

The Return of Jesus

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[0 : 00] In Matthew 25, verse 31, we read these words and we read these words.

And the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

You know, there are times when a piece of writing, an article, maybe in a Christian magazine, maybe in an online communication written by a Christian, when that article really grabs your attention, really grips you, really impacts your heart and your mind.

Well, that happened a few days ago with myself. An article that I read just a few days ago online had a particularly profound impact upon myself.

It was on the Free Church News website. I'm not going to embarrass certain individuals here this evening when I name the author, although those in the central part of the church may well know who I'm talking about.

[1 : 07] But it was a New Year's address. It was simply entitled, in inverted commas, New Year. And in seven relatively short paragraphs, the author captured the whole story of redemption and seeing each progressive stage in terms of what God's doing, what God has done, what He is doing, and looking at each stage as new.

I mean, as the author wrote, the Bible is a book about beginnings. You know, creation, when the material universe began. And then the climax of creation, when God created human beings. Life, human life, our first parents, Adam and Eve, made in God's image. And then, of course, the beginning of sin. Sin in the human heart and the fall of man.

And then, of course, in the flood, after the flood, Noah emerging from the ark and humanity, as it were, given a new beginning. And then, of course, through to the greatest beginning of all, when God became man.

When the Son of God became man in the person of the Lord Jesus. And Jesus was going to the cross. Going for us. But not to remain dead after having died on the cross, but rising from the dead.

[2 : 30] Again, a new beginning. The resurrection of Jesus from death to life, followed by His ascension, ascension into heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father.

All that Jesus has done for us, to give those who are His a new beginning. To give you a new beginning and being born again.

For you to be brought into God's kingdom. To be given that gift of eternal life. Life that will be eternal life to be received in all its fullness. When Jesus returns.

And the dead are raised. And the dead in Christ raised in Christ's likeness. And entering another new beginning. The new beginning, we would say, of God's final order.

The new heaven and the new earth. Sin will be no more. And God will declare from His throne, Behold, I'm making all things new.

[3 : 33] And it's that emphasis that the Bible gives on new beginnings. And I think a new year. It really directs us the more to consider, you know. And I pray that this evening and next Lord's Day evening, God willing, we'll be considering what the Bible tells, particularly of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

And the new order that God will give to His people, the new heaven and the new earth. And I do think that a new year does help us, again, see the progression of time.

Time under God's sovereign control. God's control leading to that day of days when Jesus returns and brings in the new heaven and new earth.

So, this evening then, God willing, we'll focus our thoughts on that new beginning, the new beginning of God's final order. And particularly to look at the return of the Lord Jesus, the promised return of Jesus.

As I say, God willing, next Lord's Day evening, we'll look specifically at the new heaven and the new earth that the book of Revelation describes for us. So, without any further ado, let's move on to the first point that you see there in your notes.

[4 : 50] The fact, the fact of His coming. When the Son of Man comes in His glory. When the Son of Man comes in His glory. And of course, Jesus is giving this statement as He nears the end of His life on earth, before His death on the cross.

If you were to go back just a chapter to chapter 24 in verse 3, we read there of the disciples coming to Jesus on the Mount of Olives and asking Jesus about His coming and the end of the world. And Jesus gives that lengthy speech about His coming again. Jesus speaks of signs that will tell, indicate that Jesus' coming is soon.

And then in chapter 25, the first 30 verses, of course, the parables that speak of Jesus' return. These parables given to reinforce in the hearts of believers, in your heart, my heart, to reinforce the necessity of being prepared for the coming again of the Lord Jesus.

And as He ends these parables, then He, Jesus speaks about that coming. The fact, when the Son of Man comes. Now, you who know the Word of God is true, you who believe in the Word as the fully inspired Word of God, you have that sure belief that tells you that what Jesus is saying is true.

[6 : 24] He is coming again. And again, we can use this in an argument. If the sinless Son of God, if the sinless Lord Jesus, if He is sinless, then what He speaks has to be true.

