***The Manner of the Return of Jesus Christ

RV38-01***

We are studying the letter to the church at Saris in Revelation 3:1-6. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Thessalonica, we have two letters in the New Testament which record what he had to say to those people. Those two letters are of particular interest to us because the apostle Paul had only about six weeks of time that he was able to spend in the city of Thessalonica with those believers. Apparently, he was aware of the fact that his time with them would be short, and that, therefore, he had to make a decision on what it was that he was going to teach them.

**The Coming of Jesus Christ**

Those two books are interesting because, as you read them, you become aware of the fact that, for six weeks, he taught them nothing but prophecy. He taught them basic information concerning the return of the Lord. So, we are studying that very topic, and it is one of great importance. Christians who understand the issue of the return of the Lord are Christians who know how to live their life with some perspective. The return of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth, therefore, is an event that spiritually-minded Christians long for. We look forward to the return of the Lord. We can enter in with the final words of John in the book of Revelation when he said, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

The arrival of the Lord on the earth will bring to an end the current authority of Satan over our planet and over humanity. It will bring to an end the current philosophy of humanism which dominates the world scene: humanism, the religion; and, its political expression under the terminology of liberalism and all that that connotes. The first coming of Jesus Christ was in the role of the suffering and condemned Lamb of God. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be as the conquering world ruler.

As we pointed out in the previous session, these two comings were not always clearly distinguished in the Old Testament, and writers of the Old Testament Scriptures were often themselves confused on what they had written under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. This was because they were describing this Messiah, and they described His coming as a conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah, and they also described Him as the suffering and despised Lamb who was put to death. Somehow those two obviously don't fit together, and there have been various attempts to relate them. The truth was that when New Testament Scriptures were written, we discovered that there was indeed a gap of now almost 2,000 years between the First and Second Comings of Jesus Christ.

Today, most of humanity ignores Jesus Christ, and it ignores what the Bible reveals about His return to this earth. Many who accept the Old Testament prophecies about the sufferings and the rejection of Jesus Christ at His first coming, strangely enough, reject the prophecies about His coming again, and about His exaltation and glory. We've looked at several of the ideas that are presented as the interpretations of the meaning of the Second Coming of Christ. Every Old Testament prophecy, which has not been fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus Christ, will be fulfilled at His return to earth.

So, remember that the Second Coming is important because there's a lot of Old Testament prophecy that has never been fulfilled. Consider such a simple little thing as the fact that the Jews have a kingdom, and a king ruling over that kingdom. They don't have it today. Consider such a simple fact as the truth that they will have the land of Palestine from the Euphrates River in the north to the Nile River in the south, out to the Arabian desert, and over to the Mediterranean Sea. That will be all theirs. Never for a single hour have they possessed that extent of territory promised to Abraham and his descendants. There are countless promises in the Old Testament that have never been fulfilled by the First coming of Jesus Christ. Those await fulfillment at the Second Coming.

Also, I should point out to you that, for every prophecy relating to the First Coming of Jesus Christ, you will find eight relating to the Second Coming. So, the Second Coming is going to fulfill an infinitely greater amount of predictive truth than has been fulfilled by the First Coming.

Another thing to remember is that history has taught us a pattern of God's dealing with the prophecies which He makes relative to the coming of Christ. The Old Testament prophecies relating to the First Coming of Jesus Christ were all fulfilled literally to the letter. When it said that He was going to be born in Bethlehem, that's exactly where He was born. When it was said that He was going to be born by a supernatural birth without a human father, that is exactly the way He was born. When it was said that He was going to be born in the line of King David, that is exactly the line in which He was born. Right down the line, there are numerous predictions concerning the Messiah in His First Coming – every one of them was specifically and literally fulfilled. Therefore, it is obvious that when we think about all these prophecies relating to His Second Coming, like: His ruling upon this earth in a 1,000-year kingdom; King of Kings; Lord of Lords; the Jewish People being the supreme nation upon the face of the earth; and, Jerusalem being the capital of the world – all of these predictions have never been fulfilled. They are associated with the Second Coming, and we may anticipate logically that they will be fulfilled exactly and literally as all those associated with the First Coming. The Bible knows nothing about spiritualizing prophetic truth. So, the return of Jesus Christ is a very exciting topic.

