



What Will Happen When Jesus Christ Returns?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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What will happen when Jesus Christ returns? The Scriptures promise that He is coming – and that He is coming at a time that is unknown to us (see Matthew 24:36-25:13). Therefore, we need to gain an accurate understanding of the things that will transpire at that time so that we can be prepared for them. Let's consider what the Bible says will take place whenever Jesus Christ returns.

Some Things That Will Happen

In this study, we will focus briefly on 11 things the Scriptures definitively say *will* happen whenever Jesus Christ returns. Then, later in the lesson, we will focus on a few things we can definitively conclude will *not* happen whenever Jesus Christ returns. Certainly, the only way we can know about what will transpire when Jesus returns is through what the Bible teaches us.

(1) Jesus will come in the clouds. When Jesus ascended into Heaven, Acts 1:9 says that “a cloud received Him” out of the sight of those who were watching. Then, verse 11 identifies that Jesus will come in the same manner as these individuals saw Him go into Heaven. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says that those Christians who are living when Jesus returns will be “caught up together” with those who were dead in Christ “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

(2) The Lord will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The return of Jesus Christ will be an occasion everyone (both living and dead) will know about and will take part in. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

(3) The dead will be raised. Death is likened to “sleep” (see Acts 7:60). The Scriptures demonstrate that the Hadean realm is the temporary waiting place for those who have experienced physical death. The reason for both is because there will be a resurrection from the dead everyone will take part in. Jesus promises such in John 5:28-29. He says, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour

is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

(4) The dead in Christ will rise first. Certainly both those who have done good and those who have done evil will take part in this resurrection from the dead. However, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 provides some additional information concerning those who have died “in Jesus.” The passage says that “God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (vs. 14). Then, in verses 15-16, He says that those who are alive and remain upon the earth whenever Jesus Christ returns will not “precede those who are asleep.” Instead, Paul says that the “dead in Christ will rise first.”

(5) The living will meet the Lord in the air. I do not know how the resurrection of the dead will take place. I do not know where Hades is and where they will come from when Jesus returns. But, I do know that the Bible says those who are living will be “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). And, for those who are Christians, “we will always be with the Lord.”

(6) The earth will be destroyed. As Jesus returns and gathers all people (both the living and the dead), what will become of this earth we live on? 2 Peter 3:10-14 gives the answer. Verse 10 says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Note that some Greek manuscripts contain a different ending to verse 10 that say the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Both are true. As we will see in a moment, everything that mankind has done while living on earth will be judged. And, 2 Peter 3 goes on to further state that this world will be destroyed by fire. Verse 12 says that “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.” Nothing that exists on this earth will remain (also see verse 7)!

(7) The resurrection and transformation into our spiritual bodies will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. When Paul was writing to the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 15:50-54), he told them that they would “all be changed” because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” He said that this would happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” He said that “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” saying that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Then, he goes on to picture this tremendous moment of victory for those who are Christians (Note that this resurrection is a moment of great defeat for the one who is not a Christian). Matthew 25:1-13 speaks of those who were prepared for His coming as going in with Him to the “wedding” while those who were not prepared were shut out.

(8) Judgment will take place. The Scriptures speak clearly about the promise for a final Judgment in which Jesus Christ will Judge the world (see Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). This will take place whenever Jesus Christ returns.

Matthew 25:14-30 records a parable demonstrating that Jesus Christ will return to reward/punish individuals for how they have conducted their lives while He has been gone. Then, Matthew 25:31-46 goes on to describe this great Judgment scene and identifies when it will take place. Specifically notice that verses 31-33 say that when “the Son of Man comes in His glory...He will sit on the throne of His glory” and He will separate the people from one another as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

(9) Vengeance will be taken upon those who are disobedient and eternal rest will be given to those who are faithful to Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 makes it very clear that the things which will be experienced by individuals on this Day of Christ’s return will differ depending upon whether they were faithful and obedient to Jesus Christ during their lives or not. Those who have been faithful to Jesus Christ will be given rest “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.” However, at this same time, vengeance will be taken on “those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.” These individuals will “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

(10) Death and Hades will be destroyed. Neither death nor Hades are permanent. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says that the “last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” Then, whenever Jesus comes (from the standpoint of those who have lived faithful to Him), Paul says that “Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)! Jesus Christ provides the victory over these for those who faithfully serve and obey Him (1 Corinthians 15:56-58)! Also, see Revelation 20:13-14 concerning how Death and Hades are pictured as being cast into the same lake that burns with fire and brimstone all of God’s enemies are cast into. This is a great scene of victory for God over this fierce enemy of man!