Jesus can't contradict Himself. But of course, we live in a world, a world of increasing skepticism. And skepticism about so much of what the Bible teaches about the Lord Jesus.

And including that skepticism is skepticism about the return of Jesus. You speak about Jesus' return and often you'll get the response of there's disbelief, unbelief, incredulity, the teaching of Scripture mocked.

And whenever you speak about the second coming of Jesus, rubbish, rubbish. But, you know, when we see what the Scripture tells us of the return of the Lord Jesus, then, yes, this tells of the, again, this progression of new beginnings.

It's a doctrine. It's a teaching. It's a teaching, certainly that non-Christians can't and won't believe in. But if you hold to the inerrancy of Scripture, if you've trusted in the Lord Jesus for your salvation, you'll come to these prophetic words of Jesus by faith, trust, and know that what Jesus says is true.

[7 : 52] I remember many years ago in the class of the late Professor John L. McKay and we've been looking at Genesis. I remember, I'll never forget, we were telling us that the first words of Genesis telling us in the beginning that these words presume an end.

Because if we're reading that creation's account, you know, starts in the beginning, then these words infer, they tell us that there's going to be an end of that creation as we know it.

A new creation and a new heaven and a new earth inhabited by those who are that new creation in Christ. But then some of you might be saying, oh, well, okay, fair enough, but Jesus himself doesn't exactly know the timing of his return.

You know, how can we trust Jesus when Jesus says, you know, when he says, when the Son of Man comes, but of course elsewhere Jesus says that even the Son doesn't know when his return is. Well, again, look at the evidence. Look at verse 31 again. When? Jesus said, when? Strictly speaking, the word is, in this context, anyway, whenever, whenever the Son of Man comes, whenever Jesus comes.

[9 : 13] I mean, Jesus is saying, I'm coming, I'm returning. Be absolutely sure of that. But when I am coming, Jesus is saying, it isn't known to me and it's not known to you.

So Jesus is utterly consistent in his teaching about the timing of his coming. Go back to chapter 24, verse 36, when Jesus says to his disciples, but concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven or the Son, but the Father only.

The Son of Man is coming at an hour that you don't expect, Jesus says again later on. So when Jesus is telling his disciples, when, whenever the Son of Man comes, Jesus is utterly consistent in what he's saying about the sureness of his return.

He is returning. And that is definite. That is fact. When exactly that moment is, only that God the Father knows.

So if what Jesus has proclaimed about himself and his coming are true, if he's to come, as it were, to complete the work that he'd been given to do as Messiah, as the Christ, then the question arises, what are you doing about it?

[10:36] Do you have Jesus' second coming, the second advent in view? Or do you just live for the day without so much as a care for your eternal soul?

I think there are lessons that we learn even from the very fact of Jesus' coming. And one surely is that we stop speculating about the exact timing of Jesus' return.

If Jesus, the Son of God, the divine Son of God, doesn't know when he's coming back, then throw speculation out the window. Obviously, the various millennia, there were so many, you know, people say, oh, the return of Jesus must come at a turn of a millennium.

Now, forget speculation. We don't know exactly when he's coming, but we do know he is returning. But also, we have to say this, even though we don't know the exact timing of his coming, we do know that he could come like a thief in the night, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 5.

Jesus will come at an hour that we don't expect. Jesus said, again, back in Matthew 24, people going about their everyday business.

[11:52] Someone's sleeping in bed and the Lord will return. And that surely tells you that we have to be in that state of vigilance because, to use William Tyndale's great expression, Jesus will come in the twinkling of an eye, the suddenness of that new beginning, a resurrection from the dead when Jesus comes.

So, we live our lives. You live your life. I like to live my life knowing that Jesus is coming again. I mean, you know, in everyday life when we know something's lying ahead, we plan for it, the children's address this morning about diaries and planning and forward planning and so on.

Well, we do that. It's a normal thing to do. Well, think of the coming of the Lord Jesus. We know it's coming. We know it's happening. So, surely then there has to be that preparedness.