**Biblical Expressions for the Coming of Christ**

We begin now with just a fast survey of some of the terms which are used in the Bible relative to the coming of Christ, as we turn now, particularly to the New Testament revelation about this subject. Again, I remind you that this is a subject that Jesus Christ Himself taught. He was very careful, as we saw (in the previous session) in the Isaiah passage, to stop reading at the comma, because the comma was the point at which everything up to that point had been fulfilled. After the comma, it was Second Coming truth, and He stopped. And He could actually say to that group of people in the synagogue, "This day, everything I've read to you has been fulfilled in your hearing. While the Lord exalts in that truth, the devil hates it, because it spells his doom.

1. **The Coming One**

Expression number one, looks like this in the Greek Bible: "hoerchomenos." "Hoerchomenos" means "the one who is coming," or "the coming one." This expression is often used in the Scripture. It is an expression which was used as a technical title for the promised Messiah – the coming one. Obviously, the very title itself indicates an arrival upon the scene of humanity.

For example, in Matthew 11:3, we have this used: "And said unto him, 'Are you He that should come (are you the coming one), or do we look for another?'" This was the inquiry of John the Baptist to the Lord Jesus. Jesus rode in the triumphal procession (on what the religious world calls Palm Sunday) when He rode into Jerusalem to the cheers of the people on that donkey. Matthew 21:9 says to us, "And the multitudes that went before and that followed Christ saying, 'Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is 'hoerchomenos' (blessed is He that comes – the coming one) in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.'" If you understand this Greek expression, you will realize that what these people were saying was, "Blessed is the Messiah Savior." Here were the crowds cheering the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, the promised Savior, made so long ago to Adam and Eve.

This same expression is used in the book of Hebrews 10:37, specifically of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and we will not tarry." It says, "He that shall come (or He who is the coming one) will come and will not tarry." Of course, that refers to the Second Coming.

1. **Coming from One Place to Another**

The second expression relating to the return of Jesus Christ is just a different grammatical form: "erchomai." This refers to the act of coming from one place to another – the act of moving from one place to another. This is used many times in the Bible in reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For example, 2 John 7 says, "For many deceivers are entered into the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ comes ('erchomai') in the flesh." This is a deceiver and an antichrist. There are people today, and we have looked at some of those ideas, who deny that Jesus Christ is ever going to return to this earth. They are, of course, condemned as being in error.

Jude 14 also refers to the Second Coming of Christ, but here with the saints: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with 10,000 of His saints;" that is, He is going to come, and you and I (thousands of us) are accompanying him.

Revelation 1:7 also uses this particular term when John says, "Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him (that is, the Jews) and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen." "Behold, He who comes;" that is, the Second Coming – all the world will see Him. When Jesus Christ comes, all of humanity will know it. That's why, elsewhere in the Bible, we are warned not to be conned by people who talk about a secret arrival of the Messiah. We're told that that will never be true. The arrival of Jesus Christ will be open knowledge to all the world.

Revelation 22:20 also uses this term, referring to the coming of Christ: "He who testifies these things says, 'Surely I come quickly. Amen.' Even so, come Lord Jesus."

1. **Come Down**

There's a third important term, and I'm just giving you a few examples of these. These are used in a variety of ways, many times in the Bible, but they all tell us something a little bit more about the coming of Jesus Christ. This third term is "katabaino." This word means "to come down." "Kata" means "down," and "baino" means "to come:" "to come down," or "to descend." So, this tells us another thing about the coming of Christ – that His coming is going to be a descent. It gives us the direction of the coming of Christ. This is used for both of the comings of Jesus Christ. In John 6:38, it is used of the First Coming of Jesus Christ: "For I came down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." "I came down "katabaino" from heaven. This is not the physical Jesus who came down from heaven at the First Coming. It is the one that Isaiah calls "the Son." It is the God Jesus who came down. The humanity was formed through the natural birth process.

