

How Is Christ Coming?

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July 1974



Tonight I would like to speak about one of the most vital issues of our time, the coming of Christ. How is he coming? In the New Testament alone there are more than 38 times that Jesus speaks of his Second Coming.

In the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, Jesus says "Surely I am coming soon." (Rev. 22:20) And the Apostle John responds to the Lord by saying "Amen. Come Lord Jesus!"

This is the conclusion of the New Testament.

All of Christianity has been built on the hope that Jesus is coming back. Last Sunday Billy Graham said on television, "The time of the coming of the Lord is at hand."

Then how is he coming? In order to successfully meet someone important we need some information. We need to know where he is coming, when he is coming, and how he is coming.

The Bible says something about how Christ is coming, in Matthew 24:30, "They will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." We also read in Revelation 1:7, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds." On the other hand, we read in I Thessalonians 5:2, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

If the Lord is coming with the clouds of heaven with power and glory, with a procession of angels, I don't think our Lord would make a very successful thief, could he? However, many Christians today seem to have set their minds on the clouds of heaven looking forward to the coming of the Lord out of the blue sky.

We must realize, however, that this generation is not the only one which has been expecting someone very important to come from the blue sky. In Biblical history there have been two previous occasions when people were expecting someone very important to arrive from the blue sky.

The return of Elijah

The first occasion was the return of Elijah. The prophet Malachi had foretold, in Malachi 4:5, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers." God promised the return of Elijah prior to the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. The people expected Elijah to appear before the Messiah could come.

Who was Elijah? He was a great prophet of Israel, who lived approximately 900 years before Jesus. The Bible records that Elijah ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire.

Since Elijah ascended in that manner the people of Israel reasoned that he would return in the same way, coming down from the blue sky.

But they never heard the news of Elijah's supernatural return. Instead, one day the people of Israel heard a most extraordinary declaration, that the Son of God had come. They heard Jesus of Nazareth being proclaimed to the world as the Messiah.

The chosen people of Israel were puzzled. They asked, "If Jesus is the Son of God, then where is Elijah?" When Jesus' disciples went out into Israel preaching the Gospel proclaiming that Jesus was the Son of God, the scribes and Pharisees rebuked them, saying, "If your master is the Son of God, where is Elijah?" The disciples could not answer that question. They were very much embarrassed. So they decided one day to ask Jesus for help with this problem.

We read in Matthew 17: 10-13, "And the disciples asked him 'Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?' He replied 'Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come.' Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist."

This was a bombshell. Was John the Baptist Elijah? Yes. Jesus said so. Jesus speaks the truth. However, this was not convincing to the people of Israel because John the Baptist did not come from the blue sky.

He was born as a man in the flesh just like you and me. However, we read in Luke 1:17 a prophecy concerning John the Baptist before his birth. God was already foretelling the mission with which John would go forth into the world. "He (John) will go before him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

John the Baptist was chosen by God to be the harbinger of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He came to prepare the way of the Lord. Indeed in the sight of God, John the Baptist was Elijah. God gave him the power and spirit of Elijah.

Furthermore, we read in Matthew 11:13-14 that Jesus reinforced his statement about John. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he (John) is Elijah who is to come."

So we understand that the prophecy of Malachi was indeed fulfilled in the sight of God, in the sight of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Elijah. However, he did not come from the blue sky. The expectation of the chosen people of Israel was betrayed.

This was the first occasion of expecting someone to come from the sky that did not happen in the way people expected.

The coming of Jesus

Another occasion was the time of the coming of Jesus Christ himself. The people of that time thought very simply that God was living in heaven -- up there.

So the Son of God must be up there, too. So they thought that when the Son of God would come, he must come from the sky.

Furthermore to support this belief, the prophet Daniel had written, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man." (Dan. 7:13) Daniel was saying that the Son of man, Jesus, would be coming with the clouds of heaven. So the people's conviction that the Messiah would arrive from the clouds of heaven was strengthened by Daniel's prophecy.

