

# 1. 5 SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR CHRIST'S RETURN: #1 JESUS' GETS HIS REWARD <sup>(1)</sup>

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For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce godlessness and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we look with earnest longing for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of the great God and of our Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2: 11-13 my translation). <sup>(2)</sup>

Did you notice there are two comings of our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned here?

**The First Coming:** Verse 11 ... For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. There's the Good News. God's love for the world through Jesus Christ has been made public knowledge. God is calling all peoples to turn their backs on a godless, indulgent life and to enter the coming Kingdom of His beloved Son.

Our salvation is accomplished because Jesus came the first time and achieved His Father's eternal purpose to redeem a lost humanity for Himself ... **the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.**

And now, having obeyed the Gospel promise, having accepted God's offer of forgiveness of sin, having received the gift of God's holy Spirit we now enjoy the life of God bubbling up from our innermost beings whetting our appetites for more, as we eagerly anticipate the glorious day when God consummates His Kingdom-plan for this world, which is ...

**The Second Coming:** Verse 12 ... We are earnestly longing for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The question then is:-

Are you looking expectantly for the promised return of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Are you captivated by the **blessed hope** when Jesus will peel back the skies and return to plant his feet again upon the earth, when he will reclaim this world for his God and for the saints, when, as the old prophet said, the knowledge of the **glory of the great God** will rule over the entire cosmos like the waters cover the seas?

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<sup>1</sup> These are the notes of the first message I preached in the Mardon Road Church of Christ in Hamilton, New Zealand, in February 2023.

<sup>2</sup> I am not going to delve into the translation debates as to whether this verse teaches that **our great God is our Saviour Jesus Christ**. That would require another full article altogether. Sufficient to say at this moment that the verse does **not** support a trinitarian reading that Jesus is "fully God". Everywhere else the NT says the Second Coming of Christ is to be **in the glory of His Father** as **Jesus himself taught** (Matt. 16:27; Mk 8:38 etc.) Titus 2: 11-13 agrees. Many trinitarian scholars are highly suspicious that this verse calls Jesus **our great God and Saviour** as most of our modern English translations attempt to do. In my translation here I have chosen to agree with the unambiguous previous statement in Titus 1: 4 where God is defined by the apostle Paul as the Father and where Jesus is clearly called **Jesus Christ our Saviour**.

If not, then I pray by the end of this little series you will be craning your neck, looking up to heaven from whence your redemption comes! So, I want to lay out some reasons why we should be looking forward to the glorious return of our Lord Jesus to planet earth.

Now I am perfectly well aware that many folks out there are sceptical that Jesus Christ ever lived the first time. You can buy any number of books written by doubters who deny the historical evidence for the Jesus of the New Testament. But you will struggle to find accredited professors of history denying the existence of Jesus. The historical eyewitness record for Jesus of Nazareth walking and talking in Israel is overwhelming.

But for every voice out there which denies the historicity of the first time the Son of God walked on the world's stage, when we come to talking about Jesus Christ coming back to planet earth, we are met by a raucous chorus of scoffers saying, "**Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation**" (2 Peter 3: 4). The din of the Second Coming deniers is deafening!

Now, I can understand why those outside the church scoff at and mock the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ. After all, it's been quite a while since he lived amongst us. But I cannot understand why many in the church today join their chorus of disbelief. For if we take the Scriptures as our authority, we cannot fail to see how often and how clearly the promise of Christ's return is laid out. Here's a very small sample:-

**Acts 1: 9-11** And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? **This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven.**"

Our Lord Jesus himself said, "If I go to prepare a place for you, **I will come again ....**" (John 14:3).

**Matthew 24: 30** "The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."

**I Thess. 4: 16** For **the Lord himself will descend from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God ...

**Hebrews 9:28** So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **shall appear a second time**, not to bear sin, but *to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

Rev. 1: 7 Look! **He is coming with the clouds; every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.**

From Matthew to Revelation the promise of the Second Coming of Jesus occupies one in every 25 verses! Someone calculated there are 318 times the Second Coming of Christ is mentioned in the 260 chapters in the NT. It must be something God wants us to be inspired by, and to believe!

As surely as Christ Jesus was born and lived and died and was raised the first time, then as surely the Bible declares he shall return --- every eye will see him. But the next time he is not coming in humility and weakness --- the next time he is coming in great glory and in the power of His Father God and with all the heavenly host with cataclysmic signs and cosmic wonders. This is our **blessed hope!**

There are **THREE WORD-PICTURES** those early Christians used when they thought about the Second Coming, this **blessed hope**.