But the same word, "katabaino" (coming down), indicating the direction of His arrival, is also used in the Bible as the Second Coming of Christ. You have this in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. This is one of the books that Paul wrote to a people in which he taught prophecy in six weeks' time: "For the Lord Himself shall descend (shall "katabaino" – come down) from heaven with a shout." This refers to the Second Coming which is yet future: "With the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. So, the Second Coming and the First Coming are both described by this word.

1. **The Presence**

Word number four is a very short one: "heko." The word "heko" marks the result of an act of coming. It conveys the idea of the result of coming. Well, when you have come some place, what do you say? Well, you say that you've arrived. You are present. "Heko" stresses the quality of the presence. This was used of Jesus at His First Coming in John 8:42, where it should be translated as "am come" – not "came:" "But here I am come." The stress is that Jesus Christ came into the human scene. He was not somebody who did not exist before His arrival here on earth. These words stress to us that He already had an existence in heaven, and He arrived and was present here on this earthly scene.

It is used of the Lord Jesus in terms of His presence in discipline. We've already studied Revelation 3:3, which says, "Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard and hold fast and repent. If, therefore, you shall not watch, I will come ('heko') on you as a thief, and you shall not know in what hour I will come upon you." Here, what He is saying is that He will come. You won't know when He's coming, but suddenly He will come how? He will come in the fact that He's going to be there, and you are going to be face-to-face.

This verse particularly applies to discipline, and this is how God deals with us. This is how the Lord deals with us in discipline. Suddenly, we're confronted with God's hand upon us in discipline. And when we do suddenly become aware that we're facing Him directly in discipline, sometimes we're surprised. Sometimes things happen to us, and (you know the old expression) "I wonder why this happened to me." Very often it's an indication of our own sloppy spiritual condition that we are being guilty of some mental attitude sins; we're being guilty of some of the sins of the tongue; we're being guilty of various overt sins; and, we're passing them off lightly and indifferently, instead of realizing that that evil has fractured our fellowship with the Father. It has broken our walk with Him, and suddenly we're faced with the Lord in putting us in a position of discipline. It is His telling us to get things straight. This word is a word that refers to that kind of confrontation, but it also refers to the actual presence physically on-the-scene of Jesus Christ.

1. **Arrival and Presence**

One of the more famous words that is used in the Bible about the coming of Jesus Christ is one you may have heard of before. It's "parousia." "Parousia" means "arrival and the presence of a person." Philippians 2:12 illustrates this meaning as Paul uses it in reference to himself: "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my "parousia" (my actual physical presence) only, but now much more in my absence." So, he uses this word to indicate an actual physical presence. This is the word which was used to describe the arrival and the presence of a potentate – a ruler. They would describe the arrival of this ruler by the word "parousia." And it's a fitting word to describe the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

It is used many times in the New Testament, and it is also used in reference to the Second Coming of Christ. We have that in 1 Thessalonians 2:19. Paul says, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not you even in the 'parousia' (in the actual presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

1. **Unveiling**

Another one of the more important words describing the coming of Jesus Christ is "apokalupsis." "Apokalupsis" means "to unveil," or "to uncover." If you were to look at a Greek New Testament, and you were to turn to the last book of the Bible, you would see written at the top: "the 'apokalupsis.'" That is the word that is usually translated as "revelation." That's the word that actually the book of Revelation does begin with. In Revelation 1:1, John says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ (the 'apokalupsis' of Jesus Christ)." This describes for us the nature of Christ's return to the earth. It's going to be an unveiling to humanity. An unveiling of what? Well, what do people know about Jesus Christ now? How do they think about Him? One of the things they generally do not tribute to Him is the way the disciples saw Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. They received an exclusively marvelous introduction to Jesus Christ in His full, resplendent glory. For a moment, that hidden glory was revealed and was permitted to come through. This is what this word refers to. It is the unveiling of the divine glory. The word stresses visibility.

