

THE SECOND COMING

“the blessed hope”

Key question

What can we know about Christ’s second coming?

Key text

Acts 1:11

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This 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.”

A fundamental of the faith

The second coming of Christ

The basis of the believer’s hope and the culmination of God’s plan is connected with Christ’s second coming.

Introduction

1. The fascination with knowing the future is universal.
2. The Hebrew-Christian faith expresses its hope in terms of the Coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God.
3. This is a prominent theme in Scripture.
 - a. To every one mention of the first coming the second coming is mentioned eight times.
 - b. Whole books (I & II Thess.) and chapters (Matt.24, Mk.13, Lk.21) are devoted to it.
4. Christians are “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,” (**II Pet.3:12**).
5. The coming of our Lord is at the heart of our worship experience. **I Cor.11:23-26**

“23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ 25 In the same way {He took} the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink {it,} in remembrance of Me. 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death **until He comes.**”

6. Key texts.

- a. **John 14:1-3** “1 Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 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.**”
- b. **Acts 1:6-11** “6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ 7 He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’ 9 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.** 10 **And as they were gazing intently into the sky** while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; 11 and they also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This 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.**”
- c. **Matt.24,25, I Cor.15, I Thess.4,5, II Pet.3, Revelation 4-22.**

A. **There are a number of points of tension in trying to interpret prophetic Scriptures.**

1. **Do we seek to harmonize the O.T. and the N.T. or do we take a more historical / cultural view of the text?**
 - a. Covenant theology emphasizes the unity of purpose between the O.T. & N.T.
 - b. Dispensationalists see two different programs (Israel and the Church) at work in the Bible.
2. **Do we respect the progressive nature of revelation or do we treat the Bible like a jigsaw puzzle?**
 - a. We must respect the N.T. in its interpretation of the O.T.
 - b. The spiritual application of material promises seems to be present in the N.T.
3. **Do we take a humble tentative approach to our conclusions or are we dogmatic?**
 - a. The example of Christ’s first advent suggests that we should not be too dogmatic in that many of the prophecies were not understood until after the events and then only with apostolic explanation.
 - b. Disagreement between Spiritual leaders suggest that there may not be a clear picture of all future events.
4. **Are we to understand prophetic texts as figurative or literal in their fulfillment?**
 - a. Some of the O.T. prophecies were literally fulfilled.
 - b. Many of the O.T. prophecies seem to have had a figurative fulfillment.
5. **Do prophetic texts have a single purpose or multiple applications?**
We know that most prophetic texts had a near (O.T. cultural) and distant (Messianic age) fulfillment.

B. **Key terms used with respect to Christ’s Second Coming.**

1. “Parousia” – translated as “presence”, “coming” or “arrival.” I Thess.3:13; 4:15
2. “Apokalypse” – translated as “to reveal.” I Cor. 1:7; II Thess.1:6-7; I Pet.4:13

3. "Epiphany" – translated as "to appear." I Tim.6:14; II Tim.4:8; Titus 2:13-14

C. **Erroneous views of the Second coming of Christ**

1. It is to be equated with the believer's death.
2. It is the coming of the Holy Spirit.
3. It is the destruction of Jerusalem.

D. **The Kingdom of God.**

1. **The Kingdom of God and eternal life.**

- a. The Kingdom of God is an expression found most often in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) where the expression "eternal life" is less common.
 1. It is found in John only in 3:3,5. John seems to use "eternal life" to refer to the same idea.
 2. In Matt.19:16-29 we find the kingdom (vs.24) equated with salvation (vs.25) and eternal life (vs.16, 29). Mark 9:43,47 provide a similar parallel.
- b. Other references to the future aspect of the Kingdom
 - Acts 14:22: "It is through much tribulation that we must *enter the Kingdom of God*" (Note the common New Testament theme of suffering *now*, and inheritance of the Kingdom or Reign *then*).
 - James 2:5: We are now "heirs of the Kingdom of God which God has promised to them that love Him" (as often elsewhere in the epistles, heirs *now*, inheritors *then*).
 - II Peter 1:11: By developing Christian qualities of character now, "there *shall be* supplied to you entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."
 - Rev.11:15: "The kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our God..." (a vision of the *future* transfer of power to Jesus at His Second Coming).
 - I Cor.15:50: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, i.e., a transformation of our present physical bodies into spiritual bodies is required for the future inheritance of the Kingdom of God. This is conclusive for the argument that the Kingdom is primarily future in Paul's thinking. It is impossible for us to inherit the Kingdom at present. This can only happen at the future resurrection.

