

THE FRIDAY NIGHT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

A. Will Jesus return on January 1, 2000?

1. This question is partly serious; mostly facetious.

a. Serious: because Jesus could come back on that day.

(1) Wouldn't that be something!

(2) It would catch people by utter surprise and astonishment.

(3) After all, Jesus could come then!

b. Facetious: because some have all but predicted this!

(1) Some take an eschatological view that the year 2000 marks the end of the world's 6000 year history; the last one thousand years would be the Millennium.

(2) As there is a six day working week, the seventh being the day of rest (and a day with the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years a day – 2 Peter 3:8), so there are to be 6000 years of toil and sorrow followed by a thousand years of rest.

(3) This is based on Archbishop Ussher's opinion that the earth was created in 4000 BC.

c. Illustration: 'Elijah' who predicted the Rapture on October 11 1957.

2. The approaching millennium does remind us of 2000 years of Christianity and brings us face to face with one important part of Jesus' teaching: his Second Coming.

a. 'After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11.

b. 'Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.' Hebrews 9:27-28.

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B. Definitions:

1. Second Coming: the personal return of Jesus to the earth.

- a.** Now at God's right hand, he will leave this to return to the earth.
- b.** Note: 'This same Jesus. . . . will come back in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven.'

(1) A cloud hid him from their sight as he was taken up.

(2) Many references indicate that he will come back with clouds.

'Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.' Rev. 1:7.

'At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.' Matthew 24:30.

'For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.' 1 Thes. 4:16-17.

2. Eschatology: doctrine of 'last things', such as the Second Coming, judgement, the 'signs of the times', prophecies of the 'last days'.

3. The Final Judgement: the awesome day in which God will judge the world with justice by Jesus Christ himself. Acts 17:31.

4. Views about the one thousand year reign, called the Millennium.

- a.** Note: the word millennium means 'one thousand years'.

- b.** This emerges from how one interprets these verses:

'And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their

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foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison. Rev. 20:1-7.

- c. There are generally three views as to the meaning (to be explained further below):
 - (1) Pre-millennialism: the Second Coming precedes the Millennium, that is, Jesus comes before the thousand years begin.
 - (2) Post-millennialism: the Second Coming follows the Millennium.
 - (3) A-millennialism: the thousand years are not to be taken literally at all but rather spiritually or even metaphorically.
- 5. The Rapture: the view that Christians will be 'caught up' secretly in advance of the visible Second Coming.
- C. Why is this lesson important?
 - 1. The Second Coming of Jesus, promised in the New Testament, is often neglected and deserves careful examination at any time.
 - 2. The Second Coming will be a fact in history; it is only a matter of time before it takes place.
 - 3. All of us will see it happen – dead or alive.
 - a. The 'dead in Christ' will rise first. 1 Thess. 4:16.
 - b. All the dead in any case will be raised. 1 Cor. 15:22; Rev. 20:12-13.
 - c. Those that remain who are saved will be caught up with the rest of the saved to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess. 4:17.
 - d. The bottom line: 'Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.' Rev. 1:7.

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of His train:
Hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign.

John Cennick (1718-85)

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4. With the year 2000 fast approaching, there is no better time than now to study the Second Coming.
5. God has used the preaching and teaching of this matter to bring many to Christ.
6. It gives us an opportunity to focus on the most important question of all: are we ready to meet God were Jesus to come today? Are we? Are you?

II BASIC FACTS REGARDING JESUS' SECOND COMING.

Note: I am indebted again to Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (IVP) and have found so much agreement and help with his manner of outlining these things.

- A. There will be a sudden, personal, visible and bodily return of Jesus.
 1. 'So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.' Matthew 24:44.
 2. 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' John 14:3.
 3. 'For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.' 1 Thes. 4:16.
 4. 'But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.' 2 Peter 3:10.
 5. 'Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' 1 John 3:2.
 6. 'Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"' 1 Cor. 15:51-55.
 - a. We are talking about 'this same Jesus'. Acts 1:10-11.
 - b. We are talking about 'the Lord himself'. 1 Thess. 4:16.