One of the great things associated with the return of Jesus Christ is going to be something that you see. We've already seen that there are going to be trumpets sounding. There are going to be things to hear, and there are going to be things happening, but one of the things to associate with the return of Christ is something that you're going to see. And this is used also many times in the Bible of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:7 uses it. It uses the word "appearing" in the King James Version. 1 Corinthians 1:7 uses the word "coming," and that is also this "apokalupsis."

So, one of the things that is going to happen when Jesus Christ returns is that all of us who are caught up in the rapture are going to experience what the disciples (Peter, James, and John) experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration. We'll see Jesus Christ, but we'll see Him in all of His glory.

1. **Making Manifest**

Another important word relating to the coming of Christ that is used in the Greek Bible is "phaneroo." "Phaneroo" means "to make manifest," or again stressing the idea of visibility. It stresses bringing into the open and making clear what has existed unseen. There are going to be a lot of things that are going to be made clear about Jesus Christ when He appears which now are actually hidden. This is used of Jesus Christ and of believers in 1 John 3:2, where we read, "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it does not yet 'phaneroo' (it does not visibly appear to us) what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." So, here, the promise is that one day you are visibly going to be in appearance just like Jesus Christ. There will be a glory radiating from you as there is a glory radiating from Him: "Bringing into the open that which has existed but which is unseen."

This is going to be an important kind of factor relative to most of the world. The world which ignores Jesus Christ and the world which smugly tolerates Him is suddenly going to discover that He is all that He claims to be – the God-man who is the ruler of all the world. To the Jews, there will be an appearance that will be particularly striking, because one of the things they will particularly be aware of in Jesus Christ is the evidence of His wounds in His hands; His feet; and, His side. They will realize that this is the man whom their forefathers crucified, and they will realize that here is their Messiah. Here is the one that could have saved their people generations of persecution under Satan's hand had they accepted Him. Instead, they turned against Him.

Right now, the Jews stand in the position that they reject Jesus of Nazareth. They reject His claims of being the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham as the Messiah. That is why God has no dealings with the Jews. You must understand that everything that takes place in Israel today, (except on God's sovereignty in His dealing with the Jews and maneuvering them into the position of His ultimate plan) as a personal relationship of favored people – they are not that anymore. They do not stand under that place of particular care and blessing of God. You and I have that position. It is the church. The only Jews that come under God's great blessing today are those who have become Christians – who have accepted Jesus Christ. Well, they're going to see Jesus Christ. They're going to see His glory. They're going to see Him identified as the one who He really claimed to be.

1. **To Bring to Light**

Another important word about the coming of Christ is "epiphaino." This is one of the important ones. "Epiphaino" means "to bring to light," and again, "to bring to full visibility." Several of these words rally around the point of a site factor – something you're going to see. This was used of Jesus Christ at His First Coming. We have this referred to in 2 Timothy 1:10: "But is now made manifest by the appearing (the 'epiphaino') of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through His gospel." ... This stresses the factor again of the visibility of what will be seen when Christ appears.

It is also used the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. In 2 Timothy 4:8, it is applied to the Second Coming: "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also who love His 'epiphaino' (His appearing – His visible presence)." 2 Thessalonians 2:8 is another passage that uses this word in reference to the Second Coming to earth.

1. **The Sight**

The last word we will look at is "horao." The word "horao" means to see with the eyes. It is again the factor of stress upon the site. It is used of the site that will meet the eyes of mankind at the Second Coming of Christ. This word is used of the Lord Jesus Christ in reference to His First Coming in John 6:36: "But I said unto you that you also have seen Me, and believed not." This is referring to having seen Him at the First Coming. The Lord Jesus used this about Himself after His resurrection in Luke 24:34. That's a significant word. People actually did see Jesus Christ physically alive after the resurrection.