(11) The Kingdom will be turned back to God. Today, Jesus Christ reigns as King over His Kingdom (the church). However, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 indicates that He will deliver His Kingdom to God (the Father) after all of the enemies have been defeated (the last of which will be death). Therefore, this too will transpire after Jesus Christ returns and the enemies of God are defeated!

Now, before moving on, I want to offer just a few concluding thoughts about these things which are promised to transpire when Jesus Christ returns. (1) This will not be a secret thing. Everyone will know that Jesus has come. (2) Everyone will be involved – both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished. (3) There will no longer be any additional opportunity to make changes to your life. (4) Jesus Christ will not set foot on this earth. Instead, He will come in the cloud and all will meet Him for Judgment. (5) This earth will be destroyed and nothing on it will remain.

Some Things That Will Not Happen

While we may not have every answer to every question we have concerning the return of Jesus Christ, God has given us sufficient information to reach the definitive conclusions we have been considering. In addition, we have enough information to identify some things that will not happen. Certainly, there are many things that are claimed regarding the return of Jesus Christ that we can know to be absolutely false.

(1) Jesus will not set foot on this earth again. There are some who claim that Jesus will establish His kingdom when He returns and reign over this kingdom for 1,000 years from Jerusalem. However, not only does the Bible teach that Jesus' kingdom has already been established (compare Luke 9:27 and Colossians 1:13), but the Scriptures do not teach that Jesus will set foot on this earth again. Instead, as we have seen, whenever Jesus returns, He will be in the clouds – and the righteous will be called to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

(2) The earth will not be rejuvenated. Some claim that this earth will be rejuvenated to be a paradise (claiming that it will be restored back to the original condition God created in Genesis 1-2). However, rather than teaching that the earth will be rejuvenated for the righteous to live on, we have seen that the Scriptures teach this world will be destroyed – and no one will be left to live on earth (see 2 Peter 3:1-14).

(3) The righteous will not be “raptured.” Some believe that the “rapture” will take place prior to Jesus' return. They believe that all of the righteous will be removed from this earth. So, if two people are driving in a car together and the rapture happens (and one of those two people are part of Christ's church), one of them will be taken suddenly and the other will be left behind. However, this is based on perversions of Scripture and man's own suppositions. We have seen that all will take part in the resurrection and that this earth will be destroyed whenever Jesus Christ returns.

(4) A period of tribulation and Armageddon will not take place. Some believe that there will be a period of tribulation and a great battle between Christ's army and Satan's army (known as the Battle of Armageddon) prior to the end of the world. Much of this belief comes from a misinterpretation of the symbolism in the book of Revelation. Many people interpret the signs and symbols used throughout the book of Revelation literally and interpret the book in such a way so as to apply to events still in the future. However, this method of interpreting the book of Revelation is full of error and causes the Bible to contradict itself. For instance, the passages we have seen throughout this lesson demonstrate that the Day of Judgment will come at the same time for everyone (both the righteous and the wicked) and that this world will be destroyed when Jesus comes. There is no time or opportunity for a period of tribulation or a physical battle called “Armageddon” on earth.

There are certainly many different false ideas man has invented concerning the return of Jesus Christ. However, all of these fail to diligently and accurately interpret the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). Instead, these views cause Scriptures to contradict each other and result from

misapplying passages. We have seen the plain teaching of Scripture concerning the return of Jesus Christ – and we must simply hold fast to it!

Conclusion

Now that we have considered the Bible's teaching about the return of Jesus Christ, you need to seriously consider whether or not you are ready for this great Day. When He comes, all opportunity to change will be gone. You must take advantage of the opportunities you have *today* to make preparations for Jesus' return!

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