Was that fulfilled? You and I know that Jesus indeed came from the heavenly Father. But he did not come from the blue sky nor on the clouds of heaven. He came to the home of Joseph, through his mother, Mary, through the natural process of childbirth. Again, the coming of the Messiah was fulfilled. But the expectation of the people was betrayed.

This generation of Christians today is inclined to look to the clouds of heaven for the coming of Christ. But do you have a guarantee that your expectation will not be betrayed this time?

Looking up a chimney? Tonight, you and I must take a deeper look at this most serious question. I want to invite your attention to a most important verse from the Bible, with which we will begin our search for truth -- Acts 1:11. "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven."

This particular verse has been used by the Christian world over and over as an iron-clad proof that the Lord Jesus is indeed coming from the clouds of heaven.

This passage records the scene of Jesus' ascension into heaven after his resurrection. His disciples were

gathered together watching him go up into heaven. Then suddenly two angels appeared and said to them, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?" Let us analyze from this point. This sentence has a negative connotation. I don't think that the angels were encouraging the disciples to look to heaven for the Lord's return.

Let me illustrate: Let's say that on Christmas Eve I find my children looking up into the chimney, waiting for the arrival of Santa Claus I say to them, "Children, why do you look into the chimney?"

When I say, "Why do you look into the chimney?", I am almost saying that it is no use looking there.

If God was planning to send His Son Jesus from the blue sky, then the angels should have said, "Keep looking. Keep looking into heaven." But instead, they implied that it was no use to look into heaven, because he would not be coming from that direction.

The meaning of heaven

Then the angels explained, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven." We must take a very close look at this verse, for the angels explained how Jesus is coming.

First of all, there are two meanings for the word "heaven." The first appearance of the word "heaven" refers to the sky, because the disciples were standing there looking up into the sky.

The second "heaven" however, does not mean the sky. Jesus was not taken up into the blue sky, into space. "Taken up from you into heaven" means that Jesus Christ was lifted up into the spiritual kingdom, where God's will prevails, where nothing sinful, nothing carnal can exist, where only spiritual beings can dwell. This is the spiritual realm of God's kingdom in heaven. This is where Jesus was taken, not up in the sky.

A few years ago, Moscow radio broadcast a very eloquent message on Christmas morning. "Our rocket has bypassed the moon. It is nearing the sun, and we have not discovered God. We have turned off the light in heaven that no man will be able to put on again. We are breaking the yoke of the Gospel, the opium of the masses. Let us go forth, and Christ will be relegated to mythology."

This was a very impressive statement, but they missed the whole point! They had been looking for God up in space.

God is not up there in space. Jesus has not been flying around up there for 2,000 years. Neil Armstrong did not say he waved to Jesus Christ in outer space on his way to the moon. Physical space is not God's dwelling place. Jesus indeed was not taken up into space.

"Taken up" means that Jesus ascended into the spiritual realm, which has nothing to do with this physical elevation or altitude.

Then this means that he "will come" again from this spiritual heaven, God's dwelling place, the place of the Most High. So Jesus' descent also has nothing to do with physical descent.

In John 3:13, Jesus said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."

Indeed, Jesus had descended from heaven. Let me illustrate this point with this little parachute. Do you think this is what Jesus meant by descent? No, Jesus did not descend in that fashion.

Returning in the same way

Jesus said he had descended from heaven. But his descent was through the natural process of childbirth. He was born as a baby, just like you and me. He grew into manhood and proclaimed the truth as the Son of God. In the sight of God, that was Jesus' descent.

Jesus began his heaven-bound journey with his descent into this world at the very moment of his birth. And from that time, man witnessed how Jesus lived, how he ministered, how he suffered, how he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, how he was crucified on the Mount of Calvary, and how he was resurrected. All these were part of the process of his ascension, his journey into heaven. Jesus' ascension began at the moment he descended. This is how we saw him going into heaven.

Therefore Acts 1:11 shows the angels predicting that the Lord will not be coming on the literal clouds of heaven.

Instead, he is coming in the same way as we saw him going into heaven -- as the Son of man in the flesh.

