

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH “The Second Coming of Christ”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Be faithful unto death, in view of the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If there is one thing in Scripture that ought to motivate, challenge, and compel us to live faithfully to Jesus every moment, it is the Second Coming of Christ. The fact that Christ one day is going to return and deliver us to the Father ought to motivate us to never ever give up on Christianity. This lesson deals with what the New Testament has to say regarding the Second Coming of Christ. It will show us that Christ’s return, according to New Testament teaching, is inevitable. We may not be sure exactly when it will occur, but it will be an awesome event. It is going to happen, but we do not know exactly at what time because God has not revealed that to us. However, some awesome events will occur at the Second Coming of Christ, and knowing that ought to motivate us to live faithfully before Jesus each and every day. What does the New Testament teach about the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

We must realize that the Scriptures do teach that Christ is coming again. His coming is inevitable. It is one thing that definitely is going to happen. So many passages teach this. In John 14:1-3 Jesus said to His disciples,

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

Jesus promised the faithful that if they live true to Him, He will come again and receive them to the Father. In Acts 1 we find one of the clearest passages about the Second Coming of Christ. In Acts 1:9-11 the context is where Jesus is about to return to the Father, but before He does He gives His disciples some last-moment instructions and encouragement about the kingdom.

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”

Here is the promise. His disciples saw Jesus descend into Heaven. And the angels standing nearby said that that same Jesus would one day return to receive His own. Paul said in Philippians 3:20-21, “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” We are patiently waiting because one day Jesus is going to come. The Thessalonians changed their lives in view of the Second Coming of Christ. They turned from idols to God in order to serve the true and living God, and to wait for Christ’s return from Heaven. Do you remember the promise of 1 Thessalonians 4:16? One day Jesus is

going to return with the shout of the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first, and then those of us who are alive will be caught up together with him in the air and shall always be with the Lord. It is a fact that one day Christ **is** going to come. Someone might ask, "Where does the Bible say that the Second Coming is coming to happen? I've heard people speculate that one day the Lord is going to come again. But some of them say that the Scriptures never say anything about the Second Coming." Oh, but it does! Notice Hebrews 9:28, which specifically mentions it. "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." Christ came the first time to deal with sin, and to offer Himself as a sacrifice. But He will appear a second time (there's the Second Coming) apart from sin. But what for? For salvation—just as 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and John 14:1-3 indicate. He is coming to redeem to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24) those who are in the kingdom and those who have been faithful. So yes, Christ is coming again. The Second Coming is clearly taught in Scripture. John said in 1 John 3:1-2 that we need to realize the great love that God has showered upon us. But one day we will be changed when the Lord Himself returns again. There is so much evidence for the Second Coming. Why deny it? The Bible clearly teaches that it is going to happen. Understanding that will motivate and challenge us every day to live for Jesus in view of the Second Coming.

Since the Second Coming is going to happen, what do we know about the time of Christ's return? Can we know exactly to the day, hour, or minute? What does the Bible say? There were some in New Testament times who thought that Jesus' return would be immediate. Much of 1 and 2 Thessalonians deals with that. Some thought that Christ would be coming at any time, so they gave up their jobs and were sitting around waiting for Christ to return. Paul told them to get back to work and live their lives because no one knows when Christ will return since He will return "as a thief in the night." Some thought that it might be a thousand years before He returned. Some thought it might be two thousand years. William Miller, a Seventh Day Adventist, said in 1833 that Christ would return in 1843. But when Christ did not return in that year, Miller changed his mind and said that it would be in 1844. We all know, of course, that didn't happen either. Charles Russell, a Jehovah's Witness leader, said in 1914 that Christ would come in 1919. Finally he decided that Christ had come, but only a few people saw Him. But that is not what the Bible teaches. Every eye will see Christ, and every knee will bow (Phil. 2:10), and all who are in the graves will come forth (John 5:28-29). So as we look at history, a lot of people have tried to predict when Christ will return.

