

The coming of Jesus: 1 What is it?

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[0 : 00] So this is the subject we're looking at, the second coming of Christ as it's sometimes called, although in the Bible it's not called the second coming of Christ.

! It's a very big subject and it is a very important subject as I hope to show just now. Well what am I talking about, this coming of Jesus? We are signed up to a statement of belief which is actually written by the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches and we signed up to it. And this is what the statement says. The Lord Jesus will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness.

The wicked, you see the statement believes there are such things as wicked people. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God.

[1 : 25] God will make all things new and will be glorified forever. That's a reasonable statement of the subject that I'm going to try and bring to us this morning.

You notice it says he will return. So it's a statement about the return of Jesus. Jesus. And it says that he will return in glory.

So compared with the coming of the Lord as a baby, when he was born in Bethlehem, that was not a particularly glorious thing.

In fact, it was a rather humble thing. But when he returns, it will be in glory. He will raise the dead, all the dead. And he will judge every person.

And the stakes are very high. Eternal punishment for those who have rejected him. And eternal joy in fellowship with God for those who have trusted in him.

[2 : 31] So the stakes could not be higher. Eternal punishment versus eternal joy. And God, through Jesus Christ, will make all things new.

A new heaven and a new earth. A new world. And it will be a world not like ours in the sense that our world is a world of sin. But it will be a world of glory.

But it will be like ours because it will be a new creation. A new heaven and a new earth. So that's what I'm talking about. And that's the subject.

And you'll see that it says we are believing there is an end point in history. Now, not all belief systems think that way.

Some belief systems say everything just goes round and round and round and round. Some belief systems say things just sort of go on into a sort of soup of something.

[3 : 37] But we're saying there is an end point in history. That there will be a definite end. And that this end is to do with judgment and salvation.

Fearful judgment and amazing final salvation. We're also saying in this belief that we believe that Jesus Christ is the key to this.

So not a philosophy and certainly not an exam, but a person. One person holds the keys of life and death and heaven and hell.

And that one person is Jesus. The same Jesus that was born as the baby. And that he will make all things new.

Which is simply to repeat and emphasize those matters. So that's what we're going to be looking at. And I don't know whether you've thought about this before.

[4 : 54] But I could imagine a lot of people would object. And they would say, but no one can believe this sort of thing anymore. I like the anymore because the anymore encapsulates this wonderful arrogance of thinking that we're so clever.

And people used to be really stupid. Which I think is a very arrogant thing to think. But anyway, I put the anymore in. But no one can believe this sort of thing anymore. Well, I don't know whether I can

do much to persuade you.

But I could say this. You probably believe that there was a Big Bang beginning. Most scientists seem to assume that everybody knows that.

And if you ask scientists what was there before the beginning, before the Big Bang. Unless they tie themselves up in all sorts of mathematical knots and say, oh, well, it's not really a beginning. It's a sort of echo of multiple universes. You say, well, you told me there was a beginning. What was before the beginning? They say, I have no idea. We've got no idea what there was before the beginning.

[6 : 05] It's a complete mystery. And an honest scientist would say that, I think. So if there's a beginning with a mystery, what makes it so impossible for there to be a mysterious ending?

What makes it so difficult to believe that if the universe began, somehow, for some reason, that it might not end in the same way that it began, perhaps?

What makes that so impossible to believe? Well, perhaps the idea of a final judgment. Do you know, everybody, I think everybody, in their right moments knows that this is right.

Everybody in their right moments knows that evil ought to be punished. Everybody in their right moments knows that good ought to be rewarded.

And everybody in their right moments knows that this is not finished business in the world that we now live in. I think we have a deep instinct about that.

[7 : 21] We perhaps try to bury it, or perhaps try to load onto our judicial system. You know, you sort all that out. But we know the judicial system is only just scratches the surface of punishing evil and rewarding good.

Isn't it true? In your heart, don't you know that there ought to be a judgment? That there ought to be a place where evil is finally dealt with?

And to say that this is by Jesus, which is what the statement is saying, that he is the key person in this. Well, think about Jesus.

Think about his authority. Think about the way he used his authority on earth. Remember how he cast out demons with a word? Remember how he forgave sins and had the authority to do that?

Think of his goodness. He was a very compassionate person, wasn't he? Sometimes he got angry, but you could see why he got angry. But he was a very, very compassionate person.

[8 : 30] He wasn't cruel. He wasn't malicious. He was good. And you think of the experiences that he had. You might say, well, I don't want to be judged by anybody. I don't want to be judged by a high court judge.