In Hebrews 9:28, it describes the visible nature of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as several of these words have emphasized: "So, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall appear the second time without sin (that is, apart from the sin question) unto salvation."

So, all of these various basic words (nine of them) have to do with the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Each of them stressed some particular quality, but they all rotate around one basic quality, and that is that the return is going to be visible.

**Factors about the Return of Jesus Christ**

That brings us to certain factors that we should observe relative to the coming of Jesus Christ.

1. **Jesus Christ will be Identifiable**

One of the things that you should remember about the Second Coming of Christ is that He will be identified. You will be able to identify Him as Jesus Christ. There won't be any question about that. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Paul writes, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." The word "Himself" is an intensive word to indicate Jesus Christ, and no one else. The same thing was stressed in Acts 1:11 when Jesus returned to heaven after His resurrection: "Who also said, 'You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven.'" The word "same" again indicates no substitutes.

So, one of the factors that is evident about the return of Christ is that Jesus Christ will be readily identifiable to those who see Him. There will be no question. You won't be looking around and wondering, "Who is it?"

1. **A Literal Event**

There is another factor to remember, and that is that this is a literal event. As Acts 1:11 indicated: "As He left, so He will return." Jesus Christ will return in the same physical fashion that He left. All the theories about the Second Coming, other than a literal return, are false. We have looked at several of those.

1. **Physical Visibility**

A third factor to remember about the return of Christ is physical visibility. These words that we have looked at have stressed that to us. The disciples actually saw Jesus go into heaven. Acts 1:9 says that they watched Him. They saw Him rise. A cloud eventually hid Him out of their sight. People are actually going to see the return of Jesus Christ. Visibility will be there. Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." There'll be no doubt about that.

So, there are three important factors (when you talk about the return of Jesus Christ) to be sure that you understand. He will be identifiable personally as Jesus Christ; it will be a literal event – not a spiritual coming; and, it will be physically visible to your physical eyes.

**Certain Things will Accompany Jesus Christ**

Along with these words we've looked at, the Bible tells us that certain things will accompany the return of Christ.

1. **Glory**

One of them is glory. This specifically is an external glory. During the First Coming of Jesus Christ, His divine glory was hidden from human eyes. In the high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ, on the night before His crucifixion, recorded for us in John 17:5, Jesus makes this statement: "And now, O Father, glorify Me with Your Own Self with the glory which I had before the world was." The word "glory" is referring to the outward brilliant expression of the integrity of God – the holiness of God. We have studied this in detail in the past. That quality is going to be readily evident about the person of Jesus Christ when He returns. Matthew 24:30 tells us that when He returns, He will be returning in just that kind of glory: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and with great glory.

1. **Inherent Power**

Another factor, along with glory, is that Jesus Christ will have inherent power functioning when He returns. Jesus Christ returns with the power to establish His kingdom over the whole world. He has the ability to produce results. The word that talks about His power is a word that means that He has within Himself divine power – inherent power. He will punish the unbelievers at that time, and He will remove them from the earth. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says of these people: "Who shall be punished (those who reject the gospel) with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

When Jesus Christ came the first time, His divine power was not functioning in establishing His kingdom. One of the important things to remember is that, while He had this kind of inherent power of deity, He never used it for Himself. That was one of the things that Satan was trying to tempt Him to do when He was so hungry after 40 days in the wilderness. Satan said, "Come on, let's face it. You have inherent power. You can take those stones, and You can turn them into bread, and You know that bread is what You want right now. Demonstrate that power. Let all these people see who You are." But Jesus Christ had to meet temptation (He had to come up against the devil) in exactly the way you and I do. You and I can't turn stones into bread to meet a need that we have. Neither could He be permitted to do the same. That's where the sin would have come in had Jesus yielded to that suggestion of Satan. He certainly could have done it. But as a human being, He functioned the way you and I have to function – dependence upon God to supply us, and to give us the capacity and the provision for everything that we need.

