

What if it were...
TODAY?



I WILL COME AGAIN
and receive you to Myself
THAT WHERE I AM,
There you may be also.
JOHN 14:3

West End Baptist Church
Newport, Tennessee
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Take as many copies as you need;
Pray over as many copies as you take;
Distribute as many copies as you pray
over!

WHAT IF IT WERE TODAY?

I know clearly what I am doing this morning; and I have been told in the past I should never do it; because people will be confused. But I am thoroughly convinced that if we don't talk about this subject, people will never even attempt to get it figured out; and those who don't might very well die without their sins ever being forgiven; without ever becoming a Believer; without ever accepting the shed blood of Jesus The Savior to wipe them clean and having forgiveness to flood over their guilty and unrighteous souls.

My title comes from a very popular song in many hymnbooks today: "What If It Were Today", with words and music written by Leila Naylor Morris.

(Matt 24:29) - Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

(Matt 24:30) - And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory.

(Matt 24:31) - And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

(1 Thess 4:13) - But I would not have you to be ignorant (uninformed), brethren, concerning them which are asleep (Believers who have died), that you sorrow, not like others which have no hope.

(1 Thess 4:14) - For since (first class condition) we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

(1 Thess 4:15) - For this we say unto you by The Word of The Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto The Coming of The Lord shall not precede (go before) them which are asleep.

(1 Thess 4:16) - For The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

(1 Thess 4:17) - Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The most significant event in Bible Prophecy is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is so important that there are over 300 separate prophecies relating to it in the Bible, making it one of the most important Doctrines in the Bible. It is the key that unlocks the door that leads to the future.

No Christian can be said to have a mature faith who does not accept the Basic Truth about the Second Coming of Christ.

Ray Pritchard quoted David Jeremiah as saying "for every Biblical Prophecy on the First Coming of Christ, there are eight concerning His Second Coming". This ought to alert us to the importance of our topic.

Christians have always believed that one day, Christ will return to the earth. It is included in the various creeds of churches that Christ's Second Coming will bring an end to this age and usher in the coming Kingdom of Christ.

His return will bring us the final stage of our Redemption, the culmination of all that God has promised to those who love His Son.

I should also note that while Christians have always believed in the Return of

Christ, they have often not completely agreed over the details.

In our day there is a lively debate over how the Rapture (I Thess 4:13-18) relates to the Second Coming (Matt 24:29-31). Some see them as the same event. Others see them as separated by $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 7 years. And many Christians are like the man who said he was "pan-trib," meaning he believes it's all going to "pan out" in the end. He's correct in one area that God's Plan will ultimately come to pass.

When I was talking to the pulpit committee from the Wartburg Church, I asked them where they "were" concerning the Second Coming of Christ; and the Chairman answered: "Confused".

Lately, I have been re-studying the Rapture question and the various views of how the Rapture relates to the Tribulation. Without going into great detail, I should say up front that I think this is an area

where Christians can sincerely see things in different ways.

Essentially the issue comes down to the fact that the New Testament presents the Truth of the Second Coming in various passages that offer different pictures of the Return of Christ. To be sure, part of that misunderstanding comes from the use of differing Translations and publishing Houses; and part of it comes from differing teachings in churches, seminaries, and homes. People see it in different ways; and I've seen them fog over when a different belief is presented than what they have always believed.

Radio and television ministries; books and teaching materials; and differing stages of whether The Bible is true or not have all added to the misunderstanding.

Those beliefs are not entirely the same. No one passage tells us everything. No matter which view you hold, you have to

think about how Matthew 24 relates to 1 and 2 Thessalonians and how all those Passages relate to the Book of Revelation.

I sincerely believe that the events of The Second Coming of Christ beautifully correspond to the protocols and procedures that occur in an orthodox, Biblical Jewish Wedding Ceremony.

Many Bible students (myself included) believe that Christ's return will occur in two stages. This is usually called the "Pre-Tribulation Rapture" view. That is, we believe Christ will come before the Tribulation to resurrect dead Christians and to "rapture" the living Christians - and both will be lifted off the earth to meet Him in the air. Christians who are raised or raptured will be taken to the "Father's house" of John 14:1-3) where their works will be judged:

(2 Cor 5:10) - For we must all appear before "The Judgment Seat of Christ"; that every one may receive the things done in his body,

according to that which he has done, whether it be good or bad.

This Judgment will be followed by the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb":

(Rev 19:7) - Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.

(Rev 19:8) - And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the Righteousness of Saints.

(Rev 19:9) - And he (the Angel) said unto me (John), "Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb". And then he said unto me, "These are the true sayings of God".

(Rev 19:10) - And I (John) fell at his (the angel's) feet to worship him. And he said unto me, "You must not do that: I am a fellow servant to you and your brothers that

hold to the Testimony of Jesus; which is the spirit of prophecy”.

While this is going on in heaven, the horrors of the seven-year Tribulation (the “70th week” of Daniel 9:24-27) will unfold on the earth:

(Dan 9:24) - Seventy weeks ($70 \times 7 = 490$ years) are determined upon thy people (Israel) and upon your Holy City (Jerusalem):

1. To finish the transgression,
2. To make an end of sins,
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity,
4. To bring in everlasting righteousness,
5. To seal up the vision and prophecy, and
6. To anoint the most Holy.