### 1. *PAROUSIA*

Literally means “to be beside” and describes the physical presence of one person with another. When the NT writers tell us they long for the *parousia* of Jesus, they express the ardent hope that their Lord will return materially, visibly, audibly, tangibly, physically, to be beside us, actually with us.

### 2. *EPIPHANEIA*

Means “appearing on the scene”. It also carries the extra hint of suddenness. The idea is like in the old Western movies when the Indians are attacking the circled wagons that are burning. Hope is gone. But the cavalry arrives over the horizon in the nick of time.

### 3. *APOKALYPSIS*

Takes the idea of “suddenly appearing” one step further. *Apokalypsis* means to uncover that which has been hidden. It’s like that childrens’ story about the Emperor who disguised himself as a beggar the day before he intended a State visit to the district. The Emperor mingles with the people *incognito* to see how they will treat him as a person.

The next day is his *apokalypsis*. He appears with full royal regalia and a retinue of court attendants which causes great embarrassment and shame when yesterday’s “beggar” they disdained is unveiled and recognized as their king ... fully revealed in his true status for all to see. For obvious reasons, this word could not be used for Jesus' first coming, but is entirely appropriate for his second, when he comes “**with power and great glory**” (Matt. 24:30).

These three words, when combined, give us a vivid description of the Second Coming of our Lord: The same Jesus who ascended bodily to God’s right hand in heaven is himself

going to come back suddenly, in the full regalia of heaven's glory, to be with us visibly, bodily, tangibly, audibly, actually, physically. As if that doesn't get the pulse racing!

### WHY THE EMBARRASSING SILENCE ABOUT THIS DOCTRINE?

Given such frequent and unambiguous statements, why, pray tell, are we in the church not discussing it, looking forward to it, eagerly anticipating it, not consumed by this hope? A number of reasons contribute.

**The Delay:** Jesus is taking his time! So far, it's about 2,000 years distant from the first coming. Jesus told a number of parables about the master travelling away into a far country and how his servants must wait an indeterminate period of time until his return. Nevertheless, it is a matter of recorded history that when Jesus did not return within the first few generations the church began to lose faith in **the blessed hope** and they turned their hopes and vision elsewhere ... maintaining its own perpetuity.

### MARRIED TO ANOTHER MAN!

I heard a sad, sad story about a man who went off to fight in WW2. He was engaged to be married and as he kissed his girl goodbye and embarked on the ship for the front lines, his fiancée promised, "I'll be waiting for you, my love, no matter how long it takes. I'll be waiting for you." He yelled back from the gang plank, "I shall return for you, my beautiful, and then we will marry and be happy together ever afterwards."

Well, she waited months, which turned into a year. The letters from her beloved and brave man came — "I can't wait to see you, my beloved. Every day on these wretched battlefields is an eternity away from you, my love." She waited many more heart-aching months, and the letters from the front lines became less frequent. Two years' absence went by and their hearts grew ever fonder. Then, the letters stopped. Not a single letter more from the man of her dreams.

The dreaded knock on the door sent chills through her spine. That dreadful telegram from the homeland war department: "**We regret to inform you that Sergeant Robert James Miller has been reported MIA on the front line. Your country is forever in debt to the brave service of Officer Miller.**"

As time went on the grief-stricken young lady moved on and met another man, and they married and had a baby. Now, you know what I am going to say next, don't you? Right! **Miller** had been lost in action, *presumed* dead on the reports of his company. But he went underground behind enemy lines, supported by the resistance movement. Many, many months after the war, **Robert Miller** arrived back home and rushed off to find his beloved fiancée.

His heart was thumping out of his chest as he banged on the door of her new address. How he had dreamed every day of this homecoming. Oh, how he had ached for when he could hug her, kiss her, hold her in his arms — her heart next to his. As the door creaked open his eyes fell on the startled face of his beloved **Rachel** holding a babe in

her arms. She was wearing another man's ring. It did not take him long to realise that his beloved had a sad, sad look in her eyes. The baby in her arms was another man's. She was no longer his bride. Can you imagine? That true story was repeated a number of times after the war.

Just so, when Jesus delayed his return, his bride — the church on a corporate level — began to settle down and her hope in the sure return of her Lord began to dim. The church joined herself, married herself to the world. The church became obsessed with her own power and preservation and turned inward. Instead of looking for the Second Coming of her Lord, the church became preoccupied with gazing at its own navel. Pastors and bishops became self-serving, power-hungry..

In fact, the church compensated for Jesus' no-show by the novel belief that the Church itself was God's kingdom on earth. The vibrancy of **the blessed hope** was all but lost. The result was the growth of ecclesiasticism, priesthood and popery, ritualism and sacerdotalism. That's the first reason, and it has to do with Jesus' "tarrying" longer than initially believed. Waiting is always hard!