They know nothing about, you know, they've never eaten fish and chips. They've done nothing about the sort of experience of life I had. Well, you couldn't complain that about Jesus, could you? Because Jesus understood life, real life. You know, he was born as a refugee. He had the legitimacy of his birth questioned.

He was ostracized. He was contradicted. People didn't treat him right. He was condemned by a court unlawfully.

Oh, he had all the experiences and more that you would say, if I'm going to be judged by somebody, I'd like them to understand that sort of thing. And he was somebody approved by God.

[9 : 28] So God himself backed up this Jesus and raised him from the dead. He died on the cross and God raised him from the dead. And I say, if there's going to be a judgment, who would be a better person to do the judging than Jesus?

I can't think of a single person. I would rather be the judge of the world than him. Or you might be objecting.

Well, I'm a Christian. But this second coming stuff is just for wacky Christians, or American Christians that I see on the such and such channel, or fundamentalist Christians, you know, fill in the blank with any sort of Christian that you don't particularly aspire to being, and say, well, this second coming stuff, that's their stuff.

We don't do that. To which I would answer, well, I agree with you in a way. There is a wacky way of dealing with the subject of the second coming of Christ, which I personally find rather off-putting.

I've come across, when I was a youngster, Bible studies that contained very unwise predictions, and very complicated systems of interpretation that really stretched your credibility, and I don't think was what the Bible was trying to say.

[11:03] They were speculative. And I think there are schemes of interpretation that are over-literal. Jesus didn't always mean us to take things literally, you know, pluck out your own eye, cut off your own hand.

I don't think he meant us. He spoke in metaphorical ways, and the Bible does too. So I would say yes. Yeah, I'm sure you could find Christian groups, Christian people, who go over the top in including all sorts of details which may be right and may be wrong and obscure the main point. But I want to say, don't be put off by the possibility of being wacky. It's not, the second coming is not wacky Christianity. The second coming is bread and butter belief.

It's not, you know, a bizarre addition. It's the heart and soul of faith. Have you heard of throwing out the baby with the bathwater?

I thought I'd try and draw that, and I thought, no, I probably won't. Where you, you fail to hold on to the important core, important, the precious thing.

[12:21] So the coming of Jesus, the return of Jesus, is an important core truth that we need to hang on to. And that's what I'm going to try and spend the rest of the time convincing us of.

So those were a couple of objections to look at. And I've got three headings to say why I think this is important. And the first is to say it's absolutely basic to being a Christian.

Faith that Jesus Christ will come again as judge of the living and the dead, as I put up on the first screen, is basic to being a Christian.

I think you would struggle, really, to have Christian faith or something identifiable as Christian faith if you had pushed this out of every place and not included it.

For example, the Lord's Prayer. That's basic, isn't it? That's one of the basic things that it would be good for every Christian to learn and to understand. What does it say?

[13:32] Thy kingdom. What does it say next? Thy kingdom come. And in that prayer, we are praying for the progress of God's kingdom until it arrives.

And I think when we pray in that basic thing, our Father, may your name be hallowed. May your kingdom come. We are praying for this exact thing that Jesus Christ would come and fulfill all that he has promised in his own return.

Your kingdom come. I don't think that I have to rely on the Apostles' Creed to prove everything, but there is, the Apostles' Creed has been believed by the churches far and wide for a long, long time. And I had it printed out on the notes that I didn't bring with me. But it does say this, I believe in, there's lots of things, I believe in God, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

On the third day, he rose again from the dead and he's now in heaven. From thence, he will come to judge the quick and the dead.

[14:56] That's the form I learned it in. Quick meaning, you know what quick means? Alive, yeah. So when you cut yourself to the quick, that's the living part of your body. He will come to judge the living and the dead.

It's always been believed. It's in that very compressed statement that the churches, Anglican Church recites this, Roman Catholic Church recites this.

I would be very surprised if there's any Christian group or anything, any group that would claim to be Christian that doesn't have something like this in it. The Apostles' Creed, so-called, I believe in Jesus who is in heaven and from there, he will come to judge the quick and the dead.

What about baptism? Baptism is a basic thing, isn't it? In the Bible, there is the assumption that every Christian is baptized.

The only person that I can think of for whom that assumption doesn't work out is the thief on the cross because he came to faith at such and such a point that he couldn't really be baptized, could he, if you think about it.

[16:09] Baptism. Would you like to find Romans 6, verse 3 and have a look at it? Baptism. When you began the Christian life, let's assume the way that Paul assumes it, that when you began the Christian life, you, there was some water, a river, pool, special tank of water and confessing your faith in Jesus Christ, you went down into the water and came up again afterwards and what were you saying when that happened?

