

In our “This is the End” series (sub-series of our yearlong Major Topic of the Bible) we are attempting to answer the Big 3 “Whens” of the end times: (1) When Will Jesus Return? (2) When Will the Rapture Occur? And (3) When is the Great Tribulation? Last week, we surveyed the “8 Signs of Jesus Return” in the Olivet Discourse and concluded, with sublime confidence, that Jesus will return on the exact day his Father tells him so. Not one day before, nor one day after. Theologian William Lane Craig summarizes the nature of Jesus’ return as:

*A single, visible, decisive event that will bring about the end of human history, the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment of humanity.*

Everything about the “end times” revolves around Jesus’ return. Like a runaway train, human history is speeding, ever more quickly towards this “Stop-of Stops.” As we saw last week, we prepare for this “Blessed Hope” by practicing the 3Bs: Be Alert, Be on Guard, and Be Watchful. Before we look at the “When of the Rapture” next week, we need to take a pause and explain the “Why of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming?” I mean, “What’s so horrible that Jesus got to come back and blow it all up?” Or, if you have recently studied your cosmic eschatology, “Why can’t things go on indefinitely until the universe dies of a frozen heat death?” There are four major biblical reasons why Christ will return.

### **Purpose I: To Finish Redemption**

Jesus is coming again to finish the redemption he started on the Cross. Listen to portions of 1 Corinthians 15. Beginning in v22 Paul writes,

*22 For as in Adam all die (original sin), so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the first (to be resurrected); then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

Pretty awesome stuff here, but there’s more in v54-57:

*54 Then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” 55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*

*56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

When Jesus returns, he will complete our redemption by bringing about the final “victory” over humanity’s triumvirate of mortal despots, i.e., sin, death, and the devil. When he dismantles these, Jesus will deliver his Kingdom to his Father and the Father, in turn, will give it us to us (Luke12:32). Redemption then, is far more than getting saved now and going to heaven later. It’s the final overthrow of all forces which are hostile to God, his people, and his creation. And, to celebrate even more, this redemption even includes the “our bodies” (Romans 8:23). This phenomenon leads us into the second purpose of Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

### **Purpose II: To Resurrect the Dead**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose of Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is to resurrect the dead; all the dead of human history. This event is called the “General Resurrection.” The souls of those who die before the Christ’s Return go immediately into an intermediate state which is either in Heaven or Hades. They remain there until

they are reunited with their physical bodies in the final resurrection. Listen to Paul again in I Corinthians 15:51-54:

*51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep (stay dead), but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

Jesus himself, also spoke the sure eventuality of the general resurrection in John 5:25-29:

*25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. 28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

Jesus speaks to what will happen to both the righteous and unrighteous dead. Each person will be brought forth from the grave. For what purpose? The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming answers this question.

### **Purpose III: To Judge All**

Jesus is coming again to judge all people. He stated this intention clearly in Matthew 16:27:

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels,  
and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Paul alludes to this judgement in 1 Corinthians 4:3-5. In defending his apostolic calling he explains to the Corinthians:

*3 I don't care if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of people's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.*

Here, Paul warns against making snap judgements which none of us do, right? (lol). Paul personalizes this ethic by not judging himself. Why? Because ultimate judgement belongs exclusively to God. To be clear, God will issue two types of judgments on humanity: (1) Evaluation and (2) Condemnation.

The sins of Christ followers have been judged and forgiven through Christ's work on the Cross. Thus, we will not be condemned but evaluated on how we deployed our Time, Talent, and Treasure for the purposes of God on earth.

On the other hand, those who reject Christ's gracious entreaties to enter a saving relationship with him, will have to pay for their own sins (which they are unable to do). This is the condemnation which Jesus referred to in places like John 3:18, 36:

*18 Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

*36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

These passages should "jet fuel" our passion for our mission, "To Get and Make Disciples that Transform the World." However, the reality of end-time judgement leads me to recall a poignant saying:

*When you were born, you cried, and the world rejoiced.  
Live your life in such a way that when you die the world cries, and you rejoice.*

We will rejoice, and not cry, at the Judgement if we have fully dedicated our lives to Christ along with everything he has given us!

### **Conclusion**

The 4<sup>th</sup> purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is so intricately woven into our "When of the Rapture" question that we will cover it next week. But for now, let us leave off with a transformative thought:

**Live in the reality of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming Every Day.**

Wise people see the future and allow it to influence their present attitudes and actions. If we truly believe that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is only a matter of time, we will do likewise.

Let us pray.