

# He is coming back!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay. He is coming back. I guess in all the anticipation of Christmas, all the hecticness! that we all get involved in it to some extent another preparation for all the celebrations.

! It may not have crossed our radars perhaps that today is actually the fourth Sunday of Advent. We don't celebrate Advent a huge amount in our sort of church but nevertheless it's true in the church generally. And Advent is traditionally the four weeks leading up to Christmas week and each week there's a candle lit, that sort of thing. And it's a time when we prepare ourselves spiritually for celebrating the coming of the Messiah which is what Christmas is all about, our Saviour as a human baby in Bethlehem. And as Christians we immerse ourselves in carols as we'll be doing later on today, remind ourselves of the events surrounding Jesus' birth and what he came to do as the Son of God and that's great and so we should. It's time of, as we've been thinking earlier, a time of great celebration. But the done thing, I mean I noticed Keith doing it earlier on the done thing is to sort of check out on Google AI what the meaning of things are these days.

And if you look at what Advent is, it tells us this, it's a Christian season of, what does it say? A Christian season of expectant waiting and preparation, marking the start of the church year, focused on the coming arrival of Jesus Christ at Christmas, which you all know about, what we're celebrating. But did you notice this? And his future return, and his future is turned, second coming, over four Sundays before December. So it's not just about looking back and rejoicing at Jesus' first coming, so important that is. But it's also about looking forward to the promised return of Jesus. Jesus. And all that means both for the Christian and also for those as yet who have not come to put their faith and trust in him. So that's what we're going to be reflecting on this morning.

The second coming of Jesus and the anticipation of that second coming. Well, what did Jesus tell us about his return to our world? The Old Testament, the Bible, as you know, full of prophecies about the first coming of Jesus over 2,000 years ago. It's surprising how much detail there is in the Old Testament about the coming of Jesus the first time. All the events surrounding his his birth, his life on earth, his eventual death on the cross, his resurrection, his ascension, and once his work of salvation for you and I was complete, his ascension up into heaven.

[ 3 : 02 ] So there's many, many prophecies, and very often preachers today, I guess, will be going through some of those prophecies. But his second coming, we don't actually need to rely entirely on Old Testament prophets. The prophet Daniel actually did talk about the day of the Lord, the coming, the second coming of the Messiah. So we don't have to rely entirely on those sort of prophecies because Jesus himself, when he was on this earth, revealed a great deal about his expected return to earth.

And he revealed that to his disciples and they've recorded it for us. And so it really does pay us, doesn't it, to take note because it's something that will affect us all. Everybody in this room will be affected by the second coming of Jesus. We'll all have to face it in some way or other.

And for those that actually ignore what Jesus has said, there are some really serious warnings. And it can seem pretty scary. But for believers, it's really something to look forward to, something to be excited about. It's a time of fulfilment, a time of vindication for all that we have placed our hope and our trust in. And as Keith was mentioning earlier, it's a time of inexpressible joy.

Not just ordinary joy, inexpressible joy. The second coming of Jesus, ending of all suffering and pain and everlasting future on the renewed earth, set free from all that's evil, all the stuff we see around us that really grieves us. It'll all be over. Even death itself will be finished.

So what did Jesus reveal to us? We don't have time to go into all of it. And there's many passages about this in the New Testament. But there are some key pointers that Matthew records for us in chapter 24 and 25, his account of the gospel. And he was there. He heard these things from Jesus. So we're just going to summarise this very briefly. If you want to look it up, you can, chapter 24, 25

of Matthew. But I'll just summarise those things for you.

[ 5 : 23 ] Well, first thing that he tells us, Jesus, that in the lead up to his second coming, we'll hear of wars and rumours of wars, as he puts it. Nation rising up against nation. Does that sound familiar these days? There'll be famines and earthquakes in various places. There's even one up in Cumbria, I think, a week ago or something. So there'll be famines and earthquakes in various places. Jesus tells us that these are like the birth pains, the beginnings, if you like, of his second coming. Secondly, as believers, we'll be called on to persevere, persevere to the end. We must expect a time of difficulty and perhaps even persecution. And Jesus tells us that wickedness will increase on the earth, a bit like before the flood. A time of great distress on the earth will come.

But fortunately for all of us, it's only for a limited time. And he says that too. The third thing is, the good news about Jesus must first be proclaimed throughout the world.

