

20th Century Bible Course

Dear Friend:

You probably know how you would react if someone told you your house was on fire-or that you had just won the Irish Sweepstakes. But how would you react if someone told you that the Son of the living God is about to return personally to this earth? Would you take it seriously? Would you smile it off? Would you question the emotional balance of the one who told you?

Why not check your present reaction before studying this lesson.

- *Don't believe it at all.**
- *isn't scientific.**
- *Intelligent people know better.**
- * Never gave it a serious thought.**
- * The thought depresses me**
- *The thought frightens me.**
- * I think it's getting closer, but isn't likely to occur in my lifetime.**
- * I think it could be any day now.**
- * My grandmother believed it.**
- *Nothing has happened yet.**
- * It's just more doomsday talk.**
- * I can hardly wait.**

Or you may be thinking, "I believe that Christ will return. And sometimes I think it will be soon. But I am confused and have many questions." Perhaps you will find some of your questions here. Check those with which you identify at this moment.

Is the coming of Christ really literal? Doesn't it simply mean when He comes, He will come into your heart?

We've heard about Christ coming back for so long now and nothing has happened yet. Isn't it rather naive to think it will actually happen in our day?

Some people say that when Christ does come, only the Christians will know it- that they will suddenly be caught away secretly and no one will know what happened. Is that true?

I've heard there will be people who will claim to be Christ when they are only impostors and that many people will be deceived. How can we tell? Wouldn't it be unfair for God to punish us if we were innocently involved?

After you have completed this lesson, read your questions again and see if all of them have been answered satisfactorily.

May God bless as you study His Word.

Cordially yours,

Your Bible Instructor

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LESSON 4

THE KING IS COMING

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 TO 5:11 (NT 181 [142,143])

The second coming of Jesus is the greatest theme in the Word of God. It is referred to 380 times in the New Testament, an average of one verse in every 25. Thus we can see the importance Heaven places upon this subject. Down through the ages this has been the hope of the people of God.

Martin Luther wrote, "I ardently hope that, amidst these internal dissensions on the earth, Jesus Christ will hasten the day of his coming." Calvin, Knox and Wesley all longed for Christ to return. It was John Milton who sublimely wrote, "Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth;.. take up that unlimited scepter. . . . For now the voice of thy bride calls thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed."

Then followed the age of science and enlightenment. At last we were headed for Utopia! No difficulties or problems were too difficult for science and man to solve! But time has shattered that dream. Today man searches frantically for ways to save mankind from self-destruction. Considering how we have polluted the earth-smog and radiation contaminating the atmosphere, wastes devastating streams and rivers, cement and steel replacing forest and plain, pesticides leading to a silent springtime-this anxiety is understandable. And when we remember the thousands of multimegaton warheads poised on launching pads around the world, we can sympathize with the playwright whose production made headlines on Broadway some years back: "Stop the World. I Want to Get Off!" No wonder theologians, scientists, and statesmen-and even some who once scoffed-are taking a new look at the possibility of Christ returning, and many are openly calling it the only hope of man.

Is there solid evidence on which to base such a hope? Will Christ really return to Planet Earth? Could this be the way a new and better kingdom will be ushered in? What does the Bible tell us?

Part 1-WILL JESUS CHRIST COME AGAIN?

The Testimony of Jesus Himself

1. In what four words did Christ positively promise to return for His people? John 14:2, 3

2. While under oath at His trial, what promise did Christ make? Matthew 26:64

It was during the dark days of World War II. The great commander stood before his men and in a voice filled with emotion, gave his message of farewell. His last words were: "I shall return." Then, with a wave of the hand, General Douglas MacArthur was gone.

The days that followed were difficult ones for the men who remained behind on Corregidor and Bataan. Defeat and internment followed. At times they had reason to wonder whether the cause for which they had fought was hopeless. But their general had left a definite promise. And upon that promise they based their hopes for final liberation.

Two years and seven months later-it seemed a very long time to them-the great day came. As American invasion barges moved in toward shore, General MacArthur stepped into the surf of the beach and dramatically declared: "I have returned."

For centuries the people of God awaited the fulfillment of the promises concerning Christ's first coming as the Messiah. Then came the wonderful day when heavenly messengers announced: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (**Luke 2:11**) Just as surely as the promises of God were fulfilled in the first advent of Jesus to this world, just so surely will be those pertaining to His second advent. We can rely upon the word of Christ. Our eternal future is secure when it rests upon the promises of His word. Jesus Himself said, "I will come again," and His promise, *made under oath*, can be depended upon-He *will* come again! That will be the most wonderful day in all history!

His Promise Confirmed by Angels . . .

- 3. What encouraging promise did the angels, sent to comfort the sorrowing disciples as Jesus was taken away from them, make to them? Acts 1:9-11**
- _____

Part 2-WHAT WILL THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS BE LIKE?

A Literal Coming

- 1. In what way did the angels say Christ will return to this earth? Acts 1:9-11**
- _____

A Visible Coming

- 2. How many will see Christ return? Revelation 1:7** _____

No one will need to tell you when Jesus returns. You won't need to read it in the newspaper or hear it on television; you will see Him coming. And so will everyone else.

An Audible Coming

- 3. What great sounds occur at Christ's coming? 1 Thessalonians 4:16** "The Lord himself shall descend ... with a _____, with the _____, and with the _____."

