

JESUS WILL MAKE A ROUNDTRIP VISIT TO THE EARTH

By Terry Jones, March 2, 2008
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CENTRAL SERMON THEME – Since the promise of Jesus' return is certain and the time is uncertain we want to be ready at all times for His return.

Matthew 24:29-41

INTRO. - What will we be doing if Jesus returns in our life time? We may be driving along a highway when suddenly the sun goes out like a blown light bulb. Immediately every driver moves over to the shoulder of the road. Before we can get out of our cars, a light, brighter than the sun, appears above us. We turn our eyes upward to see a huge bright cloud moving closer to the earth. Everyone's car horn appears to be blowing. Instead, we hear a trumpet blast so loud the ground shakes beneath our feet. At that moment, people resembling paratroopers are jumping off this cloud and floating down to the earth. We wonder if maybe the tabloids were correct. UFO's are invading the earth! Angels are descending to the earth to take people up to the cloud. What is happening? It is the Second Coming of Christ.

Another scenario could develop. During the night our doorbell rings in the early morning hours. Alexis jabs me in the ribs to awaken me to answer the door. Fears flood my imagination. Is this bad news about family, church, or community? I turn on the outside light to peep through the side window before I open the door. After seeing a blinding light I ask, "Who is it?" A voice says, "Jesus is here and I have come for you and your family."

Before I can open the door this heavenly visitor enters our house. The angel holds our hands as he takes us through the ceiling and the roof. Alexis says to me with a chuckle, "You should have been watching Star Trek with me all those years. We are being beamed up." Once we clear the house we are propelled upward at blazing speed. The night has become brighter than a cloudless summer day. We are headed toward that light. On the way the angel quotes Scriptures about the Second Coming of Jesus. What a comfort! What has happened? Jesus has returned.

You have noticed the words on your car's right hand side-view mirror. "Objects are closer than they appear." The mirror on the right side of your car allows a wider angle of vision making the distance closer than it appears.

We can borrow those words to describe the Second Coming of Jesus - His coming may be closer than it appears.

Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple when the disciples comment about the magnificent temple King Herod had built. Jesus interrupted their admiration for the temple with this terrible announcement, "Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." After they were resting on Mt. Olivet, the disciples asked Jesus two questions: When will the temple be destroyed? When is the end of the age? Jesus answers these two questions in order. Verses 4 through 28 speak about the destruction of the temple that occurred in 70 AD. After discussing the temple Jesus spoke about the end of time. I will agree there is some overlap in the answers Jesus gives. We begin with verse 29 to understand the Second Coming. Jesus teaches us to:

I. PREPARE FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN THE FUTURE, Vv. 29-31

- A. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - 1. Jesus predicted not one stone will be left upon another stone.
 - 2. There will be a period of distress from the destruction.
 - a. We are now living in the period between the destruction of the temple and the end of time.
 - b. We do not know when this period will end.
 - 3. Immediately after this period of distress dramatic changes will occur.

- B. The sun will grow dark, the moon will not give any light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.
 - 1. What does Jesus mean? Jesus describes a great event.
 - 2. The sun grew dark when Jesus died on the cross - a great event.
 - 3. Jesus uses this figurative language to describe a spectacular event.

- C. Jesus portrays his return with the typical imagery of a cosmic upheaval.
 - 1. Jesus will appear.
 - 2. All the nations of the world will mourn because they sided with the wrong group.
 - 3. Jesus will appear with power and great glory.
 - 4. He will command the angels to gather His elect from all nations.
 - a. The elect are God's chosen people.
 - b. How are we elected to God?

- c. Illus. – To explain God's election pretend you are in an election. God votes for us and the devil votes against us. This is a tie vote. We vote with God to break the tie and we are God's elect. If we vote with the devil we are not God's elect. When you believed in Jesus Christ, you became one of the elect.

D. After Jesus' return this physical world will be changed.

- 1. 2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.
- 2. Matt. 24:35 – Heaven and earth will pass away.
- 3. Rev. 21:1 – Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.
- 4. At Creation, God created the physical world from nothing.
- 5. After the Second Coming, God will dissolve this world to recreate a new world called Heaven.
 - a. God will turn off the sun.
 - b. The moon cannot shine if there is no sun.
 - c. The stars will be turned off.
 - d. Nature's power will be shaken.

E. We are to plan for major changes if Jesus returns in our lifetime.

II. KNOW THE CERTAINTY OF JESUS' RETURN, Vv. 32-35

A. Ex. - When we see Christmas lights shining we know a holiday is near. Which holiday? Thanksgiving. Christmas lights are a sign that Thanksgiving is very near and Christmas is coming.

B. Learn the lesson of the fig tree.

- 1. When the new leaves appear, summer is near.
- 2. Green leaves are a sign of summer.
- 3. What are the signs that Jesus is coming soon?
- 4. The signs are Jesus is on the clouds, the trumpet call, and the angels gathering God's people from all the nations.

C. This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things happen.

- 1. I believe the Jewish race is the generation Jesus referenced.