The whole world, to every nation or people group. And the stats tell us that while huge strides have been made with spreading the gospel to all over the world, still they reckon about 42 percent of ethnic people groups have not yet heard the gospel in our world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in parts of the Far East. And they also estimate that something like one in five people don't have the Bible yet in their own language. So these are sobering things. But just bear in mind that with the technology we've got these days for translators, the pace at which the gospel is reaching out to all these people, it's accelerating, it's getting quicker. And so we can't sort of rest on our laurels really. These things are happening and it's happening very rapidly. The fourth thing is, and this is important, no one knows the precise day that Jesus will come back, his second coming. Even Jesus himself said when he was on this earth that he didn't even know that God himself, the Father, was the only one to determine that date that lies ahead of all of us.

He also then says that it is coming, there will be a great upheaval in the universe. We have a job to comprehend that when we look out into the sky and see all the universe. But there's going to be some sort of great upheaval in the universe. And he also declares that the sun will be darkened. And then the second coming. Like a lightning bolt from east to west, every nation throughout the world will see the Son of Man coming. Jesus himself, not in poverty as a baby this time, in a cattle feeding trough, on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, the King of Kings. His angels, angels, sounding trumpets, the dead will be raised, be a judgment passed on all that have ever lived.

[ 8 : 50 ] And those that have been saved by Jesus will be gathered together with him to inherit the renewed heavens and the new earth forever. Justice will be seen to be done. All the things that have gone wrong in this world will be put right. Everything evil will be destroyed and everlasting peace will reign.

A few. It's a lot to take in, isn't it? Particularly if you've never heard it before. Maybe someone here this morning has said, what is all this about? I've never heard this before. Well, it's there, it's in the Bible. But let me say that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. And Jesus spent some time encouraging his followers to be prepared. He gave parables about the 10 bridesmaids, five who were prepared and others, the other five that weren't. They hadn't got their lamps sorted out. And when the bridegroom turned up, they weren't ready. He is the only one that can, we can turn to, who can save us and carry us through to safety.

And we need to be ready for that second coming. And that's the message that needs to go out this morning. So let me say this, if you've never considered these things before, maybe you haven't, can I urge you to take what Jesus says very, very seriously? This is not just my thinking up things.

It's not something that somebody else has thought up. It's what Jesus, the Son of God, has actually told us. And we need to take him seriously, don't we, at his word. So you need to find out how you too can be saved to inherit this eternal life. And that's why the Christmas story is so important. It's so imperative to understand. It's not a kind of science fiction fantasy story, this. There is a day fixed in the future of the universe when these things will surely take place. They're going to happen.

[ 10 : 56 ] And we need to be ready. We need to be prepared. But let me focus on this. And this is where we come to our passage that Johan read for us earlier.

Christians were people of hope, hope. A real deep-seated hope. Not just a transient thing, but a genuine hope, real hope.

And I want us to try and grasp hold of that this morning, because it's what drives us forward. It's what empowers us to reach out to others with the good news of the Gospel.

Before his death on the cross, Jesus tells his followers that he's gone to prepare a place for them, and that he will return to take them to be with him forever. And this meant a huge amount to those early disciples, those that have spent so much time with him. You can imagine, you spent some time rubbing shoulders with someone for three years, living with them, getting to know them, all their character traits, and actually, in the right sense of the word, falling in love with them. You know, knowing them that well, that it just draws out this desire to be with them and be with them forever. And so the early disciples, I think, were really excited about the prospect of what Jesus was talking about, the future, of what lay ahead of those that believed in him.

[12:27] And when they went through all sorts of suffering, which we've been thinking about in Peter recently, all kinds of suffering that they had to go through, that's what kept them going. This thought that one day they will be back again with Jesus. And we need to capture that too, that we have that prospect ahead of us. And that's what enables us to get through life and to know that these things are just transient. And we've been, as I say, we've been looking for, over the last few weeks, looking at Peter's first letter to the churches in Turkey, or Asia Minor as it was then. And you, I don't know whether you noticed, but he starts in his letter looking to the hope and the inheritance, the inheritance that we have as believers when Jesus returns. So in Peter 1, 1 Peter 1, 3 to 5, it says this, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And listen to this, into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time when Jesus returns. And Peter finishes his letter with these words.

Chapter 5 and verses 10 to 11, he says, The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while in this life, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power forever and ever. So when we think about these things, we, what will it actually be like for us when the time comes? What sort of bodies will we have in the resurrection? I've wondered about that. What do we have to look forward to?

So let's turn to this passage in 1 Corinthians 15 and briefly look at that. Now then, you probably can't see it very well, but here is an acorn, which I found just down the road from Johan's house. It looks well and truly dead. It's brown. It's lost all its green colouring. Yeah, a bit shriveled up. It looks dead. And this is what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 15.