The Lord will come down to us in the same manner that Jesus, the Son of God, descended to earth 2,000 years ago, as the Son of man in the flesh.

Indeed Jesus is coming again. But he is not coming in a supernatural manner. Instead he will be coming as another man born in the flesh.

This is why we read in Revelation 12:5 a clear-cut description of the coming of the Son of God: "She brought forth a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron."

Who do you think could have the right to rule all the nations with a rod of iron? The President of the United States? No. The Queen of England? No. The Pope of the Roman Catholic Church? No.

No one has the right to rule all the nations with a rod of iron except the coming Lord. And the Bible clearly shows that a woman will bear this child into the world, even indicating that it will be a male.

Now the Bible, which has been such a book of mystery, begins to make sense to us.

Tonight, of course, I am not going to recite all the relevant Bible quotations. But in order to reinforce this important revelation, let me note just one or two particularly important passages.

In Luke 17:20, we read, "Being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, 'The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.'"

But if Jesus really were to come from the clouds of heaven, with the trumpets of angels, in power and great glory, then these would indeed be extraordinary signs. But Jesus said there would be no visible signs to be observed.

First he must suffer

Furthermore a most extraordinary statement appears in Luke 17:25. "But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." If Jesus came back to our world with the clouds of heaven with power and glory, with the procession of angels, who would dare to cause him to suffer, or reject him? Would you? I don't think so.

When Neil Armstrong returned to earth from the moon, the President of the United States was out there on the Pacific to greet him.

If the Lord would come with power and glory on the clouds of heaven, with the procession of angels, I'm sure the Pope would be there to meet him. I'm certain that Billy Graham would be there, along with thousands of evangelists, clergymen, and priests. You and I wouldn't even be able to get a ticket to attend the welcoming ceremony. We would probably end up welcoming the Lord on our television screens on an NBC special.

However, he said he would suffer and be rejected by this generation. This is the word of Jesus Christ himself. Why? He is coming once again as the Son of man, in the flesh, the same way he entered into our world 2,000 years ago.

And initially no one will recognize him, just as Jesus was not known at first. Until the day that he appears on the throne of God to judge the world no one will recognize him. So Jesus said that at first he would suffer. But in the end, he will be victorious as the Lord of judgment and establish God's kingdom.

In Luke 18:8, we read that Jesus says, "I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily.

Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

This seems like an outrageous question. Today there are millions of Christians waiting to receive the Lord in churches throughout the world. But Jesus asked if he would find faith!

Two thousand years ago, there were many faithful people in Israel. The synagogues were filled with priests, elders and scribes, every one of them among the Jewish faithful. But did they welcome Jesus when he came as the Son of man in the flesh? No. Not even a single one of them accepted Jesus as the Son of God. In the sight of God, there was absolutely no faith on earth when Jesus came as the Son of man in the flesh.

Unless the Christian world today awakens in time, we shall repeat the same mistake the Jewish faithful committed 2,000 years ago. This is what Jesus was predicting may happen. This prophecy will be fulfilled

when he comes once again as the Son of man in the flesh.

Depart from me

Let us consider one more verse from the Bible, Matthew 7:22-23: "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'"

This is the word of Jesus Christ. How could that happen to devout Christians, believers who constantly called upon the name of the Lord? How could Jesus say to them, "Depart from me, you evildoers?" How could they become evildoers?

Throughout history, many grave crimes and the worst sins have been committed in the name of God, the name of the Lord. Two thousand years ago, those who plotted to kill the Author of life, Jesus Christ, were those who prayed day and night in the synagogues calling upon the name of God.

When Jesus was brought before the court of Pilate, the Roman Governor, Pilate had no desire to crucify Jesus. He could find no fault in him. But the people surrounding his court -- priests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees shouted out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And that very night, those same people went into their synagogues and prayed in the name of the Lord, the name of God, as if they had acted righteously. And yet they themselves had killed Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

When Jesus returns once again among us, as the Son of man in the flesh, this situation will undoubtedly be repeated in the last days in our Christian world. Many Christians will pick up stones to throw at him. Many Christians will call him a blasphemer, a heretic, and accuse him of being possessed by demons. Those were the same charges brought against Jesus 2,000 years ago.

