

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S COMING MEAN?

Scripture reading: 1 John 3:1-3.

Intro: This will complete a brief series of four messages--all dealing with our Lord:

- 1) The meaning of His death.
- 2) The meaning of His resurrection.
- 3) The meaning of His ascension.
- 4) The meaning of His coming.

In the three previous messages I have given 7 things each one means, and yet have not been able to deal with either our Lord's death, or His resurrection, or His ascension, exhaustively.

I want to follow the same procedure tonight: 7 points, with the realization that there are more that could be included. Perhaps with this, as with the others, this will lead to more study of these great themes on your part.

What does Christ's coming mean? The Rapture, not His Second Coming.

This is the theme of many NT passages besides the one which we have read:

- 1) John 14:2, 3.
- 2) 1 Cor. 15:20-58.
- 3) Phil. 3:20, 21.
- 4) 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- 5) Titus 2:11-14.
- 6) And many other, shorter references.

What do they teach us about the coming of the Lord at the rapture of the Church?

Let us start with the best first.

I. THE COMING OF THE LORD MEANS THAT WE WILL BE WITH THE LORD.

Cf. John 14:2b, 3,

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

John 17:24a,

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Cf. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17,

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

II. THE COMING OF THE LORD MEANS AN END OF AT LEAST THREE THINGS:

A. It means an end to separation from our loved ones.

Cf. 1 Thess. 4:16b, 17,

"The dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

B. It means an end of death. Some day believers will attend their last funeral.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-57. (Turn to it and read.)

Death will be conquered in two ways:

- 1) By the resurrection of all who have died.
- 2) By their resurrection into an incorruptible and immortal state.

C. It means an end of sin.

In Tit. 2:14 Paul concludes that passage on the coming of the Lord with these words,

"Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people of his own, zealous of good works."

When death goes, sin goes--and vice versa. Sin brought death. One cannot exist without the other.

John wrote:

"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2b).

In Phil. 3:20, 21, our bodies will be like His. In Rom. 8:29 we are taught that predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

We will be glorified. Cf. Rom. 8:16, 17,

"The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; And if children, then heirs--heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ--if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together."

Glorification and sin cannot go together.

III. THE COMING OF THE LORD MEANS THREE THINGS TO US NOW:

A. It is our "blessed hope," our greatest source of comfort and encouragement.

Paul concludes that wonderful passage in 1 Thess. 4 with,
 "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."
 This speaks of our encouragement.

Note also Peter's words regarding our "living hope" and our heavenly "inheritance," followed by these words,
"In this ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials, That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
 These words are found in 1 Pet. 1:6-9.

Nothing is more comforting than the truth of the Lord's return.

- B. It is one of our greatest incentives to holy living.

Too many of us seem to be intent on pleasing people, instead of seeking to please the Lord.

John concludes the passage we read at the beginning with these words:

"And every man that hath this hope in himself even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

And Paul,

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age, Looking for that blessed hope . . ." (Tit. 2:11-13).

- C. It should be our greatest motive for serving the Lord.

Two verses which are often quoted but which are hardly ever quoted in their context are the two verses which come at the end of 1 Cor. 15--verses 57 and 58:

"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,"

and,

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

What light does the context throw on each one?

Concl: Is it any wonder that Paul says,

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we
are of all men most miserable," most to be pitied!?

This is found in 1 Cor. 15:19.

But a Christian can be almost as miserable if he is living like he has no hope.

The question before us tonight is not just, What does Christ's coming mean?, but, What does His coming mean to me?

Do I love Him so much that I also "love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8)?

Let the world laugh at us. Let them scoff at our hope. When we turn to the Word and see how this truth is presented in the Word, we can soon see that if we are looking forward to the coming of the Lord, we are looking forward to what our Lord is anticipating--and this is pleasing to Him!