But inside, he talks about a seed of wheat, but I've got an acorn here. Couldn't find a seed of wheat, to be honest. But inside is this blueprint, the DNA to produce a mighty oak tree. Can you imagine that?

[15:21] Just from this little acorn? This mighty oak. There's some beautiful oaks in Farnham Park, which I love to have a look at. But isn't it amazing? Just a little thing like this produces this tremendous oak tree. And when we look around us in creation, we can see all sorts of examples of this.

Think of a grubby little caterpillar on your cabbage or whatever. And then it turns into a chrysalis, and it looks completely dead. It's motionless, lifeless almost. And suddenly this emerges from this, this sort of beautiful butterfly. And just as an aside, I can only remember standing at the graveside when my mother passed away and we were stood there at the graveside. It was a beautiful, sunny summer's day.

And we all stood around there feeling very sad, obviously. And everybody saw it after the actual internment. Suddenly this white butterfly flew out from the grave and up into the sky. Everyone saw it.

It was a beautiful butterfly. And we thought, wow, there's a lesson. This is the resurrection, isn't it? This beautiful butterfly comes out, a white butterfly from the grave. This is what Paul is talking about in this passage.

First of all, this acorn has to be buried in the ground. And it lies dormant through the winter and then it bursts into life, into spring. And this is how Paul says it will be for us. First, we must die unless Jesus returns first.

[17:10] But the essence of our being, our souls, the things that sense of our being within us, our souls, don't talk about souls much these days, do we? But our souls, they will remain intact.

And then at the resurrection, when Jesus returns, we will be raised up with perfect bodies. Boy, am I looking forward to that. You're great. You know, you're getting to my sort of age. You'll understand

what I'm talking about, where things start falling apart and dropping off and things like that. But there's something else. Our bodies will not be like the ones we live in now. This is what Paul says. As Paul describes it, they will be spiritual bodies. What does that mean? But when you look up into the heavens, you see different degrees of splendour. Paul talks about the sun and the moon and the stars, different degrees of splendour. And you can safely look at a full moon in the night sky or the glimmer of distant stars. But it's dangerous to look directly at the brightness of the sun, isn't it? What Paul is getting at here, I think, is that our existing bodies are just a pale reflection of the glorious bodies that we will be given at the resurrection.

[ 18 : 32 ] Look forward to that. Verses 42 to 44. So it will be at the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown, perishable.

It is raised, imperishable. It will never, ever die. It's sown in dishonour. All the filth and the sin that has affected us, all the temptations that we have, all those things, sown in dishonour.

It is raised in glory. Sown in weakness. It's raised in power. Sown a natural body. It's raised to spiritual bodies.

Just let those words sink in for a moment. This is your future if you're a believer in Jesus this morning. It doesn't mean to be all sort of floating about in the clouds, you know, with dismembered bodies as some have portrayed it.

We shall have real bodies. Our bodies will be real physical bodies. Not bodies that are programmed to decay and die, but imperishable.

[ 19 : 41 ] I don't know if you ever watched the repair shop. You know, we're a bit of sort of repair shop junkies, really. You know, we have to watch it. And people bring in some sort of precious object, don't they?

A clock or something that they have great attachment to. Something that one of their loved ones had given to them many years ago or something. It's broken. It's falling apart. There's a shadow of its former self when it was new.

Then the master craftsmen. They've got a collection of them there. Master craftsmen. Or perhaps like Will Kirk from Farnham. He just lives down the road here, doesn't he? And he's renovating his own house down there.

So, but they get to work. And they completely restore these objects. And then you get this great revelation where the cloth is lifted.

It always brings a smile to my face. Because they all sort of say the same sort of things. When the people come back to collect their precious item. And they walk in and... How are you feeling? Oh, I'm excited.

[ 20 : 47 ] That sort of thing. And then the great revelation. You know. Wow! I've never seen anything like that before. How did you do it? I'm speechless.

Well, they're not speechless, are they? They're sort of shrieking. It's beautiful. Just as it was when it was made. Well, Paul is telling us.

It's like that of the resurrection after the great creator. Has completed his work in us. And on us. This body. The whole of me. The whole of my being. My soul.

Reunited with this new body. Needs complete restoration. My goodness. That's what I'm looking forward to. And it gives me real hope for the future.

Something to look forward to. Through all the challenging things that we're going through. But here's the thing. It's even better than a restoration. This is all about restoration, isn't it?

[ 21 : 45 ] Paul is anxious to draw a distinction between the natural body that we now have. And the spiritual body that we will have. And as he points out. We all, in a sense, inherit Adam's genes.