But what does the Bible say about the time when Christ will return. Here is what is clearly taught. It is impossible to get around this. The truth is that no one except God Himself knows when Christ will return. In Matthew 24:36 Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." What can we know regarding the Second Coming? It is going to happen, but no one knows when. Jesus said, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." If Christ said that God is the only one Who knows, how dare we try to predict when Christ will return! No one knows. What will it be like when Christ does return? In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 Paul said that the coming of Christ would be like a thief in the night. What does such an image relate to our minds? Do you know when a thief will come to rob you? Absolutely not! If you knew, you would be sitting there waiting for him. A thief comes when nobody knows it and when it is least expected. That's the idea behind Christ's return. Nobody will know when He is going to come back. So be sure that, when you hear prophecies about His return (like we heard around the year 2000), anytime anyone says that Christ will appear on such-and-such a date, you can tell that person that he is a false teacher and that you are not going to listen to Him because the Bible says that no one knows

when Christ is going to return. Someone might ask, "Why didn't God tell us?" We may not know those reasons, but I believe that one of the main reasons God did not tell us is because a lot of people would live their lives like they wanted to right up to that moment, and then they would try to get right. God wants us to live faithfully before Him all the time, and to always be ready for Christ's return. This "keeps us on our toes" so that we can live for Jesus every day.

What will Christ's Second Coming be like? What will happen? What kinds of events will unfold? How can this encourage us? We know that Christ's coming will be with great power and authority. In Matthew 25:31 it is seen as a powerful event. Judgment will be meted out. Men and women will fall down before God. When Christ returns, it will be personal. It is not just for "the world." It is personal—and meant for each one of us. In 1 Thessalonians 4 we learn that all those who are in the graves will come forth. In John 14 Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for us. It is a personal event. It will not happen just to "the world," but will happen to each one of us. It will be an unannounced event. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 we see that it will be like a thief in the night. We will not know when it is going to happen. But a trumpet will sound, the voice of an archangel will be heard, and it will not be something that we know before it happens. It will be audible. We will hear it. In John 5:28-29 Jesus said that all who are in the grave will come forth, and everyone will hear the voice of the archangel. This will be something that we not only will see, but also hear. It also will be something that is visible. According to Acts 1:11, it will be something that we can see. "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner." So not only will we hear it, but we will see the return of Jesus in the air.

Here are some events that will take place at Christ's Second Coming. The resurrection will happen in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ. Notice again the words of John 5:28-29. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." Upon Jesus' return, men and women who have died will arise from their graves. Some will rise to eternal life, and some will rise to eternal condemnation. This also is taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where Paul discussed the Second Coming when he wrote, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." In view of the Second Coming, we also know that the resurrection will happen as well.

What else will happen in conjunction with the Second Coming? The Judgment also will occur. In 2 Timothy 4:1-2 Paul wrote, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." When Christ comes, He will mete out judgment to the living and those who have died and who will come forth out of their graves. At Christ's Second Coming, you have people being raised and you have the Judgment occurring.

Another thing that will occur is that God's vengeance will be meted out to those who have not lived faithfully before Christ in this life. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 we see things that will be occurring in conjunction with Christ's return.

"And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed."

The picture is that Jesus is coming. How will He be coming? It will be in flaming fire in order to take vengeance on two types of people—those who do not know God, and those who have not obeyed the Gospel. These people will be punished with everlasting destruction. They will suffer the fires of Hell at that point. Vengeance will be meted out when Christ returns. Men and women will be judged by the Word of God. In John 12:48 Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” In the Judgment scene in Revelation 20, the books were opened and the dead, great and small, stood before God. Each one was judged by the things written in the book. This is how it will be when Christ returns. Men and women will be judged based on how they have lived their lives according to the Bible. At that moment, God will mete out vengeance and eternal punishment for those who have done evil. But He will glorify those who have done right.