When Romans 6, verse 3, it says, don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? So yes, you probably knew that. It's showing a death to my old life

linked up with the death of Jesus Christ.

And in verse 4, it says, we were buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Well, that's right. We come out of the water to live a new life, to live the Christian life, life with Christ. But Paul goes on in verse 5, if we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

In his resurrection. Saying there will be a day when he raises us as he himself was raised. And what day is that?

[17:44] That's the day when he returns. So baptism includes within it a reference to the coming of the Lord. That as he was raised, so one day Jesus Christ will raise the dead.

That's what it said. And what about the supper? So this morning at 10 o'clock, first Sunday of the month, as we do, we separated, separated.

We celebrated the Lord's Supper. And you will probably know this off by heart, but if you don't know it off by heart, you could look and find the answer because in the Lord's Supper, it says, in 1 Corinthians 11, 26, it says, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So the supper, in Paul's understanding of it, he says, this is something with a reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus.

You do this and the assumption is that Christians do. So let me put in a plug for communion. communion. In some churches, they have it along with the main service and there's pros and cons for that.

[19:20] Probably means it has to be done quite quickly. But we do this first Sunday of the month at 10 o'clock in the morning and third Sunday of the month after the evening service.

So that suits people if they're morning people or evening people. I'm sure you could manage one of those. And all Christians come round the Lord's table and he says, when you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

And one of the things we think about is it's one time less. Sorry, which one am I doing it? One time more we celebrate the communion one time less before he comes.

So that's my argument to say it's basic. Think of the basic things of the Christian life and the coming of the Lord Jesus is in there.

Second point. The Old Testament strains forward to the coming of the Lord.

[20:32] So what I'm going to say now is in your Bible you've got the Old Testament and the New Testament. Old Testament is the large number of pages at the beginning up to about there and the New Testament is about Jesus which is a bit there and I want to say that the idea of this day of the Lord this day in which he comes and finalizes everything is there well at the beginning.

So I'm thinking of Genesis 3 verse 15. Genesis 3 verse 15.

So this is right at the beginning and right at the beginning the serpent the snake tricked deceived tempted our first father and mother and in particular our first father and took our race into the position and condition of sin and in Genesis 3 15 or 3 14 God says to the serpent because you have done this curse to you above all livestock and all the wild animals you will crawl on your belly you will eat dust all the days of your life and I will put enmity between you and the woman between your offspring and hers he will crush your head you will strike his heel statement at the beginning there is a conflict there is enmity between you and the woman between your offspring and hers there's a conflict going on but the conflict will not go on forever unresolved although the serpent will strike the heel of the woman's seed the woman's offspring yet the woman's offspring some human being will crush the head of the serpent so one day did that work as a picture yes not bad the one day the serpent will be totally crushed if you crush the serpent's head he's finished one day the conflict will end and there will be a moment of total victory that

I would say is fulfilled in the return of Jesus Christ so I say it's there in the beginning of the Bible and I would say it's also here in the middle so I've picked a reference in the middle which is Psalm 110 and Psalm 110 refers to in the New Testament it's taken to refer to the heavenly session of Jesus Christ when he's seated in heaven where he is now and the quote in Psalm 110 says sit the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet it's another foot reference isn't it but notice sit until so the wording of it says

Jesus Christ is seated in heaven until a certain end point until a certain end point and that I am claiming is fulfilled in the return of Jesus Christ when he comes to bring final judgment final

salvation that will be the victory that will be the point at which everything is brought under his feet it's there in the middle of the Old Testament and if you care to find the very last page in your English presumably you have an English Bible the last page of the Old Testament and I have to say that in the Hebrew Old Testament the books are in a different order so I'm not going to claim it's the last book of the Bible sort of full stop but in the English Bible it's the last book and the last page is [25 : 19] Malachi chapter 4 listen to what this says see if you can find Malachi Malachi chapter 4 which says this wait a minute I'll hold my horses Malachi chapter 4 surely the day is coming it will burn like a furnace all the arrogant and every evil doer will be stubble and that day is coming the day that is coming will set them on fire says the Lord Almighty not a root or a branch will be left to them but for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings and you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall then you will trample down the wicked they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things says the Lord Almighty and the last bit I think we think whoa that's a bit heavy but I'm going to take the bits that are clear and understandable a day is coming and the day will be a day of fearful judgment fearful judgment for every evildoer now I know the Lord has days in history where he partially fulfills this but I want to claim that this prophecy and many prophecies like this are fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ a day is coming behold a day is coming says the Lord of fearful judgment but for you who revere my name it will be like the darkness ending the night finishing and the sun coming up and the sun of righteousness will rise and the rays of the sun will come with healing and you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall now I'm not sure whether many of us have calves that we've seen released from the stall