This shout is so penetrating that it awakens the righteous dead! Surely there is nothing secret or quiet about this. Jesus came to earth the first time rather quietly. Not so the second time!

A Glorious Coming

- 4. How dazzling will be Christ's coming? Matthew 24:27** _____

- 5. Whose glory will add to this splendor? Luke 9:26** _____

- 6. Who else will accompany Christ at His coming? Matthew 25:31**
- _____

When one angel rolled back the stone from Christ's tomb, the Roman soldiers became as dead men, dazed by the angel's countenance which was "like lightening" (Matthew 28:2, 3, NT 31 [23]). Think of the splendor of "ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands" of angels coming with Christ! (**Revelation 5:11**) indeed, He will come with "power and great glory" (**Luke 21:27**)

A Dramatic Coming

- 7. What thrilling event occurs as Christ returns? 1 Corinthians 15:52**
- _____

- 8. What will the angels do as Christ appears? Matthew 24:30,31**
- _____

How appropriate that the angels who have ministered to the "heirs of salvation" (**Hebrews 1:14**) should participate in Christ's second coming. We shall then see these angels face to face!

- 9. What will happen to the righteous living at Christ's appearing? 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NT 181 [143])** _____

What a day that will be! What a reunion! Friends and families reunited! Little children who have been snatched away by death now placed in their mothers' arms! The lame walking! The blind seeing! The tired and weary now possessing the vigor of eternal youth! And best of all, seeing Jesus face to face! What a day!

10. What will the wicked living be doing at this time? Revelation 6:15-17

They pray, but it is too late. They hide themselves and cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them. They are lost and they know it. What a sad picture when it could have been so different!

11. What will happen to the wicked? 2 Thessalonians 2:8

12. What happens to the mountains and islands at Christ's second coming? Revelation 6:14

Thus we have seen that this dramatic event will accomplish several things: **(1)** the righteous dead will be raised; **(2)** the righteous living will be caught up with the resurrected dead and will be given glorious new bodies "fashioned like unto his glorious body"! (Philippians 3:20, 21); **(3)** all the righteous will be taken to heaven; and **(4)** all the living wicked people will be destroyed.

An Unexpected Coming

13. Who only knows when Christ is coming? Matthew 24:36 _____

14. Because of this, what counsel are we given? (verse 44) "Therefore be ye also _____: for in such an hour as ye _____ the Son of man cometh."

In the clearest language possible Jesus taught that His coming would be open, personal, literal, and visible, and that good and bad alike would see Him come. He was to come as a "thief in the night" only in the sense that none would know the day and hour, and multitudes would be unprepared. Sometimes we find in certain commentaries or in Bible footnotes, references to a secret coming of our Lord. These are only expressions of men, and, although well meaning, they are not the inspired Word of God.

Part 3--THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING ABOUT THE SECOND COMING

Dwight Moody once said, "The Church has had very little to say about it [the second coming]. Now, I can see a reason for this; the devil does not want us to see this truth, for nothing would wake up the Church so much."

1. According to Christ, who will do great signs and wonders just before the second coming? Matthew 24:24 (NT 25 [19]) _____

2. What specific instructions did Christ give us with which to meet these deceptions? (verses 25-27) "Behold, I have _____. Wherefore if they shall say unto you. Behold, he is in the desert; _____: behold, he is in the secret chambers; _____."

Suppose that some morning you hear that Christ has returned and is working miracles in Chicago. And you follow the crowds and see the spaceship that brought him and you press close to see the miracles. This being looks like Christ and even sounds like Christ! The bands play, the music sounds, and you feel the hypnotic beat of the drum, and the crowd bows down, and-you bow down!

But it isn't Christ at all, and you've worshiped the wrong god by mistake. Only imagination, you say. But according to the Scriptures something much like that *will* happen. And *most people* will be deceived. But *you* don't need to be. If you have studied the Bible for yourself, if you know that Christ is coming not in a spaceship but in the clouds, if you know that everybody will see Him come-like the lightning-you won't be in danger of worshiping the wrong god. That's why personal Bible study is so important.

Part 4--HOW TO PREPARE FOR JESUS TO COME

1. What advice does Jesus give to His followers since they cannot know the exact time of His

return? (verse 42) _____

2. What other specific dangers does Jesus warn us about? Luke 21:34-36

Surfeiting means an intemperate indulgence in something (such as food or drink). In the accelerated pace of our time, this warning is especially relevant. How easy it is to allow the cares of this world, the details of everyday living, to crowd out time for Bible study and fellowship with our Saviour. And the age of affluence makes overindulgence almost a life style. How sad it would be to miss out on the greatest event of all. If Jesus is coming back, and coming soon, what else really matters?

3. How may we prepare for Jesus' coming? 2 Peter 3:9-14, 18

4. What will all who hope for the second coming do? 1 John 3:2,3

You see, when Jesus comes back, no longer beaten and crucified, but as the King in His glory, He will look for you. And if you are not there waiting for Him, He will be disappointed. Thousands of others will be waiting and He will be glad, but His joy will be incomplete if you are missing. It was you He had in mind when He first thought of Calvary and you He had in mind when He carried it through. No one else can take your place or ever really heal the disappointment He will feel if you don't care enough to be there waiting-when He planned it all for you.

Why not-just now-wherever you are-tell Him you won't disappoint Him-that you'll be there-waiting-when He comes.