

Facts About the Second Coming of Christ

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

The second coming of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:27) is a prevailing theme of the New Testament. It is referenced eight times more often than the Lord's initial coming (Pardington, 354). It is alluded to more than 300 times in the New Testament (Thiessen, 442).

Because there is considerable error associated with the Lord's return, we must examine this theme—not only positively, but also in addressing several errors that have distorted biblical teaching.

Prophesied in Old Testament

Since "immortality," which is associated with the second coming, is illuminated most fully by the gospel of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10), one would not expect there to be an abundance of explicit information in the Old Testament related to this terminal event. There are, however, hints of the Lord's return nestled within the OT literature.

Job felt there would be a time of vindication for him by his "Redeemer" at some point after his flesh had disintegrated (19:25-27), though he had no precise understanding of that Redeemer from his ancient vantage point.

In a messianic discourse, David foretold of an ultimate retribution upon Jehovah's enemies (Psa. 2:9; 110:1).

Isaiah spoke of the time when every knee would bow and every tongue would swear allegiance to God (Is. 45:23; cf. Rom. 14:11).

Daniel prophesied of a future bodily resurrection (Dan. 12:2-3). These events are associated with the Savior's second coming.

New Testament Affirmation

As indicated above, the New Testament abounds with information regarding the second coming of Christ. Jesus himself affirmed it on numerous occasions (cf. Mt. 24:37, 39, 42, 44).

Shortly before his crucifixion, the Savior promised that after his death he would "come again" (cf. Lk. 19:15; Jn. 14:3). When the Lord ascended into heaven the angels proclaimed that he would "so come in like manner" as they watched him depart into heaven (Acts 1:11).

The entire fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians deals with the resurrection of the body, to occur at the time of Jesus' return (v. 23). The books of First and Second Thessalonians both deal significantly with the Christ's return (1 Thes. 4:13ff; 5:1ff; 2 Thes. 1:7ff; 2:1ff).

There is a special Greek term commonly used for the return of Christ. Parousia (24 times in the New Testament), signifying an "arrival" or "presence," is employed sixteen times for the second coming (cf. Mt. 24:37, 39; 1 Thes. 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:23; Jas. 5:7, etc.).

One scholar suggests that the *arrival* "motifs" treated in many of these texts "are derived from OT and Jewish salvation expectations, which anticipate an earthly personality such as the messianic king" (Radl, 3.44).

Let us now consider the issue of the second coming from both positive and negative vantage points.

Features of the Second Coming

There are explicit features of the second coming that identify the nature of this grand event. At the same time, these qualities eliminate various false ideas that have arisen within the community of "Christendom" over the past two millennia. Consider the following points.

Certainty of the Second Coming

The second coming is **certain** to occur. The very integrity of Christ is at stake in this matter. He declared: "I come again," undergirding that with, "if it were not so I would have told you" (Jn. 14:2).

Further, it is identified as a **definite** "day," e.g., "**the** day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thes. 5:2).

Time of Second Coming Not Revealed

The **specific time** of that event is not revealed. He will come at an unexpected time (Mt. 24:37ff), similar to the manner in which a thief stalks his victim (1 Thes. 5:2).

Not even Christ, during his personal ministry, knew when that day would occur (cf. Mk. 13:32). This was due to his self-limitation of certain knowledge while on earth.

Strange indeed are the claims of certain modern religionists who imagine they can calculate that which **the Lord could not!** Date setters have been notoriously wrong. When the skeptic Bertrand Russell charged Jesus with error, claiming Christ believed his "coming" would occur during the first century, he exposed his pathetic ignorance of biblical data (1967, 16).

Second Coming Will Be Literal

The Lord's coming will be **literal**. There are passages which mention "comings" of Christ that are **representative** (i.e., not literal), e.g., his "coming" on Pentecost with the arrival of his kingdom (Mt. 16:28), or via the dispatch of the Spirit to his apostles (Jn. 14:18), in the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:30), or in a disciplinary fashion (Rev. 2:5).

But Christ's second coming will be **personal**. Note the expression, "the Lord **himself**" (1 Thes. 4:16).