**Sinful Laxity** is another reason many believers no longer burn with anticipation of Christ's return.

Our text in **Titus** says we are to **renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, looking expectantly for the blessed hope (Tit. 2: 12)**. Nothing will throttle **the blessed hope** of Christ's Second Coming quicker than careless, loose, indulgent living.

It's hard sometimes to tell the difference between a so-called Christian and the standards you find in people of the world. Like the **Laodicean Church**, we have become lukewarm. Many are giving way to the cares of this world and its pastimes, passions and pleasures. Jesus warned the cares and worries of this life would choke the life of his word out of the believer — and certainly the desire for Christ's return will inevitably wax dim with such lukewarmness.

**Preacher's No Longer Believe** nor teach **the blessed hope** of the Second Coming. When I was a boy, we often heard sermons on prophecy, the end times, the second coming. Preachers would carry slides and charts with outlines of Bible prophecy. No more. A recent survey of ministers in the USA found that 9 out of 10 pastors don't believe Christ is coming back. You can be sure that, if *they* don't believe it, they won't preach it.

**The False Hope of Christians Going Straight to Heaven When We Die** is another reason. There is a false but very popular gospel that Jesus died to take us away to heaven. If I believe that when I die I will be immediately transported in spirit to be consciously enjoying heaven's delights, without the need for Christ to come back and call me out of the grave of my mortal sleep, then I can defer any hope of his second

coming, because at the end of the day, I am already alive in the spirit, not really dead, so I don't need Jesus to come back to raise the dead from their coffins.

But if we believe the New Testament hope that Jesus must come back to waken the sleeping dead to embodied immortality then we know the only way we ourselves will live forever in God's Kingdom, and the only way we will ever be reunited with our dead loved ones who are asleep in the dust of the earth is when the trumpet sounds, and King Jesus shouts, "All God's people awake! Stand up all you people of God and enter the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

**Multitudes of Conflicting Theories** about the Second Coming is another reason for people giving up **the blessed hope**. The current massive confusion over the various schools of end-time interpretations drains confidence --- Are you premillennial, post-millennial, amillennial? Are you pre-trib., mid-trib., post-tribulation? Hah, says the average Christian, if the "professionals" can't sort it out what hope have I got?

**Date-Setting:** And what about all the mistakes in date-setting? History is full of sad examples of "guesstimating" the actual date of Christ's return.

**Martin Luther** calculated it would be 1636, **John Wesley** believed 1874 (both were wise enough to choose a year well ahead of their having to live with their mistakes!) Founder of the Seventh Day Adventists, **William Miller**, chose 1844, and founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, **Charles Russell** chose 1914 (they both died soon after their failed predictions!).

There was another rash of date-settings around the forming of the State of Israel. It was popular fare, particularly amongst the evangelical churches, to believe that the generation which saw that nation born again would be alive when Christ came back ... 1988 was a popular candidate, being 40 years after Israel was reconstituted. Crying wolf too often has fostered a ho-hum nonchalance about the Second Coming of Christ.

But enough of this. I want to get to the good stuff. I want to outline my reasons why we should be looking for the blessed hope of the Second Coming. I want to specifically tell you why *I* want Jesus Christ to come back to earth.

### 1. I WANT TO SEE JESUS GET WHAT HE DESERVES!

Surely Jesus, the beloved Son of God, should have received the honour and the glory and the praise from the world the first time, but he didn't. **He came unto his own** [the Jewish Nation] **but his own** [people] **received him not (John 1: 11)**. Some of them said he was a crazed demon-possessed lunatic.

He was rejected by his own hometown when they drove him up to the brow of a cliff and intended to hurl him over **(Lk 4: 29)**.

He was plotted against, criticised, maligned and even at one point after the crowds deserted him, he wondered if his own disciples might turn from him, “**Will you also turn away?**” he wondered (John 6: 67).

He was rejected by his own family. They thought he had lost his mind, and his own brothers doubted him big time.

He was of course, ultimately deserted by his intimate disciples in his hour of need, but not before one of his bosom buddies had despicably betrayed him.

He was ridiculed by the “respectable” religious leaders. They couldn’t even give him a fair trial.

He was treated with disdain by the Roman authorities who were supposed to champion law and order.

They stripped him naked, and put a scarlet robe on him, and plaited a crown of thorns to jab onto his head.

They put a reed in his hand (a pretend sceptre) and knelt before him and mocked him, “**Hail, King of the Jews!**” (Matt. 27: 29).

They spat on him (have you ever had the indignity of somebody spitting on you in contempt?). Imagine the spittle of a cohort of soldiers dripping all over you!

They took that reed and kept striking him on the head.