What else will occur at the Second Coming? We also know that every knee is going to bow, and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus is God’s Son. At that moment in time, all the critics will disappear. All atheists will be no more. All agnostics will no longer doubt. Every person, at that moment, will be convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, and will bow and confess that truth to the Father. In Philippians 2:9-11 Paul wrote,

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The picture is that when Christ returns, all people are going to know that He is God’s Son and that God’s plan was correct. Every person will bow, and every tongue will confess that Christ is the Son of God.

Also, in conjunction with that, the kingdom is going to be delivered to the Father. In 1 Corinthians 15:24 we are taught that when Christ comes, He will deliver the kingdom to the Father. What is the kingdom? The kingdom is the church (Mt. 16:19). The kingdom is presently here. From Mark 9:1 and Colossians 1:13 we learn that there were people in the kingdom in the first century. The kingdom is the church. What will happen when Christ returns? Those who are in the kingdom are those who will live with the Father. Do you see the importance of being in the church and of making sure that we are living faithfully in the kingdom? The righteous will be changed at Christ’s return. In Philippians 3:20-21 we are taught that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Do I understand all of that? Absolutely not! But here is what I do know. My body will no longer be corruptible, and my body will no longer be mortal, but will be changed into immortality. Also at this time, the righteous will be given a victor’s crown. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

There is one final event that will occur in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ. The world, and all that is in it, will be destroyed. In 2 Peter 3:9-12 we read,

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the

earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?"

The world in which we live right now will cease to exist. When Christ returns, when God metes out His judgment, when the dead are raised, and when all who are faithful meet God in the air, Christ will destroy this world. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat. Knowing that ought to motivate us. But it also ought to show us something else. There are some who teach that a one-thousand year reign of Christ will come after His return. But if the world and everything in it is going to be burned up at His Second Coming, where will that reign take place? Such teaching is contradictory. In the Book of Revelation people go to passages that are figurative in an attempt to bring out a thousand-year reign, the Rapture, and such things. But God never intended for such things to be taught in those passages. He is teaching us in that context that Christians will rule and reign with Christ in Heaven. We will occupy a place of hope and comfort. But this world will not be a place where Christ is reigning. At the coming of Christ, the world will be burned up. There is no doubt that Peter's comments show with great force that this will take place.

If this Earth, and all that is on it, will be burned up with a fervent heat at Christ's return, why would we want to put our hope in this world? What good will it do us if we have the biggest house on the block, the fanciest car, and the nicest clothes—but when Christ returns, all those things will be burned up? What will those things matter? The point is that they won't. So, let's not put our hope in this world. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24ff. that where our heart is, that is where our treasure will also be. According to Christ's statements, our treasure needs to be putting the kingdom first (Mt. 6:33).

In view of all this, what should our conduct be? What should motivate us? How does the teaching about the Second Coming challenge us to live every day for Jesus? Here is what it ought to do. It ought to encourage us to wait patiently for His return. We "eagerly wait" (Phil. 3:20). In James 5:7 and 1 Corinthians 1:7 we are told to wait for the Lord Jesus. Just like those Christians in Thessalonica, we have turned from sin to God, and now are waiting for the return of Christ. This ought to cause us to patiently endure—never giving up. We must wait faithfully for that day. It is like we are waiting for the greatest event that we could ever imagine in our lives. We are anticipating it. We are awaiting it. We have butterflies in our stomachs about it. We are **so** ready for it to happen! But in the meantime, we are patiently enduring. That is what Christ's Second Coming ought to do for us. It ought to cause us to be pure and blameless in our lives. In Philippians 1:10 we are taught to live a pure and blameless life. In view of the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23) we ought to be pure, spotless, and blameless. We do not know when Christ will return, but we do know what will occur when it takes place. We know that there will be no second chances once He returns. This ought to cause us to live pure lives and to be holy, "as He who called you is holy" (1 Pet. 1:15). This ought to make us realize that without holiness, no one will see God (Heb. 12:14).

The Second Coming of Christ also should cause us to live sober, righteous, and godly lives Titus 2:11-13 says,

"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

In view of Christ's Second Coming, we need to live soberly, righteously, and godly. In 2 Peter 3:11, Peter asked, "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" We must live, in view of the Second Coming, as a spotless child of God. Does that mean that we will never sin? No, we will sin. But it means that when we do we must be immediately ready to repent and make it right.