However, Jesus is not coming to be crucified again. He is coming as the Lord of Glory. He is going to establish God's kingdom, by judging this world, separating good and evil.

He will destroy evil, and make the goodness of God prevail upon the face of the earth.

In Luke 17:26-27, we read, "As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

This is the description of the days of the Son of man. And this will happen when the Lord comes as the Son of man in the flesh.

As a man, the coming Jesus will declare the Kingdom of Heaven. But nobody will pay attention to him. Furthermore, the people will laugh at him, ridicule him, and persecute him, and do all kinds of evil against him.

And in the meantime, the world will continue in its wicked, carnal business -- eating, drinking, marrying - - until the day the Lord will be lifted up to the throne of judgment. And when they recognize him as the Lord of judgment, it will be too late! The ark will be closed. The judgment will already be at hand, and the Lord will say to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers."

I would like to explain the true meaning of the "clouds of heaven." We must know what the Bible means. Jesus once said "I am the vine, you are the branches." This is a symbolic expression

Symbolic clouds

By the same token, the "clouds of heaven" has a spiritual meaning, not physical. We read in Rev. 17:15, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."

The Bible indicates that water is a symbol for the multitude of fallen mankind. What are clouds? They are vaporized water. But water on earth is impure, dirty, with many foreign elements in it. But when water is vaporized into clouds, it is pure and genuine.

By the same token, those people who are vaporized and purified from the waters of mankind are symbolically in the position of the clouds of heaven.

Jesus is coming among those prepared people, God's people. He is coming among the consecrated, reborn Christians, among those who are purified, elevated, cleansed from sin. Those will form the foundation of the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns to our earth. This is the true meaning of the clouds of heaven.

Would we want the Lord to arrive here transported upon crummy physical clouds? I think we would

rather send a Lincoln Continental or even a Boeing 747 for our Lord, to make him more comfortable.

Physical clouds have nothing to do with the spiritual realm from which our Lord is coming. Clouds in the Bible have a spiritual meaning, reborn Christians.

So today, our duty is to know how to become reborn, consecrated Christians -- how to become God's people. Many may think, "Well, I read the Bible." I tell you that is not enough. Many say "I'm going to church every Sunday." That is not enough.

Some might say, "I was born in a good Christian family. My grandfather was a great Christian." That is not enough! Others say, "I give my tithe every month." That is not enough. You may say, "I participate in all sorts of prayer meetings, prayer breakfasts, and give t 1 any contributions to charities."

All of these things are good, but they are not enough. Tonight, we must know that there is something more important.

The fate of the arrogant

The Bible says, "For behold, the day (of the Lord) comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble." (Mal. 4:1)

Two thousand years ago there were many people who read their Bible day in and day out, going to their synagogues to pray every day and night. But they were not the ones who received the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why? They had done everything, except one thing. They were not humble, they were not meek. There was no humility. They were not open-hearted.

Today, how many Christians are like this, believing that their place in heaven is absolutely assured, lock, stock and barrel? We are too rich in spirit. God meant us to be poor in spirit.

Those poor fishermen of Galilee, like Simon Peter, didn't know anything about the Old Testament. They didn't know anything about the Mosaic Law. They never went to the Temple or the synagogues. They did not pay much attention to ideas about the coming or going of the Son of God.

But when Jesus approached Simon Peter and spoke to him, Peter was poor in spirit, thirsty in righteousness. His heart was open. Therefore, the spirit of God could move into him immediately. He had humility and meekness, which enabled him to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. He became the chief disciple of Jesus.

The Lord is coming as the Son of man in the flesh. Unless you are really poor in spirit and really thirsty in righteousness, you will not meet him.

Expect new truth

There is one very important thing to remember. When Jesus Christ returns to our world, he will bring with him another Bible. That's very strange, isn't it? The Christian world has believed that this Bible, the Old Testament and New Testament together, is the only Bible.

