

The Return of Jesus: Is the Stage Set?

The One who left Heaven, the One who was born in Bethlehem, the One who walked the shores of Galilee, and the One who overcame death, and the grave is coming again! Jesus could return at any moment! You and I need to _____ of His coming, _____ for His coming, _____ for His coming, and _____ for His coming.

As Baptists, we know a great deal about Jesus's first coming, but many of us don't know as much about His second coming. Jesus isn't coming again as an infant; He's coming as a King! Words about Jesus second coming outnumber His first coming by eight to one in the Bible. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament talk about His return. Jesus referenced His own return over twenty times. If that subject was important to the Lord, it should be important to us. The Bible is unified about this truth; Jesus is coming again. Are you ready for His coming?

I. **Ask the Right Questions.** Two important words: (1) **Eschatology** is "the study of last things or future events." (2) **Parousia** refers to "the second coming of Jesus Christ."

1. What Does the _____ Say about Jesus's Second Coming?

Matthew 24:44 – *Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect him.*

John 14:3 – *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

Acts 1:11 – *Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*

1 Thessalonians 4:16 – *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

Revelation 22:20 – *Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

Jesus's second coming is going to be _____ and _____ (Acts 1:11).

2. What Do _____ Believe about Jesus's Return? As a church, we follow a statement of faith known as the "Baptist Faith & Message 2000." The article on "Last Things" says, "*God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.*" As Baptists, we need to agree about the primary issues, and we can, and often do, disagree about the secondary issues. On what points do we agree? (i) Jesus is Coming Again. (ii) At Jesus's Return, the Judgment of the Righteous (Judgment Seat of Christ) and the Unrighteous (Great White Throne) will Take Place. (iii) Heaven and Hell are Real Places.

II. Look at Current Events. As for Jesus's second coming, what's the proof, evidence, or signs? In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus talks about the "*signs of the end of the age.*" In 2 Timothy 3, Paul talked to Timothy about the "*last days.*" Paul's phrase, "*But understand this,*" means "to keep knowing this." The words "*times of difficulty,*" mean "extremely violent." As Chuck Swindoll says, "The church needs to realize that difficult times will only intensify as we anticipate Jesus's second coming." Why will the times be difficult? As Paul says, times will be difficult because "people" will be difficult.

(1) Lovers of _____. Lovers of self love money, pleasure, and themselves. Do you and I live in a self-centered, greedy culture?

(2) Lovers of _____. What will people do for money? People who are ungrateful fail to appreciate other people, and they often forget the source of their blessings. Do you and I live in an ungrateful society (stores, restaurants, churches, etc.)?

(3) Lovers of _____. Many people sacrifice their futures for the pleasure of the moment (Jacob and Esau). As Swindoll says, "This describes a person unwilling to resolve a conflict or reconcile a relationship." Are you unforgiving toward a person in your family, workplace, or church? I appeal for you not to go through life or to your grave with a grudge or an unforgiving spirit. As Paul teaches, current events say, "we're living in the last days."

III. Offer a Personal Challenge. As you and I live in the last days and anticipate Jesus's second coming, how should we live and what should we do?

1. Get _____ – In Mt. 24:44, Jesus said, "*Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect him.*" Do you personally know Jesus Christ? Why has Jesus not returned today? Jesus's return is delayed because He is patient (2 Pt. 3:9).

2. Stay _____ – In Mt. 24:42, Jesus said, "*Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.*" The temptation is for you and me to be consumed with this world. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and remain aware of God's truth and current events.

3. Share _____ – In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Until Jesus comes again, you and I have a message to share. We need to be consumed with being His witnesses. Has every person in the world heard the gospel?

4. Live _____ – In 2 Pt. 3:11-12a, Peter said, "*Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.*" Jesus's second coming should influence the decisions we make in life. Jesus's promised return should inspire us to live godly lives.

5. Encourage _____ – In 1 Thess. 5:11, Paul said, "*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*" Jesus's return should eliminate gossip, division, and destructive criticism. How do you and I need to encourage one another? How do you and I need to build each other up?

Are you ready, prepared, and watching for Jesus's second coming? May you and I not go through life and come to the end unprepared spiritually! Jesus is coming again! Are you ready? Are you awake? Are you sharing Jesus? Are you living godly? Are you encouraging other people?

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Jesus's second coming is going to be **personal** and **bodily** (Acts 1:11).

2. What Do **Baptists** Believe about Jesus's Return? As a church, we follow a statement of faith known as the "Baptist Faith & Message 2000." The article on "Last Things" says, "**God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.**" As Baptists, we need to agree about the primary issues, and we can, and often do, disagree about the secondary issues. On what points do we agree? (i) Jesus is Coming Again. (ii) At Jesus's Return, the Judgment of the Righteous (Judgment seat of Christ) and the Unrighteous (Great White Throne) will Take Place. (iii) Heaven and Hell are Real Places.

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