God's Armor.

Ephesians 6:13-17 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

If we would just follow these instructions each day of our lives Satan will have no power over us. We will be ready and watchful for the Lord's return.

## **II. THE REWARD FOR THE FAITHFUL.**

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

There is peace in knowing that you are always ready for the coming of Jesus. You have nothing to fear!

When you know that we are saved by the grace of Jesus and remain prepared, we can look forward to His coming with excitement and expectancy.

Instead of uncertainty, fear, and dread, you will be anxious to see Jesus! You will not be afraid to die.

There is great comfort in knowing what God has planned for us when He sends His Son back to earth. You will be saved from the Wrath of God.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Far too many people today are focused on things of this world. They have no time to come to church on Sunday. They never pick up a Bible and read it. They could care less of walking and talking with Jesus throughout their day. They care nothing about spiritual things. They are not ready and watching for the return of Jesus.

Unfortunately, the same thing is true for many church people. They are so wrapped up in worldly things that they don't realize they have become intoxicated by Satan's powerful brew.

Despite how confusing the end times may seem to you, trust Jesus when He says that those who are in Him WILL WIN in the end! Will you be ready and watching?

**He is Lord!**