We must realize that 2,000 years ago, before the coming of the Son of God, there was no New Testament. When Jesus came, he brought the New Testament. However, this was not all the truth he wanted to reveal. Jesus said to the people, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12)

He said "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (John 16:12) Furthermore, we read in Revelation about another scroll of God, with writing on both sides, sealed with seven seals, waiting to be opened. When the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, comes back to our world, he is going to reveal the truth contained in that scroll.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) He did not say that the Bible is the way, or that the Bible is the truth. And when he comes, he will not speak the language of 2,000 years ago. He will speak your language, the language of the 20th century.

The most important thing that we must realize tonight is that Jesus Christ is not coming merely to repeat the New Testament. He is coming to reveal the new truth, which might be called the Completed Testament.

When St. Paul had a vision of heaven, he saw that heaven had three different levels. The Bible, the word of the restoration of God, will also eventually have three parts: the Old Testament the New Testament,

and the Completed Testament, or whatever name the final part will have.

We must remember that Jesus was rejected and persecuted 2,000 years ago because he was not simply repeating the Mosaic Law. The people said, "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." (John 9:29)

Jesus spoke new truth. He said that he did not come to destroy the Law, but to perfect it. And in the same way, the perfection of the New Testament shall be revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes again to our world. Then we will know the whole truth.

The Bible says "When the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away." (I Cor. 13:10) On that day, we will no longer see in the mirror dimly, but face to face. We will understand the truth fully. That is the understanding that Jesus Christ is going to bring.

Our attitude for receiving Christ. The Christian world today must not repeat the same crime that the Jewish faithful committed against Jesus Christ. This is why we must be humble, meek, open-minded, and let the spirit of God speak to us directly. This is the attitude that Christians must have to meet the Lord.

A popular saying among many thinking people today is, "We need a new revelation." The cry of many Christians is "This age needs a prophet, not preachers." Why?

In Amos 3:7, we read that God says, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." God must reveal His plan for this age. The answer must come from God. And God is doing that.

The time of the Lord's coming is near. Therefore God has summoned the modern-day prophet, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, as a channel, to speak to the world, revealing God's word.

Do you think that the message you have heard tonight came out of my own brain? I am not that clever. Nor is any man. If the human mind could produce such a message, it would have not come to us to do it. John Wesley would have done it many years ago. I'm sure that John Calvin would have done it, or John Knox. Or that great scholar and theologian Paul Tillich would have done it. No, this thought would never have come to a military officer, who has never even gone to seminary!

God works in strange ways. These are not my words, nor are they Reverend Moon's words. Reverend Moon is merely an instrument, through which God is revealing His message, with the fullness of time, so that the Christian world could be ready for this day of hope, the day of the coming of the Lord.

In conclusion, let me say this. We have so many great and beautiful churches, with stained glass windows, and plush carpets. These are the houses of the Lord. And when our Lord Jesus comes, he is the Master of those houses.

However, unless the Christians of America have listening ears for this new revelation, when the Lord Jesus comes, I'm afraid that Christians here and throughout the world will never let the Lord inside their churches to walk on their plush carpets.

The Bible speaks of "the great and terrible day of the Lord." We can understand that the day of the coming of the Lord would be great. But why should it be terrible? The Lord is coming to judge the world, to separate good and evil. So the day of the Lord will be great for ' hose who recognize him, because they will belong to the Author of life. But it will be terrible for those who fail to recognize him as the Lord, because they will be cast into the unquenchable fire.

The Lord is coming as a man, in the flesh. He is coming with the sword of truth, to judge the world, and to establish God's Kingdom here on earth.

He will kindle the fire of revolution in your heart. He will remake you. He will re-create you. We will all become new creatures. We shall become the first citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We must make the day of the Lord a great day, not terrible. And the coming of the Lord as a man in the flesh will be great for us only if we can accept him as the Lord. And only by the words of truth can we recognize him.

Today, this truth has knocked at your door. Are you listening? Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus is coming as the Son of man in the flesh. Are you ready to receive him? Then you are the prince of this age.