So, the inherent power of Jesus Christ during His First Coming was not used in His behalf. However, at His Second Coming, He will absolutely (the Bible guarantees you) use that inherent power to establish the kingdom of God upon this earth. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 tell us what He's going to do to humanism (the religion of mankind) and to liberalism (the political sociological expression of that religion): "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that do not know God and that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." The inherent power of Jesus Christ was held back. He let them put Him on the cross. He let them make Him a laughingstock. He let them spit upon Him. He let them beat Him up. He let them do everything that they chose to do, and He paid the price for our sins. That inherent power is not going to be held back, and it is going to be a fantastic world where Jesus Christ, with His righteousness, cuts down every expression of unrighteousness.

1. **A Royal Escort**

Another thing about His return is that there will be a royal escort. Jesus Christ returns not in humility and obscurity. This time when He comes, it's going to be with all the bands playing. Hail to the Chief is going to be sounded off, and it's going to be all outward glory and magnificence – the panoply of the majesty of the King who is arriving. We are told in Matthew 25:31 and in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 that He will be with the elect angels. The Holy Angels of God form an honor guard when He returns. 2 Thessalonians 1:7 indicates that to us – that He will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

Revelation 5:11 tells us that it is impossible to count the number of His escort. The escort will be beyond the capacity to number. The angels, with their great power, will be under the orders of Jesus Christ to execute His judgments. Matthew 13:41-43 describe for us how these angels will execute the judgments of the King.

So, when He comes, three things are going to be true about his return. He will come with magnificent external visible glory. He will come with His inherent power of deity – the omnipotence of God will be fully functioning and no longer restrained – using it to the fullest. And He will come, as befits His personage and position, with a royal escort of angels. We, as well, who are His bride, will be accompanying Him.

**The Manner of His Return**

Therefore, there are certain things that we may conclude about the manner of the return of Jesus Christ.

1. **Inevitable**

The first one is that it is inevitable. In Hebrews 10:37, we are told that nothing can delay or prevent the Second Coming of Christ: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Time is moving steadily toward the day of Christ's return. There is no turning back. The return of Jesus Christ to this earth from heaven is inevitable. It cannot be reversed.

1. **Stealthy**

A second factor about that coming that you want to remember is that it's stealthy. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 tells us that this is going to be a return without warning: "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." How does a thief come? The thief comes stealthily. He sneaks quietly. He comes in so that you do not suspect his presence. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be upon an unsuspecting world. The signs of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ give us an indication of His general nearness, but they do not indicate to us the specific moment when He appears. So, His appearance is stealthy. What the Bible means is that He just sort of sneaks up on you. And one of these days, He's just going to sneak up on the world.

1. **Unexpected**

Another factor is that it is unexpected. The return of Jesus Christ for the mass of humanity will be completely unexpected. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 says, "For when they shall say, 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." What will most of humanity be thinking and saying at the moment that Jesus Christ returns? They are going to be saying, "We have finally straightened out international relationships; we have finally straightened out social problems, we have finally established a condition of peace; we have finally established a condition of safety; we don't need God's help; and, we have stabilized our lives." That's what this passage means. At the very point that they think they have stabilized it all, and not expecting or even thinking or dreaming about the return of Jesus Christ, suddenly He crashes into the scene of the human race once more.

Matthew 24:50, along this same line, tells us that the return of Jesus Christ will absolutely just not be on the minds of people: "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he does not look for Him, and in an hour that he's not aware of." Here in this parable, we have an illustration of the attitude the people will have. They won't even be thinking about the return of Jesus Christ. How many people do you know, as you go through your day, think about the return of Jesus Christ? How many Christians are preoccupied in their day with the return of Jesus Christ? Luke 21:35 gives an interesting illustration (an analogy) of how the return of the Lord will be unexpected: "For like a snare, it shall come on all of them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." The return of Jesus Christ is going to come like a trap that suddenly snaps shut upon them.

