

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 & Matthew 24:29-44
“Description & Characteristics of Christ’s Coming”

Lord Jesus, by your Word and Spirit, keep us, your faithful holy ones, free from deception, distractibility and despondency as we expectantly await your glorious Return as Judge. May your kingdom come and may your will be done in us as we cry ‘Come, Lord Jesus. Come’ for your glory and for our eternal rest in you, our Savior and King. AMEN.

Our family will begin a road trip later today. We have never been to our intended destination, but we are excited and optimistic about where we are going. While parts of any journey will have enjoyable moments, there are also occasions that can be frustrating, tedious, and even dangerous. These can be discouraging roadblocks; enough to keep one from taking the trip. I think that is why many vacation destinations have beautiful brochures with pictures illustrating how wonderful they are; to encourage us to endure the difficulties of the journey with the end destination in mind. When aspects of the journey become unpleasant, the descriptions and characteristics in that brochure remind us of how wonderful it will be to finally reach our destination. Our hope and optimism for the end compels us to keep going and to stay focused on the goodness that lies ahead. As we look at today’s passages, we will be handed a biblical brochure. As pilgrims of Christ journeying in this world, we will get a glimpse of our final destination when Jesus Returns. These biblical description and characteristics will not only encourage us in our journey with the glory of our destination’s End, they will also help keep us safe on our pilgrimage to ensure we ultimately reach our hoped-for End.

Our End-Time Hope, as Christians, is focused on Jesus Christ. Our hope, our blessed assurance, involves our personal Christ-like transformation, body and soul, within God’s presence for eternity in a recreated cosmos free from sin and suffering. This hope is a promise God has given to us ‘in Christ’ Who fulfills all God’s promises. God has proven Himself faithful in the past, so we can be confident that what He promises for the future will happen. Therefore, we look back to what Jesus accomplished for us, and we look to the future, to the end of history, when Jesus will complete what he began at His first coming that is being fulfilled through His Church in the present.

Jesus, at His first coming, came in humility and peace. He reconciled people to God the Father by His death on the Cross for our sins. That Jesus died for our sins, Himself being sinless, was proven in His resurrection from the dead. When Jesus Ascended into heaven and disappeared in a cloud, a promise was given that He would return to the earth the same way He departed. However, when Jesus Comes Again, He will come in glory and to judge. Those Who believe Jesus endured hell in their place on the Cross as punishment for their sinful rebellion will be resurrected unto eternal life. Between Jesus' first and second comings is called the Last Days, and make-up the present Church "Age" in which we live. During this time, Jesus has commanded His People to proclaim the Good News of His death and resurrection throughout the world while diligently awaiting His imminent Return. To encourage and comfort us that we may persevere in our mission until His Return, Jesus, and New Testament authors, have given us a "Description and Characteristics of His Second Coming" along with a description of the tribulation we will experience during these Last Days called "Messianic Birth Pains." We have these descriptions to enable us, as disciples of Christ, to maintain a healthy and balanced biblical perspective and lifestyle as we await the Return of our King Jesus. Today, we'll look at....

...A Simple Description and Some Characteristics of Christ's Second Coming. Jesus' Return is our destination's End that we look forward to in our lives. We discussed our present experience of God's power as we encounter suffering. The reality of suffering for the Christian on pilgrimage in this world is in **2 Thessalonians 1:5** (**READ**). With this background we can look at...

...Three Descriptions of Christ's Return to encourage us to stand firm and press on in our Christian journey.

1. A Revelation of Judgment

a. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

- i. Verse 7 ("is revealed" or "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven.") A derivative of the word for "revelation" here is the title of our last book in the Bible, "The Revelation".
 1. This is an unveiling; a revealing of God's justice. While God is loving and merciful, He is also holy, righteous and just. It should be a great comfort to us that Jesus is concerned with justice and that, in The End, all evil and wickedness that has plagued the earth will be punished.

2. A Royal Visitation

a. “Man of Lawlessness”

- i. Last week, we touched on the rapture of the church when Jesus Returns. Paul calls that “the day of the Lord” in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and he states that it will come “like a thief in the night”. It appears the apostle is revisiting this in verse 1 of chapter 2. However, prior to this “day of the Lord” and “our being gathered together in Him” the “rebellion must come” and the “man of lawlessness” must be revealed (*cf.* Matt. 24:15). This rebellion is apostasy, and I take it as likely referring to a large-scale falling away of the visible Church (of those who merely profess to be Christians); perhaps through deception, which Paul is warning the Thessalonians against. Such people will visibly fall away from the Church through the deception and sacrilege of the “man of lawlessness”; because, they were already inclined to such apostasy; already perishing; because, they “refused to love the truth and so be saved” (verse 10). We will see this again in “The Revelation” with vivid imagery in the “Beast from the Sea” (Revelation 13:1-8). While Paul does not use the designation of “anti-christ” for the “man of lawlessness,” the description fits John’s description of anti-christ in 1 John (2:18-27 4:3) where he also talks about professing Christians who will “fall away” - proving that they were never really part of the holy people of God. Paul, here, like John of the anti-christ, states that the secret power of this “lawlessness” is already at work. We know this to be true even today, as we have seen people, people once in leadership positions among us, now living ungodly lives by accepting the deceptions of the world and refusing “to love the truth and so be saved.” The “man of lawlessness” comes by the power of Satan as a Christ-like counterfeit to deceive, but it is the Lord Who hands apostate imposters over to “a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie” (verse 11). In the End, the “lawless one” will be revealed as the counterfeit puppet controlled by Satan that he is, and he will be overthrown and destroyed by the Lord Jesus.
- ii. **Verse 8** (“coming”) This is the arrival of the King in all His authority to execute judgment. This is Christ’s **Royal visitation** as

the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will destroy the anti-christ.

