

HE IS COMING
Acts 1:9-11

Intro: This weekend we are centering our attention around three great events which have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) The death of Christ -- expounded with such blessing on Friday night by Dr. Mitchell.
- 2) This morning -- the resurrection of Christ.
- 3) Tonight -- the coming of Christ.

The first two of these are past; one is yet to come.

All three were spoken of by the Lord in His ministry here on earth. The fact that two have been fulfilled as He prophesied provides us with encouragement that the third will be fulfilled also -- even though we have had a period of almost 2,000 years between our Lord's resurrection and His coming.

From our study of the New Testament we know that the coming of the Lord will be in two phases, or stages:

- 1) He is coming first for the Church. He will not come to the earth for the Church, but will come in the air and the Church will be raptured.
- 2) Then, after the Great Tribulation, the Lord will come to the earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. At this time He will reign for a thousand years. This is why we call it the Millennial Reign of Christ.

Tonight we are thinking about the first of these two events -- Christ coming for the Church.

From these verses and the context plus from two others passages I want to point out some simple lessons tonight, basic lessons, which have to do with the coming of the Lord.

I. In the first place, we are to KNOW IT.

This was not the first time that the disciples had heard this. It may have been the first time that they really paid attention to it, but on several occasions the Lord had spoken of His return. Once, in particular, had been very specific: John 14:2, 3.

This time it is an angel that tells them. They are called "two men in white apparel," but the implication seems clear that they are angels.

But the only conclusion that we can come to from these passages is that this is a truth every child of God is expected TO KNOW!

You have heard me say how much I am enjoying the writings of the Puritans. But there is one great lack: They had very little to say about the coming of the Lord.

Even in our day you can usually get a crowd if you speak about the coming of the Lord, but many times people are interested only in what information you can give them about the timing, or about the events which lead up to it. Note how the Lord handled the question in verse 7.

What is really important is that we know that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, and that is where we have to start. It may take something special (as it did here) to get it into your heart, but the Lord will not be satisfied until that event for the future holds a place along with these two other great events of the past.

II. In the second place, we must BELIEVE IT.

There are at least three ways we can respond to truth that we learn from the Bible:

- 1) We can dispute about it until we come to the place where we reject it, or
- 2) Until we become simply indifferent to it.
- 3) Or, we can believe it.

And remember that believing something in Scripture influences everything about us. It will have a profound effect upon our lives.

This leads to our third point. If we really believe it,

III. We must LOOK FOR IT.

Or, should we say, we must be looking for Him!

Many people have misinterpreted what the angel said to the disciples when he asked them the question, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" He was not rebuking them for looking for the Lord. Paul in Titus 2:13 tells us that that is exactly what we are supposed to do: "Looking for that blessed hope and . . ." He ^{was} rebuking them for standing there. We will see why in a moment.

What kind of a question do you suppose the angels are asking today? Do you suppose any of them ever say,

"Say Michael, (or Gabriel) have you seen anybody gazing up into heaven today?"

And the answer probably comes back,

"No, I haven't seen anybody looking this way for a long time. Oh, occasionally when the Lord calls somebody home they look up, or when they get into trouble they look up, but most of God's children are too busy, too

busy with things on earth to think about heaven, or to even look to see if the Lord might be coming."

Don't you suppose that this is confusing even to angels -- especially when we say that we BELIEVE in the coming of the Lord?

Illus.: Back in 1942 I met a young lady and fell in love with her -- and still am in love.

As school ended, she went to her home and I stayed at school although we were to join several hundred other students in going to a camp in North Carolina in just about 2 or three weeks.

Those were the longest weeks I think I ever lived.

It seemed like they would never end.

I put her on a train, and went back to my room -- lonely feeling like the bottom had dropped out of my world.

As I walked into my room, I saw something that just about finished me off. She had given her picture to one of my friends and asked him to put it on my desk. I cannot describe what went over me because I really do not know -- weak knees,

fast heartbeat,

blurred vision,

everything started to go wrong.

What was wrong? I was in love. If I had had any doubts before, I had none then (and I don't remember having any before). It made me more anxious to be back with her. I was counting the days. That was what I was living for. About 7 months later I married her.

All of the time we were apart, I had that picture close by. I wrote letters, and she did too. Today I still have that picture and it is not for sale at any price, but I don't have it out anymore -- for one reason: I have the lady -- and she is much better than the picture.

Is there a parallel with the Lord? If you really love Him and if you really believe that He is coming again, can it be possible that you will never look for Him -- or only look occasionally?

This leads me to my fourth point:

IV. We must PREPARE FOR IT.

Now this includes more than one thing, but the one that I want you to see tonight is the one that is here.

The Lord wants us to keep looking, but He does not want us

to keep standing. He wants us to get busy. Busy doing what?

Acts 1:8 gives us our answer.

There is a job to be done -- a job which has to be done over every generation! People need to hear about the Lord Jesus!

Many have not heard at all -- right here in Portland. Many have heard, but they have heard the wrong things. Even many who are telling about Him manifest that they do not know as much as they think they know. They need to know what is given us in the Word. **THEY NEED A TRUE PICTURE.**

And for this we need the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit -- as our Lord clearly indicated in Acts 1:8. This is going to drive us to our knees. This is going to make us look at ourselves. This is going to make us concerned about our relationships with each other.

There is a job to be done -- but all the time we must be looking, LOOKING, LOOKING!

Now I just have two more things that I want to say tonight. And for these I want to go in part to two other passages in the NT.

V. We must REJOICE IN IT.

Luke wrote Acts, and Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke. In the last two verses of Luke we have a passage which deals with the same time period we have been considering here in Acts 1. Listen to Luke 24:52, 53:

"And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."

Now I want to ask a question: Why were they so happy? And note that their joy continued!

I can recognize two reasons:

- 1) Because the Lord Jesus was coming back.
- 2) Because they had been assured that when He did come He would be "this same Jesus."

When our loved ones are away from us for a time, one question that we all ask is,

I wonder if he (or she) has changed.

What about our Lord? "This same Jesus." He will not change, nor can He change. Would you want Him to change? We spend a lot of time trying to change one another, but would you change Him? Do you hope that He will be different? NO -- A THOUSAND TIMES, NO! I need to change, but I want

the Lord to remain the same -- and He will!

This is worth rejoicing about. Two thousand years -- and He is just the same. Cf. Heb. 13:8.

— But then there is this other point -- a final point.

VI. We must PRAY FOR IT.

The next to the last prayer in the Bible is this:
"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

The last two verses read in this way:

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

This is Rev. 22:20, 21.

Do you really want to see Him? Do you want Him for Himself, and not just to get out of the situation we face in our world today? But even considering that, do you see any other solution for our troubles?

When was the last time you prayed for the coming of the Lord? Or have you ever prayed for His coming?

— Concl: He is coming -- perhaps sooner than we expect. But, oh, that it would mean to us what it surely will mean to Him.

Let us KNOW it,
 BELIEVE it,
 LOOK for it,
 PREPARE for it,
 REJOICE in it, and
 PRAY FOR IT!

Cf. the principle in Zech. 12:10.

I do not think that I am wrong when I say that the evidence that the coming of the Lord is near will not be seen by the conditions in the world, but by the conditions in the hearts of the people of God -- when they beseech the Lord to come with earnest, fervent, continuing prayer.

Have you ever heard this kind of a request, or a prayer meeting called for this purpose?

— The Bible is our prayer book. And John teaches us to pray for His return.