1. **Destruction**

Another factor is going to be destructiveness. It will be a destructive return. Again, 1 Thessalonians is that good book of prophecy that tells us so much about these matters. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 again says, "For when they shall say, 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction comes upon them." The effects upon the unbelievers at the return of Christ will be sudden destruction. This destruction doesn't mean annihilation. It means permanent loss of access to divine blessing. They will be destroyed in terms of the fact that they will not be able to find fulfillment as human beings – the fulfillment of being transformed into the image of Christ. One of the great miseries and agonies that any human being who is in the lake of fire will experience is the incompleteness of himself as a human being who is designed to be in the image and likeness of God. He will never be able to experience that, and that will be part of the great misery that he suffers.

1. **Sudden**

Another factor to remember about the return of Christ is that it is sudden. Again, 1 Thessalonians 5:3 says that, "When they say peace and safety, then *sudden* destruction." This is an event which, all of a sudden, has arrived. Here in this passage, it is compared to labor pains that a woman experiences. One day she's going about her business; then, out of the blue, at a certain point in that pregnancy, suddenly she is struck with the first of a series of labor pains. Suddenly, though it has been anticipated, yet there was no indication. You know that it's coming. But when it comes, it just comes all of a sudden. There is no indication that something is getting ready to start – that tomorrow, the labor pains are going to come; or, that two hours from now, the labor pains are going to come. They just hit, and there they are.

This analogy is to indicate to us that the return of Jesus Christ, for most people, is going to be just that sudden. And in the case of a pregnancy, there's nothing else to do once it hits, except to go through with it.

1. **Inescapable**

That leads us to another factor. The return of Christ is inescapable. That again is the final statement of 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "They shall not escape. There will be no way of evading the wrath of God. There is no second chance. All of these groups say, "Out there, you're going to be given a second chance." All of these groups say, "Well, out there, you'll find that you realize that all of this was true. Now you will believe it because you see it really is true." No, sir. God says, "You receive it on faith. You do not have a second shot at it. There is no second chance offered to accept the gospel once you are in the presence of Christ. And the return of Christ is an idea that people scoff at, but once it happens, the consequences are inescapable.

1. **Human Viewpoint Delusion**

Another factor is that the return of Christ will be under human viewpoint delusion. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 say, "But you, brethren, are not in darkness (that is, in human viewpoint) that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness." When Jesus Christ returns, the earth is going to be covered with ignorance relative to spiritual things. The Second Coming is a matter that is of indifference now because of this ignorance. Human viewpoint is a spiritual darkness. It leads to false hopes. It leads to the idea that there's some other way to escape the consequences. 2 Peter 3:3-4 record for us the people who are dismissing a literal return of Jesus Christ as simply a fantasy.

So, when Jesus Christ returns, there are certain things that are true about that return. It's inevitable; it'll be stealthy; unexpected; destructive; sudden; inescapable; and, under human viewpoint delusion.

**White Garments**

This is the great event that we're looking forward to. This is the turning point for you and me. There are many things that the Word of God has indicated to us that are going to be the root of this plant – the Second Coming of Christ. There is nothing in the Bible that tells us when the rapture is going to arrive. The point in time is unknown, and there are no signs. There are no signs of the coming of the rapture of Jesus Christ. There are only signs of the Second Coming. There are only signs of His return to the Mount of Olives in order to take over the control of this world. And all of these things that we have talked about here – all of this is associated with a white garment that God has for those of you who are overcomers. John says that the overcomer is the born-again person. These white garments, and all that that implies of your ultimate sanctification and of your ultimate salvation, is all tied up and it all comes to fruition when Jesus Christ returns.

We should not be careless about living daily in the awareness that He is at hand; in the awareness that His return is at any moment; and, in the awareness that this is the next important thing in our experience. Every decision you make; every plan you make; everything you do with your time; everything that you invest your energy in; and, everything you do with your money should all revolve around the fact He is coming, and that coming is near at hand. And it is going to be a great event for you and me. It's going to be a spectacular event. For the world, it's going to be the worst thing that they could ever dream of. It is going to be the point of final, horrible judgment. Thank God for those of you who are going to escape that.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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