1. That it is by the breath of His mouth demonstrates the Lord Jesus' incomparable power and the ease with which He overthrows the lawless one. (~~Revelation 19:15, 21~~)
2. That the lawless one is destroyed, or brought to nothing, by the "splendor", "brightness" or "appearing" of Jesus' "coming" brings us to the third description of His Return...

3. ...A Glorious Manifestation

- a. This is unlike Jesus' First Coming in Humility
- b. Ref. 1:7-9 "the glory of his might"
- c. Now, if we believe what the Bible records about Jesus' First Coming (the Virgin Birth, His Death, Resurrection and Ascension), then why would we NOT believe what the Bible describes about His Return?

Three Additional Characteristics of Christ's Coming (Matthew 24:29-44 on page 1,142)

1. **Visible** – If we pick up with the glorious manifestation of Jesus upon His Return to Judge, we move on to Matthew 24:30 "all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."
 - a. This is not only a personal and physical Return of Jesus as He Ascended into heaven, but it is a Visible Coming as He Returns to assume His ruling authority as the Son of Man over all the nations of the earth forever (Daniel 7:13-14).
 - b. **Verses 29 (READ)** - "Immediately" refers to after the "distress" / tribulation of the entire Church Age of these Last Days. We come back to our present experience of suffering as we eagerly and patiently await the Return of Jesus. The language articulates cosmic upheaval and the overthrow of earthly kingdoms and their corresponding heavenly powers. This began at Christ's First Coming and will be completed upon His Return which will occur after the "distress" / tribulation of the Church Age ("those days"). "Then" of *Verse 30* is not following verse 29 but during that time; after the tribulation of these Last Days we are currently living in. Events in these verses occur at the same time. As we've seen previously, this is not a secret 'coming'.
 - i. Verse 31 Note the angels being sent and the loud trumpet call again to gather the Lord's elect People discussed previously when

we looked at 1 Thessalonians 4 and the “rapture” last week. Prior to this last trumpet call of God, our Lord sends out other warning trumpet blasts that are manifested in tribulation throughout the world during these Last Days. These warnings, combined with God’s delay in returning to execute final justice, are a great mercy to humanity. Suffering and tragedy are a call for the world to repent while there is still time; because, Jesus’ Second Coming will be....

2. ...Triumphant

- a. While Christ indeed reigns NOW, it remains a contested reign. When He Returns, it will be uncontested in the fullness of Daniel 7’s Son of Man for all to see.
- b. Currently, the glory of Jesus remains concealed, but when He Returns, the splendor of His divine nature and kingly authority will be revealed, and His brightness will illuminate the true condition of our hearts. Therefore, we must be ready to receive Him; because, His coming will be....

3. ...Sudden

- a. We already mentioned that Paul stated Christ’s Second Coming would be like that of a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). The apostle Peter agrees (2 Peter 3:10-13), and the apostle John records the same suddenness of Christ’s Return in Revelation 16:15. Perhaps the apostles’ imagery was derived from Jesus’ own words recorded in *verses 43-44(READ)*
- b. *Verses 36-44* – This section articulates the suddenness of Christ’s Return and is clear that no one will know the day or hour of His Second Coming. In *verse 36*, there is evidence that Jesus’ abandoned His independent use of His divine prerogatives to fulfill His redeeming mission when He became man to do only what His Father willed. This is why Jesus did not know the time of His Return; His Father, in Jesus’ humanity, did not reveal to Him this knowledge. Therefore, it is near blasphemy for anyone to think they can discern it.
 - i. Beginning in *verse 37* are exhortations for us to be vigilant throughout the delay until Christ Returns. This is the issue at stake, and we will discuss this further next time. Importantly, it is about the preparedness of our hearts; not about charts signifying events prior to Christ’s Return. The point of making a parallel

with Noah is to highlight the ordinariness of the events in the world at the time of Christ's sudden Return.

- ii. The point of verses 41-42 is to highlight the suddenness, not to explain who is taken to where or who is left behind for what (D.A. Carson). To facilitate our understanding of this, Jesus gives four parables to exhort us to be careful and watchful during the delay of His Return; because, there will be no warning. The Second Coming will be unexpected. In God's grace, we will explore these parables further next week.

We are blessed with these descriptions and characteristics of Christ's Second Coming, so we may be encouraged on the road of discipleship when we encounter the potholes of suffering and distress in this world, which is merely a staging post on the way to our eternal glorious destination. This is what Paul means in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-16.

Verses 13-14 (READ) God chose us to be the first fruits of the Creation He is bringing about in Jesus. This begins in our hearts as we are saved by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit through our belief in the truth of the Gospel, so we might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 15-16 (READ) Be encouraged to stand firm, and hold fast to the apostolic teaching...the Bible, which gives us descriptions and characteristics of our destination when Jesus Comes Again. While it may seem like we are on a scary road to nowhere and doubting the strange pessimistic signposts on the way, we are on the right path to glory. Yet, we must be on guard and diligent; because, that power of lawlessness is already at work. Satan is a deceiver, liar and murderer who comes as an angel of light but is really a roaring lion looking for those who refuse to love truth, who do not believe, and who find their pleasure in unrighteousness. While the Devil is presently a restrained cunning best, so that the Church may grow in God's grace, he remains deadly to those the Lord allows to stray off the road and into his reach. May we not be deceived. "May our Lord Jesus Christ, himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort our hearts and establish them in every good work and word."
AMEN.