

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Matthew 24 29-31

29 “But immediately after the tribulation of those days

THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED,

AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,

AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky,

and the POWERS OF THE HEAVENS will be shaken.

30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky,

and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn,

and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY

with power and great glory.

31 And He will send forth His angels

with A GREAT TRUMPET

and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect

from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”

(Matthew 24:29–31, 2022 LSB)

There it is – the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! In His first advent, the Lord Jesus emptied Himself, taking on the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men, and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross. With His resurrection, He was highly exalted by God the Father and given the name above every name.

Before we dive into our text this morning, I want to make a couple of things clear.

First, the Lord Jesus Jesus Himself will return, personally and physically. It won't be “in spirit,” whatever that means. It won't be through representatives. It won't be the New Age “Christ Consciousness.” In the beginning was the Word, God the Son. He took on human flesh and was born to Mary. From the moment of His incarnation, Jesus Christ has been fully God and fully man.

Second, the Lord Jesus Christ will return with power and great glory. In His first advent, God took on human flesh, and He veiled His deity. He never stopped being God or acting as God, but He lived as a Man among men and women, lowly and humble. But when He returns, it will be with all the glory and majesty of Yahweh on high, God Almighty.

Third, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to accomplish God's purposes, some of which are:

- Jesus Christ, hated and maligned while on earth, will be vindicated as the beloved Son of God.
- Yahweh will prove Himself true. The overwhelming majority of prophecies in Scripture have

to do with Jesus Christ. Every last one of them will be fulfilled. God is true.

- Jesus will inaugurate His Kingdom on earth at long last.
- Jesus will restore and redeem Israel, fulfilling God’s unilateral covenants: the Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants.
- What’s more, Jesus will fulfill every last promise of the Mosaic Covenant. What Israel failed to do during her time, Jesus perfectly fulfilled in Himself.
- And lastly, God’s command in Genesis 1:28 will be fulfilled:

God blessed them, and God said to them,

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it;
and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky
and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.”

(Genesis 1:28, 2022 LSB)

This command has never been fulfilled. Adam sinned and threw the race into turmoil and disobedience before the earth could be filled and subdued and mankind could have dominion over it.

In Matthew 24:29-31 Jesus gives us the framework for His second coming. Let’s pray and then see what He says.

DARKNESS

Matthew 24:29

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days

THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED,

AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,

AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky,

and the **POWERS OF THE HEAVENS** will be shaken. **(Matthew 24:29, 2022 LSB)**

The timing is very clear: immediately after the tribulation of those days. Jesus doesn’t say that the tribulation will have ended, but that immediately after it reaches its peak, and when all life on earth hangs in the balance, the second coming will occur. There is no gap in time. There is no “golden age” as Postmillennialism teaches. In fact, we see Matthew 24:22 take place, as the tribulation is cut short while there is still life on earth.

The enormity (magnitude) of this moment can’t be denied. The sun will be darkened. The moon will no longer reflect the light of the sun. With the sun and moon gone, the stars will stand out as

never before, but they will fall from the sky. The very powers of heaven will be shaken; that's a reference to the spiritual powers and authorities that exist in the angelic realm: demons, in other words.

Jesus uses language that would have been very familiar to Jews of His time. Theologians today call it apocalyptic language. End of the world language. It's common in the Old Testament prophets. Listen to Joel 2:1-2, 30-32:

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And make a loud shout on My holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,

For the day of Yahweh is coming; Surely it is near,

2 A day of darkness and thick darkness, A day of clouds and dense gloom.

As the dawn is spread over the mountains,

So there is a numerous and mighty people;

There has never been anything like it,

Nor will there be again after it

For the years from generation to generation.

...

30 And I will put wonders in the sky and on the earth,

Blood, fire, and columns of smoke.

31 The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood

Before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes.

(Joel 2:1-2, 30-31, 2022 LSB)

The same language is found in Joel 3, Amos 5, 8, Zephaniah 1, and Isaiah 2, 10, 13, 24, 34, and elsewhere. The sun is darkened. The moon is darkened. Stars fall. The heavens are shaken.