Yes, that being ready for his return and therefore to be more urgent in our lives. Yes, in the present knowing that the prospect of his return is sure and true.

That's what we read there in verses 32 to 46 and I'm not going to go into these verses in any detail but notice what these verses tell us about. They tell us about judgment.

[13:16] Now, obviously, we'll look a little more closely when we look at the purpose of Jesus coming but, you know, when we realise that Jesus is coming as judge then you have to ask yourself are you ready for his return?

Are you prepared to meet Jesus when he returns? I mean, if you are ready you will have given your life to him and you'll be longing for that day of his return but if you're not ready what do you think about his return?

Do you think it's just a made up story? Some kind of nice I don't know imagination? Well, if that's all it is then Jesus himself is deluded.

If that's all it is then what Jesus is saying is going to be utterly unreliable and we might as well just carry on living a nameless existence. Jesus is saying I am coming again and you have to face up to that truth.

He is coming therefore to be ready for that return to the fact of his coming and then secondly the manner the way of his coming when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him.

[14:31] You know, these words are so full of meaning so full of power that really we need to take a little bit of time to consider what Jesus is saying here about himself about his glorious appearing when he returns.

And why are we looking at this? Yes, to gain an understanding of what Jesus is saying about his return but surely when we look at what Jesus is saying here that we're given that purpose to have a suitable response to what Jesus is saying a suitable response in worship and faith and proclamation.

well, look at what Jesus is saying here about the manner of his coming but notice how he ties everything together when the Son of Man comes in his glory.

You've got to keep these words together. Why doesn't Jesus just say when I come in my glory he actually says when the Son of Man comes in his glory why does he speak of himself as Son of Man?

It's interesting actually when you look at that designation that Jesus gives of himself here it was Jesus' most favourite designation of himself it was the expression he used of himself more than any other designation.

[15 : 49] But why use it in this particular context with the disciples here? Well, because of the association of the title Son of Man with glory and majesty.

You go back to the Old Testament go to the book of Daniel Daniel chapter 7 what do we read there? Verses 13 and 14 we have one like a Son of Man who came to the Ancient of Days to God was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory so the Son of Man one like a Son of Man given dominion and glory and a kingdom and all peoples nations and languages should serve him his dominions an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed so Jesus is telling his disciples that he is the fulfilment of that prophecy he's the one who's come and who'll come with the clouds of heaven the clouds of heaven that express the glory of God so Jesus is saying here when he speaks of himself as the Son of Man he's saying look at what I'm saying about my authority the divine aspect of my authority and glory but notice also

Son of Man he's come from heaven to earth as man as man he lived on earth as man he died as man he rose again God and man in one person our representative man our Lord our God the Son of Man and of course the Son of Man Jesus will return in bodily form he'll return as a person he'll return as Son of Man when Jesus ascended into heaven he ascended in bodily form he returns he'll return that glorified body but also I think this is true that we can see when Jesus speaks of himself as Son of Man then when you look at the context that Jesus often spoke of himself as Son of Man it was in the context of Messiah as Christ that's what we're looking at this morning remember Jesus came to identify with man Jesus came to bear the wrath of God against sin that man deserves Jesus came as Messiah as Christ and how did he show his identity as Messiah as Christ he showed it by suffering he showed it as we were saying this morning in suffering as as the Christ and of course in his judgment against sin in his judgment against sin why?

for the sake of those for whom he came to give his life so Jesus coming again will be as the Messiah the Christ come to bring into his kingdom those whom he gave life to eternal life to through his first coming Jesus is coming again to fulfill the work of Messiah as son of man bringing into his kingdom those you who know him as Lord and saviour those for whom he came to give his life the first advent as we were just thinking of a few weeks ago the first advent resulted in salvation for sinners Jesus giving sinners that new beginning that new status in Christ so Jesus second advent the second coming result in that new order which Christians will be found eternally and that notice that coming again of Jesus the son of man he'll come in glory every eye will see the glorious son of