The first man. The first man, Adam, became a living being. But the last Adam, Jesus himself, is a life-giving spirit. Through the incarnation.

Remember that when Mary had this encounter with the angel. And she said, the angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. And so Jesus is born at this spiritual being.

The spiritual did not come first, but the natural. But after that, the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth. The second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth.

You and me. As is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we've borne the image of the earthly man, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly man.

[ 22 : 47 ] So what does all this mean? Well, it means that when we repent of our sins. And we put our faith and trust in Jesus. Do you know what happens then?

We become born again. The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us. And it's like the second birth. The spiritual birth. All by the power of the Spirit of God.

And at the resurrection, we should just be like the resurrected Jesus. And have spiritual bodies. His post-resurrection body. Just like his, it says.

And when you look at how Jesus was after the resurrection, people struggled to recognize him at first. But then they realized it was really him. And as Thomas found, it had the marks of the wounds in his hands and his side.

And mysteriously, he could appear in a room and disappear. He could move around at will, not in hindrances or restricted in any sort of way.

[ 23 : 51 ] But he also ate and drank. It says he ate fish. And he even prepared breakfast for his disciples on the beach. And he was recognizable as their friend and saviour, Jesus.

Well, now we come to the climax. Paul describes this point of transformation when Jesus returns. Verses 52 to 54.

Listen, I tell you a mystery. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep. But we will all be changed in a flash in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised imperishable. We will be changed. Praise God. We will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory.

[ 24 : 56 ] Praise God. So how do I respond to this? You might be saying in your heart, I hear all this and I'd really like to know more. How can I be saved?

How can I experience this new beginning, if you like? And the reply is very, very simple. That's the simplicity of the gospel message that we proclaim at Christmas. And I urge you, you know, if you've not considered these things before, when you hear the Christmas story this year and what Jesus came to do on the cross, listen and take it seriously.

Your future depends on it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And you will experience this transformation. And you will inherit his eternal life.

So why would you choose to cut yourself off from all this glory, all this wonder, this amazing transformation that Jesus gives to those that believe and trust in him?

Why would you turn your back on it? Choose outer darkness as Jesus described it. Why would you do that? Complete separation from all God's goodness and grace.

[ 26 : 04 ] He talks about weeping and gnashing of teeth. Why would you choose that? Choose life. Choose life in Christ. This Christmas, believe on him and trust in him.

And if you already do believe, perhaps you're struggling with all kinds of sufferings or doubts. Look to your glorious future inheritance. And then say with me, even so come, Lord Jesus.

Even so come. Bring it on. These momentary troubles, this life throws at us just temporary. Up ahead is a complete transformation and glory into an existence that we can only just begin to imagine.

With Jesus our saviour forever. This is our destiny if we believe in him. Well, Paul finishes up with a postscript and I'll finish with that too.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, he says, stand firm. Look what lies ahead. Stand firm. Don't give up. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.

[ 27 : 14 ] Because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain. If we know that this is our future, all of us here. It's a real motivation to share what we have with others, with our friends, with our family, with our neighbours.

Are we doing that? Do we want them to share and be with us at that time? There's an urgency about it, isn't there? And this is what stimulates us to go out with the carol service and the other things we're doing at Christmas.

To share what we know from what God has revealed to us. So let me encourage you. You might feel a bit jaded with all the activity and the stuff that has to be done.

But just hold on to this, this exhortation of Peter's. Be encouraged. Your labour in the Lord is not in vain. You're pointing people to the only one that can save.

It's all worth it. We have this amazing message, don't we, of hope and peace to share. There's a favourite song that I like, which we're going to just sit and listen to.

[ 28 : 23 ] And taken by someone that we actually know, Luke Fettingham. And I think it would just seal what I've been saying this morning.

So let's just watch this. There is a day that all creation's waiting for A day of freedom And liberation for the earth And on that day The Lord will come to meet His bride And when we see Him In an instant we'll be changed The trumpet sounds And the dead will then be raised By His power Never to perish again Once only flesh Now clothed with immortality The dead will then be raised The dead will now be The swan of life in victory Yes We will meet Him in the end And we will be like Him For we will seek Him as He is Oh yes Oh yes That all heaven and heaven will cease And we will be with Him forever And in His glory we will live Oh yes Oh yes So lift your eyes to the things as yet unseen That will remain now for all eternity The trouble's hard It's only born and tree And He is achieving our future glory

Yes We will meet Him in the end And we will be like Him For we will seek Him For we will seek Him as He is Oh yes Oh yes That all hope and pain will cease And we will be with Him forever And in His glory we will live Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes [ 32 : 48 ] Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Oh yes Amen.