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- B.** We should eagerly long for Jesus' return.
1. John's response at the end of the book of Revelation should be ours as well: 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!' Rev. 22:20.
 2. It is called a 'blessed hope', not a dreaded fear. Tit. 2:13.
 3. To 'be ready' for Christ's return means:
 - a. That you know you are saved. Eph. 2:8.
 - b. That you are faithfully walking in the light. 1 John 1:7.
- C.** We do not know when Christ will return.
1. He will come at an hour we 'do not expect'. Matt. 24:44.
 2. 'You do not know when the time will come.' Mark 13:33. 'Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.' 1 Thes. 4:1-2.
 3. Jesus makes it clear that we *cannot* know when he is coming back.
 - a. He himself said that he didn't even know! 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.' Matthew 24:36.
 - b. Therefore anyone who claims to know specifically when Christ is returning is at once to be considered wrong.

II SIGNS THAT PRECEDE CHRIST'S RETURN

- A.** The Gospel must be preached to all nations. Mark 13:10; Matt. 24:14.
1. Generally speaking, this prophecy has been fulfilled.
 2. On the other hand, there are towns and villages in which the name of Christ has not been heard.
- B.** Tribulation.
1. 'When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.' Mark 13:7-8.

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2. Note: there is considerable difficulty in differentiating between those signs which may refer to the impending fall of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the last days; however, it is not unlikely that they refer to both and indeed parallel those two great events.
 3. 'Because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now - and never to be equalled again. If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.' Mark 13:19-20.
 4. Note also: these verses may be used by those of the pre-millennial school of thought (to be explained below) to refer to the Great Tribulation following the Rapture.
- C. False prophets working signs and wonders.**
1. 'For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect - if that were possible.' Mark 13:22. Cf. Matt. 24:23-24.
 2. Satan has long been active in masquerading as an angel of light. 2 Cor. 11:14.
 - a. This may refer to false teaching like Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - b. It no doubt includes many cults abroad today.
 - c. It could be too that the worst is yet to come.
- D. Signs in the heavens.**
1. 'But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."' Mark 13:24-25.
 2. It may be worth mentioning that Joel's prophecy, that the 'sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord' (Joel 2:31), which Peter referred to on the Day of Pentecost, may not have been fulfilled then but awaits a future day. See Acts 2:16-21. Surely Luke would have mentioned this had it happened.
- E. Man of lawlessness.**
1. It is difficult to know what all this means, but Paul was emphatic that the Second Coming cannot occur until such a person emerged. 'Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and

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will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.' 2 Thes. 2:3-4.

2. This person has been connected to the beast of Revelation 13, sometimes called the antichrist, the final and worst in a series of antichrists in 1 John 2:18: 'Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.'

F. The salvation of Israel.

1. Before the end it would seem that a large number of Jews will turn to Christ.
 - a. 'But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!' Romans 11:12.
 - b. 'I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.'" Romans 11:25-26.
2. This does not necessarily mean that every living Jew will be converted any more than every living Gentile was converted when God turned to the Gentiles after Israel rejected Christ.

G. Other signs that suggest we are near the end.

1. Increase in travel. 'Many will go here and there.' Dan. 12:4.
2. Increase of knowledge. Daniel 12:4. 'Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.' 2 Tim. 3:7.
3. Increase of greed and love for material things. 2 Tim. 3:1-4.
4. Superficiality (shallowness) in the church. 'Having a form of godliness but denying its power.' 2 Tim. 3:5. 'For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.' 2 Tim. 4:3.
5. Parallel with wars and rumours of wars some will be saying 'we never had it so good'. 'While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.' 1 Thes. 5:3.

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III THE ONE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF CHRIST

A. A-millennialism: no future millennium in a literal sense.

1. The era of the Church – the church age – from 33 AD until the time of Christ's coming.
2. This is an age in which Satan's influence over the nations has been greatly reduced so that the Gospel can be preached to the world.
 - a. Satan is bound during this time.
 - b. The one thousand years are figurative, not literal.
 - c. Those who reign with Christ are Christians who have died and are reigning with Christ in heaven.
 - d. In a word: the Millennium is now happening; the exact duration of the church age cannot be known.
3. When Christ returns, there will be a remnant of both believers and unbelievers, followed by the Final Judgement and the eternal state.

B. Post-millennialism: Christ will return after the Millennium.

1. The church age, the time of the Gospel, will culminate in a more rapid growth of the Church; the population of Christians will exceed the number of unbelievers.
 - a. There are basically two types of post-millennialism:
 - (1) Classic post-millennialism: the world will gradually get better and better due to the acceleration of the Gospel's influence.
 - (2) Revolutionary post-millennialism: a sudden intervention of Christ's power and glory that awakens the church and results in great revival.
 - b. In either case the thousand year reign is symbolic and does not mean a literal thousand year period during which Satan is bound.
2. At the end of the Millennial period (whether brief or long), Christ will return to earth.
 - a. Believers and unbelievers will be raised.
 - b. The Judgement follows, then the eternal state.