I have to use a bit of imagination and I think it's metaphorical I don't think you have to practice your high jump and long jump but what a wonderful picture that is isn't it on that day the Lord's people will go out and they'll gallop around and they'll say whoopee and they'll be like animals sort of released out into the field jumping round and he says that's what it'll be like that's the day that's coming and I will say that this here is there at the end of the Old Testament and is saying definitely this is what's going to happen so it's there in the Old Testament that was point number two and I'm going to say point number three it's there in the New Testament and particularly Jesus taught at length the coming of the Lord the day of the Lord the coming of the Son of Man meaning himself so if you're still in Malachi just turn on a few pages into

Matthew and there is honestly so many references that I have to be selective and I want what I'm aiming to persuade you is that the coming of the Lord is there in the in the Bible and it's important it's emphasized you can't escape from it we're in Matthew 24 and we're going to look to skim across these chapters and we're going to say what are they about what is Jesus teaching about what is the subject that he has in mind and we could say Matthew the gospel writer what is he using these precious pages of his gospel for has he got something he wants to say is there something he might like to repeat is there anything he wants to emphasize well let's see Matthew 24 verse 4 Matthew reports that the disciples asked Jesus in it's actually verse 3 tell us the disciples said when will this happen and what will be the sign of what is the next word the sign of your coming so they ask him tell us about your coming and the end of the age tell us about that point in history

God has a number of points in history but there is the point that ends history and that I think whether they quite understood it or not is really what they're asking about verse 14 Jesus replies and I'm not going to try and say that it's totally easy his reply but it has got some points that I don't think are easily mistaken verse 14 and the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then what will happen the end will come so that's the sign of his coming and the end will come and then verse 27 for as the lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west so will be so will be what verse 27 so will be the coming of the son of man so Jesus is referring to the coming of the son of man verse 30 at that time the sign of the son of man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory now we need to focus in a bit on that but not this morning they will see the son of man

[32 : 27] I haven't left enough room the son of man coming on the clouds but my point is that this is spoken of and it's spoken of repeatedly verse 33 says when you see these things you know that it is near it is right at the door I tell you the truth this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened well that's puzzling I think we could go into more detail on that another time but notice verse 35 heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away Jesus

says what I'm telling you about this is more reliable and more permanent than rocks and weather and iPads and mobile phones those things are all temporary and unreliable my words will not pass away the things

I've taught you will not pass away and then in verse 36 he says concerning that day and hour not even the angels in heaven nor the son but only the father as it was in the days of Noah so it will be at the what at the coming of the son of man so this is one of the other features the unknown timing of the coming of the son of man when Jesus says son of man he means himself but he is quoting from an old testament reference verse 42 keep watch he says because he applies this he says this is good there will be an end point in history Jesus will come judge the living and the dead therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day your lord will come and we might say is he making a point at all

I mean why is he making all these random statements why doesn't he say what he means well of course he is saying exactly what he means isn't he he's repeating this is all to do with the coming of the son of man when the Lord will return and he now goes on to tell a number of stories that give angles on this so verse so well verse 43 is about somebody got burgled and he says if you'd known when the burglar was coming you would have stayed up and shooed him off verse 44 you must be ready because the son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him so there's something about being burgled in verse 50 he gives another story about a household with a steward who's supposed to make sure everything runs properly but this while the master is away I actually met somebody the other day where did I meet them oh yes at Chaley a couple a couple said what do you do for a living they said oh well we look after the house well we used to look after the house of such and such a Russian millionaire and they said

Vladimir or whatever his name is would fly in from Paris and he'd expect everything to be ready and they told an amazing story this man has a jumbo jet he has his own jumbo jet and his wife wanted some perfume for that night in Paris she was going out I forgot to bring the right perfume Vladimir would you get the jumbo jet to fly over to Gatwick and get the taxi from Gatwick to Harrods and then pick that up from Harrods put it back on the plane bring it back over here you've got a couple of hours and they did that's nothing to do with the text my point is that my friends who looked after the house for this Russian millionaire part of their duty was to be ready if he came back you know caviar's in the fridge champagne's on ice you know the beds are made everything's neat and tidy if the master returns it's all got to be ready and imagine how annoyed he'd be if he came back and he found they hadn't tidied up they'd been eating the caviar themselves because they thought it was theirs they'd made a mess of the tennis courts and had a barbecue and spoiled all the surface because they'd forgotten he was coming and the story here is of the forgetful steward and in verse 50 what will happen when the master comes back well if the steward has forgotten then the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and an hour he is not aware of he will cut him in pieces assign him a place with the hypocrites where they'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth which sounds pretty severe you can see that Jesus was using a parable to refer to something much more serious there was the forgetful steward chapter 25 verse 10 is another story this time it's about