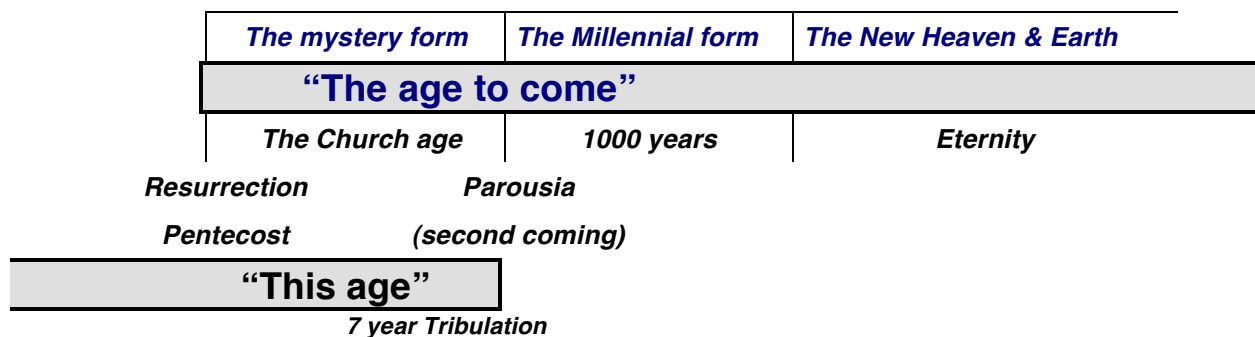
2. **The Kingdom is a puzzle.**

- a. It is a present reality - Rom.14:17; Matt.12:28; yet it is to follow Christ's second coming - Matt.25:34; I Cor.15:50.
- b. It is physical - Matt.13:41,43; Rev.11:15; yet it is spiritual - Lk.17:20-21.
- c. It is something we have now entered - Matt.21:31; Col.1:13; Lk.16:16; yet it is something we will enter at Christ's return - Matt.8:11; II Pet.1:11.
- d. It is at work in the world today - Matt.13; yet it is not of this world - Jn.18:36.
- e. It is God's reign - Ps.145:11; yet it is God's realm - Lk.16:16.

3. **A solution.**

- a. **Two ages are mentioned** ("this age" and "the age to come") Matt.12:32; Eph.1:21; Mk.10:29-30.

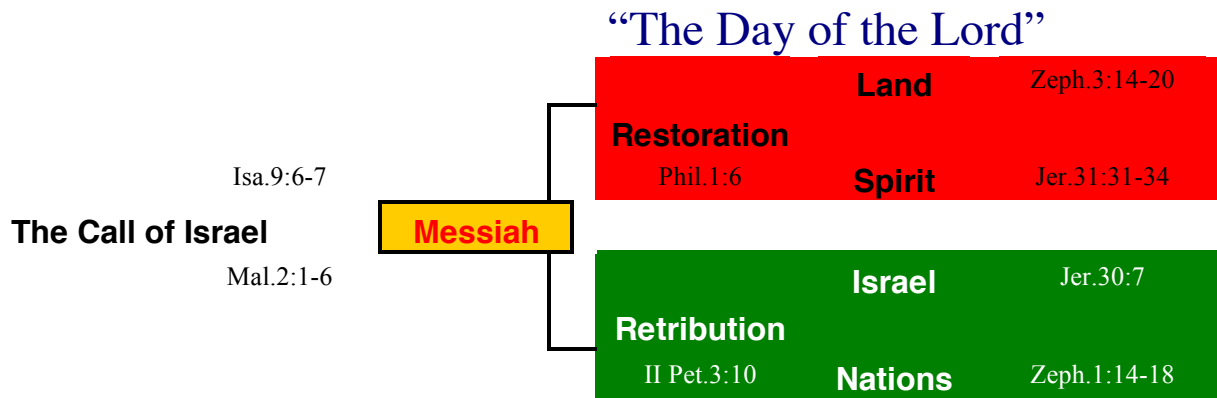
- b. **These ages are separated by:**
 1. The second coming of Christ - Matt.24:3. Christ's second coming is preceded by a period of "great tribulation" - Matt.24:15-28.
 2. The resurrection from the dead - Lk.20:34-36.
- c. **"This age" is:**
 1. Characterized by evil from which we must be delivered - Gal.1:4; Eph.2:1-2; Matt.13:22.
 2. The domain of Satan, "the god of this age." II Cor.4:3-4.
- d. **"The age to come" is:**
 1. Characterized by eternal life - Matt.19:16-24.
 2. Free from sin - Matt.13:49-50.
 3. To follow the resurrection - I Cor.15:50.
- e. **Two stages to the transition from "this age" to "the age to come."**
 1. First resurrection - Rev.20:4-5.
 2. Second resurrection - Rev.20:12-13.
- f. **The first resurrection of Rev.20:4-5 has two parts (I Cor.15:22-26).**
 1. Christ's resurrection - "first fruits" - I Cor.15:23a.
 2. Christians at Christ's second coming - I Cor.15:23b.
- g. **The three forms of the Kingdom in relation to the two ages.**