All of this talks about the Day of the Lord, the Day Yahweh has chosen for Himself. These are not natural events. Astronomers say the sun will die of natural causes in 7 or 8 billion years. The Bible says God will flip the switch and shut it down, probably long before then. I wonder if His purpose is to turn out the lights on the earth to put all the focus on His Son. After all, in Psalm 2:10-12, the Father commands all people to worship the Son or face His wrath. During Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16-17 and the Lord's transfiguration in Matthew 17:4-5, the Father says the same thing: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In Philippians 2, we see the end result: every knee will bow to Jesus as Lord. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord – that is, God Himself – to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11).

The darkness of the Day of the Lord will be an act of God by which He draws the attention of

every human being to Himself.

A SIGN TO MOURN

Matthew 24:30

30 “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn...”

(Matthew 24:30, 2022 LSB)

The sign is not followed by interpretation or opinion. No one writes it up for the internet or does a podcast about it. The sign of the Son of Man will bring about immediate mourning by the tribes of the earth.

To remind you, the word “tribe” describes people grouped by culture, physical traits, religion, geography, ethnicity, politics, and so on. I think the sense is that every person on earth who is not part of God’s elect – we’ll talk about them in a little while – will mourn.

Mourning is an odd response. After all, the second coming of Christ will end the worst time the world has ever experienced. The suffering and tribulation will be over. The corruption of human government, which can only grow during the tribulation, will be ended. Jesus Christ will return personally to earth. So why would the world mourn? Here are some ideas.

- Jesus Christ is Lord and God; that will be enough for the majority to weep and wail.
- The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars will make it clear that judgment has come and cannot be avoided any longer.
- Every human religion will be proven false and idolatrous, including many that claim to worship Jesus but live in constant rebellion against Him.
- God’s agenda will wait no longer.
- Human life will be completely interrupted. It doesn’t matter what is taking place at the moment of the Lord’s return – marriages, funerals, business takeovers, the births of children, vacations, retirement parties, whether wholesome or sinful – every event on earth will be interrupted.
- Perhaps most of all, the “free will” that people think they have will prove to be completely meaningless.

CHRIST RETURNS

Matthew 24:30

30 "... and they will see the **SON OF MAN**
COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY
 with power and great glory."
(Matthew 24:30, 2022 LSB)

Seeing is believing, right? Well, the world will understand. They will know that Jesus is Lord.

How many times have unbelievers said to Christians, "Oh yeah? Prove it!" Well, Jesus will prove it. He will come with power and great glory. He will be unmistakable.

Since Adam sinned, God has patiently endured with the wicked for the sake of the elect. He is a patient God who gives the wicked time and space to repent of their sin (Romans 2:4).

But the time will come when God's patience has run its course. He said in the time of Noah, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever." He set a 120-year countdown to the great flood. Another countdown has been running in the mind of God. We don't know how long remains, but He does. This old world that has kept rolling along for more than 6,000 years will be stopped in its tracks and face its Maker.

The Father will send the Son accompanied by clouds of the sky. These are not atmospheric clouds but clouds of the glory of God. In Exodus 13:21, Yahweh went ahead of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Both the cloud and the fire are figures of the indescribable glory of God. God's glory is frequently described as a cloud (Exodus 19:9; Leviticus 16:2; Deuteronomy 31:15; First Kings 8:10-11; Daniel 7:13; Matthew 17:5; Acts 1:9).

Jesus Christ will return in power and great glory. He will be surrounded by the majesty of God, no longer veiled or humbled, not as an infant in the manger, not as "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and not as a sacrifice for sinners, but as the Lord of Glory coming to take possession of His own. Revelation 19 describes Him:

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse,
 and He who sits on it is called Faithful and True,
 and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

12 His eyes are a flame of fire,
 and on His head are many diadems;
 having a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself,

13 and being clothed with a garment dipped in blood,

His name is also called The Word of God.

...

15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword,
so that with it He may STRIKE DOWN THE NATIONS,
and He will RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON;
and HE TREADS THE WINE PRESS
OF THE WRATH OF THE RAGE OF GOD, the Almighty.

16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written,
“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

(Revelation 19:11–16, 2022 LSB)

Well, no wonder the wicked world mourns!

