

On the Mount of Olives

Series: We Have Seen Jesus

Acts 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

April 22, 2018

A priest and pastor from the local parishes were standing by the side of the road holding up a sign that read, "The End is Near! Turn yourself around now before it's too late!"

"Leave us alone you religious nuts!" yelled the first driver as he sped by.

From around the curve, they heard screeching tires and a big crash.

The one clergy to the other, "Do you think we should just put up a sign that says, 'Bridge Out' instead?"

Well, folks, did you know that the end is tomorrow? I'm not talking about the bridge north of us on Route 4. I'm talking about Jesus coming back... tomorrow! That's right; somebody has calculated that Jesus is coming back tomorrow. I think it was about 4 months ago that we had a similar prediction, and each time, most people judge these people as nuts.

And you know, if we had a prediction of the Second Coming of Christ every day, then eventually, one would be right. It's like a clock that is broken; it's right twice a day.

Someday, Jesus will come back. But will we be ready?

For the last few weeks, we have been looking at the post-resurrection stories of people who saw Jesus. Today, we are going to look at the last sighting of Jesus and what was said after that. So I invite you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin.

Now, the Bible tells us that Jesus met His disciples on the Mount of Olives towards Bethany. He spoke to them one final time, and then we read in Acts 1:

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"¹

The angels are speaking of Christ's return. The Bible clearly points to a second coming of Christ. The first coming was to offer the way of salvation and example for living a God-centric life; the second coming is to take His followers home, and preside over the final judgment.

Jesus is coming back. Now, you have not mistakenly come to a Baptist or Pentecostal church today. We Methodists believe in, and even occasionally teach on, the Second Coming of Christ.

Today, I want to share 7 key facts of the Second Coming of Christ.

First, Foretold.

The Bible clearly foretells of a Second Coming of Christ. Jesus Himself spoke of this. At Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus said,

"... And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."²

¹ Acts 1:9-11 (NLT2)

² Matthew 26:64 (NLT2). Also Mark 14:62 and Luke 21:27

We've already mentioned the angels' prediction in Acts. The 1 Thessalonians passage is also printed in your bulletin:

*And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words.*³

Christ's second coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe in Him. But if we are morally clean and spiritually alert, it won't come as a surprise.⁴ We will know what it is when it happens.

When I was 12 years old, I had a kidney stone and spent a week in the hospital with it. So when 20 years later, I woke up with a start about 6:00 in the morning with that same pain, and I might add vomiting within the first 5 minutes because of that pain, I knew exactly that I was having another stone. I will never forget that pain; in fact, occasionally, I still dream of that pain. Those of you who have had a kidney stone are like me; you will know what it is if you ever have another one. Am I right?

So too with the Second Coming. We believers will know it when it happens. It has been foretold.

The second key is this: the Time is Unknown.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:36:

*"However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows."*⁵

In Luke 12:40, He said:

*"You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."*⁶

The Bible describes the Second Coming of Christ in terms of the unexpected nature of a thief who comes to rob you.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:2: for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.⁷
- Revelation 3:3: Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.⁸

And in Revelation 16:15, Jesus says:

³ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NLT2)

⁴ For other prophetic pictures of the day of the Lord, see Isaiah 34:4; Joel 3:15, 16; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Revelation 6:12-17.

⁵ Matthew 24:36 (NLT2)

⁶ Luke 12:40 (NIV)

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:2 (NIV)

⁸ Revelation 3:3 (NIV)

“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”⁹

So when tomorrow comes, I do not believe Christ will return, for the time is unknown and will be when the world isn't looking.

The third key of the Second Coming of Christ is this: It is Spoken of as Near at Hand.

The teacher asked her preschool class, “Now how many of you would like to go to heaven?” All of the kids but Tommy raised their hands. “Tommy,” asked the teacher, “Why don't you want to go to heaven?” He answered, “I'm sorry, but I can't. My mother told me to come right home after Sunday School.”

Tommy definitely thought the teacher meant right now. The New Testament authors also believed Christ would return quickly:

- Philippians 4:5: “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”¹⁰
- James 5:8: “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”¹¹

Three times in the Book of Revelation, Jesus says that He is coming soon.¹²

Now, just because it's been nearly 2 millennium since these words were written doesn't mean they are not true, for God has a different way of keeping time than we do.

Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again?”... But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief.¹³

God may have seemed slow to believers, but God is not slow; He just is not on our timetable.¹⁴ Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to Him. We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should realize that time is short and we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though He may not return for many years.¹⁵

Fourth: there is a purpose for the Second Coming of Christ.