(Dan 9:25) - Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks plus threescore and two weeks ($7 \times 7 = 49$ years) plus ($62 \times 7 =$

434): in which the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

(Dan 9:26) - And after threescore and two weeks (the 49 years plus the 434 years = 483 total years shall Messiah (Jesus) be cut off, but not for Himself (not for His sin, but for ours): and the people of the prince that shall come (antichrist) shall destroy the city and the sanctuary (Temple); and the end thereof shall be with a flood (an overspreading army); and the desolations will continue to the end of the war.

(Dan 9:27) - And he (the prince that shall come) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (7 years): and in the midst of the week (at the half-way, or $3\frac{1}{2}$ year point) he (the antichrist) shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation (offerings) to cease, and he that shall make it desolate shall come on the wings of abominations, even to the complete destruction which has been decreed will be poured out on the one (antichrist)

who makes the desolation.

The Antichrist will be revealed and he will commit the "abomination that causes desolation":

(Matt 24:15) - "Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation (the antichrist) which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)".

The midpoint of the Tribulation will be marked by a succession of judgments that result in the near-total destruction of human society.

When huge numbers of humanity, having chosen to follow the antichrist, have become ready for final judgment, The Lord will return from heaven with the Saints (Christians) and angels (Heavenly Host).

He will defeat the antichrist and begin setting His Kingdom on earth (Rev 19-

20). His Return after the Tribulation is often called the "Glorious Appearing".

(Titus 2:13) - Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;.

The difference between the Rapture and the Glorious Appearing of Christ can be put this way:

In the Rapture, Christ comes for His Saints, at the Glorious Appearing, He comes with His saints.

The Rapture takes place in the air, the Glorious Appearing on the earth.

In the Rapture believers go from earth to heaven, at the Glorious Appearing they go from heaven to earth.

At the Rapture Jesus comes to reward his people, at the Glorious Appearing He comes to judge the earth.

At the Rapture He claims His bride, while at the Glorious Appearing He comes with His bride.

The Rapture takes place before the Tribulation and marks its beginning; the Glorious Appearing takes place after the Tribulation and marks the beginning of the Millennium.

At the Rapture believers are saved from the "Wrath of the Lamb," at the Glorious Appearing Christ appears to bring an end to the "Wrath of the Lamb."

There are no signs of the Rapture while there are many signs of the Glorious Appearing of Christ at the end of the Tribulation.

Having said all of that, and while affirming that I believe these things, I also acknowledge that many thoughtful Bible students (including some very good friends of mine) do not see things this way. And I

freely admit that there is no one verse that says, "Christ will definitely return before the Tribulation". There is room for discussion and debate on this topic.

In this message, I am teaching what I believe the Bible teaches. However, I encourage all who read these words to search the prophetic scriptures for themselves. Be a student of God's Word. Read, study, compare, analyze. I commend the whole topic of Bible prophecy to you as one that is both fascinating and personally edifying.

And that brings me back to the main point, which is that Christians have always believed in the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus Himself declared:

(John 14:3) - I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am, there you may be also.

When Christ ascended into heaven, the angels promised the disciples:

(Acts 1:11) - This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.

Belief in the Second Coming has been named as our Fifth Fundamental Truth of Faith. Even though we have often argued about some of the details surrounding His return, Christians of every denomination have agreed on this fact: Jesus Christ is coming again! It is highly significant that three times in Rev 22 (the last chapter of the Bible) Christ specifically declares, "I am coming soon!" (Rev 22:7, 12, 20). And the last prayer of the Bible is a prayer for the Second Coming: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

A NOTE FROM PASTOR TOM

I am greatly indebted to the Lesson Booklet with its thirteen plans for Sunday School which our Church received in 1976; and written by John L. Benson. These thirteen lessons were published by Baptist Publications under the title: "Truth About Tomorrow". Since the booklet is out of print; I have secured permission to reprint it and provide copies to many people down through the years.

I have also been able to enlarge! In some parts with new discoveries and inventions that have been unearthed down through the years.

Other writers who have greatly influenced this sermon are: my parents: Fred and Josephine Mooty, Arno C. Gabelein, Clarence Larkin, Mark Hitchcock, Ray Pritchard, Ed Hindson, The Wycliffe Commentary: Charles Pfeiffer and Edward Harrison, Hal Lindsey, Jordon Williams, Charles

Ryrie, James Strong, M.R. DeHaan, J.R. Church, Gary Stearman, Howard Estep, H. Wayne House, The Tyndale Handbook, Tim LaHaye, Randall Price, Mike Evans. C.I. Scofield, Thomas Ice, David Jeremiah, Harold Wilmington, Dwight Pentecost, Paul Lee Tan, and John Walvoord.

Also very influential have been the countless sermons and lessons on this subject to which I have been exposed in my sixty years of active ministry.

Tom Mooty, 2025.



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