I think we might call them bridesmaids who are waiting for the bridegroom because that's the way they did it in those days the bridegroom would come late instead of the bride coming late and they're supposed to be ready for the bridegroom but they're not ready for a long wait they're not ready for a long wait and they run out of whatever they needed in this case they needed oil and they get shut out of the wedding so it's a story about a delayed return he's teaching about the same thing isn't he 25 verse 19 is the parable of the talents do you know it's exactly the same subject material he's saying that there's a master who gives his servants money to look after to invest while he goes away and then he's going to come back and see what they've done with it and without going into the whole story the blame is put on the person who doesn't believe that it's possible to invest meaningfully for the master's return and what do I put

[39 : 10] I think I'm quoting verse 19 after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them chapter 25 verse 31 is another story about this time it's the king returning when the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory all the nations will be separated before him gathered before him he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats he'll put the sheep on his right the goats on his left then the king will say to those on his right come you are

blessed by my father take your inheritance the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world God now I'm not going to try and tell the whole story but I'm just simply saying it's about the coming isn't it it is about what happens when he returns it's all to do with the

Lord coming back so let's bring these thoughts to a conclusion so I began by saying is the coming of the Lord important and I think it is so important to make you fall off your chair it's that important it is an important thing it's important for everyone for people of faith or no faith and why is it important to everyone because there will be a judge and there will be a day of judgment and if you were getting really annoyed because you thought that Jimmy Savile which has an E on the end of it doesn't it I think it's got one L but anyway I'll put an E there check it up when we go home he got away with it you know

I used to love Jim will fix it I thought it was you know what I'm talking about some of you don't I mean Jimmy Savile was a disc jockey and he used to have programs on the BBC and he used to have programs where he gave treats to kids and only pretty much when he was dead did people realise that he'd been appalling in his behaviour and his sexual behaviour with children and you think how he got away with it but he hasn't because there'll be a day of judgement when all the things he said and thought and did will be brought out and judged and you might very well say well actually I'm quite glad about that because that's what ought to happen but there's a sting in the tail because that goes for each of us too that all the things we've said and thought and done which might not be as gross as Jimmy Savile but are probably just as evil in some other sort of way all of those will come out which makes it a rather scary and intimidating thing and brings us to the point that we know who the judge will be and I know where the judge has his offices and I know that the judge has his door open and I know that the judge if you knock on his door and say I'm terribly afraid of my case when it comes up it's going to be awful and I know that the judge is ready and waiting actually that's what he's doing at this moment he's sitting waiting for people to knock on his door and to say right we can sort something out about this and I actually know that the judge has a fund in which he will say you owe something do you know I've got a fund here I can help you out with that you owe you've got debts well actually I've got enough here to pay those debts off for you if you come and sort it out before we come to court I've got a fund set aside for that very purpose and he might say where did that fund come from and the judge might say I died to set aside what you would need for the very moment you knocked on my door and asked for your debts to be cleared and your sins to be wiped away whatever metaphor you use debts cleared sins washed the judge says

I've got that all in hand just knock on my door now and I will guarantee you on that day you will have nothing to fear the door is open a special offer is available from the judge for you and for the believer the day is coming don't forget you know the church and individual Christians over the centuries have sometimes forgotten that the Lord's coming back they thought now is all there is we just think of now now is it it isn't it's part of living the Christian life to say now is not all there is now is important but there is a day coming and I need to think of that don't forget that he's coming back and to say what I was trying to say to the children in a rather unconvincing way it will be worth it Christians understand this don't they the

[45 : 08] Lord will say I've seen every tear you shed I've seen every effort that you put in I've seen those things you did which were thankless tasks but I saw them I saw every cup of cold water you gave because of me and I will say on that day well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of your Lord that's the rest of the quote isn't it it will be worth it it will be worth every penny of it every heartache of it!

it will be worth it and let me just say in conclusion that's the day in which Jesus will have the glory he deserves he has that glory now but lots of people don't see it and lots of people don't agree with it lots of people are in denial but on that day every tongue will confess and which I've got the wrong way around every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father that's the great day that we're thinking of this morning let's sing together