And the purpose is to reward the faithful and punish the wicked.

Matthew 16:27 reads:

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds.¹⁶

Jesus will judge the living and the dead.¹⁷ He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of our hearts.¹⁸ How will He judge you?

⁹ Revelation 16:15 (NIV)

¹⁰ Philippians 4:5 (NIV)

¹¹ James 5:8 (NIV)

¹² Revelation 3:11, 22:7, 22:20

¹³ 2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-9 (NLT2)

¹⁴ See Psalm 90:4

¹⁵ Life Application Study Bible, 2 Peter 3:34, 8-9

¹⁶ Matthew 16:27 (NLT2)

¹⁷ 2 Timothy 4:1

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 4:5

Dr. Ian Paisley, the fiery Irish cleric and politician was reputed to have been preaching one Sunday on the End Times – and in particular on the Day of Judgement. As he reached the climax of his address he said that on the Day of Judgement “there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth”.

At which point, an old woman put up her hand and said “Dr. Paisley, I have no teeth”

Paisley replied “Madam, teeth will be provided.”

The fifth key of the Second Coming of Christ is to have the proper attitude.

As we wait for Christ’s coming, we are to be:

- Good Stewards: Luke 19:13: So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas [which was 3 months’ salary]. “Put this money to work,” he said, “until I come back.”¹⁹
- We are to live blameless lives: 1 Thessalonians 5:23: May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁰
- We are to live in perfect obedience: 1 Timothy 6:14: Do what you were commanded to do without wrong or blame until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.²¹
- We are to live in constant abiding: 1 John 2:28: And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming.²²

If we do all these things, then we can expect the sixth key of the Second Coming of Christ: Rewards for the Believer.

I don’t have time to deal with each of these except to say that:

- We will receive honor from the King.²³
- We will be like the King: Philippians 3:20-21: But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.²⁴
- We will be blameless and holy before the King.²⁵
- And we will receive a crown that does not fade.²⁶

The seventh key of the Second Coming of Christ and possibly the most important for us in 2018 is this: Be ready.

In a “Calvin” cartoon, Calvin is shown sitting at his desk staring out the window. The boss catches him and asks, “Why aren’t you working Calvin?” Without much thought, Calvin confesses to his boss, “Because I didn’t see you coming.”

Jesus said this in Matthew 24:

When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up

¹⁹ Luke 19:13 (NIV)

²⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)

²¹ 1 Timothy 6:14 (NCV)

²² 1 John 2:28 (NRSV)

²³ Luke 12:37

²⁴ Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

²⁵ 1 Thessalonians 3:13 and Colossians 3:4

²⁶ 1 Peter 5:4

to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.²⁷

Outside the city of Naples, Italy are the ruins of the Roman city of Pompeii, which was destroyed in 79 A.D. The explosion of Mount Vesuvius was so sudden, the residents were killed while in their routine: men and women were at the market, the rich in their luxurious baths, slaves at toil. They died amid volcanic ash and superheated gasses. Even family pets suffered the same quick and final fate.

It takes little imagination to picture the panic of that terrible day. The saddest part is that these people did not have to die. Scientists confirm what ancient Roman writers record: weeks of rumblings and shakings preceded the actual explosion. Even an ominous plume of smoke was clearly visible from the mountain days before the eruption. If only they had been able to read and respond to Vesuvius's warning!

There are similar "rumblings" in our world. While not exactly new, these things do point to a coming day of Judgment when Christ will return. People need not be caught unprepared.

Dr. A. J. Gordon tells of two sisters who were very near and dear to one another. One was a Christian, and the other was not. The Christian girl was constantly seeking to lead the unbelieving one to the Lord Jesus Christ. One night she persuaded her to attend church service with her. The minister preached from Matthew 24, where it says that when Jesus comes in the air to call His sons from the earth one will be taken and the other left. He preached a stirring sermon. The Christian girl hoped very much that the sermon would lead her sister to salvation; but the unbelieving one did not seem to be impressed by what had been said.

Well, the two sisters slept in the same room. That night, the Christian one was so burdened for her sister that she could not sleep. She crept from bed and went into another room to pray. In the meantime the unsaved girl awoke, and missing her sister wondered where she was. As she lay there, the sermon being uppermost in her thought, she wondered if her Christian sister had been taken. The horror of having been left behind made such an impression on her that she cried to the Lord for salvation. Such a scene will be a reality – one will be taken and one will be left!

²⁷ Matthew 24:37-44 (NLT2)