They blindfolded him, and kept striking him and slapping him saying, “**Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it who struck you?**” (Matt. 26: 68).

They took him and nailed him naked to public disgrace on a cross.

And let’s not airbrush that scandal. In that culture Roman crucifixion was designed to degrade as well as to kill slowly. The cross was designed to demonstrate to their subjects just who was in charge. It was a fate reserved for the lowest of the low, for slaves, for rebels. It was an abhorrent, bloody and grotesque scene. Jesus died disgraced, abandoned, alone.

## **JESUS DIED CHILDLESS**

One of the great tragedies for a Jewish couple was to die childless. For a Jewish woman to be barren was considered a sign of God’s displeasure. For a Jewish man to be unable to father children and leave a heritage was believed to be a curse from God. To die without a family was particularly shameful and sad for a Jewish couple.

The Psalmist said, **Sons are a heritage from the LORD; children a reward from Him ... Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them ...**” (Ps. 127: 3-5).

Yes, for the godly Jew, a large family and material wealth were the signs of God's blessing. Now think of Jesus' last words on that cross:- **Psalm 22. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ( <sup>3</sup> )**

In the eyes of the Jewish nation, Jesus died childless, died with no blessed heritage from the LORD God. But note these verses in the prophetic psalm — and they surely buoyed Jesus' faith in God's promise that he would return with a huge, numberless family, as many as the sand on the seashore or as many as the stars in the night sky:-

**I will declare your name to my brethren; In the midst of the congregation I will praise you ... For He [God] has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him ... My praise shall be of you in the great congregation ... All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For the kingdom is the LORD'S, and He rules over the nations (Vs. 22,24-25, 27-28).**

Jesus knew he would receive the biggest family of all.

Jesus knew his Father would reward him with sons and daughters numberless.

Jesus knew God would set him as the King and Progenitor of all the redeemed from all the nations around the world.

Jesus knew the promise of God (from **Psalm 2: 8**) **Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for your possession!**

And God has honoured Jesus' loyalty, for the New Testament says that God has given Jesus children; **Here am I and the children whom God has given me (Heb. 2: 13)**. You see. Jesus finally is going to get his progeny, his promised inheritance. When Jesus comes back God is going to give him a multitude which no man can number, a multitude of sons and daughters for the kingdom of God, a multitude of joint-heirs to rule with him in one great big everlasting family. Oh what a day when Jesus enters his reward.

Yes. It's going to be different next time. Jesus' Second Coming is not going to be like the first time. You don't treat an ambassador from another country like that, yet alone the Son of the Most High God from heaven!

## **THE SHAME OF THE HALF-BEARDS AND NAKED BUTTS! (2 SAMUEL 10)**

Remember that story about the friendship King David had with Nahash the King of the Ammonites? The Bible says, **In the course of time, the king of the Ammonites died**. Out of genuine sorrow King David sent an official delegation of some of his best men in order to express his personal sympathy to Hanun the son of Nahash who was now the king of the Ammonites.

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<sup>3</sup> To quote the opening lines of a psalm was understood to mean you knew the whole psalm and were using a kind of shorthand for all the verses that followed. We can be sure that the whole Messianic **Psalm 22** was in Jesus' mind in those last ebbing moments, even though he could only muster his ebbing painful breaths to gasp out the first God-forsaken words.



But when David's men came to the land of the Ammonites, Hanun's counsellors said to the new king, "Do you think David is honouring you to express sympathy? Hasn't David sent them to you to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?" So Hanun seized David's ambassadors and he insulted them big time. He shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away in disgrace --- full of embarrassment and shame.

What indignity to treat David's delegation like that! When David heard about this he told the greatly humiliated men to hide in Jericho until their beards were full-grown, and of course, to cover their naked butts! This disgraceful act was enough to send King David on a mission of revenge against the Ammonites and their king Hanun.

How much more is the Almighty God and Father of Jesus going to vindicate His blessed Son!

Yes, I want Jesus to come back to get what he deserves! He was humiliated in history, and I want to see him vindicated in history. He was mocked by men, and I want to see him admired by the whole world. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief the first time, but oh, how I wish to see the beaming smile of unbridled joy on his face as he is universally recognised, honoured and worshipped as God's King and Lord Messiah!

2 Thessalonians 1: 9-10 says that when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed ..."

That's my first reason for looking for the blessed hope of the manifestation of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I want Jesus to receive the inheritance, the children, the recognition he deserves!

I want Jesus to have the family the adoration the world never dreamed he would have.

I want Jesus to have the government of this world placed on his worthy shoulder!

Oh, come Lord Jesus, come, and get your promised reward! You deserve every bit of the glory that is coming your way!