2. Though the Jewish people will be scattered at times throughout the world, they will still exist when Jesus returns.
 3. Heaven and earth will pass away but my words shall not pass away.
 - a. Nothing is more certain than the earth; day and night.
 - b. Jesus' words about His return are more certain than the earth and heaven.
 - c. His words shall not pass away.
 - d. Therefore His coming is certain.
- D. What are the signs that Jesus will return?
1. How do we know Jesus will return? The Bible says He will return.
 2. What can we expect before Jesus returns?
 3. The Scriptures indicate some characteristics of the end time.
- E. Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All*, believes three characteristics of the end time are emerging.
1. Time of great falsehood
 - a. Satan will be unusually active before his final judgment.
 - b. The devil's method is deception.
 - c. False Christs will deceive people.
 - d. Even false miracles will deceive people.
 - e. Our postmodern world believes that truth is relative and personal.
 - f. Favorite quote from the Bible - Judge not.
 - g. Truth will be lost in deceit.
 2. Time of great wickedness
 - a. 2 Thess. 2 describes a deceiver who will be a lawless one.
 - b. Sin will be accepted as normal behavior.
 - c. Murder, theft, heterosexual and homosexual immorality, lying, blaspheming God, and lusts will be considered normal behavior.
 - d. The wickedness will be so widespread; churches who oppose this wickedness will be accused of being intolerant.
 - e. Churches will compromise to avoid being labeled as unloving.
 3. Time of great persecution
 - a. In the last century, communist regimes such as Russia and China led the persecution of Christians.
 - b. In the this century, Hindu extremists and Islamic terrorists will lead the persecution against Christians.

- c. Verbal abuse of Christians will increase as TV entertainment consistently ridicule Christian values and lifestyle.
- d. Christians may be ridiculed, insulted, experience injustice, be physically attacked such as prison, beatings, or martyrdom.

F. Watch for deception, wickedness, and persecution to grow in our world.

1. J. Dwight Pentecost writes - A short time ago, I took occasion to go through the New Testament to mark each reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and to observe the use made of that teaching about His coming. I was struck anew with the fact that almost without exception, when the coming of Christ is mentioned in the New Testament; it is followed by an exhortation to godliness and holy living.
2. God will win! We can be certain of His victory.
3. Let us be faithful for Jesus is coming again!
4. We know the certainty of His return but we:

III. UNDERSTAND THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE TIME, Vv. 36-41

A. Illus. - A West African Bible College student asked the missionary Gregory Fisher this question: "First Thessalonians 4:16 says that Christ will descend from heaven with a loud command. I would like to know what that command will be." Gregory Fisher said his mind wandered back to an encounter he had with a refugee from the Liberian civil war. The man, a high school principal, told about being apprehended by a two-man death squad. After several hours of terror, listening to these men describe how they would torture and kill him, he escaped. He hid in the bush for two days where he was able to find his family and escape to another country. However, he lost two children in his escape. The student brought him back to his question, "You have not given me an answer. What will Jesus say when He returns?" The missionary answered, "Enough! He will shout, 'Enough.'" The surprised student asked, "What do you mean, 'enough?'" He answered, "Enough suffering. Enough starvation. Enough terror. Enough death. Enough indignity. Enough hopelessness. Enough sickness and disease. Enough time. Enough!" Only God knows when to say, "Enough."

B. No one knows the day or hour.

1. The angels in heaven do not know.
2. The Son of God does not know.
3. The church does not know.
4. Only the Father knows.
5. Does Jesus know now? I believe He knew after He ascended.
6. Anyone who predicts the time for Jesus' return is a false prophet.
7. The coming is certain but the time is uncertain.

C. The time will be like the days of Noah.

1. What happened when the flood came? People were involved in their daily activities; eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.
2. They had given no thought to the flood until it came.
3. Normal activities will be taking place when Jesus returns.
 - a. People will be eating and drinking.
 - b. People will be getting married and giving their children to be married.

D. Normal daily activities will take place.

1. Two men will be working in a field but one is taken and the other left.
2. Two women will be grinding grain to make bread but one will be taken and the other left.
3. This is not a secret rapture but some people will be prepared and others will not be prepared when Jesus returns.

E. The Second Coming is the Christians' alternative to physical death.

1. Death is one of our worst experiences but the Second Coming will be painless.
2. The preparation for the Second Coming is the same for our death.
3. While we live, God gives us the opportunity to be saved from suffering the penalty of our own sins.
4. We learn to live by learning to die.
5. We die to sin, our deadness is buried in Christian immersion, and arise to a new life in Christ.

CONCLUSION - Since we do not know the time of our death or the Second Coming of Jesus, how shall we prepare? The great Christian reformer, John Huss, was arrested for his faith in Christ and His Word. His persecutors informed him he would be burned to death for his faith. After receiving this

news Huss purposely held his hand over a fire to feel the burning pain. He was practicing so he would be faithful when he died in the fire. *Moody Monthly*, April, 1990, p. 76.

Every struggle and trial we endure now will help us to be faithful in the future. When our earthly life ends we want to hear God say, "Well done. You have been a good and faithful servant." Are ready? The correct answer is, "I am getting ready every day." The wrong answer is, "I will someday get ready for Jesus' return or my death." As a church we want to help you get ready. Every thing we know about the Second Coming of Jesus can be reduced to two words, "Be ready!"