But Israel will also mourn, we know:

10 “And I will pour out on the house of David
and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem
the Spirit of grace and of supplication,
so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced;
and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son,
and they will weep bitterly over Him
like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

(Zechariah 12:10, 2022 LSB)

The entire nation of Israel will see Jesus Christ, their Messiah, whom their fathers crucified, and they will mourn. They will mourn their rejection of Him. They will mourn that their fathers rejected Him and cut Him off. But their mourning will be prompted not by the Lord Jesus treading the wine press of the wrath of the rage of God (Revelation 19:15), but by the Spirit of grace and supplication, who has given them both understanding and faith. So their greatest mourning will be for their own sins, and they will believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Every eye will see Him return, Revelation 1:7 says. Every eye will be upon Him. The Lord Jesus Christ has returned in power and great glory, filled with majesty, in a tremendous display of the glory of God Almighty. What will He do first? He will give a command.

THE GATHERING

Matthew 24:31

**31 “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”
(Matthew 24:31, 2022 LSB)**

The Lord Jesus will turn to His holy angels and command them to search the face of the earth and gather His elect. He will send them in every direction – the four winds. He will send them to the furthest boundaries of the earth – from one end of the sky to the other. They will leave no place on earth unexamined. No place will be too remote.

You know, Jesus said in the garden during His suffering that He could call on twelve legions of angels to come to His aid. A Roman legion was typically 6,000 men. Jesus had 72,000 angels at His immediate disposal, poised to obey His call instantly. He refused to call for help and instead submitted to the fullness of His suffering for our sins.

But when He comes for His people, He does call upon the angels. Hebrews 1:14 says they are “all ministering spirits, sent to render service for the sake of those who will inherit the salvation.” And perhaps when Jesus returns, He will call upon far more than twelve legions of them. Perhaps there will be one angel for each of the elect, and not one of those angels will return empty-handed.

Do you see Jesus acting just as a King acts? He has His servants, His slaves. He commands them and they obey Him. He commands them and they dare not fail Him. He commands them and they instantly fly to bring about His will. Maybe it’s the romantic in me, but I imagine those angels bursting in song when He sends them, overflowing with joy at the sheer wonder of serving God the Son and His elect.

Those of the world will watch this with wonder and terror and rage and blasphemy. Remember, the second coming of Jesus Christ will vindicate Him as Lord and Savior and prove that God is true. The angels will pass by all those people who thought that their goodness was enough. They will pass by all those who worshiped other gods, thinking that sincerity was all that mattered. They will pass by all those who mocked Christianity as primitive and mythological. They will pass by those who thought their power could protect them. They will pass by those the world most admired.

But those same angels will seek out and find and gather the elect of God. These humbled men and women, still in their mortal flesh, still marked by age and full of weakness, will be escorted to the presence of Christ as though worthy of the greatest dignity and honor. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10), so I have to imagine that these angels are bursting with gladness and singing praises to the Almighty One.

BRINGING IT HOME

The Hope Of The Second Coming

Jesus Christ is coming again. The Bible is abundantly clear about this. Jesus promises us in Revelation 22:12,

12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his work.”
(Revelation 22:12, 2022 LSB)

He says again in Revelation 22:20, “Yes, I am coming quickly!”

And John agrees with Him in prayer: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”

Peace In Christ

The prophet Nahum wrote,

7 Yahweh is good, A strong defense in the day of distress,
And He knows those who take refuge in Him.
(Nahum 1:7, 2022 LSB)

He knows us, beloved. He knows our sins and calls us to forsake them:

19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal,
“THE LORD KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS,”
and, “EVERYONE WHO NAMES THE NAME OF THE LORD
is to DEPART FROM WICKEDNESS.”
(2 Timothy 2:19, 2022 LSB)

He knows your fears. He knows your weaknesses. He has not promised you an easy earthly life; in fact, Jesus promised His disciples tribulation: “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). Our sufferings are not a reflection of God’s love for us in Christ. He promises

to hear our prayers, sanctify us, teach us, stand with us, and never forsake us.

Are you in Christ? Is He your hope? Then He hears your prayers. His Spirit is sanctifying you. He is teaching you. He walks with you through life and stands with you no matter what comes. He will never forsake you. Yes, there is trouble now. There is pain now. There is difficulty now. But hear the promise of God:

10 And after you have suffered for a little while,
the God of all grace,
who called you to His eternal glory in Christ,
will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, and ground you.”
(1 Peter 5:10, 2022 LSB)

Life is so brief, and so all suffering is only for a little while for Christians. It's just a little while longer. Trust Him! Endure! Say with the apostle Paul,

12 ... I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed
and I am convinced that He is able to guard
what I have entrusted to Him until that day.
(2 Timothy 1:12, 2022 LSB)