C. Pre-millennialism: Christ will return before the Millennium.

1. The church age is followed by the return of Christ.

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- a. Some believe the return of Christ is via a secret Rapture of believers.
 - (1) A period called the Great Tribulation occurs on earth.
 - (2) Christ returns visibly at the end of the Great Tribulation.
 - b. Some believe that the Rapture and the visible return of Christ are simultaneous, meaning they are one and the same event.
 - (1) The Great Tribulation therefore precedes the Second Coming.
 - (2) Those who take this view tend to believe we are in this period of tribulation at the present time.
2. Once Christ returns he begins his literal reign on earth of a literal thousand years.
- a. Believers will reign with Christ on earth; they will have resurrected bodies.
 - b. Of those unbelievers who remain on earth, some will turn to Christ.
 - c. It will be an era of total peace on earth.
 - d. At the end of the thousand years Satan will be loosed and will join forces with unbelievers who submitted outwardly to Christ's reign but inwardly rebelled; but they will be defeated.
 - e. Then the bodies of unbelievers will be raised to stand before the Judgement; then the eternal state follows.
- D. Note: the present study is too general to put all the arguments for and against each view.
1. What is certain:
- a. Jesus will come again.
 - b. All people will be raised.
 - c. All will stand before God at the Final Judgement.
 - d. The eternal state follows.
2. The Big Question on must answer: are you ready?

IV THE FINAL JUDGEMENT AND THE ETERNAL STATE

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- A.** Both the Old and New Testaments teach that there is coming a day of days in which God will judge the world with justice. Amos 5:18; Joel 3:14ff; Matt. 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36; Heb. 6:2; 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 6. 'Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.' Hebrews 9:27-28.
1. 'Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.' Hebrews 9:27-28.
 2. 'Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.' Rev. 20:11-12.
- B.** The Second Coming and Final Judgement are inseparably connected.
1. 'In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.' 2 Tim. 4:1.
 2. 'Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.'" Jude 1:14-15.
 - a. Christ will be the Judge. 2 Tim. 4:1; Acts 10:42; 17:31; John 5:21-27.
 - b. 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?"' Matthew 7:21-22.
- C.** The Judgement will reveal two conditions of people: 'For it is time for judgement to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"' 1 Peter 4:17-18.
1. Who are saved and who are lost. 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.' Matthew 25:46.

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- 2.** Who among the saved will have a reward. 'For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.' 2 Cor. 5:10.
 - a.** Some will have a reward.
 - (1)** 'If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.' 1 Cor. 3:14.
 - (2)** 'No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.' 1 Cor. 9:27.
 - b.** Some will be saved by fire. 'If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.' 1 Cor. 3:15.
- D.** Angels will be judged. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Cor. 6:3.
- E.** Satan will be judged. 'And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' Rev. 20:10.
- F.** There are moral implications of the Final Judgement.
 - 1.** It satisfies our innate sense of a need for justice in the world.
 - 2.** It enables us to forgive others freely.
 - a.** 'Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.' Romans 12:19.
 - b.** Whenever we have been wronged, we can give into God's hands any desire to harm or pay back. 2 Thess. 1:5-8.
 - 3.** It provides a motive for righteous living.
 - 4.** It provides a great motive for evangelism.
- G.** The eternal state consists of two final destinies: Heaven or Hell.
 - 1.** Hell: a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.
 - a.** 'And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Matthew 25:30.

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- b. 'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Matthew 25:41.
 - c. 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.' Matthew 25:46.
 - d. It is a place of 'unquenchable fire'. Mark 9:43,48.
 - e. The smoke of torment 'goes up for ever and ever'. Rev. 14:11.
2. Heaven: the final abode of the saved.
- a. 'Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" Matthew 25:34.
 - b. 'And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" Rev. 21:3-4.
 - c. 'Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.' Isaiah 65:17.
 - d. "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure." Isaiah 66:22.
 - e. 'But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.' 2 Peter 3:13.

CONCLUSION

- A. Nearly every statement mentioned in this study deserves a complete study in itself.
 - 1. We have given a brief survey of eschatology.
 - 2. Many questions remain that must be answered by a further study.
- B. The essential and by far the most important question is, are you ready?
 - 1. Do you know for sure that if you were to die today, would you go to Heaven?
 - 2. Do you know for sure, that if Jesus were to come today, are you ready to meet him?
 - 3. Can you say right now, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus'?