The Second Coming also should cause us to set our hope fully on the coming of Christ. We are told in 1 Peter 1 that our hope must be fully set on Christ, His return, His kingdom, and His promises. That is where our hope must be. We have the hope of the resurrection. We have the hope of Christ's coming. We know that these things are going to happen. In view of that, we must want to live faithfully before Christ every day. We may not know when these things are going to happen, but they should motivate us every day to live for Jesus.

This should motivate us to realize the importance of "now." How do we **know** that Christ's Second Coming will not occur shortly? It could happen in 10,000 years, or it could happen in two minutes. We do not know when it will take place. It could be any time. This should reinforce in our minds the importance of obeying God now. In view of this, if you have never obeyed the Gospel, this ought to stress to you the importance of "now." The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2,

"We then, as workers together with Him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says, 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

How important is "now"? It is essential that you understand you now have an opportunity, now you have the time, and now you have the chance to obey God. But when Christ comes, all that will be over. We need to take advantage of "now." We need to get our lives ready. One of the saddest verses in the Bible is found in Acts 26:28. Paul had preached to King Agrippa about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. Paul said that the king knew about these things and about Jesus. Agrippa then said, "Almost you persuade me to become a Christian." The saddest line, when Jesus returns, will be "I 'almost' obeyed the Gospel." Our lives are like a vapor (Jas. 4:14). We therefore need to understand the importance of "now." We need to get ready. If you have never obeyed the Gospel, you need to do that now. You need to get ready now. You need to hear the Word. You need to believe in Jesus. You need to repent of things in your life that are not right. You need to confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:10). And you need to be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Or, if you are already a child of God, then let this lesson motivate you to live faithfully before Jesus. We should "be faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). In Matthew 10 we are told that those who endure to the end will be saved. This should cause us every day to take up our cross and follow Jesus faithfully. In view of God's grace and mercy, this should cause us to make our lives a living sacrifice. If there is anything today that ought to motive us to live faithfully, it is the Second Coming of Christ. Our Lord is coming! We do not know when, but we do know that it will be a powerful event. We must be ready to be caught up with Christ in the air and to go home to the Father. We surely do not want to be caught unprepared. Is your life the way it ought to be? Are you ready today for the Lord to come? Have you obeyed the Gospel? If not, take advantage of "now." If you are a Christian, live faithfully before God in view of the Second Coming of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST”

1. According to this lesson, what is one thing that that ought to motivate us to live faithfully for Jesus every day of our lives?
2. In Acts 1:11, what did the angels tell Christ’s disciples?
3. According to Philippians 3:20, what should every Christian be doing during his or her time on Earth?
4. What does 1 Thessalonians 4:16 say about the Lord’s return?
5. What does Hebrews 9:28 mean when it says that at His Second Coming, Christ “will appear a second time, **apart from sin**”?
6. What promise did Christ make in John 14:3?
7. What specific problem, related to the Second Coming of Christ, had arisen in the church in Thessalonica?
8. What promise did Christ make in John 5:5?
9. What promise did Christ make in John 5:28-29?
10. According to Philippians 2:10, what will happen at Christ’s Second Coming?
11. According to Matthew 24:36, when will Christ’s Second Coming occur?
12. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2, to what is Christ’s Second Coming compared?
13. According to Matthew 25:31, when Christ returns, who will come with Him?
14. According to Matthew 25:31, after Christ’s Coming, what will He do?
15. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, when Christ returns, who will meet Him first, and where will that meeting take place?
16. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, when Christ returns, who will meet Him second?
17. According to 2 Timothy 4:1-2, what great event will take place at the time of Christ’s Second Coming?
18. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, what will Christ do at His Second Coming?
19. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, what two groups of people will not be happy at the time of Christ’s Second Coming?
20. According to According to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, what will happen to those people who did not live faithfully before Christ while on Earth?