They teach falsely who claim that "no visible return of Christ to the earth is to be expected" (Clarke, 444), or that the "second coming" was merely the punitive action of Christ in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, as alleged by Max King and his preterist disciples (see Jackson, 31-56).

Christ's Return Will Be Visible

The Lord will come **visibly**, not as the theory of the invisible "rapture" maintains. This example of "freak exegesis" was popularized by Hal Lindsey in the book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (124-125).

The Lord's return will be a "revelation" (2 Thes. 1:7), indeed a "manifestation" (1 Jn. 2:28), involving an "appearance" (1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:29).

Too, he will come as the "Son of man" (Mt. 16:27), in his glorified body (Phil. 3:21).

Jesus Return Will Be Final

The second coming will be **terminal**. Paul depicts the "coming" of Christ as being "the end." Death will have been destroyed, and the Lord's enemies will have been abolished (1 Cor. 15:23-24).

Clearly then, since the dead have not yet been raised, the second coming obviously did not occur in A.D. 70, as the radical preterists allege.

Additionally, when false teachers attempted to undermine the Christian cause by challenging the Lord's "promise of his coming," Peter refuted their charge by contending that Christ's coming would be accompanied by the demolition of the entire universe (2 Pet. 3:4, 10). Thus, that coming has not occurred, and there will be no place for a 1,000 year earthly reign of Christ following that coming, as alleged by premillennialists.

Events Associated With the Second Coming

Though we touched slightly upon the following issues in points discussed previously, we now will consider them more systematically.

The Resurrection

The general **resurrection of the dead** is connected with the return of Christ.

The ancient Sadducees denied the resurrection (Mt. 22:23; Acts 23:6-8), as do modern skeptics. But the doctrine of the bodily resurrection is affirmed abundantly in the New Testament (see Jn. 5:28-29; 6:39-40; Mk. 12:18-27; Acts 17:32; 24:15; 26:8; Rom. 8:23; 1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:1-2; Phil. 3:21).

The faithful who are living at the time of Christ's coming will be transformed into his likeness (1 Cor. 15:51; Phil. 3:21).

Judgment

The **day of judgment** is likewise connected with the second coming (Mt. 16:27; 25:31-46). Note:

- Christ will be the judge (Jn. 5:22, 27; 2 Cor. 5:10).
- All human beings who ever have lived will be judged (Rom. 14:10; Acts 17:31).
- Each person will be judged by the **law of God** under which he lived. The ancient Gentiles will be judged by the law of the conscience (Rom. 2:12-15). The Jews will be judged upon the basis of Moses' law (Rom. 2:12). Those of the Christian age will be judged according to the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; Rom. 2:16).
- Human culpability will be measured by one's ability, together with his pattern of **obedience or disobedience** (Mt. 7:21-33; Heb. 5:9).
- The judgment will be **irrevocable**. Christ declared there are but two destinies—eternal punishment, or eternal life ("life" = communion with God). There is no post-judgment redemption, nor is there an eventual annihilation for the wicked.
- The purpose of Christ's judgment will not be to determine one's destiny; that is fixed at the moment of one's death (Lk. 16:22-23). The objective will be to both **reveal** and **vindicate** "the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5), which will be acknowledged universally (Rom. 14:11).

Conclusion

The Second Coming of the Lord will be the terminal event of earth's history. Every rational individual should prepare of this phenomenal occasion—one of either thrilling reward, or indescribable terror, depending upon one's spiritual status.

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Scripture References

Hebrews 9:27; 2 Timothy 1:10; Psalm 2:9, 110:1; Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 24:37, 39, 42, 44; Luke 19:15; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Matthew 24:37, 39; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Corinthians 15:23; James 5:7; John 14:2; 1 Corinthians 1:8, 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Matthew 24:37; Mark 13:32; Matthew 16:28; John 14:18; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 John 2:28; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 16:27; Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:23-24; 2 Peter 3:4, 10; Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:6-8; John 5:28-29, 6:39-40; Mark 12:18-27; Acts 17:32, 24:15, 26:8; Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:51; Matthew 16:27, 25:31-46; John 5:22, 27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:12-15; Romans 2:12; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Romans 2:16; Matthew 7:21-29; Hebrews 5:9; Luke 16:22-23; Romans 2:5

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