

THE RETURN OF OUR REDEEMER

John 14:3

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Christ is the theme of the whole Bible. The theme of the Old Testament is Christ is coming. The theme of the Gospels is that Christ has come. The theme of the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation is that Christ is coming again.

This is one of the grandest and most inspiring themes in the Bible. It is the world's greatest future event. It has suffered much from ignorance, prejudice, indifference and perversion.

I. The Certainty of His Return.

1. It was purposed in the mind of God.
2. It was prompted by the love of God.
3. It was prophesied by the prophets of God.
They used the choicest words and noblest phrases and clauses when they sought to portray the Second Coming of Christ. Zechariah 14:1-4.
4. It was promised by the Son of God.
"I will come again." John 14:3. Note the Person--"I;" the Power--"I will;" the Promise--"I will come;" the Prospect--"I will come again;" the People--"And receive you;" the Place--"That where I am;" the Purpose--"Ye may be also." "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27.
5. It was proclaimed by the Spirit of God.
 - (1) Through messengers from heaven.
"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Who also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.'" Acts 1:10-11.

They left the ascension mount filled with joyous hope and glorious anticipation.
 - (2) Through the apostles.
Paul: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." I Thessalonians 4:16.
Hebrews 9:28: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
Jude: "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints." Fourteenth verse.
John: "Behold! He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." Revelation 1:7.
 - (3) Through the Lord's Supper.
With reference to it, Paul said: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." I Corinthians 11:26. The Supper is not only a commemoration of the past and a proclamation of the present, but also an anticipation of the future--"till He come."

II. The Reasons for His Return.

1. To gather the saints unto Himself.
"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3.
2. To raise up the bodies of the righteous dead.
"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." I Thessalonians 4:16.
What a glorious hope to all believers who mourn the loss of loved ones! If Christ did not return, the bodies of the redeemed would never come out of the graves, and death would be triumphant throughout all the countless ages of eternity.
3. To translate the living saints.
"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." I Thessalonians 4:17.
4. To judge the works of the saints.
"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." I Corinthians 3:12-15.
5. To reward His own.
6. To reveal His glory.

III. The Manner of His Return.

1. Personally.
"The Lord Himself shall descend."
2. Bodily.
"In like manner as ye have seen Him go."
3. Visibly.
"In like manner as ye have seen Him go."
"Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him."
4. Suddenly.
"As lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west."
5. Unexpectedly.
"As a thief in the night." Naturally, a thief is not expected when he comes.
6. Gloriously.
"The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels."

IV. The Time of His Return.

1. In the future.
2. No one knows.

Some things are made clear in the Scriptures:

- (1) The period of His absence would be protracted.
- (2) Certain signs would herald the approach of His advent.
- (3) The precise time of His return cannot be known. "Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."
"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels that are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."
He does not want us to know the exact time, but it is His desire that we shall be ready at any time. The fact of His return is certain, and that is sufficient for our comfort. The time is uncertain, and that is sufficient for our consecration.

V. The Challenge of His Return.

1. It is an incentive to preparedness.
"Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Matthew 24:44.
2. It urges spiritual alertness.
"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13.
3. It is conducive to purity of life.
"And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself." I John 3:3.
4. It produces patience in trial.
"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." James 5:7.
5. It inspires sacrificial service.
6. It is a great comfort to those who sorrow.
The resurrection of all the dead in Christ will take place when He returns.

In view of the certain return of our Redeemer, all of us who are Christians should wait in patience, walk in purity of life, weep in hopefulness, witness in faithfulness, work in diligence, and watch in readiness. The unsaved should repent of their sins, receive the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, and rejoice that He is coming to take His own.