E. The Day of the Lord

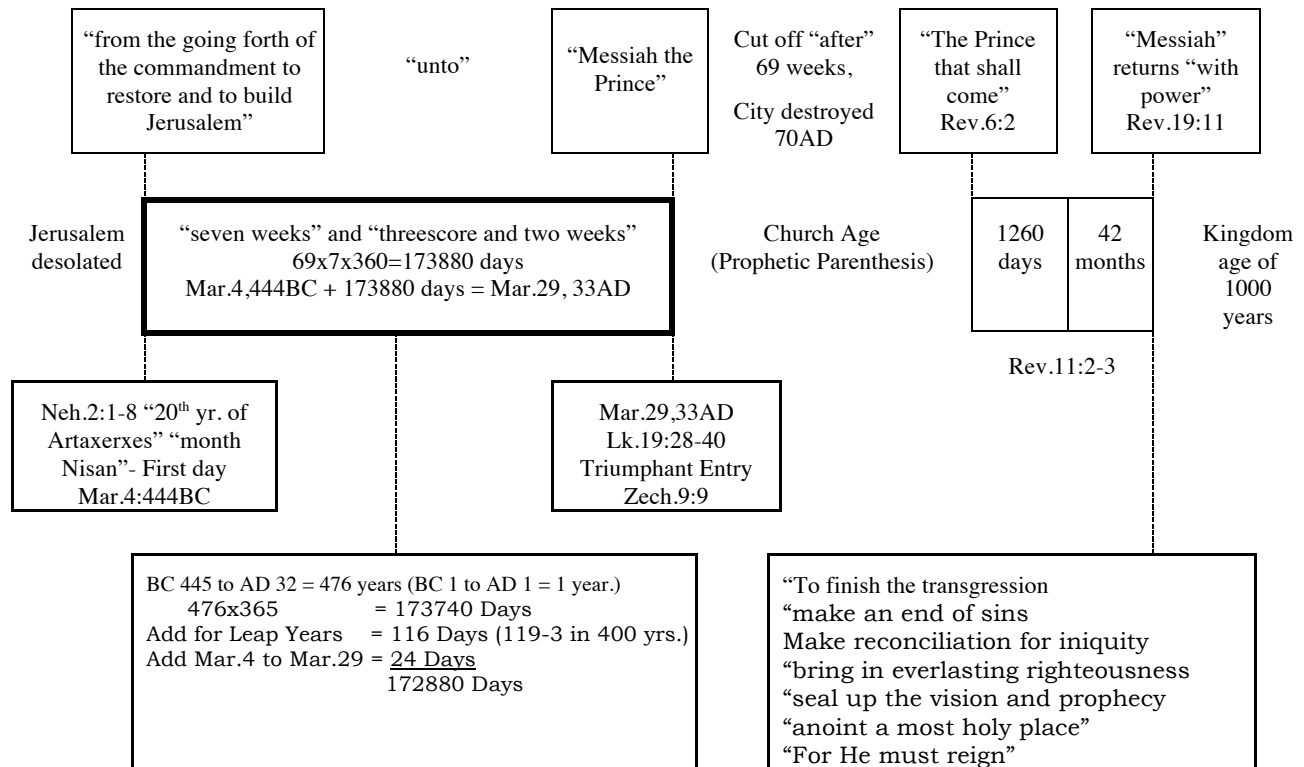
1. The OT prophets speak most often of the "Day of the Lord" – Isa.2:2-21, 13:6-13; Joel 1:4-15; 2:10-11, 28-29; 3:11-21; Amos 7:4; 8:8-9; 9:5-15; Obadiah 15; Hosea 2:18-23; 3:5; Micah 4:6-8; Zeph.1:2-18; 2:3-15; 3:9-20.
2. The NT mentions it in Rom.2:5; I Cor.1:8; 5:5; II Cor.1:14; Phil.1:6,10; 2:16; I Thess.5:2; II Thess.2:2; II Pet.3:7-12; Rev.16:14.
3. The "Day of the Lord" is the intervention of God in human history to:
 - a. Judge evil or deliver God's promised of wrath. This is the most common association.
 - b. Reward good or deliver God's promised blessings.
4. The "Day of the Lord" could refer to the intervention of God in:
 - a. The past history of Israel. Note: OT prophets often commingled the near and end time significance of the "day of the Lord."

b. The culmination of history.