[19 : 40] God that radiant glorious body of Jesus will be observed by everyone I mean no mistaking no mistaking he will come in majesty in splendor and in power his glory as of the only begotten son of God the glory of the divine son of God he'll come in that manner that is so evident and so obvious that he is the glorious son of God we might even say this the very glory of heaven will descend to earth the light of God's glory appearing even through the sun every eye will see his glory the majesty the eternal son of God but that's not all that we read here of that glorious return of Jesus we're told that the glory that comes will be accompanied by all the angels with him and again I love how the first advent and the second advent you see the two as it were connected when Jesus came to earth in human form as that newborn child remember how was that announced it was announced by the heavenly host the heavenly angels a great number of angels appeared announcing the advent of Jesus the angels who appeared to that handful of shepherds the shepherds who were terrified and in the second coming of Jesus again that coming will be accompanied by angels every single angel you might even say as reverently as possible the scene of the second coming of Jesus unparalleled even in the first coming we're told here all the angels will be with them on that day of days every single one of God's heavenly angels appearing with

Christ you'll see it whether you're a Christian or not in Jesus first coming that company of angels came giving glory to God in the second advent of Jesus all the angels accompanying Jesus the glory of Jesus evident for all to see the glory proclaimed in the Son of God now again we have to apply what we read here to our own practice our own worship our own reverence before God what do we how can we apply what we learned here of the manner of Christ's appearing well surely the first thing has to be worship although we've been taught about the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus surely prompts you to worship the Son and to do it with that greater fervency you know the more that you're aware of his glory the divine Son of God the more you're aware of his majesty the more you're aware of the manner of his coming again surely prompts us to worship to worship him and to know and to affirm in our hearts that his coming again yes will be personal he will come he

will come not just a figment of imagination he will come in that glorious body cling to that promise of Jesus return just worship God even for the the fact you've been given that that promise of his return what if you're not a

Christian what if you're not a Christian well if all that we've said up for now is true will you be able to look at Jesus when he returns when he comes in his glory will you welcome his return will your heart rejoice with the millions upon millions of of of those who will rejoice at his coming with the millions and millions of angels praising the son of man or will you be like those who call on the very mountains and rocks to fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb which you see we're thinking of the purpose of his coming of course the purpose of his coming yes is to come as king and to come as judge as we read there in verse 31 he will sit on his glorious throne the purpose of his coming he's coming to judge the world will sit on his glorious throne so we're singing there in psalm 47 god rules the nations from on high he sits upon his holy throne thrones in these ancient days thrones were of course were associated with kings thrones now are associated with rulers monarchs but in these days the king to sit on his throne was to dispense justice when king solomon sat on his throne in the throne hall he was there in the throne of justice to dispense justice we read in proverbs 20 when a king sits on his throne to judge he winnows out all evil with his eyes so you know king throne judgment is there for us even in the prophetic words of

Jesus and it tells us then that he is king that he has that royal position of judgment that he is the final authority he will be on that throne of judgment that throne of majesty he will judge the world as we go on to see from verse 32 verse 31 and 32 marriage of course he will sit on his glorious throne before him will be gathered all the nations and then what are we told we'll separate the people one from another the shepherd separates sheep from the goats every single event in human history is going to reach its climax when Jesus returns wars will cease conflicts finish technological development will have reached its end all the nations gather together no one's going to be missing we'll all be there and separated by the

Lord Jesus just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats which side will you be on will you be on the side of the sheep who know Jesus voice will you be separated with the goats who know not Jesus voice and Jesus will say I never knew you and the truth of scripture is this that separation is final second chances there's no mistakes in Jesus judgment there's no one with the sheep who ought to have been with the goats and no one with the goats who ought to have been with the sheep Jesus will give his judgment based on your relationship with him and it won't be because of the denomination that you belong to it won't be whether you can recite the shorter catechism in its entirety it won't be whether you can recite great chunks of scripture or as I was reading the other day we can study our