F. A chronology of the events of the end times

1. **The “70 weeks” of Daniel provide a framework for prophetic events (in the mind of many). Daniel 2,7,9275147**



2. **Jesus’ teaching**

- a. **Jn.14:1-3** His coming will be to receive His own.
- b. **Matt.24** (Mk.13, Lk.21) “as in the days of Noah”
 - 1. Preceded by: apostasy, tribulation, world evangelization, signs in heavens.
 - 2. Characterized by flashing light (power, glory). not knowledge of day or hour, trumpet will call elect, one taken and one left.

3. **Paul’s teaching**

- a. **I Cor.15:22-23, 51-52** Characterized by: last trump, resurrection of dead.

b. I Thess.4:13-5:11

1. Preceded by: words of peace and safety, destruction.
2. Characterized by: voice of angel, trump of God, descent from heaven with a shout, like a thief, resurrection of dead.

c. II Thess.2:1-10

1. Preceded by: apostasy, man of sin revealed.
2. Characterized by: our gathering to Him.

d. Paul believed that the coming was to be soon - Rom.8:19-25, I Cor.1:7, Phil.4:5, Titus 2:13.

4. Peter's teaching

II Pet.3:8-14 Characterized by: like a thief in the night, heaven and earth destroyed, new heaven and earth created.

5. John's teaching

Revelation

1. Preceded by: tribulation (ch.5-18).
2. Characterized by: second coming (ch.19-20).

6. Chronological chart of Matt.24-25 compared to the rest of the New Testament.

<i>Beginning of birth pangs</i>	<i>Great Tribulation</i>	<i>Coming of Christ</i>	<i>Parables</i>	<i>Final Judgment</i>
<p>24:4-14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False Christs, Wars & rumors of wars • Famine & earthquake • Believers hated • Conflict within the church • False prophets • Many will be misled • Lawlessness • Love will grow cold • World evangelism <p>I Thess.5:1-11 Rev.6-7 SEALS (Antichrist)</p>	<p>24:15-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desecration • Tribulation • False signs <p>II Thess.2:1-12 Rev.8-18 TRUMPETS (wrath on all) BOWLS (wrath on nations)</p>	<p>24:29-31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmic signs • Christ is seen • Trumpet sounds • Elect gathered <p>I Thess.4:13-18 Rev.19 II Pet.3:3-13</p>	<p>24:32-25:42</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fig Tree • Servants • Virgins • Talents 	<p>25:31-46</p> <p>II Pet.3:3-13</p>

G. Interpretations of Revelation

	Chapters 1-3	Chapters 4-19	Chapters 20-22
Preterist	Historic churches	Symbolic of contemporary conditions	Symbolic of heaven and victory
Idealist	Historic churches	Symbolic of conflict of good and evil	Victory of good

Historicist	Historic churches	Symbolic of events of history: fall of Rome, Mohammedanism, papacy, Reformation	Final judgment, millennium (?), eternal state
Futurist	Historic churches and / or seven stages of church history	Future tribulation; concentrated judgments on apostate church and on antichrist; coming of Christ	Millennial kingdom; judgment of wicked dead; eternal state

	Chapters 1-3	Chapters 4-19	Chapters 20-22
Postmillennial	Historic churches	General historicist	Victory of Christianity over the world
Amillennial	Historic churches	General historicist	Coming of Christ; judgment; eternal state
Premillennial	Historic churches as representative of historical stages	General futurist	Literal millennial reign; judgment of great white throne; New Jerusalem
Apocalyptic	Historic churches	General preterist	Symbolic of heaven and victory

H. **The Antichrist.**

1. Over the years there have been several candidates – Virtually every pope, King George (during the American revolution), Lincoln and Lee (during the civil war), JFK, FDR, Elvis, Henry Kissinger, Gorbachev, Moshe Dayan, Anwar el-Sadat, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, Saddam Hussein,
2. The term only appears in the writings of John - I Jn.2:18-25, 4:3, II Jn.7
3. Paul uses the term “lawless one” in II Thess.2:3-12.
4. Other texts that are sometimes used to reference the antichrist are – Dan.7-9, Matt.24.

I. **Practical considerations of the second coming of Christ.**

1. History is linear - it is progressing to a planned end.
2. It will be the time of the resurrection of the dead. We cannot expect our union with Christ to be complete until then.
3. It will be the time of the fullness of His Kingdom. We cannot expect the Kingdom’s fullness until Christ comes.
4. It will be the time of the fulfillment of God’s promise to the nation Israel. Israel does not have special rights over the land until then.
5. It will be the time of judgment. We are to be watchful.

Questions that you should be able to answer.

1. Specific facts you should know.

- a. What are the events that precede Christ's second coming?
- b. What are the key texts that speak of the second coming of Christ?

2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.

- a. What does the Scripture say about the notion that Christ could return at any time?
- b. How do theological systems effect interpretations of Christ's second coming?

3. Questions you should wrestle with.

- a. What are the dangers of being too dogmatic about the order of events surrounding the second coming of Christ?