[27 : 17] Bible till the second coming and leave God completely out of it you're being found within the flock of God will be based on the evidence of your faith faith in Christ demonstrated by your works as verses 35 to 45 show us faith faith in the Lord Jesus the evidence of which will be seen in your actions showing that you truly love the Lord Jesus that your love for him will be seen in your compassion for the lost the needy the vulnerable the weak notice as Jesus says there in verse 40 truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me but just remember this and I think this has to be in many ways the great focus of this evening's thoughts that great separation will reveal the grace of God that great separation will reveal the grace of God towards sinners who deserve nothing of

God's saving loving kindness because everyone who's at God's right hand will be a demonstration of the love of God every single one gathered on that right hand of God will be a trophy of grace and you who know him who will be on that right hand of God will show and be testimony to the wondrous love of God for sinners and you who are found within that sheep fold you'll be a testimony to the love of the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep so that all who are his in that flock of Christ will know everlasting life in him and that life vindicated on that last day and so you know I'm pleading with you really has to be made the more urgent because of what we read about that separation you know separation in any context isn't very nice isn't very easy but you know the separation that will happen on that last day when Jesus returns it's not going to be calm it's not going to be gentle

God will show his wrath on those he will put on his left hand side I may have mentioned this before one of the great Scottish preachers of the 19th century was Thomas Chalmers and Chalmers like I

guess every other minister preached particular sermons more than once and one of the sermons was on the fury of God I think it was entitled the fury of God and he said this on that last day there will be a tremendous discharge of fury that wrath which sinners are now doing so much to treasure up will all be poured forth on them the season of God's mercy will then have come to an end we're still living in that season of God's mercy God is still giving you that opportunity to come to him and repent him the season of God's mercy is still with us but when Jesus comes as judge that season of God's mercy will have come to an end and there'll be no second chances no coming as it were into the kingdom by those who in life refused an offer of salvation so we'll begin another year let's be a mere but you know this turn of a year shows us the march of time yes towards that day of days towards the end of time as we know it but that end that end is a new beginning for those who are in Jesus that new beginning of God's final order even you now in this present age you who know the Lord Jesus be prepared for that new beginning wait expectantly cry out even now Lord Jesus come is that your joy is that your prospect do you have that joy in your heart as you as you envisage the return of the Lord Jesus just reading the other day it makes him a little quaint it probably is but the story is told of the great reformer Martin Luther and Luther was seeing his children standing around a table and he noticed how their eyes were so we would say glistening of all things they were looking on a dish of peaches and he said this this is a pattern of those who rejoice in hope oh if only we would behold the last day with the same happy and fond expectation is that your hope looking forward to that last day with great expectation the expectation of joy of hope knowing that the best is yet to be with that prospect of that new beginning of eternal life and the new heaven and the new earth that awaits all who are his the place where there'll be no more tears where the former things will have come to pass when God makes all things new

I pray that you who know will be even now rejoicing in your heart of that glorious prospect and that in itself will be a stimulus a great stimulus to greater holiness greater stronger faith and a more fervent zeal for the Lord as you await his return amen let us pray our heavenly father forgive us for the frequency which we fail to think on the return of the Lord Jesus forgive us Lord when that return is so absent and so far so often from our hearts but help us Lord to look with these eyes of faith and to see the truth and the reality of that return the promised return of the saviour so help us Lord to be strengthened in our faith and to live knowing that the Lord Jesus has promised to return even in that twinkling of an eye help us then we pray even the remainder of this day to glorify you go before us Lord in all things we pray we pray these things in Jesus name amen let's close now in Psalm 104 on page 138

[34 : 11] Psalm 104 singing from verse 31 to the end of the psalm may the Lord's majestic glory always last and never fade may the Lord rejoice and triumph in the works that he has made when he gazes on creation the earth begins to shake in fear at this touch the mountains tremble smoke and flames of fire and fire appear and so on 31 to 36 Psalm 104 to God's praise flamwan sing amazing beautiful m r why fold the sea award and so on